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The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Vol. I

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1955

## **The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Vol. 1**

John M. Oesterreicher

*Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies*

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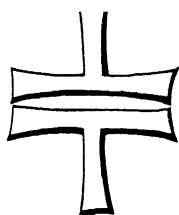
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# THE BRIDGE



# THE BRIDGE

A YEARBOOK OF  
JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN STUDIES  
VOLUME I

Edited by John M. Oesterreicher

PANTHEON BOOKS

# THE BRIDGE

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## A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

A BRIDGE links two shores, spans an abyss, opens a road for communication; it is thus an instrument of peace, as is this Bridge, its editors hope.

THE BRIDGE tries to show the unity of God's design as it leads from the Law to the Gospel—the unbroken economy of salvation. Never can the Church forget that the Rock on which she stands is embedded in the revealed wisdom of patriarchs and prophets and in the mighty events which dominate the history of the children of Israel. For her the past is not dead but lives on, as it ought to live in the mind of every Christian; hence the marvels of the Ancient Dispensation will be spoken of repeatedly in these pages.

THE BRIDGE speaks also of Christians and Jews of today, and speaks to them. But the peace it looks to is not merely a minimum on which Christians and Jews can agree. For were we, the editors, to seek no more than a lowest common denominator, we should be untrue to the faith dear to us and at the same time show little respect to them, in whom we see our separated brethren. We should be untrue were we to pass over in silence the one fact which separates Christians from Jews and Jews from Christians, the fact of Jesus. Yet, separated though we are, we *are* brethren, for He over whom Christians and Jews are separated turns and ties us to them: He is the Bridge.

What we wish, then, is that our work will help Christians to a deeper understanding of their treasures, and no less that it will serve the dialogue between Christians and Jews. We say a dialogue, even though one party to it speaks but indirectly, for this is a time-honored term in the Church's intellectual history, reaching as far back, for example, as Justin the Martyr. Despite all its shortcomings, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* is unmatched in its tenderness, for in it a Christian and a Jew, having argued their faiths, at times vehemently but always amicably, end their discussion by praying for one another. Dare we expect that what we offer here will lead to like love?

THE EDITORS

## THE BRIDGE

WHEN God planned the world and foresaw that men would serve idols, an old Jewish legend goes, He paused and wondered if He should not lay His plans aside. But then He saw Abraham, and said: "Lo, here is a rock on whom I can build the world" (*Yalkut* I, 766). To the Catholic too Abraham is a foundation. When, through the mist of idolatry, the voice of the true God reached the patriarch, a fresh beginning was made; with him a new order of things was under way, so that St. Augustine could speak of God's call and Abraham's answer as a hinge of time (*PL* 41:492). He is a turning point in history because, as Scripture never tires of repeating, "he believed"; and his faith, so eminently personal, is forever a pattern of Christian faith. Believing in the living God and His Promise, believing because God has spoken, believing with utter abandonment, he is our father, for we believe like him. Above all, he is father to her who was full of grace and faith, for his response to the God who summoned him made possible Mary's perfect response.

Thus the history that starts with him is not merely national but in the deepest sense universal; it is indeed the story of the Jews, but it is, at the same time, the story of the world's salvation. All that happened from Abraham till John the Baptist happened not to an alien people but to men and women who are our ancestors in the spirit. Hence their lives are part of our lives, a truth ever present to the mind of the Church and entering into her liturgy, particularly her blessings. When, on the feast of Mary's nativity, the Church blesses seeds and seedlings, she sees herself one with the children of Israel who, having settled in the land of promise, offered the first-fruits as Moses had commanded them. Again, in her blessing of an organ, its music is said to continue the praise the Israelites sang to God with trumpets and cymbals, while the bells in her towers are blessed as echoes of the joyous harp of

David and the thunder that dispersed the foes of the chosen people.

To show this unity of sacred past and present is one of the tasks the editors of THE BRIDGE have set themselves. It is, I think, a needed work, getting to the heart of things. And there is strength in seeing again that a wondrous unity bridges the centuries, that the world is no parcel of broken or unrelated pieces, rather a universe lovingly ordered. But immediately one asks: What is the place of the Jews of today in this realm of love? A Christian cannot forget that they are linked, not merely by blood but by heavenly design, to the men and women who stood at Sinai, to whom first God made known in words and on tablets of stone the universal law: those great commandments that are not like the statutes of the earth, for they begin with "I am the Lord your God" and end with "your neighbor." A Christian gladly remembers that the Jews today and ever are the people to which in olden days God sent the peerless prophets; the people which, in the words of St. Augustine, was itself once "a prophet of Christ, and from which the flesh of Christ was born" (PL 40:435-436). "Through Christ and in Christ," the great Pius XI said, "we are of the spiritual lineage of Abraham. . . . Spiritually, we are Semites." Jews, then, are in a way the Christian's kin, and Jesus is the Bond which binds us to them.

"Spiritually we are Semites." It is to a search into the many implications of these words of Pope Pius XI that this and the succeeding volumes of THE BRIDGE will be devoted. They will explore the basic unity of Old and New Testaments, confront the rabbinical tradition with the teaching of the Church, examine the relationship between Christians and Jews on the temporal plane, review Jewish thought and life down the ages, weigh recent attempts by Jewish thinkers and artists to interpret the Christian revelation, sift modern views of Jewish existence by Jews, Christians, and writers who are neither, and discuss many other apposite topics; thus the work of THE BRIDGE will extend from theology, philosophy, and history, to literature, art, and sociology. To this end, Father Oesterreicher has succeeded in bringing together distinguished American and European scholars—a true *universitas scholarium*, in which, though each one bears responsibility only for his own contribution, all are united in the same spirit. In these many ways THE BRIDGE bears out its name.

This Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies has, I feel, a prophetic message. It cannot fail to have some influence on contemporary

thought, which, rich and various though it is, stands in need of a unifying principle. For some it may even lead to an encounter, like Abraham's, with the God who has not been silent. In any case, it is my hope and the hope of all who have shared in its planning that this Yearbook will be for many a bridge to that wisdom which, in the words of the Old Testament, is the image of His goodness, that wisdom which no evil can overcome, which of all things active is the most active (*Wis* 7:26, 30, 24). Seton Hall is happy to sponsor this venture of learning and love.

MONSIGNOR JOHN L. McNULTY  
*President, Seton Hall University*

## THE ONE GOD

HOLY, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory," the Church sings with joy at the moment of the Sanctus and thus gracefully spans the two Testaments. Echoed in Latin, in Greek or Slavonic, in Syriac or Armenian, the triple *kadosh* of the seraphim in the inaugural vision of Isaiah, calling him to prophetic service, lives each hour around the globe. God's transcendent majesty inspires men and angels to cry out with wonder that He is most holy, all pure, other than His creatures, infinitely higher than they. Though Synagogue and Church repeat in different tongues the angelic words Isaiah heard, they do so with the same awe, for one and the same is the God of both Testaments.

This assertion is not a contemporary emphasis motivated by conciliatory, irenic desires. Rather is it a matter of perennial Christian attitude, plainly evident from the historical record. As early as the middle second century the Church, through her uncompromising champions Irenaeus and Tertullian, fought Marcion's contrary thesis. According to him, it was a lie to speak of two Covenants, since the Old and New Testaments could never be reconciled; the God of Israel could never be the Father whom Jesus preached, for the one was harsh and demanding, the "Just God," while the other was gracious and merciful, the "Good God."

Against this, the Church could not be silent, for the true God is justice and pity, demands and gives, is sternness and love. Unwaveringly she spoke out, one of her early canons excommunicating those who accept or assert Marcion's doctrine: "If anyone says or believes that one is the God of the Ancient Law and another the God of the Gospels, let him be anathema" (Denziger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 28). And to this day every bishop, before his consecration, solemnly declares his belief that God, the almighty Lord, is the one Author of

Old and New Testaments, no less of the Law and of the Prophets than of the Apostolic Writings.

Marcion's threat struck at the roots of the Christian faith, which knows itself to be the flowering and fruit of the tree God planted in the days of the patriarchs and watched over and watered through the centuries that followed them. Forever, then, will the Church proclaim that the promises no less than the fulfillment are His gifts, gifts of the one God; forever will she proclaim that the God of Abraham is the Father of the Lord Jesus. But no error is so gross, so ugly, that it does not have its source, or rather, one of its sources, in a real problem. The problem seized on by Marcion has been sensed by many an Old Testament reader since: those passages which speak of God or make Him speak in a way that bears the impress of passionate, impetuous men.

The Old Testament, particularly its more ancient parts, uses language of God which is highly anthropomorphic. True, the language of the New Testament is also anthropomorphic. The language of man must ever be so when it speaks of God. But there is a vast difference between the anthropomorphisms of Paul, who speaks of the "wrath of God," and those of Moses, who sings: "The Lord is a warrior. . . . Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into the sea" (*Ex* 15:3-4), as there is a difference between the first chapter of Genesis and the second. The second chapter, which embodies the story of man's creation in its earlier form, portrays God in a markedly anthropomorphic and rather homely style, as molding like a potter and breathing like a man, while the first is more elevated, limning the Creator's majesty.

Two facts of critical significance are implied by these comparisons, namely, that there is progressive revelation about God in the Old Testament, reaching a climax in the New, and that language is intimately related to the intellectual world be it of a man or of a people. Thus, generally speaking, language will be more anthropomorphic, even naive, when man lives in an earlier age. It will be less so when his idea of God is refined and enriched by revelation, and when his thoughts and words have grown more mature by reflection and have been deepened by inner experience.

What Marcion missed, then—if he really wished to see the truth—is that the problem of the Old Testament is not with its God but with its men. The mind of God does not need time, but the human mind does. Revelation is conditioned not by its Giver, but by its receiver,

man in his finitude. When, as in revelation, eternity enters time, when divine wisdom is communicated to a created intellect, the grasping of it cannot be entire all at once.

Of the gradual and unflagging way in which God led the children of Israel, and with them the world, Gregory Nazianzen has this to say: "In all of history there have been two great life-shaping changes, two revolutions if you will, which are called the two Testaments. One went from the worship of idols to the Law, the other from the Law to the Gospel. . . . The two are alike in this, that their changes did not come about unexpectedly, at the first sudden thrust. Why so? So that—and this is worth the effort of knowing—we may not be dragged [to God] by force but may be led by persuasion. For what is not done freely will not last . . . but what is done willingly carries with it the seed of long life and firmness. What is done under coercion, is really the work of him who coerces us, while what is done of our own will is our own. This last is the way of divine goodness, the first of tyranny. . . ."

"Just so," St. Gregory continues, "when God set aside some ancestral rites and permitted others, He acted like an educator, or like a physician . . . who in order to administer his medicines, will often allow his patient something sweet, well timed and artfully flavored. Again, it is not easy to move from what has long been held in honor and esteem to things new. Hence the first Testament, having done away with idols, permitted [bloody] sacrifices; the second ended the sacrifices, but at least did not prohibit circumcision. Men could bear with a certain equanimity, therefore, the taking away and, in the end, give up even what had been conceded them, that is, first the sacrifices, later circumcision. And so pagans were made Jews, and Jews Christians, and [the world] was led step by step—by stealth, as it were—to the gospel" (*PG 36:160-161*).

Such is the "unhurrying, unperturbed pace" of God. St. Gregory has only outlined His way to man through biblical times. Much research, much critical work, is needed to show in detail how Israel's understanding of God's nature heightened; how the knowledge of His will and design grew; how His universal kingship, how redemption from evil, the true sacrifice, and all the dominant themes of the Bible, unfolded before Abraham's children; how revelation moved forward from Abraham to Moses, then down the line of the writing prophets, from Amos to Malachi.

With burning tongue and exalted speech, the prophets depicted the ethical heart of God. Their zeal flamed out alike against the inhumanity of man and Israel's lapses into idolatry. Loving their people, martyrs in the cause of holiness, they were supereminent men of God. There was more of the experience of the Lord in them and less of the language of men, as was fitting in the forerunners of "the Prophet" who was to come, who would not only receive God's word but would be the Word of God.

What we have said so far should not be taken to mean that every kind of anthropomorphism is a sign of a primitive mentality. In the Bible, anthropomorphisms are, more often than not, the expression of the Hebrew mind with its love for the visible world, that is, for the goodness of all created things. To the Hebrew mind, the world of the senses was not evil, rather was it transparent to the glory of the Creator; matter was not an enemy, rather a servant of God and man. So unmistakably is this the outlook of the biblical Israel that it must point beyond itself: it is not chance or merely an imperfection, it has a significance in the divine economy.

When the Israelite spoke of God's arms or feet, of His countenance, His eyes, His mouth, or even His nostrils, he did not doubt for a moment that the Lord was spirit, that He could not be imagined, that He transcended all there is and all men could think. What he really tried to express in metaphors was that the Lord was not far and unapproachable but near—for the manner of the Bible is humble and impassioned. That God is jealous, that He loves and hates, that He deliberates, repents, and takes vengeance—words like these spell out that God is not just an idea but the living God, indeed they are a haunting promise of the Incarnation.

Marcion could not have been more wrong when he spoke of two Gods and declared war on the God of Israel. God is forever the same, whether He creates man, calls Abraham, appears to Moses, leads the Israelites out of Egypt, gives them the land of promise, sends them judges, kings, prophets, or, in the fullness of time, comes Himself to save—He draws "with bands of love" (*Os* 11:4). True—and this cannot be said too often—before God could be seen with eyes like Hosea's, centuries had to pass, for men are limited. He, however, is the same in all His dealings. "The God of the Old Testament, who is often regarded as a God to be dreaded," writes a modern exegete, "is in reality

'merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness' (*Ex* 34:6; *Ps* 85:15; 102:8; 144:8; *Joel* 2:13). These four attributes express the same notion: Yahwe is a God of love, whom St. John will call Charity, but who is defined more exactly here, through the mention of patience and mercy, as the God of all benignity" (Ceslaus Spicq, O.P., *The Mystery of Godliness*, pp. 161-162).

It is in the name of the One God that THE BRIDGE seeks a meeting of Jews and Christians. This name, however, is for us ever wedded to the name of Christ, a name that keeps Christians and Jews apart. THE BRIDGE, then, desires to make understood Him who separates, and those whom He separates. For as prejudice feeds on ignorance, love requires understanding and understanding knowledge. In speaking of Christ and Christians, of Jews and Judaism, we hope to spread knowledge and create understanding, an intellectual and spiritual climate consonant with the unsearchable ways of God (*Rom* 11:33).

Happily, there is a notable scholarly renaissance in our times among Jews as well as among Catholics. Both are eagerly exploring their traditions, and both are making them available to English readers. Witness recent English editions of the Fathers and of the Talmud. There is no gainsaying the fact of a reviving religious interest at the intellectual level. Catholic scholars are investigating the rabbinical background of the Gospels; Jewish thinkers like Joseph Klausner and Martin Buber and literary figures like Franz Werfel and Sholem Asch have shown an awareness of Christian themes. To broaden this reciprocal knowledge, to sift it and thus to serve truth, is the task of THE BRIDGE.

May He who is the God of both Testaments be with us, for unless the Lord build the bridge, they labor in vain who build.

MONSIGNOR JOHN J. DOUGHERTY  
*Regent, The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies*

# STUDIES

Raïssa Maritain

## ABRAHAM AND THE ASCENT OF CONSCIENCE

A PHILOSOPHICAL MEDITATION  
ON THE FIRST AGES OF MAN

*You are a prince of God among us.* Gen 23:6; Vulg.

THERE are several good ways to read holy Scripture and several ways to interpret it;<sup>1</sup> but the first and fundamental reading should be, as far as possible, a simple grasping of the literal sense in all its obviousness. Such a reading in the light of faith, unclouded by any preconceived human interpretation, has this advantage: it brings to the fore the essential problems reason is called on to solve in its own domain without detriment to the spiritual and mystical sense. This sense depends on another light and presupposes, moreover, that natural reason has been sufficiently satisfied and that the mind is at peace.

The simple reading of the story of Abraham in Genesis cannot fail to raise, among many other problems, one that is especially great. Abraham's election to an exalted destiny is evident. His faith in the word of God is absolute, his generosity heroic. His high sanctity is proved abundantly in Scripture and has never been disputed within the Church. But how can the sanctity of this exemplary man, who is always in God's favor, be reconciled with certain of his actions, which even the Mosaic Law was to condemn; how can it be reconciled with others which we today must consider contrary to divine law, indeed, to simple human honesty?

1. On the several senses of holy Scripture, see St. Thomas, *Quaest. Quodlib.* VII, 14 and 15.

## THE STATES OF HUMANITY

LET us reread the story of Abraham as it is told in Genesis. "Yahweh said to Abram: Leave your country, your kinsfolk and your father's house, for the land which I will show you; I will make a great nation of you. I will bless you, and make your name great. . . . In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:1-3).

Here Abram was alone before God, before a command that overturned his life, before promises hard to believe. God's bidding was direct; it was not a commandment written in a book, and there was as yet no Church, in the form of a social body, to set it forth or discern its spirit. Around Abram the paganism of Ur held sway; and Terah, his own father, so it seems, was a worshipper of the moon-god.

God's command and promises, then, reached Abram without any intermediary. In this spiritual solitude, taking on himself the entire responsibility, he accepted the command and believed the promises. His faith here did not bear on any universal truth. He obeyed like a servant who hears his master say, "Do this"—and he does it, "Go there"—and he goes.

Faith makes all the saints swift and faithful doers of the will of God; but when faith bears on a universal truth, it has, in the mind divinely illumined, supports also in a way universal. For Abram, however, it was a matter of recognizing the truth of a particular and personal command, a matter, above all, of not failing to recognize the voice he heard. Much later, the risen Lord will say to her who seeks Him all in tears and speaks to Him not knowing who He is, merely the one word, "Mariam." And at once she will reply, "Rabboni," knowing Him by His voice. Abram's heart too was attuned to the voice of his God. At once he obeyed, not hesitating to leave his country and his father's house. He was not stunned by the immensity of the promises; rather did he act in the simplicity of his heart, in the humility and grandeur of a predestined heart, of a heart chosen to be the type, the exemplar, of heroic faith. He received and kept the word of God, and between that word and his soul there was no gap: when God speaks, the soul's life is raised.

What simplicity, what extraordinary power there was in that divine inspiration acting as it did in the manner of a vital instinct! Abram

obeyed God as one obeys the deepest impulses of one's being. At God's bidding he broke his earthly attachments, setting out on a hazardous journey like an old ship that a storm has blown from port, like a vessel whose moorings have been broken by the mighty breath of Yahweh. That breath, that inspiration, sent Abram into new paths, where the history of the people of God began.

With his wife, his nephew Lot, his servants, and his herds, Abram left Haran, "and they came to the land of Canaan" (Gen 12:5). There Yahweh confirmed His promise: "To your descendants I will give this land" (Gen 12:7). And Abram built an altar in the place where Yahweh had appeared to him, at Shechem; "near the terebinth of Moreh" (Gen 12:6), Scripture adds by way of detail.<sup>2</sup>

But "there was a famine in the land and Abram went down to Egypt." And how did he act there? He said to his wife: "I know that you are a woman beautiful to behold. When the Egyptians see you, they will say: She is his wife; then they will kill me, but will spare you. Therefore, say you are my sister so that I may be treated well on your account, and my life may be spared for your sake." And indeed, "the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful." Pharaoh's princes praised her to Pharaoh, "and the woman was taken and led away to Pharaoh's house. He treated Abram well on her account" (Gen 12:10-16).<sup>3</sup>

What are we to think of this? What does the conscience of a man of our time say to it? Will God's anger burst forth? Will Abram repent and by penance regain sanctity? No, God took no offense; He was not at all angry with Abram. And Abram's conscience was not troubled. It was and stayed perfectly clear, just as when he married Sarai, who was his half-sister—an incest which later the Mosaic Law was rigorously to forbid. Serenely, too, till the end of his life, he would

2. Some scholars think that "the directing terebinth" or "the Teacher's Terebinth" is the true translation. In all likelihood the tree was a landmark, possibly an "oracular tree" attended by priests who interpreted the answers of the oracle to the pagan Canaanites.

3. "Abram received flocks, herds, he-asses, men-servants, maid-servants, she-asses and camels. But Yahweh struck Pharaoh and his household with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Then Pharaoh summoned Abram and said, Why have you done this to me? Why did you not tell me she was your wife? Why did you say she was your sister and let me marry her? Here now is your wife; take her and go. . . . They sent him away with his wife and all that belonged to him" (Gen 12:16-20). Later on Abraham acted the same way toward the king of Gerar (Gen 20).

keep concubines, and God would not reproach him in any way. "He died in a blessed old age," says Genesis (25:8). Nor would Sarai be reprimanded for having sent to him her servant Hagar: "Yahweh has kept me from bearing. Go in to my maid, I pray you; perhaps I shall get children through her" (Gen 16:2).<sup>4</sup> All these things are done with marvelous tranquillity and with no consciousness of doing wrong.

Of the lie Jacob told at his mother's behest, St. Augustine said: "It is not a lie; it is a mystery."<sup>5</sup> Let us have the courage to say: It is without doubt a mystery, but it is also a lie.

The lives of the Old Testament saints are undoubtedly replete with mysteries, but they are also marked by deeds for which neither God nor their consciences reproached them, but which the teaching of Christ and the Church forbids as faults and grievous sins. Thus lying, guile, harshness, cruelty toward conquered enemies, concubinage, incest, and polygamy are linked with eminent names. And divorce and polygamy were to be permitted by Moses.

We are not speaking of faults which the times of Abraham and of Moses already counted faults, faults of which certain saints of the Old Testament were guilty, of which they repented, and for which they did penance, as did David. Such faults, admitted and expiated, simply join them to the multitude of sinners whom God's mercy has raised up and made holy. What concerns us here is the coexistence of the unshaken conscience of the just with ways today forbidden as offenses against God.

Here we touch on great mysteries: on the mystery of conscience, and on the mystery of the successive and characteristically different states

4. In this, Calvin was convinced that Abram was guilty of the sin of adultery. ("This connection was so far illicit, as to be something between fornication and marriage," was one of his comments. See his *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, trans. J. King, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847, I, 426.) But Abram was here without guilt—and not only because his action was in accordance with the custom of his age, as the Code of Hammurabi shows (cf. James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 172–173, nos. 144, 146, 147, 170, 171, and others). Quite apart from this, there are deeper reasons, precisely those we try to explain here, which acquit Abram's conscience of such a sin—Abram, whom Diodorus of Tarsus calls *ho patēr tēs ekklesiās*, "the father of the Church" (cf. Deconinck, *Essai sur la chaîne de l'octatenuque*, Paris, 1912, pp. 112, 16, Fr. 26, as cited in Erik Peterson, *Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden*, Salzburg: Verlag Anton Pustet, 1933, p. 68, note 9).

5. St. Augustine, *Contra Mendacium* I, x, 24 (PL 40:533).

of mankind and of sanctity. The Bible acquaints us with three great states of humanity subsequent to the sin of Adam: the state of nature,<sup>6</sup> the state of the Law, and the state of the Gospel. Properly speaking, that is, leaving aside individual or social backwardness caused by environment at any time, the state of nature extends from the fall of Adam to Moses, the state of the Law from Moses to Christ, while with Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit there begins the state of the Gospel. From the earthly paradise to Sinai, from Sinai to Calvary, and from Calvary to the paradise of God, mankind makes its painful way along the hard and bitter road of illuminations. Knowledge and suffering and divine grace grow from age to age, as mankind is in labor to bring forth its purest form and most perfect state.

#### THE STATE OF NATURE

The state of nature in the life of mankind can be compared with infancy in the life of a man. Reason is present, and so is the will; God is present, enjoining what is to be done. But reason, by the loss of innocence reduced to its natural nakedness, is just beginning to discover the world; and God is sparing in His demands, proportioning them in some measure to human experience.

The state of nature is not a state of *pure* nature; nature is wounded—but does it know that it is wounded? Grace is present and at work, and with what force! But it acts in the manner of a vital impulse, of an inspiring motion; and it disguises itself, so to speak, in nature, if it is true that nature, in beings, is their first principle of motion and operation.

The human conscience is still in twilight, at its dawn. From the first day light is there, diffused and uncertain—just as, according to Genesis, it was in the universe from the first day of creation—but “the lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate day from night” (Gen 1:14) were not created till the fourth day. Human conscience is still very close to the great elemental instincts—those for the conservation and propagation of life, for example—and to serve these instincts there is at once awakened an innocent guile. Thus the great biblical figures are given to ruses, which are not imputed to them as sins.

Did not Abram make Sarai pass for his sister? It is true that she was

6. We speak here not of the state of pure nature, which has never existed in fact, but, as we shall explain later, of the state which preceded the gift of the Law.

his half-sister as well as his wife, but in making her pass for his sister he surrendered her to those who lusted for her. Later on his son Isaac would act the same way. There is also the story of Lot's daughters. "The elder said to the younger: Our father is old, and there is no man in the land to marry us, as is the custom everywhere. Let us make our father wine to drink, then lie with him, that we may have offspring by our father" (Gen 19:31-32).<sup>7</sup> Again, by their involved and premeditated lie, Rebekah and her favorite son Jacob stole the blessing with which Isaac wished to bless Esau. When Esau finally arrived with the meal he had prepared, and when he and his father discovered Rebekah's subterfuge, "Isaac trembled with dread . . . Esau uttered a very loud and bitter cry, and he said to his father: Father, bless me too. But Isaac answered: Your brother came deceitfully and received your blessing" (Gen 27:33-36).

There is no need to multiply examples. In the days of the patriarchs, all the laws which have formed our conscience were not yet engraved either on stone or in hearts. The principle behind these laws, however, and moral conscience itself, exists in every man. It is part of our natural dowry: Do good, avoid evil! When you hear His voice, obey Him who speaks as one having authority, for He is the almighty Lord! It is thus that God made Himself known to the patriarchs. Later He was to reveal to Moses: "As God the Almighty, *El Shaddai*, I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But my name of Yahweh, He who is, I did not make known to them" (Ex 6:2-3).

In that age and among the peoples in whose midst Abraham lived, God went about the education of mankind by orders explicit, particular, and precise, as well as by impulse and inner inspiration. To the people whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were to lead, however, there was revealed the existence and providence of the one God, Creator of heaven and earth, a revelation offered to its faith as a universal truth. The two great primal commandments which flow from this truth were also clearly known and affirmed: Adore the one true God! Obey Him! Further, the two sins most gravely condemned and punished in the

7. God cared for this offspring even to the point of commanding Moses, who had wandered in the desert forty years and was about to pass through the land of Moab, that he should not attack the sons of Moab: "Do not show hostility or engage them in battle, for I will not give you possession of any of their land, since I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as their own" (Deut 2:9). Like care is shown for the Ammonites (Deut 2:19).

state of nature were disobedience and idolatry, for faith and obedience were the first foundations of mankind's education by God.

In a state of grace-given freedom and pure spirituality, in a state of intimate union with God, love makes man do spontaneously the very thing obedience would demand—and still more. But so long as mankind has not attained so perfect a state, the constraint of obedience is needed if we are to act aright. And even in that state of love and freedom which drives out fear and constraint, the absence of the clear vision of subsisting Truth (a vision unattainable by anyone who has not passed through death) makes faith and obedience indispensable. Then obedience, it is true, becomes easy and light, save in extraordinary trials or missions; indeed, it blends with the *élan* and clear-sightedness of love. Still, obedience no less than faith continues to be needed in the education of saints, which must go on to their last day.

All mankind's history up to now has not been, nor will it ever be, anything but the history of that difficult education. They started together, mankind and this divine education, at the mysterious frontier which separates man from simple animality. It was on the same "day," according to Genesis, that the animals of the earth and man were made. A spiritual soul was given to perishable flesh, and it all began. Since then, God, the flesh, and the soul have been at work, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in discord. There is union, the most intimate sort of union, and there is the cruelest strife.

Every soul is in vital contact with God through moral conscience, and that conscience is present in every age of mankind. In its essence, even in its worth, conscience is not dependent on our explicit knowledge of all the particular moral laws which oblige us; and yet the very morality of our obedience is founded on it. This is why there are strict observances which are merely pharisaical,<sup>8</sup> and ignorances and apparent disobediences which are not contrary to holiness.

But this light of conscience is unequally distributed. It is capable of growing to the full day of eternity, but also of lessening, of darkening,

8. Here, as later, I use the word "pharisaical" or "pharisaism" in the sense of purely literal observance with the desire of having the certitude of one's own justice. It is not a temptation of Jews *qua* Jews; any community which—rightly—holds in honor the law of God risks falling victim to it. Moreover, I do not overlook that, in historical reality, the Pharisees counted among themselves many souls of high moral and religious life. St. Paul gloried—humanly speaking—in having been a Pharisee (Phil 3:5).

of dying, and it may even happen that it dies completely. Likewise, knowledge of the moral laws is not a resplendent array of stars, always present to every man, equally luminous to every soul, never brightening, never declining. Our own experience, after all, and mankind's present state more than prove this.

Let us not think of mankind's state of nature (as we have called it) as a state in which the natural moral laws were perfectly known and observed. Quite the contrary, knowledge of the natural moral laws is a slowly acquired and hard-earned light, excepting, of course, the initial knowledge that good is to be done and evil to be avoided. (This fundamental knowledge coexists with reason and intelligence.)

Is there anything surprising in this? Is it not evident that the laws that rule the whole of nature cannot be perfectly known save by the Author of nature? This is perhaps even truer of the commandments of the moral law than of physical laws. For moral laws do not depend only on the nature of the soul and on what the soul can know of its own nature: they are also a function of its eternal destiny. They are the living bonds which, in varying degrees, tie created nature to its uncreated end. Now, that which we can know only imperfectly and by the help of another admits of more and less; it can increase and decrease for a variety of causes.

For our knowledge of the moral laws we rely both on the lights reason has at its command and on divine revelation. Of course, all knowledge could have been given us from the beginning, given and preserved in each of us to the end. But that, it seems, is not the world God created; that is not the way He governs souls. Even toward man in the state of original justice, with all the privileges of innocence, God acts, we like to think, like a gardener who puts into the ground a seed, not a mature tree heavy with fruit.<sup>9</sup> And the seed dies and lives, waxes strong in the soil, climbs toward the sun, knows the changes of season, flowers, and bears fruit. God acts like a father, like an educator. All human history shows this, and the inspired Scriptures tell it on every page.

#### THE PROGRESS OF MORAL CONSCIENCE

After the Fall, Adam perhaps resembled those men we call Primitives, although they enjoy some very great gifts, such as knowing the

9. For a discussion of God's slow and patient education of man, see Part II, section I, "The First Steps of Mankind," p. 41.

existence of a Master of all things and the duties of religion. Adam, and the men after him, may have been like those African primitives who raise to God altars marvelous in their simplicity, no more than the lamb of sacrifice and a few unhewn stones. The grandeur of those ages that knew no ornaments! God's invisible presence is clearly felt by instinctive hearts, by hearts into which objections have not yet entered. Those early or primitive times were the ages of fear and trembling, because of the nearness of Omnipotence. For Omnipotence had not yet unveiled the face of its love, and the darkness in which it wrapped itself is sensed to the point of terror by the spirit of these naked souls.

The altars primitive Africans erect against trees can be no simpler than those Abraham raised to God in the land of Canaan, near the terebinth of Moreh and near the terebinths of Mamre. But higher and surer than theirs was his religion. In him we are far from primitive or degraded mankind. The mercies of God already had a long history, from the time of man's initial sin, from the time of Noah and of Shem; and the ingenuity of men had already created several civilizations.

There is a strange inequality in the way art, the knowledge of God, and moral conscience progress. The initiative is necessarily God's, who moves reason and will to their first act. Without waiting for man to proceed from things visible to the knowledge of the invisible, from things created to the Creator, without waiting for him to recognize in himself, through the deceits of finite joys, the desire for perfect joy, God Himself speaks. Through grace He speaks to him who will take so long to travel or retravel the road from ignorance to the knowledge of causes. God makes Himself known as the first Cause and the Source of all knowledge.

Everywhere God has chosen notable witnesses to His presence and providence, and traces of this primal teaching are found in the history of all peoples. But in no sacred history is it so clear as in that of the people whom God prepared for Himself according to the flesh and according to the spirit. God Himself spoke to them, and in everything that happened to them He sketched the shape of spiritual events to come. As St. Paul tells us: "All these things happened to them as a type" (1 Cor 10:11). This direct and continuous teaching by God, which created the prophets, seems to have absorbed the highest powers of the Jewish soul.

Elsewhere—in Asia, in Egypt, in Greece—it was art and philosophy that developed first. In these domains, all is relatively easy; all takes place in the visible, in the human realm; all serves the adornment of this world. Knowledge of things divine, however, remained elementary, obscure, and symbolic, until the gospel was preached.

The descendants of the patriarchs turned away from the exploration of science and art; all their poetic powers, which were far from small, worked together with divine inspiration. Intent on what forwarded its destiny, this people thrust its roots firmly into the earth; it was pastoral, it was prolific. All its laws and the science of its government it owed to God. Here religion held the first place in all respects, coming down from on high, clear and pure from the start, even though it was only progressively revealed.

An explicit moral conscience, however, is everywhere very slow in coming; it is the last thing acquired. Not as to its principles—in them it is contemporaneous with reason—not as to the sense of duty and obligation, but as to complete knowledge of the natural moral laws and of the laws that depend on positive divine law, for instance that of monogamy, which participates in both orders. The positive divine laws are known through a progressive revelation, the natural moral laws by slow acquisition.

Hence, full knowledge of all the moral laws and, consequently, a fully enlightened moral conscience, depend both on God's good pleasure and on experience, on full maturity of reason and on supernatural wisdom. These, clearly, are not to be found at the beginning of the history of mankind, and at that of a mankind fallen, but only at its end, when divine grace, molder and tutor, will have prevailed over the frailty of nature and the night of sin. Then a charity wholly divine, love and freedom of spirit, will at last have rendered useless the sway of law, legal rules, in which there remains at all times something of this world.

#### THE SANCTITY OF ABRAHAM

Whatever the various ages of mankind may be, and whatever the actual moral growth of this people or that person, at each moment the innocence of a man consists of his not sinning against the light present

in his conscience. "Where there is no law there is no transgression," says St. Paul (Rom 4:15). Similarly, when the law is not known, there is no transgression.

Not only innocence but sanctity itself—the heroic perseverance in the way lighted up for us, the perfection of charity—is compatible with a conscience not fully illumined. In brief, a very noble "theological" conscience, that is, one aware of the duties of faith, hope, and love, can go hand in hand with a still implicit moral conscience, provided that the obscurity in it and the ignorance are not due to any sinful darkening.

A perfectly upright conscience, then, can be in certain respects a "twilight" conscience. In fact, compared with the stainless light of the conscience of Mary and the absolute light of the conscience of Jesus, the conscience of all the saints, from the beginning to the end of time, can be called twilight.

From the story of Abraham and the witness of Scripture, this, it seems, is the picture of the morality, of the knowledge of good and evil, in the age of mankind in which the patriarchs lived.

The sense of sin as such was very profound. And God had pointed out the sin of idolatry, the sin against nature, the sin of taking another's wife; but the wife who had been surrendered to another or had been captured was not bound to resist. Not all kinds of marriage between close relatives were condemned as incestuous, as later they would be; Abram, for instance, married his half-sister Sarai, and even Lot's daughters were not expressly reproached nor was the blessing of offspring refused them. Again, polygamy and concubinage were recognized institutions.<sup>10</sup>

10. Surely it need not be pointed out that Abraham's marriage to Sarah and the union of Lot's daughters with their father are not on a par. One was an accepted custom in patriarchal days, while the other—forbidden in that same period by the Code of Hammurabi (cf. Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 172, no. 154)—is so clearly against the *pudor naturalis* that the daughters had to make their father drunk with wine. Though Moses had been commanded to keep peace with the descendants of Lot's daughters (see note 7), they had been hostile to the people of Israel on its way to the promised land. Remembering their hostility, the Law was later to command that no Ammonite or Moabite, "nor any descendants of theirs even to the tenth generation," be admitted into the community of the Lord (though this was not always enforced; see, for instance, Ruth, the ancestress of David). Significantly, the prohibition against Ammonites and Moabites is preceded by one which reads: "No child of an incestuous union may be admitted into the community of the Lord, nor any descendant of his even to the tenth generation" (Deut 23:3-5). The full horror of

But the existence of the Most High God, Creator and Judge of all the earth, was made known to all. The sense of equity and justice was very much alive; alive too was the sense of the importance of the just man. There was no doubt that the merit of justice could counterbalance many sins and appease God.

Never was God angry with Abraham. "God is with you in everything you do," Abimelech the king told him (Gen 21:22).

Abraham's story tells of the state of moral conscience in his times and shows too his own sublime theological conscience. His sanctity, the heroism of the theological virtues in his soul, his singular election, God's friendship for him, and the generosity of his love for God, are—if we have faith in Scripture—proclaimed therein aloud by the Holy Spirit Himself. Never does God cease to speak to Abraham, to guide him, to encourage him.

When Abram had returned from Egypt, he dwelt in the land of Canaan. His nephew Lot had been carried off into captivity, and in order to rescue him, Abram went off to do battle with king Chedorlaomer. Returning the victor, he received the blessing of the mysterious Melchizedek, "king of Salem and priest of *El Elyon*, of the Most High God" (Gen 14:18). Then, rapt in contemplation, he heard God say: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great" (Gen 15:1).

"O Lord God, what will you give me?" Abram replied. "I am childless. . . . You have given me no descendants; and a slave born in my house will be my heir" (Gen 15:2-3). For the first time Abram answered God, and it was with a poignant complaint, which revealed that a shadow of doubt had crept into his heart. It was so long since God had promised him abundant offspring; but how would this come about? He was still alone with his barren wife. Then God renewed His promise: "It is not he—that stranger—who will be your heir; your heir shall be one of your own flesh" (Gen 15:4).

"Abram believed in Yahweh, and Yahweh credited it to him as jus-

incest is all but spelled out in the "Law of Holiness" which, centuries after the patriarchs, gave a long list of forbidden marriages (Lev 18:6-18).

As to the keeping of a plurality of wives, and the keeping of one or more subordinate wives, these customs were tolerated by God in patriarchal times because of the hardness of the human heart, if one applies to them what Jesus said of divorce (Mt 19:8).

rice" (Gen 15:6). Here the fulcrum of sanctifying grace is clearly given, and the basis of sanctity, for, as the prophet Habakkuk will say, the just man lives by faith (2:4). Abram did not know the Law, he was not yet circumcised; but he believed God who spoke to him. He did not oppose the light of faith which, through God's doing, was born in him as a superior wisdom; he did not set against it any natural knowledge of natural impossibilities. And by this capacity to welcome within him a new life, by this heroic faith, was he justified. It was after this, St. Paul points out, that "he received the sign of circumcision as the seal of the justice of faith which he had while uncircumcised, in order that he may be the father of all who believe" (Rom 4:11). To say it again: Abram believed, he had faith in Yahweh, and Yahweh reckoned it to him as justice. This is one of the peaks of Scripture. It is higher than Sinai. It joins together the two Testaments. Already it reflects the light of Christ.

Abram, now at peace, lived on in faith and in the obscurity of faith. When he was ninety-nine years old, God spoke to him again, that He might seal with him His astonishing pact of friendship. "This is my covenant with you. . . . Your name shall be *Abraham*, for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful. . . . Kings shall descend from you. I will establish my covenant between you and me . . . a perpetual covenant that I may be a God to you and to your descendants after you. . . . You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; it shall be a token of the covenant between you and me. . . . Sarai your wife you shall not call Sarai but *Sarah*" (Gen 17:1-15), that is to say, "princess," mother of a royal stock, mother of the chosen people. "I will bless her, and by her also I will give you a son" (Gen 17:16). By her *also*, for Hagar had already borne Ishmael.

Abraham began to laugh: "Shall a son be born to one who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety, bear a child?" Abraham laughed, and said to God: "Oh, that Ishmael may live in your favor!" (Gen 17:17-18). Descendants from the son of Hagar—surely that is all you meant to promise. Abraham's laughter shows the familiarity of this dialogue. It was the very opposite of a laugh of incredulity, for Abraham did not doubt the word of God. Rather did he laugh the way one does with a friend who holds out a marvelous hope: in laughing he sought God's reassurance of what He had promised. And God said:

"Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son. And you shall call him Isaac. . . . As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly. . . . But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year" (Gen 17:19-21).

Another sign of Abraham's high faith and of God's singular predilection for him is the trinitarian visit of the angels. "Yahweh appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. And when he raised his eyes, he saw three men standing at a distance from him . . ." (Gen 18:1-2).

Throughout the narrative, the sacred writer alternates the singular of the divine unity and the plural of the trinity of persons.<sup>11</sup> Does he, perhaps, suggest by so doing that divine inspiration poured this theological light into Abraham's heart? Needless to say, this is far from being the only possible interpretation, but it seems, to us at least, to be in accord with the exceptional graces in the theological order given to the father of the faithful.

"He saw *three men* standing at a distance from him. As soon as he saw *them*, he ran from the entrance of the tent door to meet them and bowed down to the earth, and said: My *Lord*, if I find favor with *you*, do not pass by your servant. . . . *They* said to him: Where is Sarah, your wife? He answered: She is in the tent. *I* will surely return to you at this time next year. He (the Lord) said, and Sarah, your wife, shall have a son" (Gen 18:9-10). Here the divine Trinity seems to be adumbrated; as, according to many of the Fathers, it is in the story of man's creation, when God said: "Let us make mankind in our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26); and as, without doubt, the Triune God clearly manifested Himself at the baptism of Christ.

As the trinitarian visit drew to its close, God's friendship too manifested itself in remarkable ways. "The men set out from there, and looked toward Sodom; and Abraham walked with them to escort them on the way. Yahweh said: Can I keep from Abraham what I am

11. The alternation of singular and plural which runs throughout the narrative can be understood as the "I" of the divine word and the "we" of the conversation of creatures; and this, it would seem, is the literal meaning. The literal meaning, however, can contain the deeper meaning loved by some of the Fathers, St. Ambrose, for instance. In any case, in Matins of Quinquagesima Sunday, the Church sings of Abraham: "He saw three, and adored one."

about to do? For Abraham shall surely become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. Indeed, I have chosen him, that he may charge his sons and his household after him to observe the way of Yahweh, doing what is good and right. . . ."

Then it was that God revealed to Abraham that He was going to punish Sodom. "They (two of the angels) went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing in the presence of Yahweh. He drew near and said: Will you destroy the good with the wicked?" Now unfolded that wonderful dialogue, glowing with the holy familiarity of friendship and faith, with Abraham's deep feeling for justice and brotherly love—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth act justly" toward those in Sodom who are innocent? he pleaded—that dialogue glowing with his awareness of the power of the saints. For did he not think that ten just men would suffice for the saving of a city full of sinners? And God thought so too. But the ten just who would have saved Sodom could not be found, and "Yahweh departed after He had finished speaking to Abraham" (Gen 18:16-33).

#### THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

"Yahweh did to Sarah as He had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. . . . Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him" (Gen 21:1-5). When Isaac had grown to boyhood, "God put Abraham to the test." This—supreme event in Abraham's life!—was the most moving and marvelous sign of his election, the dazzling manifestation of his faith. "God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, Abraham! Abraham answered, Here I am. God said, Take Isaac your son, your only one, whom you love, and go into the land of Moriah, and there offer him as a holocaust on the hill which I shall point out to you" (Gen 22:1-2).

Without sparing, without preparation, the deadly command struck Abraham in the fullness of his joy. Isaac, the flowering of his trust, must be sacrificed: such was the incommunicable command, such the unique dialogue, such the lonely encounter with God. There was no escaping from mystery nor any help to hope for. For what God was demanding was something quite other than His usual demands: He demanded the impossible, and yet the impossible might not be refused Him. Even the slaying of a man is right and good when it is God who

ordains it,<sup>12</sup> because God is the Master of life and of death. But has God ordained it in this or that specific instance? No one knows save him to whom God Himself has made it known. Abraham received the command to kill, and he obeyed.

Here is proof of his boundless faith: he recognized God's extraordinary will, not in extraordinary evidence, but in the darkness ordinary to faith. The heinousness of the sacrifice did not make him waver, when the very faith of a soul less mighty could have been laid low. Nothing could cloud his faith's ineffable light, not even his full-hearted attachment to the son of his old age.

Abraham's faith was exceptional, mark you, not only in its greatness but also in the object proposed to it. Abraham believed, as do all the faithful, in God, one, almighty, Creator and Lord of all things. But there were also presented to his faith commandments which were particular, personal, and incommunicable. In both respects Abraham's faith was theological and supernatural, in both heroic.

Because Abraham was chosen to be the father of all the faithful, it was of course fitting that he should exercise theological faith in all its forms. Thus his faith is the exemplar of divine faith as it bears on universal truths, and also as it receives particular commandments and works in an exceptional manner in those to whom there is offered an exceptional object of faith. So to Mary in the Annunciation; to St. Joseph in his dream; to the apostles, called one by one to believe in the mission of Christ; to Joan of Arc, charged with the temporal salvation of a people.<sup>13</sup> In each instance, the act of faith is stripped of all visible assistance and is carried out in anguish of conscience.<sup>14</sup>

12. Because it is God who ordains it—man being nothing more than the instrument of the Lord of life and death—the act changes essentially in moral quality. Only the material deed remains. Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* I-II, q. 94, a. 5, ad 2; and q. 100, a. 8, ad 3.

13. Since the coming of Christ, private revelations no longer have for their primary object the truth of mysteries hidden in God, but, says St. Thomas, only the direction of human acts (*Sum. Theol.* II-II, q. 174, a. 61). According to Thomists, therefore, such revelations do not belong to the domain of theological faith, but are a charism, *fides gratis data*. Still, charismatic faith and theological faith have in common faith's supreme motive, the veracity of God who reveals. (Cf. Salmanticenses, tract. 17 *de Fide*, disp. I, dub. 4, no. 5. According to other theologians, such as Bellarmine and Suarez, charismatic faith springs from the very habit of theological faith.) Thus Joan of Arc knew well that her voices demanded of her an act of divine faith. If she were to say that God had not sent her, she declared, she would damn herself (cf. J. B. J. Ayroles, S.J., *La Vraie Jeanne d'Arc*, Paris: Gaume, 1890, I, 253).

14. Søren Kierkegaard has shown this admirably with regard to the sacrifice of

Abraham's sanctity and the heroism of his faith always responded to God's exceptional demands on him. Here the demand was cruel, and its cruelty is well attested by God Himself who insisted:

*Abraham, take Isaac your son,  
your only one,  
whom you love,  
and offer him as a holocaust  
on the hill which I shall point out to you.*  
(Gen 22:2)

All this happened at night, for next it is said that "early in the morning" Abraham arose. It was the night of his agony. The night in which the mere man in him died. The night of a transfiguration! Lo, Abraham becomes the image of the Father whose Son is crucified. The night of a new birth for the whole, perhaps, of mankind, and of the winning of a new fatherhood for Abraham, who, in sacrificing his dearest, his "only one," joined to himself all the faithful.

The Abraham who went to bed in the evening was not the same Abraham who arose "early in the morning." The evening before he was happy and prosperous, filled beyond measure with the greatest of gifts. God was with him in all he did; God's blessing was on Ishmael and on Isaac. But in that night, Abraham came to know the exigent Master, the incomprehensible Master, the Master of life and of death. He believed, and in his faith he began to die. He died to his happy life, to his abundant life according to the flesh. He died to the light of his simple thoughts, to his too natural thoughts, to his still too simple knowledge of good and evil. In that great darkness, his faith grew greater yet, and its roots struck ever deeper into his soul.

Isaac. In his *Fear and Trembling*, devoted entirely to Abraham, he considers Abraham's faith only as he was tried in the sacrifice of his son. He says nothing of the faith which adheres to universal divine truths, as if such faith did not exist for him or as if it ought to be identified in him with faith in particular and personal commandments. Here is a point of reproach in what is otherwise a book of exceptional beauty.

It is true that, even when faith is in divine truths universally proposed and no matter how firmly it clings, the intelligence is not fully satisfied. No matter how firm such faith, it admits of a certain *inquisitio*, as St. Thomas puts it in *De Veritate* (q. 14, a. 1), something like an unrest of the intelligence. But, except in great spiritual trials, this unrest does not have the character of anguish as Kierkegaard understands it. One discerns in *Fear and Trembling* that Kierkegaard himself passed through a very deep trial at once psychological and religious, and that here is the source and the life of all his thought.

Abraham did not tarry. "Early in the morning he arose, harnessed his ass, took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac, and cut wood for the holocaust. Then he set out on his journey for the place which God indicated to him" (Gen 22:3).

The road was long, longer still the trial. For three days the little group made its way, Abraham in the darkness of his secret, Isaac in the joy of his childhood. "On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place at a distance." Here he prophesied without knowing it—did not God say of him to Abimelech: "Restore that man's wife, for he is a prophet . . ." (Gen 20:7)? Or is it the theological virtue of hope which illumined his soul with a dawning light? Unknowingly, he prophesied: "Stay here with the ass while the boy and I go there to worship; then we shall come back to you" (Gen 22:5).

The two of them went together, Isaac carrying the wood, Abraham the fire and the knife. "My father, where is the sheep for the holocaust? God Himself will provide a sheep for the holocaust, my son. . . . When they arrived at the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Then he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the wood upon the altar. Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to kill his son . . ." (Gen 22:7-10).

Abraham, like those whom later the Christ would call His disciples, understood the absolute summons, the evangelic summons: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother, and wife and children . . . and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:26). For each time we give to God our "only," we give all, we give infinitely, and it matters little if this our "only" is but a poor object, created, perishable, mortal. The life of our soul in this world, indeed our very life in this world, is our "only"; or our happiness in this life is our "only"; or the one we exclusively love is our "only." He who gives his "only"—his soul, his life, his beloved, or his happiness—gives infinitely. And with his son Isaac, Abraham gave to God the very soul of his life and of his joy; he consented to the destruction of all his hope.

Then the angel of God stopped Abraham's arm, and a ram was slaughtered in the place of Isaac. And Yahweh said to Abraham: "You have not withheld from me your son, your only one. . . . I swear by myself, since you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only one, I will indeed bless you, and will surely multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens. In your descendants all the na-

tions of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice" (Gen 22:12-18).

Such then was the glory and the sanctity of a man who knew but a few articles of explicit faith, and whose conduct violated several of the moral rules which would oblige the men who lived in the age of the Mosaic Law and the men who live in the Christian era.

## THE ADAMIC STATE

THE story of Abraham, that noble figure, has suggested to us the notion that there are various states of mankind and of sanctity, and has led us to examine the height and extent of the knowledge of the moral laws in that age when God had not yet given His Law through the mediation of Moses and the ministry of angels.<sup>15</sup> It is impossible that the same question should not be asked about a state still more primitive and incomparably more mysterious—the Adamic state. Hence we should like to offer some reflections on the first steps of mankind and on the origin of morality.

## THE FIRST STEPS OF MANKIND

What idea, what picture can we construct for ourselves of Adam's primitiveness? However conjectural such considerations may be, we think them indispensable. True, the narrative of Genesis governs from on high all our philosophical and scientific conceptions; it is good nonetheless to seek some understanding of them from the perspective of our knowledge of man.<sup>16</sup>

Must one say that sin brought man from the full original perfection of his intellectual faculties, of knowledge, and of beauty, down to the very borders of animality? And must one say that God, as if He were making man afresh—but this time with the cooperation of created liberty and with the assistance, as it were, of time—had to begin all over again from those utmost borders and from sin? Or may one

15. The presence of angels at Sinai, though variously interpreted, is ancient Jewish tradition. In the New Testament, the ministry of angels in the promulgation of the Law is spoken of several times (Ac 7:53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2).

16. In the teaching of St. Thomas on Adam's condition in the state of integrity, it is proper, we think, to distinguish the formally theological from that which was influenced by the science of his day, with its ideas on nature and particularly on the past of man and the history of living species. What is formally theological can well exist together with another anthropological concept of the early periods of humanity.

also think that Adam's state of innocence, so noble by reason of gratuitous gifts and of sanctity, was nonetheless that of a nature still imperfect in terms of development and experience; may one think that, in a peace towering above these imperfections, Adam preserved powers for progress, his immense, still undeveloped potentialities for the future? Nothing in the second chapter of Genesis seems to gainsay this conjecture. It shows us man as he is about to set out on his forward movement in the natural order and begin his education.

It was with work that man's education began, work that as yet admitted of no pain, since man was set in an abode of delight. But even in this abode there was a shadow of threat, a mysterious commandment: to *keep* the garden of Eden. Is this garden in danger of being invaded, or of being lost? The second commandment, also very mysterious, is terrifyingly more explicit: "The day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must die" (Gen 2:17). Do not these very simple commandments seem suited to a still very simple state of human intelligence? They may well have been given by inner inspiration to a man who did not yet have words, for only later, in our opinion, would language be invented.

Nothing prevents our imagining the body of that man as relatively close to primitive types, though free from any trace of degradation. In spite of the perhaps immense distance in time between them, and excluding from our picture of Adam the stigmas of degeneration which may mark the primitives, still his appearance may have been closer to the primitive types of prehistory and anthropology than to the evolved types which the artistic canon of the Egyptians and Greeks makes us accept as the models of the human body.<sup>17</sup>

Then there is intelligence. Because of the stable harmony and the perfect subordination of powers which, in the morning of its creation, human nature enjoyed by grace, one ought to think of Adam's intelligence as incomparably strong in its living vigor and its forces for development, for no wound had yet impeded it. This virgin intellect was, as far as knowledge in the human mode goes, in an unimaginable state

17. When the second Council of Orange, whose formula was to be taken over by the Council of Trent (Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 174, 788), taught that man was changed for the worse in body and in soul, it immediately went on to say that "the worse," in what concerns the body, is to be understood as its subjection to the law of death and of corruption, *corpus corruptioni obnoxium*. This in no way touches the question of the particular characteristics in the anthropological order which the body of the first man presented.

of simplicity and inexperience; yet its notions and ideas were rich with vast potentialities. In relation to what was needed to ensure the peace and joy of paradise and the spiritual privileges of the state of integrity, it is enough to remember that divine inspiration, descending without hindrance from the higher ranges of reason to the outer fringes of sensibility, was at every instant able to guide the work of the natural faculties. It was also able to infuse into Adam's noble and intuitive intelligence, disproportionate though its notional state was with respect to such a light, a contemplation very lofty but, so to speak, unaware of itself—and very different from that which arises in a spirit mature and initiated to reflection.

Free will was intact, turned naturally as well as supernaturally toward God. And the primitiveness peculiar to the state of concepts—no measure at all of the power or the nobility of freedom—in no way hindered Adam's full moral advertence and his full responsibility for decisions. For here was a man in whom the nature of the species had all its pristine vigor, and whose ease in, and mastery over, his actions surpassed anything our present weakness can imagine.

How long did Adam live as solitary guardian of the earthly paradise? What desires, what needs at last made their voice heard in him? Did God regard that voice as a sign of human growth when He said: "It is not good that man is alone; I will make him a helper like himself" (Gen 2:18)? Then came a strange test. (It is the letter of holy Scripture I am following throughout, without asking myself if it does not condense into a brief narrative teachings of the moral and spiritual, as well as of the historical, order.) God acted as if He wished to determine whether the time had really come to give man a human companion, a "companion like himself," whether the time had come for human society. And presently He made the first man pass an examination, as it were; He tested the power of his reason.

"When Yahweh-Elohim had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, He brought them to the man to see what he would call them; for that which the man called each of them would be its name. The man named all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the beasts of the field; but he found no helper like himself" (Gen 2:19-20).

Here Scripture gives us clearly to understand that there is an essential difference between man and all the other animals, and lets us

witness the early exercise of human intelligence through its experience of the things of nature. Rather, it lets us witness an enormous discovery, the invention of language—or at least the first use of it by man Scripture tells of—urged into being by man's intellectual faculties, which, we have no doubt, were closely guided by divine providence and inspiration. Man's faculties were guided by that inspiration which is granted the artist and the poet, guided by that providence which is the more visible and maternal the nearer it is to the origins of a being. And here we are at the beginnings of humanity.

"Yahweh-Elohim cast man into a deep sleep and, while he slept, took one of his ribs . . . and the rib which Yahweh-Elohim took from the man, He made into a woman, and brought her to him . . ." (Gen 2:21-22). Was that deep sleep an ecstatic sleep, as St. Thomas supposed? What dreams did God send Adam, and what are the essential and hidden truths in which God wished thus to instruct him under the veil of sensible images? What mystery did He let him sense, going to the very roots of being, concerning the union of man and woman, and their love? Behold, here is Eve, born of his own substance, as from the opened side of the crucified Christ there would one day be born another Spouse, she too mother of all the living.<sup>18</sup>

As we try to read word by word in Genesis about the progress of what is human, we observe that—whatever other interpretations may be possible—the woman skipped one step. She was not taken from the earth, she was not "formed out of the ground," as was man. Dust she was, through the medium of man's flesh, as man (so the natural sciences suggest, and revelation does not preclude) was dust by way of animal flesh; but she was made out of human flesh, she was created within paradise, while man did not enter it till after his creation. Thus, according to the Bible, woman's physical origin is nobler than man's. The price of this privilege is that the demands made on her by God and by men will be greater, and so will—dare one say it?—God's attentions. It was Eve who—by her fault, it is true, but also by the boldness of her decision, a boldness proper to an adult—took the initiative that, accepted by Adam, decided mankind's fate. And it was a woman who, without any human counsel and by the fullness of her faith, made

18. Many sayings of the Fathers on the birth of the Church from the heart of the Second Adam have been gathered by S. Tromp in an article, "De nativitate Ecclesiae ex Corde Jesu in Cruce," *Gregorianum*, XIII, 4 (October-December 1932), 488-527.

up in some way for the fault of Eve and led straying mankind to re-ascend toward the Saviour and toward God. By reason of the same privilege, God would permit that all the laws men were to make, whether of themselves or under His inspiration, would always exact of woman more abnegation and purity, more humanity, than they would of man.

"Yahweh-Elohim made a woman, and brought her to the man. Then the man said: She now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. . . . For this reason," adds the inspired writer, thus fixing the moment when marriage was instituted and giving the ontological reason for love, "for this reason a man leaves his father and mother, and clings to his wife, and the two become one flesh" (Gen 2:22-24). This conscious attachment, founded on the perfect likeness of her to him; this great love in which all the depths of being, the very life of flesh and bone, are engaged; this union without shadow of servitude—for servitude followed on sin<sup>19</sup>—brings us face to face with one of the greatest signs of what is human. And it is given us in Genesis right after another such sign, that of reason, of which man gave proof in the naming of the animals.

Before his sin, Adam's primitiveness was that of youth and new strength, not of weariness and old age. Whereas the "primitive" of our day has a dreadful past which crushes and accuses him, in Adam mankind had a boundless future. Progress would undoubtedly come through accumulation of experience, but it would also come through the development of mighty faculties, of which we can hardly form any exact idea, since we cannot know just how far original sin was able to weaken them.

It is of faith that man was created in the state of grace, at peace with himself, in union with God. By a supernatural privilege, he was also exempt from all suffering and from death. Sin destroyed this peace, this union, and the immortality of the body; it cast its shadow over intelligence and weakened free will. Yet after this fall, mankind started on its way again, having sorrow and death as companions thenceforward.

Adam and Eve were naked and did not know yet how to clothe themselves. Their nakedness was at once of the body and of the soul. With the loss of grace, they were stripped of all protection. The sensi-

19. "To the woman He said, I will make great your distress . . . your husband shall be your longing, though he have dominion over you" (Gen 3:16).

tiveness of their bodies was no longer sheltered from the elements, but above all they felt degraded; used to God's truth, they had now been touched by falsehood. And as they sensed their sin, there was born in them shame, fear, and modesty. "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid," Adam admitted. "Then God said: Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten then of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat" (Gen 3:11).

The serpent only half deceived them. They would not know good and evil "like God," but they would learn to know good and evil the way sinners do, which of all ways of learning is the hardest and most painful.

#### ORIGIN OF MORALITY

Before their sin, what did Adam and Eve know of good and evil? They were saints, the moral virtues and the gifts of grace unfolding abundantly within their integral natures; their moral conscience was high and pure. But of the explicit, discursive knowledge of the code of good and evil, to which we here reserve the name of moral science (I use the term in the sense of an articulate or developed moral knowledge), they had before their sin only the *initium*, its very first beginnings. Such moral science could have developed in the state of innocence had it endured, but at that time they possessed only its first principle and a few positive laws. They were inclined to act aright; they knew they were to till and keep the garden of Eden and were not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. This does not amount to articulate knowledge, *science*; it is its merest start. And this very start of moral science Adam held from a divine revelation: You shall not eat of the fruit of that tree, he was bidden in a commandment that was from without and was of "positive" law.

Here we have the first restriction imposed on man. It was the test, necessary, so it would seem, for such a test was put alike to the angels and to man—necessary if a created spirit is to overcome the appeal of nothingness and to enter into the glory of God. (Nothingness has an appeal to any created spirit, since it is one of his origins, the other being the Creator's love.) This restriction, this test, is the gate which, shut and sure by obedience, protected paradise against attack by forces of outer darkness. Opened by sin, this gate lets mankind walk through the valley of tears, along the paths of blood and death, toward another Gate which opens another paradise.

The law given to Adam and Eve brought no servitude with it, however, for it was given to a nature still upright and without covetousness. Their will tended toward the good, and they were happy in obeying, for obedience, hard though it may be to a spiritual nature when the motive and purpose of the commandment remain obscure, implies no affliction if the soul is, by grace, already fully orientated toward the good that God desires. God made men right, says Ecclesiastes (7:30). There was in the man of paradise no propensity to evil, no actual leaning to any disorder whatever.

Thus, as we understand it, Adam knew this about evil: that it was evil to eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But for the rest, how did he live? How did he do what is good, if he did not yet know, explicitly and precisely, *all* the particular precepts of the natural law, and if he did not yet have the science of good and evil—be it by the development that could have taken place in paradise, or by the experience of the fall?

He let himself be moved by the divine inspiration that guided his innocent nature step by step. He lived in a simple union with God and all creation, lived a wholly contemplative moral life, which was compatible, however, with the extreme primitiveness we have assumed of his notions and of his state in the whole order of the things—physical, intellectual, and moral—which develop by natural progress. Thus his acts, in so far as they grew out of that contemplation, had the Holy Spirit for their immediate guide. It was the initiative of the Holy Spirit he followed; and from his loving contemplation of God sprang acts harmonious with that love. All the first movements of his nature were then good. This is to say that he lived *under the regime of contemplation*. The regime of contemplation and of love embraces all good,<sup>20</sup> and has no need of the experience of evil. The ways of innocent man were divine ways.

Of moral good in itself Adam had a knowledge, an ontological experience, which was like a "passion" of the divine unity where being,

20. That is, every good which does not suppose some evil. But there is also a good, indeed a very great good, which would not exist were it not for sin. Without sin, Christ would not have died for us and so shown us His immeasurable love. Without sin, we should not know the good of repentance and penance, of compunction and contrition, nor the good of giving all for the salvation of our neighbor. In a word, without sin we should not know anything linked with the redemption. *Felix culpa*, sings the Exultet of the Easter Vigil, "O happy fault, which made necessary a Redeemer so good and so great"

the good, and the beautiful dwell together. Nevertheless, even in the state of innocence, he must also have felt that pull of nothingness which is proper to the creature, and which is not yet either the experience of evil or the inclination to evil, but is its base and possibility. *Quae ex nihilo facta sunt, per se in nihilum tendunt*. "What is made from nothing tends, of itself, to return to nothing."<sup>21</sup>

Had mankind—by way of hypothesis—forever kept living in the state of innocence, undoubtedly the gardens of paradise would gradually have spread, by the labor of men, over the whole earth; through revelation and experience, man would, little by little, have acquired ever greater knowledge of all that is good and right. He would have known evil as well, but in the light of the good, in a remote manner, and in a way entirely foreign to his own life. He would have learned of the existence of moral evil, by hearsay, perhaps. He would have known, for example, that Lucifer had preferred his own excellence to God. This would have been a knowledge of good and evil quite different in type from that whose yoke we bear. Through an experience free of disquiet, men would have come to know from God the whole domain of the soul's good, as they would likewise have explored the whole domain of being, learning truth unceasingly.

But the devil precipitated matters and, by arousing curiosity in Adam and Eve, by tempting them through pride of knowledge, made them enter too soon into the paths of moral science, a moral science whose direction was henceforth out of gear, that is to say, linked with the experience of sin and the experience of servitude, whether to sin or to the law. For the moral science *we* have presupposes the experience of evil, and so is incompatible with the innocence of the first state. We have this science; Adam did not have it, and he was happy.

Neither did he have, as we have just remarked, that innocent moral science which could have developed later on in paradise. To tempt Eve, the serpent did not make use of a false vision but of something true: the world of moral realities waiting for discovery. Yet to wish to enter into the knowledge of that world at the price of disobedience to God and in order to be "like Him," in order to have, "like Him," the knowledge of things—this was man's sin. In what way will Adam and Eve henceforth be like God! In what way will they know these things! That is where they were deceived.

21. St. Thomas, *De Veritate*, q. 5, a. 2; citing St. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, II, 27 (PG 94:960); I, 3 (PG 94:795).

It was by an ill and unhappy road that we entered into the knowledge of morality. Fallen man, heir of original sin, does good by the sweat of his brow, and knows evil by experience. The forbidden fruit was, no doubt, merely a fruit like the rest; the only thing that distinguished it was that it was forbidden. And it is all too true that eating it was enough to open the eyes to the science of morality.

Adam and Eve knew that it was evil to disobey God. How else would their fault have been a sin, and have had such a terrible consequence? But they knew it without having had the experience of evil and without being subject to the regime of constraints imposed by the Law on a weak and rebellious nature, *the regime of morality*, as it can be called. Mankind did not live under the regime of morality, did not learn morality, did not begin to acquire explicit knowledge of the particular rules of morality, did not begin to acquire the science of good and evil, until the day on which it had the experience of evil. In the days before their fault—were they many?—in the days of their innocent life, our first parents had experience only of the soul's good. For us, the knowledge of good and evil is the fruit of that human experience which started out with sin, an experience in which mankind was not abandoned to itself, however, for the mercy of God sustained it, led it, and illumined it by progressive revelations.

Specifically moral experience waited on the test of obedience. The powerful desire to know what appeared to be reserved to God alone—the mysterious domain of good and evil—broke the bonds of union. That knowledge of good and evil we possess entered into the world with death; as a remedy for spiritual death, it is true, but a bitter remedy. "The prince of evil overcame Adam, made from the clay of the earth into the image of God, adorned with modesty, beautiful in temperance, clothed with charity,"<sup>22</sup> and man entered into the experiential way of evil as well as of good. Hence the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil," which in its absolute significance is indeed the domain reserved to God alone, is for us the symbol of that moral science which is acquired through the experience of sin. And because of this stain upon its origin, it is not the best possible science of good and evil. It is visible above all as the system, or code, at once medicinal and penitential, at once divine and human, the system of laws, precepts, and servitudes which rule the conscience of fallen mankind.

22. Pseudo-Augustine, *Contra Judaeos, Paganos et Arianos, Sermo de Symbolo*, II (PL 42:1117-1118). This text is quoted, in a condensed form, by St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* I, q. 95, a. 3.

Until the coming of the Christ and the New Law, the principal feature of moral science will be law which subdues a rebellious will and condemns; even when law will have passed into second place, it will remain forever, to its least jot and tittle, and in a sense it will be made severer still. For the Christ has the secret of freeing us from law without abolishing it. Precepts fewer in number, but ever more precise and rigorous, because they reach to the innermost point of the soul—precepts needed for wounded consciences inclined to evil—will accompany mankind in all its paths that it may never be lost.

God, foreseeing sin, had announced to man that through disobedience he would come to know the conditions proper to human nature—pain, suffering, and death. What an unimaginable catastrophe was that fall *into nature* which unbalanced nature itself and cast it into disharmony! But God had foreseen it and had prepared, in the orders both of nature and of grace, incomparable ways of remedying and making up for it.

Among the ways thus prepared by God there surely must be counted the progressive teaching of the natural moral laws and the revelation of divine laws properly speaking, which bear upon our return to God. In the state of innocence—had it lasted—man would have been able to learn the good, to learn the natural and divine laws which tie the human conscience to its last end, to receive precepts—all without being condemned, without being oppressed, because, moved by the Holy Spirit, he would have run with heart opened wide, “in the way of His commandments” (Ps 118:32). But through sin, mankind has fallen from the regime of contemplation and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the regime of morality, where reason has the initiative; reason, slow to awaken and to lay aside phantoms, slow to understand and bound to a will hard put to maintain its rectitude.

From our first parents we have received the heritage of sin and of inclination to evil, but also the longing for a kind of knowledge of the good which was better than ours. There is in us the memory, obscure though it may be, of a state in which the relations between man and the universe, between man and God, were more right and more real. Here, undoubtedly, lies the origin of the very deep feeling that the Law ought to be transcended and that, whatever the cost, the pure fountains of love and of freedom must be found again. Pharisaism<sup>23</sup> is odious,

23. See note 8.

and that though the Pharisee is a strict observer of the Law. Even if he be Saul himself, he must for a time be blinded and overthrown that he may be made able to receive a better light and a new life and to become the apostle Paul, vessel of election and Doctor of the Nations. Having known both the Mosaic Law and the Law of Christ, he embraces them in one love when he says of the first what all his letters teach of the other: "The law is spiritual" (Rom 7:14). "The New Law, however," says St. Thomas, "is *maxime spiritualis*, most spiritual," for the grace of the Holy Spirit is given more abundantly since the death of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

Under the regime of morality, the regime of the Mosaic Law, man was guided painfully to the accomplishment of the divine will by commands and prohibitions, which of themselves brought not grace but the revelation of sin and its condemnation. To integrate within oneself the whole of this morality, to assimilate it into the intimate life of the soul, and to bring it to the living springs of grace, much love is needed. Hence the very soul of the Law, indeed the mark of its divine, and not merely human and social, origin, is the commandment of love: "You shall love the Lord your God . . ." (Deut 6:5).<sup>25</sup>

Still, it is not the Law that gives charity, St. Thomas teaches, but the Holy Spirit by whom "charity is poured out in our hearts" (Rom 5:5). The Old Law consisted chiefly of deeds, moral and sacramental, while the New Law derives its pre-eminence from the very grace of the Holy Spirit given inwardly to believers.<sup>26</sup> With the New Law we enter into a

24. Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* I-II, q. 106, a. 3. The words "The New Law is most spiritual" show that for St. Thomas, no less than for St. Paul, the Old Law too is spiritual. Expounding St. Paul's "We know that the Law is spiritual" (Rom 7:14), St. Thomas writes in his Commentary to Romans (VII, 3): "'We know,' we who are wise in divine things, 'that the Law,' that is, the Old Law, 'is spiritual.'" Then he goes on to explain the Law's spiritual character in a twofold way. "It is spiritual, for it is concordant with the spirit of man, for the Psalmist says: 'The Law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul' (18:8). Again, the Law is spiritual because it was given by the Holy Spirit, who in Scripture is called the Finger of God, as when Christ says: 'If I cast out devils by the Finger of God . . .' (Lk 11:20). Therefore it is written: 'The Lord gave to Moses two stone tablets written by the Finger of God' (Ex 31:18). The New Law, however, is called not only a spiritual law but the law of the Spirit, for not only does it issue from the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit Himself imprints it on the heart in which He makes His abode."

25. In Deuteronomy (5:30-31), God says to Moses: "Go, tell them to return to their tents. Then you wait here near me and I will give you all the commandments, the statutes, and the decrees you must teach them. . . ." And Moses says to the people: "*Shema Israel*, Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone. Therefore you shall love Yahweh your God, with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength" (Deut 6:4-5; cf. Mt 22:34-40; Mk 12:28-31; Lk 10:25-27).

26. Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* I-II, q. 107, a. 1, ad 2 and 3.

regime other than that which I have called here the regime of morality; rather a regime in which morality—not only safeguarded but made more interior, made deeper and more refined—is dependent on, and fastened to, Christ's redeeming love.

*Hear me, you who follow after justice,  
You who seek Yahweh;  
Look upon the rock from which you were hewn  
And the pit from which you were dug.  
Look upon Abraham, your father,  
And upon Sara who bore you;  
For I called him when he was alone  
That I might bless him and multiply him.*

(Is 51:1-2)

*Barnabas M. Abern, C.P.*

## THE EXODUS, THEN AND NOW

UPHEAVAL stirred the world of Abraham. Dynastic changes at Ur and vast migrations over the Fertile Crescent clogged the stagnant pool of a world that had died. Babylon in the early second millennium vaunted the boast, "I am rich and have grown wealthy and have need of nothing"; and all the while the bragging corpse failed to see how "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" it really was (Apoc 3:17). All flesh had corrupted its way; God's clean sun shone on a pool full of death.

But life still throbbed at Haran in northern Mesopotamia, for Abraham lived there, a newcomer from Ur in the south. All future history would flow from him; he was to become "the father of us all . . . our father in the sight of God" (Rom 4:17). For one day at Haran, in the middle of the nineteenth century, a merciful God spoke to the heart of this tribal chief (Gen 12:1-3) and broke it wide open with a freshet of mercy, gushing forth and bubbling over to cleanse all hearts by faith.

The divine word promised a blessed future, without telling its precise elements or the time of its coming. Long centuries were to pass before this pledge was fulfilled. But the very sound of God's voice is operative, never returning to Him empty, always doing His will (Is 55:10-11); hardly had He spoken when His promise began to send forth clean water that spread out in ever-widening circles of mercy and loving fidelity until it covered the earth (cf. Ez 47:1-12). The mercy of God touching each generation performs a univocal work of redeeming from death and of invigorating with life, so that all successive moments of history follow the same pattern: the wide outer circle of Christian fulfillment is of the same form as the small inner circle of God's promise to Abraham; and all the circles between bear similar shape. Thus a vital continuity binds fast the story of salvation; far from opposing

the Old Testament, the New Testament, to use the happy word of Père de Vaux, "prolongs it."<sup>1</sup>

It must be so, for God has shaped all to the full measure of His Christ.<sup>2</sup> Through Him the waters of divine mercy were to touch all shores; and so, the vast outer circle of mercy's world-wide expansion gives form to every inner circle, even to the first circle of the water's origin in the heart of Abraham. Christ's redeeming death is at once the cause and the pattern of every previous deed of divine mercy. Typology, then—mighty deeds foreshadowing mightier to come—inheres in the Old Testament as a necessary consequence of the *Christian* quality of all God's work. In His great deeds for Israel, God so kept His Son in mind that Søren Kierkegaard could speak of "the eternal contemporaneousness of Christ";<sup>3</sup> and the Master Himself could say, "Abraham your father rejoiced that he was to see my day. He saw it and was glad" (Jn 8:56).

#### THE INNER CIRCLE—ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT

THIS living bond between the Old and New Testaments is best exemplified in the vital typology of Israel's exodus from Egypt. The event was of supreme importance, for it played a unique creative role in forming the nation, in fashioning its faith and way. Ever afterward Israel commemorated it with the annual Passover feast, when men recounted at local shrines and family tables the stirring tale of their deliverance. Its memory was handed down from father to son in streams of tradition marked with all the divergences and accretions of oral history often recounted. Thus even today the biblical story of the exodus, carefully wrought as it is, betrays unmistakable signs of sundry threads deftly woven into a single pattern.<sup>4</sup> Yet the basic historicity of the

1. Roland de Vaux, O.P., *La Genèse*, in *La sainte Bible de Jérusalem* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1951), pp. 23-24. Cardinal Michael Faulhaber develops this theme at length in his *Judaism, Christianity, and Germany*, trans. George Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1934).

2. This fundamental theme of St. Paul's epistles is crystallized in Eph 1:3-14.

3. "Christ's life on earth is not a past event. . . . It accompanies the human race, and accompanies every generation in particular. . . . His earthly life possesses the eternal contemporaneousness." Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, trans. Walter Lowrie (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 68.

4. The composite style of the exodus story is readily observable in the double account of Moses' call and the revelation of the divine name (Ex 7-12). The literary

narrative cannot be questioned; it is an authentic witness to real events that marked the birth of Israel as a nation and of the worship of Yahweh.<sup>5</sup> Memory is tenacious in the East; and, in this case, its reliability is certified by the fact that Israel was often tempted to forget the story of its origin and the stern exactions of Yahweh, its God.

Here is the story simply told. Some seventeen centuries before Christ, a group of Hebrews driven by famine descended into Egypt where they enjoyed favor under the new dynasty of the Hyksos kings, who had recently swept into power on the wave of a vast Semite migration of which Abraham was part. These sons of Jacob were to remain in the Delta four hundred years, not as a nation within a nation but as an ethnic group, Hebrew in blood but Egyptian in sentiment. Life in the foreign land soiled them with pagan ways and practices. They prospered in this world's goods and in its evils; idolatry came easy and Egyptian manners were to their liking. But at last the long, peaceful sojourn in Egypt changed to a burdensome existence under cruel persecution. Too long had Israel thickened on its lees; and now, through a tyrannical Pharaoh, God poured the oversweet wine from vessel to vessel. A native Egyptian dynasty stripped the Hebrews of all privileges and shackled them with the burdens of an unwelcome minority. This persecution is the first instance of cruel anti-Semitism described in the Bible. Cries of pain and despair rent the air; and God answered. He made ready a man of the hour, whose name was Moses. Native gifts and early training equipped him for leadership. But the forging of bonds between God and men is more than a human task. First, then, God Himself had to temper the mettle of His instrument. Years of exile with the Kenites in the rocky land southwest of the Dead Sea enriched his mind with new traditions and new insights. But, more important still, these years purified his soul for that contact which God would make with him in a flame of fire at Horeb.

Time and again God had manifested Himself to the great patriarchs of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This time, however, God's word

analysis of these narratives would require going into the vast problems of Pentateuchal authorship. See, for instance, J. Coppens, *The Old Testament and the Critics*, trans. Ryan and Tribbe (Paterson: St. Anthony Press, 1942).

5. Some writers have attributed the *entire* religious significance of Israel's exodus to the literary efforts of a later prophetic school which enriched an obscure incident with new religious meaning. This thesis, however, cannot be sustained in view of our certain knowledge of Israel's literature and history. See W. J. Phythian-Adams, *The Fullness of Israel* (Oxford, 1938), pp. 103-120.

pulsed with new meaning. Truly it was still the great El Shaddai of the fathers who spoke to Moses. Yet now this most high God, the God of heaven and earth, asked for a special bond with Israel. Later the prophets were to liken this bond to the tie that binds husband and wife; in their eyes this blood covenant made Israel the people of God and God the spouse and master of Israel (Jer 3:1-12; Ez 16).<sup>6</sup> But for Moses on Horeb God's command involved the here and now. For at Horeb God charged him to lead the people out of Egypt, to shepherd them through the desert, and to bring them into the land He had promised to their fathers.

It was a mammoth task to ask of any man. Yet God, who was both solicitous and powerful, promised to help Moses. His new name was a guarantee. For He would no longer be called merely the great El Shaddai of the nations; He would be Yahweh, the faithful God of their own covenant. Whether Moses first heard this name among the Kenites, or whether it was newly revealed to him at Horeb, matters little. Its meaning is what counts. "I am what I am," God assured Moses. He is always the mysterious "I am," an alien to the shift of human gods from past to future. And so Yahweh—"He who is"—would always be His name.<sup>7</sup>

It required centuries for Israel to taste the full flavor of the Horeb revelation and to understand how the name Yahweh was at once the source of all fear and of all hope. Suffering must first chasten God's people to wisdom; the prophets must first see their visions. Then, at long last, the Horeb revelation of God's unfailing mercy would become a conviction. Whatever Israel might do, Yahweh will never turn from the mercy and promise of Horeb. He will always be faithful and true; pity and fidelity will rule all His works (Ps 24:10). When Israel ceased being a child and grew to spiritual maturity it came to see that, even from the beginning of the world, God had always been the selfsame, cherishing His creatures, as a nurse her little ones, with mercy and fidelity. Then it could appreciate the full meaning of Hosea's urgent plea, "Yahweh, the God of hosts, Yahweh is His name. But do you return to your God, practice kindness and justice, and wait for your God constantly" (Os 12:5-6).

6. Even in the great love song of Israel, the Cantic of Canticles, exegetes as eminent as Canon Ricciotti find innumerable reminiscences of the exodus.

7. The divine name is briefly discussed in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), col. 165a, b, c.

It was the memory of the exodus that did most to convince Israel of God's power and pity. At the time men saw it simply as a liberation from the hard oppression of Pharaoh; but later they came to appreciate it also as a liberation from the worse evil of defilement by Egyptian infidelity and idolatry.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the prophetic school looked upon this deliverance as a true redemption, with God as a warrior, struggling in desperate conflict with Pharaoh and the dragon power of his gods (Is 51:9-10).<sup>9</sup> One after another Yahweh hurled His ten plagues against a king's proud heart that only hardened like mud under the burning heat of the divine bolts. But the last plague was a master stroke, not softening Pharaoh's heart, but splitting it wide open in helpless defeat. Where flood and storm and hail had failed, the death of the first-born cleaved the rock.

All through the terrors, the sons of Jacob were spared; the plagues struck all around them, but they were untouched. Their preservation from God's final blow involved the elaborate ritual of the Paschal supper and a ceremony of smearing blood on the doorposts. The incidents of this last night in Egypt burned a lasting memory in the soul of Israel. The contrast between their security and the anguish of the Egyptians, the change of heart in obdurate Pharaoh, and the urgent pleadings of their Egyptian neighbors that the Hebrews enrich themselves from previously hoarded treasures—all this forced upon them the recognition of Yahweh's special favor. Ever before, Egypt had shared its riches with Israel's patriarchs, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. But the sons of Jacob came out of the darkness of the Paschal night with something far better than Egypt's gold and fine linen; they departed from the land under Moses' leadership with a new consciousness

8. Louis Bouyer, *Orat.*, emphasizes that Israel's deliverance from Egypt "was not only a material deliverance. . . . Egypt was no ordinary enemy. It was the land of magicians and idols, the country where Satan reigned openly. . . . So, the slavery in which Egypt kept Israel was not only a misfortune but a defilement. By their dependence on an infidel people, to which until the sending of Moses Israel had resigned itself, and by their acceptance of Egyptian idolatry and magic, the sons of Jacob had alienated their God" (*The Paschal Mystery*, Chicago: Regnery, 1950, p. 58). Cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Is. proph.*, I, 2 (PG 70:77B).

9. The exodus was a divine intervention that created the people of God. But this very creation involved redemption. The God of Exodus is a warrior (Ex 15:3-6), and such He will always be all through Scripture. Thus Jeremiah looks back on the exodus as a mighty deed of God's "strong hand and outstretched arm" (32:21); Isaiah envisions the creator of the new Israel as a warrior incarnadined by the blood of his foes (63:1-6); and the people of the new Israel, redeemed in the blood of the Lamb, sing forever in heaven the victory song of Moses and Mariam (Apoc 15:3).

that God had carved them out from the heart of an alien race to become His own special people. Yahweh was with them as their God, and the fiery cloud of the Shekinah leading them was His symbol.

The exodus was only half of God's work. He had delivered His people from bondage and separated them from the contamination of Egypt. A positive task yet remained: to forge a bond of union and weld Israel to Himself with a covenant of blood. Like all union with God, this could be done only in the desert. ("I will lead her into the wilderness," the Lord was later to say of Israel, the unfaithful, "and I will speak to her heart," Os 2:14.) Therefore the Shekinah diverted the line of march from the Via Maris, the direct route to the promised land, and turned southward instead to the region of Sinai.

But Israel's problems with Pharaoh were not yet over; very shortly the king's retainers set out in hot pursuit to bring back the fugitives. And Israel would have gone back readily if God had not intervened with a definitive liberation that once for all swept it out beyond Pharaoh's reach. The story of the miracle is one of the most stirring in the Bible. The fleeing people found itself in a cul-de-sac: on one side the Red Sea, on the other and behind them the mountains, in front the approaching Egyptians. There was no escape save in surrender—or in God. And God intervened. Moses lifted the rod; and a driving wind parted the waters for Israel to march across to safety. The Egyptians followed; but once more Moses lifted his rod; and the waters returned to drown them all. Israel could not miss the meaning of the wonder; they sang and danced to honor the merciful Yahweh, their God. In the happy phrase of Dom Winzen, this jubilant song marks "the hour when the Divine Office was born";<sup>10</sup> it is the seed of the Church's solemn praise of God.

Indeed, Yahweh was always at hand to supply the needs of the child He had found languishing and had mercifully freed. Time and again on this journey He proved to an incredulous people that it was really He who had intervened to point their destiny. When they were thirsty, He struck water from the rock; when they were hungry, He provided bread from heaven. Therefore, when at last this people reached Sinai, they already had ample experience of God's solicitude and power.

10. Dom Damasus Winzen, O.S.B., *Pathways in Holy Scripture*, The Book of Exodus (privately printed), p. 6.

They needed these previous love tokens, for Sinai was the scene of espousals that bound Israel to Yahweh forever. The thunder and lightning of the theophany were terrifying; the ritual of covenant was detailed and impressive; but a love story was the heart of it all. Yahweh bound Himself to Israel and Israel to Yahweh in a covenant of blood. He on His part would love and protect Israel and fulfill the rich promises He had pledged; Israel would ever live and act as His people, faithfully fulfilling the just and holy house rules of a God who was perfect.<sup>11</sup> Just as in Egypt God's word had delivered the bodies of His people from Pharaoh, so on Sinai the word of God delivered their souls from the darkness of unbelief and evil practice. Israel is thus a people created by God's word; moreover, its very continuance depended on divine promises and demands.<sup>12</sup>

Ever after, Israel looked back to the exodus and to the Sinai pact as the birth hour of the nation. Its history was often marred by infidelities, but no weakness of man could obliterate three dominant factors which Sinai burned into the Israelite soul: there is but one God, one chosen people, one country in which to work out its destiny.<sup>13</sup> It was especially the yearly celebration of the Passover feast that kept this national memory intact (Ex 12:12-14). With Israel, the Passover was not a nature feast commemorating the return of spring, as with the surrounding Canaanites. Rather, it was a religious feast, to recall the springtime of God's favor when, through the exodus, He graciously ended the winter of oppression and, at Sinai, entered on the bright joyous days of His espousals with Israel.<sup>14</sup>

All memories of these incidents are steeped in praise and thanksgiv-

11. The law of Israel was not a mere external burden; rather it was the practical way to share Yahweh's thoughts and to direct one's life by the light of His wise word. Hence God sums up the motives for its observance in the recurrent command: "You must be holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2; 11:44; 20:7; cf. Deut 14:21). The sapiential literature that flowered in Israel after the Exile is entirely based on the conviction that observance of the Law provides true communion in the wisdom of God. Cf. Psalms 18 and 118.

12. Israel was truly a people of God's word, a theme fully developed by L. Bouyer, *Orat.*, in *La Bible et l'évangile* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1951), pp. 10-54.

13. Such was the credo which the devout Israelite recited in paying his tithes (Deut 26:5-9). See R. de Vaux, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 34.

14. From the very first, Israel's faith and worship were a vital response to the God who intervened in definite historical circumstances to direct its course. Thus, unlike other ancient religions, whose gods were but a reflection of this world, lost in it, Israel's is a historical religion, and its God, the Eternal One, is the Lord of time. See L. Bouyer, *Orat.*, *La Bible et l'évangile*, pp. 39-56.

ing; later generations will sing of the exodus as of a triumph (Psalms 104, 105, 113) and of the covenant of Sinai as an espousals in which God chose Israel for Himself. As time passed, the importance of the exodus grew to full stature in the minds of men; and its profound meaning was richly interpreted in the sweeping poetry of the prophets and the Deuteronomist. All later laws of the priestly code were traced to Sinai; and the definitive redaction of the Pentateuch after the Exile rested the authority of its laws on the authority of Moses.<sup>15</sup>

But there was a twofold orientation in Israel's faith. It centered in the historical exodus that had passed; but it looked forward also to an exodus yet to come. The reason is obvious. God had promised a full flowering; and the merciful pledge of Yahweh, the faithful One, is without repentance. Yet daily events brought bitter experience that the deliverance from Egypt and the covenant of Sinai were not definitive. Time and again Israel hankered for the fleshpots of Egypt; and only too often, like Gomer, the wife of Hosea, it proved unfaithful to its faithful Spouse. From the very beginning, then, the prophets saw that there had to be a new exodus and a new covenant (see Os 2:14-24). This enduring hope enriched the memory of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and its covenant with God on Sinai. For the prophets, these events of the past were unforgettable historical facts, but even more they were cherished pledges of a blessed future.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE OUTER CIRCLE—THE EXODUS OF CHRIST

IT WAS Christ who fulfilled all the rich hopes of the prophets. His very name held promise; for, as the angel explained to Joseph, this name was at once a symbol and guarantee that, at long last, Yahweh had come to save His people (Mt 1:21). It was but natural, then, that the writers of the New Testament should find in Israel's exodus from Egypt a leitmotiv for their own description of the work of Christ.

15. Jean Steinmann characterizes the exodus as "the grain of mustard seed" out of which grew the great tree of later legal, moral, and liturgical developments in Israel. See his "L'Exode dans l'Ancien Testament," *La Vie spirituelle* (March 1951), p. 238.

16. H. Holstein has called this witness to Christ "the christological significance of Scripture" ("La tradition des Apôtres chez saint Irénée," *Recherches de science religieuse*, 1949, p. 248). Jean Daniélou, S.J., describes the full involvements of this Old Testament witness to Christ in his monumental work, *Sacramentum futuri* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950), pp. 1-250.

Steeped as they were in the Scriptures, these men tended to locate the Saviour in the biblical context of the great deliverance. They never use the word *exodus*; <sup>17</sup> but the incidents of this historic event sound a diapason for the harmony of the Gospels' full score.

Often enough there is striking agreement among all the evangelists in handling the elements of this typology; such identifications were probably fixed and made permanent in the oral catechesis which preceded the writing of the Gospels. Yet, at the same time, there is also marked fluidity; Jesus is variously identified with the God of the *exodus*, with Israel itself, with Moses the leader, or with the chief factor in some incident of the *exodus*. Such divergence should occasion no surprise; for all these different aspects merely stress that the basic typology of *exodus* must be sought in the mercy and fidelity of a saving God who, in solicitude for Israel, penetrated every person, event, and thing with His own divine power. Each element in the story of the *exodus* foreshadowed the much greater work of Christian redemption in which divine power penetrated the human nature and human deeds of Jesus, to work a definitive liberation from sin and an eternal covenant with God. Therefore, in pondering the many gospel applications of *exodus* typology, we come to a new, rich appreciation of the perfect deliverance that God wrought in and through Jesus.<sup>18</sup>

Among the Synoptics, the Gospel of St. Matthew is especially rich with this typology. The avowed purpose of the author of the first Gospel was to stress the continuity between the Old and the New Law. It is obvious, then, that he would utilize the widespread Jewish expectation that "in the last days" God must work a new *exodus*. In developing this theme, Matthew like Mark stresses a similarity between the experiences of Christ and those of the chosen people of God. Thus the return of the holy family from Egypt, after the death of Herod, is seen by Matthew as a new *exodus*; and so he captions it with the very words Hosea had used to describe the earlier event: "Out of Egypt I

17. At Jesus' transfiguration Moses and Elijah spoke of the *exodos* He was to accomplish in Jerusalem (Lk 9:30-31). In this case, however, this Greek word is merely a synonym for death, as in 2 Pet 1:15 and in Wis 3:2; 7:6.

18. It is St. Paul who develops the theology of this fulfillment. In his earlier epistles he envisions the total victory of Christ over satanic power as the definitive triumph of the last days. However, in the Captivity epistles, he insists that this victory is already actual in a realized eschatology. See Donatien Mollat, S.J., "Jugement dans le Nouveau Testament," *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, 4 (1949), 1363-1364.

called my son" (Mt 2:15; Os 11:1). The beginnings of the Saviour's public life are also linked to similar incidents in the history of Israel. As Israel was baptized into its new life with God by passing through the waters of the Red Sea, so Christ inaugurates His ministry for God by accepting baptism in the waters of the Jordan (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11). Thereafter both Israel and Christ live through a period of desert life and temptation. The forty days of Christ in the desert has its parallel in the forty years of Israel; His temptation accords with Israel's testing; His food is the word of God that comes down from heaven, just as Israel's food in the desert is not the bread of man's making but the manna of God's giving (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13). It is especially noteworthy that Christ defeats His tempter with texts from the book of Deuteronomy, all of them summing up the wisdom of God that guided and strengthened Israel.

After this early identification of Christ with Israel, Matthew prefers to emphasize the resemblance between Christ and Moses. Generalizations are, of course, always a risk. But there is some justification for saying that Matthew's chief concern is to represent Christ as a second Moses, greater by far than the first lawgiver of Israel. This identification sounds its keynote in Matthew's representation of Christ's first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). As Moses drafted the law of the Old Covenant, so Christ presents here the law of the New. This law is perfect in every way; and Christ Himself is a lawgiver of divine holiness and authority. As a master He handles the earlier law with deft touch, changing at will, and fashioning to perfection. God had spoken through Moses; but this new Moses is more than an instrument, infinitely more than the mouthpiece of God. And so "the crowds were astonished at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority" (Mt 7:28-29).

This resemblance between the two lawgivers dominates all the later discourses of Jesus in the first Gospel; indeed, the Master draws largely from Deuteronomy for the expression of His own thoughts. Moreover, there is likeness even in Christ's method of teaching. His soul, like that of Moses, was a limpid pool reflecting divine truth without ruffle; in both men passion was controlled; nothing disturbed their tranquil grasp of truth or marred the clarity of its expression.<sup>19</sup> For God said of Moses, "Moses was by far the meekest man on the face of the earth"

19. See Léonce De Grandmaison, *Jesus Christ* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), II, 236.

(Num 12:3); just as Christ said of Himself, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29).

The wonders and miracles of Christ also point a likeness between Himself and Moses. Through both lawgivers God wrought mighty works to authenticate their mission and to win for their law a hearing. It is not the meaning of the miracle that interests Matthew, nor its resemblance in kind to the miracles of Moses. Thus he is content to tell the story of the multiplication of the loaves without referring, as John does, to the profound symbolism of bread coming miraculously from heaven. Matthew's concern is with the fact itself. Miracles are God's own work; as He had wrought wonders through Moses, so now He was working in Jesus. Both were lawgivers mighty not only in word but also in deed.

It is especially in describing the transfiguration that both Matthew and Mark bring into focus the typology of Moses (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:1-7). Here the two great lawgivers of Old Covenant and New meet face to face; and the bright cloud that once overshadowed Moses (Ex 33:9-10) now descends upon Jesus. Heaven's authentication of the new Moses follows the pattern of its approval of the old.

The author of the fourth Gospel is even more pointed in showing how Christ fulfilled the typology of Israel's exodus from Egypt. In fact, some have suggested that Exodus provides the whole framework of this Gospel, and that John follows it step by step to prove that Jesus, as a new Moses and a new Lamb of God, came upon earth to lead a new Israel from the oppression of sin to the liberty of a new covenant with God.<sup>20</sup> It is difficult to accept this thesis in its entirety; for in a Gospel of so many composite themes it is an oversimplification to reduce all to a single unity. But the fact remains that the exodus motif is prevalent in the fourth Gospel.

Like Matthew, St. John too marks a resemblance between Christ and the lawgiver of Israel. But his aim is to evoke *all* the richness of the exodus typology; for he is not only a witness to the gospel tradition, but even more its "inspired exegete."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in his treatment of the life and work of Christ, many new aspects of simi-

20. Oscar Cullmann in his *Urchristentum und Gottesdienst* (Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1950), pp. 38-115, represents the Gospel of John as a kind of Paschal catechesis commenting on the mysteries of Christ in the light of their biblical pre-figurations.

21. D. Mollat, S.J., *L'Evangile de Saint Jean*, in *La sainte Bible de Jérusalem* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1953), p. 14.

larity appear. Often enough he is content merely to suggest a point of resemblance. Thus four times in this Gospel Jesus appropriates to Himself the divine name first revealed to Moses at Horeb (Jn 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19); but in all these instances the reference to the Horeb revelation is allusive rather than explicit. So, too, there is passing reference to the new espousals that will bring to perfection the Old Covenant (Jn 3:29-30). But after the brief, unadorned words of John the Baptist, this theme too is dropped.

Other points of resemblance, however, are emphasized and developed at length. The chief of these is the Paschal Lamb motif. It was the blood of the unblemished lamb that saved the first-born of Israel from slaughter and made possible the departure for the promised land. In John's eyes, Christ is the true Lamb of God who shed His blood on Calvary to save men from the death of sin and to liberate them for the promised land of heaven. John's first introduction to Christ was the Baptist's salute, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (Jn 1:36). Ever after this typology loomed large in the mind of the evangelist. Thus several times he makes a deliberate effort to connect Jesus' death with the feast of the Passover (Jn 2:13; 6:4; 11:55); the providential coincidence of time between the Paschal celebration and the death of Christ on the cross provided him an opportunity to stress an underlying typology.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps there is also a meaningful play in John's introduction to his account of the last supper: "Before the feast of the *Passover*, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come to *pass* out of the world to the Father . . ." (Jn 13:1). Certainly there is a deliberate allusion to the ritual of the Paschal celebration in John's remark that no bone of the Victim on the cross was broken (Jn 19:36). It is obvious, then, even to a casual reader of the fourth Gospel that John found in the lamb of Egypt a memorable type of the Lamb of Israel renewed.<sup>23</sup>

But he finds also many other resemblances. For him, Christ is the light of the world (Jn 8:12). The conflict between this light and the

22. An interesting Jewish legend holds that Israel's redemption in future days will happen on the night of Israel's redemption from Egypt, attributing to Moses these words: "In this night God protected Israel against the angels of destruction, and in this night He will also redeem the generations of the future." See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1940), II, 373; V, 437-438, note 235.

23. St. Paul also taught this fulfillment in 1 Cor 5:7: "Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed."

surrounding darkness is a favorite theme with John. But this theme is not his own; its source is biblical. He has drawn it from the beautiful contemplative meditations of the author of the Wisdom of Solomon who penetrates the deep truths contained in God's guiding care of His people as He went before them on their journey, lighting the way with the glory of the Shekinah. A cloud of divine light led Israel from Egypt to the promised land; this was the visible sign of God's presence with His people. For St. John, Jesus is the true light of the world, for He is the Word of God dwelling among men and radiating everywhere the "glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).<sup>24</sup> Men must follow this light if they would reach their heavenly home safely; they must come to, and love, this light if they desire divine approval (Jn 3:19-21). Thus the evangelist's witness to Christ as the guiding light of men is hardly appreciated unless one sees it against the biblical context of the Shekinah of exodus.

The manna from heaven was yet another element of Israel's exodus which St. John utilized as a type of Christ's beneficent action. In this identification the evangelist was not original, for Jewish exegesis itself had already given to the manna an eschatological meaning. Devout Israelites were certain that, as God had nourished their fathers with bread from heaven in the desert, so He would nourish them with heavenly food in the "last days"; they were certain that the manna would reappear in messianic times.<sup>25</sup> This Jewish belief is indicated in the questions the crowd put to Jesus (Jn 6:30-31). John himself relies on this tradition when, in his book of revelation, he equates manna and the tree of life as perfect symbols of the divine goods to be shared by the blessed in the world to come (Apoc 2:7, 17). It was the precise object of the fourth Gospel to show that this eschatological food is already given to the Church; it is hers here and now because of the abiding presence of Jesus in the vital and life-giving reality of the Eucharist.<sup>26</sup> If, as some have thought, the component parts of John's Gospel originated as elements of the primitive sacramental

24. St. Ambrose, in his *De Sacramentis*, I, vi, 22 (PL 16:424), writes: "What is that column of light, if not Christ the Lord who has dissipated the darkness of paganism and has spread abroad the light of truth and spiritual grace in the hearts of men?"

25. See O. Behm, "Artos," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, I, 476.

26. See J. Daniélou, S.J., *Bible et liturgie* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1951), pp. 204-206.

catechesis, then it is obvious that the typology of the manna was widely used in the early Church to describe the riches of the Eucharist.

But in the desert wanderings, God not only fed His people but also provided water for them from the rock. St. John follows St. Paul (1 Cor 10:4) in identifying this rock of Sinai as a type of Christ. This theme of refreshing spiritual water is stressed in St. John even more than the manna. His use of this type reflects its prevalence in baptismal catechesis of the early Church and also in the catechetical instructions on grace and spiritual life. It is true that the baptismal reference made by Christ in His discourse with Nicodemus (Jn 3:5) is probably based on Israel's baptism in the waters of the Red Sea and in the cloud, touched on by St. Paul in 1 Cor 10:1-2; but elsewhere in the fourth Gospel the theme of water seems to rest on the typology of the drink provided miraculously by God in the desert. Christ is the true rock from whom all life and all refreshment must come.

The brazen serpent, too, figures in the fourth Gospel as a type of the healing power of Christ's redemption: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (Jn 3:14). These words of Christ are a bare allusion to the miraculous cure wrought by God for His people (Num 21:9). But, in the light of Wis 16:5-13, this brief sentence crystallizes a rich typology to provide John with a point of departure for his sublime theology of redemption (Jn 3:14-21). In his pages type and fulfillment are so intimately interwoven that they mutually interact to aid the mind in penetrating the wealth of each.

All in all, the story of Christ as told in the Gospels is best understood when it is read in the biblical context of Israel's exodus. For Matthew, Mark, and John were all true Israelites, steeped in the Scriptures and sharing Israel's hope for an ineffable renewal of the divine mercy that led the chosen people out of Egypt, bequeathed a covenant on Sinai, and made good its pledge of loving devotedness by working wonders to hearten Israel during the desert wanderings. Long before the evangelists appeared, the Jews had seen in the events of the exodus shadows cast beforehand by a blessed future. It is the merit of the evangelists that they found in Christ the perfect fulfillment of all the Old Testament hopes—the "substance" that had cast the shadows (Col 2:17).<sup>27</sup>

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

# THE OUTER CIRCLE—THE EXODUS OF THE CHRISTIAN

THE life and work of Christ are not over. Before He died, the Saviour promised to abide with His Church always—ever the same Christ, "yesterday, today, yes, and forever" (Heb 13:8). Strong is the bond between Moses and Israel, but stronger still, intimate as no other, is the union which binds Christ to His people in the Church. For the new Moses and the new Israel are joined together as head and members of one mystical body, as bridegroom and bride of a true marriage. In the mystery of His Church, Christ is personally present to every age and renders accessible to every follower the very substance of His life and work upon earth. As St. Leo the Great expressed it: "What was visible in our Redeemer during His earthly sojourn has now passed into the sacraments."<sup>28</sup> Though the Church is the Church of pilgrimage, traveling toward the great Day of the Lord; though she moves in time, waiting, hoping, and praying, "Thy kingdom come," she stands all through time on an atemporal level. She is the tremendous Sacrament that brings the Christ of the first century into every age and into every heart. For "each time the mysteries are renewed, the work of redemption becomes actual once more."<sup>29</sup> What was wrought in Jesus during His earthly life is renewed in the soul of every Christian. Christ's mysteries belong to His Church and to each member, not merely to contemplate and to utilize but also to relive.

Therefore the exodus of Israel from Egypt does not exhaust its typology in prefiguring Christ's redeeming life, death, and resurrection. By the very fact that it foreshadowed the events of His life, it also prefigured the life of His followers, Israel renewed.<sup>30</sup> For the daily life of Christ's mystical body is but the living reproduction and fulfillment of the saving mysteries in the life of Christ Himself. This is the reason why "the typology of exodus is the most classic and constant in our liturgical tradition and in Christian literature."<sup>31</sup>

28. "Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transivit." *Sermo* 74, 2 (PL 54:398).

29. Secret for the Mass of the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

30. The prophets had long looked forward to the Israel of the future, when it would be renewed and glorified and when multitudes would walk in the light of its God; see Is 60; Jer 31:31-34; Os 2:14-24.

31. Henri de Lubac, S.J., p. 79, note 1, of *Origène, Homélies sur L'Exode*, trans.

The patristic catecheses which formed the Christian mind place the origin of a Christian's spiritual life at the moment when, through baptism, he shares in the liberating death of the true Paschal Lamb.<sup>32</sup> Like Israel of old, he is thereby delivered from slavery to the devil; he becomes a member of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Pet 2:9). As the years pass and he journeys through the desert of this life, the Christian finds in the mighty activity of Christ a kindliness, a divine mercy supporting him all his days and leading him to the promised land of heaven (cf. Is 46:3-4; Heb 1:3). But this passing from the death of sin to the vibrant life of heaven must be accomplished *in Christ*—through the power of His exodus, in His company, and according to the pattern of His example. For the exodus and desert journey of the Christian involves both a sacramental sharing in the mystery of Christ and a vital imitation of His conduct.

It was natural, then, for the early Fathers to emphasize the biblical foundation of the sacramental signs. Just as St. John showed how the redemptive work of Christ renewed and enriched the great wonders of the exodus, so the Fathers taught that the Christian sacraments, as living instruments of the Passion, continue these wonders and apply them, with new divine power and new Christian meaning, to every believer. In this they remained true to the primitive symbolism of the sacraments, which was taken directly from Israel's liturgy and the typology of the Old Testament. Humanly speaking there could be no other source, for Christ and His apostles had been schooled only in the traditions of Israel. Afterwards, it is true, writers of a Greek milieu tried to explain the sacramental symbolism in a new way: new meanings were borrowed from the thoughts and customs of a Greek world. And all this has helped to enrich man's appreciation of the sacraments. But their primitive meaning must still be studied in the light of a biblical context.<sup>33</sup>

The early Fathers of the Church were careful to preserve this biblical foundation of the sacramental signs. Thus their thought on baptism was always controlled by St. Paul's identification of its type in the cross-

P. Fortier, with notes by de Lubac (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1947). Cf. Jean Daniélou, S.J., "Traversée de la mer rouge et baptême aux premiers siècles," *Recherches de science religieuse* (1946), pp. 131-142.

32. See J. Daniélou, S.J., *Sacramentum futuri*, pp. 131-142.

33. See W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925).

ing of the Red Sea (1 Cor 10:2).<sup>34</sup> For him, the exodus from Egypt and the passage through the Sea prefigured the deliverance from evil that comes to the Christian through baptism. The two realities have similar meanings; each marks, in its own way, the end of servitude and the beginning of a new existence.

Again, this thought is not original with St. Paul. For at the beginning of the Christian era, the initiation of proselytes into the Jewish community included not only circumcision but also baptism, in imitation of the exodus from Egypt through the parted waters of the Red Sea.<sup>35</sup> This symbolic act was charged with the redemptive power of Christ to become a true sacrament of the New Law. What was merely commemorative with the Jews became dynamically operative with the Christians. The ritual washing became a vital sharing in the deliverance from sin and birth to new life achieved by Christ's exodus on the cross: "Do you not know that all we who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? For we were buried with Him by means of baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ has arisen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3-4).

With the Fathers, then, the exodus of Israel from Egypt was a type not only of Christ's death but also of Christian baptism. For them the Old Testament contained both a christological and a sacramental typology. The baptismal catechesis of Tertullian is especially eloquent: "When the people, set unconditionally free, escaped the violence of the Egyptian king by crossing over through water, it was water that exterminated the king himself, with his entire force. What figure is more manifestly fulfilled in the sacrament of baptism? The nations are set free from the world by means of water; and the devil, their old tyrant, they leave behind, overwhelmed in the water."<sup>36</sup>

This passage places in focus the primitive perspective of baptism and redemption. Both were seen, above all, as a victory over the demon. On the cross, Christ crushed His adversary's head to liberate all humanity from the cruel yoke of sin; and each Christian shares in this

34. See Origen, *In exod.*, Hom. V, 1-2 (PG 12:325-328); St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Baptismo* (PG 46:589).

35. See G. Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), I, 334.

36. *De Baptismo*, 9 (PL 1:1318). Cf. Didymus the Blind, *De Trinitate*, II, 14 (PG 39:697).

triumph of Christ at the moment of baptism. Its waters annihilate Satan's power as completely as the Red Sea drowned the forces of Pharaoh. The deliverance wrought by God for the Israelites in freeing them forever through water from an earthly tyrant and in leading them out as a new nation into the desert finds its antitype in baptism, which liberates a spiritual people from a spiritual tyrant and leads them from the world to the kingdom of God. This theme is frequent in the baptismal catecheses of the Fathers.

A striking example is this passage by St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "Needs must you know that the type of baptism is found in Israel's ancient history. Indeed, when Pharaoh, the bitter and savage tyrant, oppressed the free and noble people of the Hebrews, God sent Moses to free them from the evil Egyptian bondage. The doorposts were daubed with the blood of the lamb so that the destroying angel would pass over the houses marked with the sign of blood. Thus, against all hope, the Hebrew people was set free. As the enemy pursued the liberated, however, he saw, marvelous to say, the sea divided for them; he was avidly going after them, treading in their footsteps, when he was forthwith swallowed by the floods of the Red Sea and buried there. Let us move now from things ancient to things new, from type to reality. There we have Moses sent by God into Egypt, here we have the Christ sent by the Father into the world. There it was in order to free the oppressed people from Egypt, here it is to rescue men tyrannized in this world by sin. There the blood of the lamb warded off the destroyer, here the blood of Jesus Christ, the immaculate Lamb, puts the demons to flight. There the tyrant pursued that ancient people even to the sea, here the shameless and insolent prince of all evil gives chase even to the very brink of the sacred font. The one was drowned in the sea, the other is brought to nothing in the saving water."<sup>37</sup>

The exodus provided also a sublime typology for the Eucharist. Here, too, the Fathers drew largely from the primitive sacramental catechesis reflected in the pages of the New Testament. The inspired authors had seized on two elements in the exodus story as prefigurements of the nourishing and strengthening presence of Christ. St. John favored the manna; St. Paul, the rock of Horeb. Both symbols were eloquent of the solicitous and operative providence of Emmanuel. It was only to be expected, then, that the manna-rock symbolism would become a

37. *Catech. Mystagog.* (PG 33:1068A).

dominant element in patristic teaching.<sup>38</sup> Time and again, in explaining the reality and effects of the Eucharist, the Fathers return to these types as divinely ordained prefigurements of holy Communion.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, the Fathers utilized all the elements of christological typology in the exodus story as an equivalent sacramental typology. Thus the very liturgy of initiation, because it took place in the Paschal period, is charged with reminiscences of the exodus from Egypt. Each factor in that historical event was identified as a type of the exodus achieved by Christ through His way of the cross and shared in sacramentally by each Christian through his participation in the Christian mysteries.

But something more than a sacramental share in Christ's Passover is demanded of the Christian. For the sacrament gives grace; and grace means immanent activity. Therefore, all initiation into the mystery of Christ must be accompanied by a conversion of morals and by vital Christian living, a duty St. Paul never tired of insisting on. After recounting all that God had done for Israel in the desert, he warned his converts: "Now these things came to pass as examples to us" (1 Cor 10:6), and proceeded to apply each example to the conduct of Christians. His conclusion sums up the moral teaching of the exodus narrative: "Now all these things happened to them as a type, and they were written for our correction, upon whom the final age of the world has come" (1 Cor 10:11). The same lessons are stressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews (3:1-4:13). There the typology of the Old Testament points to positive cooperation, demands of the followers of Christ an eager striving for goodness, a hastening toward the promised land.

The Fathers were unanimous in repeating these inspired demands. All were enemies of a sacramentary quietism, with its contempt for the sweat and toil of moral effort and its search for a rest in God that is not for man the pilgrim—a doctrine condemned again by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mediator Dei*. They insisted that the Christian's sacramental share in Christ's Passover brought a new vital power that must be exercised in daily Christian living. Christ's exodus traced the way of the cross; the way of the cross, then, dying to self, is the

38. See St. Augustine, *Tract. Joann.*, 26, 12 (PL 35:1612).

39. Although the Alexandrian tradition of Clement and Origen, following Philo, understood the manna of the word of God (as in Mt 4:4), the early sacramental catecheses, on the other hand, stressed the eucharistic interpretation, resting this application on Jn 6:31-33.

only authentic Christian exodus: "Unto this, indeed, you have been called, because Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in His steps" (1 Pet 2:21). St. John Chrysostom gives pointed expression to this patristic teaching in one of his homilies. This is his thought: The Lord had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and yet, except for a few, they grumbled against Him, mistrusted His might, doubted His love. Therefore they were barred from setting foot in the Holy Land, and the grace of liberation and safe passage through the Red Sea availed them nothing. In like wise, it avails a Christian nothing to have received baptism and to have shared in the spiritual mysteries, unless he leads a life worthy of this grace.<sup>40</sup>

Truly, the exodus is not an event of the past. Though in Christ we are indeed delivered from sin, from idolatry, and from death, we must be ever in exodus, ever passing over, ever leaving behind the servitude of idolatrous Egypt, ever marching through the austerity of the desert, ever doing our utmost to enter the promised land. Till the day of Christ's return, we, God's people, remain as it were in the wilderness. There is still the yearning for Egypt's ease; still the crowd murmurs, still leaders sin. Yet God is faithful and, chastening and forgiving, thrusts us forward without fail toward the new heaven and the new earth which Jesus will usher in when He comes again. Thus to be saved, one must take the road God showed to Israel, one must walk the stations of the cross. For Israel's route is ever the route of the whole of God's people and the route of its every member.<sup>41</sup>

The follower of Christ is a man en route, for Christ called Himself "the Way" (Jn 14:6), and the first name Christians gave to their new life in Him was likewise "the way" (Ac 9:2; 19:9).

## THE CIRCLE OF CONSUMMATION

CHRISTIAN life fulfills the typology of Israel's exodus because it is a life in Christ and a full sharing in His wondrous mysteries. But the redeeming mission of the Saviour does not reach its consummation in this world; and so life here below cannot be the final fulfillment of the types God prepared in the Old Law. Only heaven can provide that.

40. *Homily 23*, 2 on 1 Epistle to the Corinthians, 10, 1 ff. (PG 61:194).

41. Adapted from Roger Hasseveldt, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, trans. W. Storey (Chicago: Fides Publishers Association, 1955), p. 72.

It is the privilege of St. John, then, to speak the last word in the glorious pages of his Apocalypse. There he describes the full flowering of all that exodus typology promised, of all that Christ accomplished. The whole heavenly scene is dominated by the victorious Lamb; it is His blood that has achieved all; through Him the wonders of the first exodus reach their crown. The elect who have crossed the Red Sea of death sing anew the victory song of Moses and Mariam (Apoc 15: 2-3). The covenant between God and His people is final and perfect; the new Israel has become God's bride, and "God Himself will be with them as their God" (Apoc 21:3). To him who thirsts God gives the water of life freely (Apoc 21:6); to him who is hungry He gives "the hidden manna" (Apoc 2:17). Forever the Israel of heaven shall be "a kingdom and priests"; and all shall sing with joy the canticle of the Lamb: "To Him who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us to be a kingdom, and priests to God His Father—to Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Apoc 1:5-6).

## CONCLUSION

THE exodus of Israel, the exodus of Christ, the exodus of the Christian—all form a vital unity, all compenetrated in perfect harmony. The Israel of old, mindful of God's mercy in the first exodus, prayed ardently for a richer renewal: "Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance. . . . As in the days when you came forth from the land of Egypt, show us wonderful things" (Mic 7:14-15). God heard this prayer, and granted the "wonderful things" of Christ's redemption. This second exodus is greater by far than the first; yet consummation follows the pattern of promise. Both are mighty works of God, revealing His power and His person in the concord of a blended minor and major scale. One cannot be appreciated without the other; both scales sound true only in their mighty harmony.

This fact is fundamental to Christian theology; it is no less essential to Christian spirituality. Pascal achieved his supreme mystical experience in that night of prayer in which he glimpsed how truly the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was his own God.<sup>42</sup> So, too, every Chris-

42. A facsimile of the prayer is found in Abbé Bremond, *Sentiment religieux en France* IV (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1916), p. 368. For the French text and an Eng-

tian who would really live his Christian life must come to realize that the God of Israel at the Red Sea, the God of Jesus on Calvary, the God of every Christian on earth, the God of the glorified Israel in heaven, is always one and the same—"yesterday, and today, yes, and forever" (Heb 13:8).

lish translation see the bilingual edition of Pascal's *Pensées*, trans. H. F. Stewart (New York: Pantheon Books, 1950), pp. 363, 365.

## *The Abbot of Downside*

### ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

THE Catholic Church traces its history back to Palestine, the homeland and sacred land of Israel, and to the times of the Roman emperor Tiberius, about forty years before the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem by the future emperor Titus. As its founder it claims Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee, of the seed of Abraham. About a hundred years after its origin it was invited by one of its own members, Marcion, to repudiate its connection with, and debt to, the old Israel by accepting his theory that Jesus, the Son of God, was not an Israelite by birth, but a heavenly visitor to earth with no roots in the past history of Israel, or indeed of mankind, and that the faith and worship of Israel had not been revealed by the true God, the Father of Jesus Christ. This invitation was rejected and Marcion left the Church and became the founder of a heretical body. The Catholic creed still affirms that Jesus was the son of an Israelite maiden and that the divine Spirit which He poured out upon His Church was that Spirit which of old had spoken by the prophets. The greatest of our medieval theologians, Thomas Aquinas, is true to the agelong tradition of the Church in affirming that the faithful members of the ancient Israel, the chosen people of God, were already before the coming of Christ members of the Catholic Church, and in implying that the Church is this chosen people, this sacred community, refounded by Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

1. *In 4 Sent.* d. 27, q. 3, a. 1. qa. 3: "Just as the ancients and the moderns [that is, those of the Old and those of the New Covenant] share one faith, so they share one Church; hence those who in the days of the Synagogue served God belonged to the unity of that Church in which we serve Him"; St. Thomas then refers to Jer 3, Ez 16, Os 2, "where the espousing [to God] of the Synagogue is explicitly mentioned; hence she was [to God] not like a concubine but like a wife." Similarly *Sum. Theol.* III, q. 8, a. 4: "While the ancient fathers observed the sacraments of the Law, they were borne up to Christ by the same faith and love by which we are borne up to Him. Thus the ancient fathers belonged to the same body of the Church to which we belong." Cf. A. D. Sertillanges, *The Church* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1922), pp. 248-249: "The true and universal religion is Judaeo-

Modern liberal and independent criticism at one time tended, in two ways, to sever the link uniting the faith of the Church to the Israel of old. On the one hand, it was urged that Jesus taught, essentially, little more than a pure ethical monotheism that owed nothing intrinsically to Israel's faith and worship. On the other hand, most of the features that distinguish the Catholic faith from philosophic theism—its sacraments, its quality of belonging to a society divinely guaranteed and distinct from the non-Catholic world, its belief that Jesus is really God's unique Son and the Lord of creation—were held to be infiltrations from pagan religious traditions or otherwise corruptions of the gospel preached by Jesus.

But as scholarship and criticism have progressed, and as they have become more docile to the historical evidences, the profoundly biblical nature of Catholic belief and also of the gospel of Jesus has become more and more recognized. A great English Protestant scholar, Dr. C. H. Dodd, has recently published a set of lectures entitled *According to the Scriptures*, in which he maintains that at the earliest stage to which our investigations into the primitive history of the Church can carry us back with security, and probably in the teaching of Jesus Himself, the events which are the contents of the Church's gospel are viewed as significant inasmuch as they realize, make actual, the hopes and promises enshrined in the Israelite Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> Thus the risen Jesus is described by St. Luke as saying to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Too slow of wit, too dull of heart, to believe all those sayings of the prophets! Was it not to be expected that the Christ should undergo these sufferings, and enter so into His glory? Then, going back to Moses and the whole line of the prophets, He began to interpret the words used of Himself by all the Scriptures" (Lk 24:25-27). Thus, in affirming His own claims, the Founder of the Church reaffirms the validity of the claims made for God's Covenant with His people of old.

#### AN ISRAELITE GOSPEL

MY PURPOSE is to take the teaching attributed to Jesus in the Gospel according to St. Matthew and to see how this teaching relates itself to Christianity. It goes back through God and through the Christ He promised to the beginning of history. The germ of its social form is found in the Synagogue. It expands in its integrity into the Apostolic and Roman Church."

2. C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1953).

the hope of the old Israel, with its Scriptures, its conviction that Israel is the chosen people of God, the one God "who spoke and the world came into being," and its expectation, based on prophecy, that God would visit and redeem this chosen people.

It is generally recognized that there is a strong Israelitic interest in St. Matthew's Gospel. The American Protestant scholar J. H. Ropes wrote as follows: "There is abundant reason to believe that the author . . . was a born Jew. His whole Gospel is pervaded by Jewish color . . . and he is strongly interested in the relation of Jesus, both positively and negatively, to the Jews and to Jewish ideas. . . . No one can doubt that the roots of the Gospel of Matthew strike deep into the knowledge and tradition and thoughts of the primitive Jewish believers of the Church of Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, a Catholic scholar has said: "Even a cursory comparison of the first Gospel with the others shows that it was intended for Jews—not proselytes, nor Hellenists, but Jews of Palestine. It begins with a genealogy tracing our Lord from the tribe of Judah and from King David and through all the kings of Judah, and showing him to be born of a virgin to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah. He is born in Bethlehem, the city of David, and adored as King of the Jews by wise men of the Gentiles. . . . We shall find that most of the matter peculiar to Matthew is concerned with the Jews or the fulfillment of prophecy."<sup>4</sup>

If modern critical scholarship has failed to exploit or fully to explore this Israelitic element in St. Matthew's Gospel, the reason is that so many scholars have allowed themselves to become convinced that this Gospel is in literary dependence, as regards a great part of its contents, upon the far more "Gentile" Gospel of St. Mark and upon a supposed "sayings source" represented by some of the least "Israelitic" or Palestinian elements in St. Matthew's Gospel. And since St. Mark's Gospel tends now to be dated about A.D. 67, it seems doubtful to many how far we can use the data of St. Matthew's Gospel to discover the Palestinian, the Israelite, character of the teaching of Jesus, from which it is separated by a period of forty years or more, and by the use of documents like St. Mark's Gospel and the "sayings source," whose date is either late or at least uncertain. Thus, although Dr. Dodd has argued recently for the great primitivity of some elements in this Gospel,<sup>5</sup>

3. James Hardy Ropes, *The Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 39, 58.

4. John Chapman, *The Four Gospels* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1944), pp. 6-8.

5. Dodd, *New Testament Studies* (Manchester: University Press, 1953).

Dr. Kilpatrick on the other hand has tried to make it seem probable that the special Jewish coloring of St. Matthew's Gospel represents the mind not of Jesus but of a Jewish-Christian community of about A.D. 95, in controversy with the restored Judaism of the period following the destruction of the Temple.<sup>6</sup>

The theory of the thoroughgoing dependence of St. Matthew's Gospel on St. Mark's has been criticized in more than one quarter recently.<sup>7</sup> It rests partly on a false inference from the agreements and disagreements between the synoptic Gospels and partly on arguments which are not decisive. And it fails to do justice to the abundant and convincing indications that in fact St. Mark's Gospel depends on St. Matthew's or possibly on something of the nature of a lost "first edition" of St. Matthew's Gospel. I must not enter into the detail of these arguments here, but I ask the reader to accept provisionally the view that St. Matthew's Gospel gives us an earlier version of primitive Christian oral tradition and memories of Christ than does St. Mark's; that it is a more or less close Greek translation of an Aramaic original; finally, that it is to be dated before A.D. 51-52 (that is, before the composition of St. Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians<sup>8</sup>) and probably before the outbreak of the great dispute in the early Church provoked by St. Paul's admission of large numbers of uncircumcised Gentiles to Christian baptism (see Gal 2 and Ac 15). This view is supported by the internal evidence of St. Matthew's Gospel, by the general trend of its agreements and disagreements with St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels, by the evidence of other New Testament writings, and (for what it is worth) by the tradition on the subject, which is unquestioned in early Christian literature. If it is correct, we have in St. Matthew's Gospel historical data separated by not more than about twenty years from the public ministry of Jesus, a source of information that can be reasonably attributed to the authorship of Matthew the publican (9:9; 10:3), a member of the body of twelve disciples whom Jesus associated particularly closely with Himself.

6. G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946).

7. B. C. Butler, *The Originality of St. Matthew* (Cambridge: University Press, 1951); Pierson Parker, *The Gospel Before Mark* (Chicago: University Press, 1953); L. Vaganay, *Le Problème synoptique, Une Hypothèse de travail* (Tournai: Desclée, 1954).

8. J. B. Orchard, "Thessalonians and the Synoptic Gospels," *Biblica*, XIX (1938), pp. 19-42.

This document is a carefully composed literary work. It opens with the genealogy and an account of the birth and early childhood of Jesus; and ends with a long account of the tragic conflict between Him and the national authorities at Jerusalem, His crucifixion after sentence by the Roman governor, His resurrection, and the commissioning of the leaders He had chosen for His Church. Between this beginning and this ending it is divided into five parts, in each of which a section of narrative is followed by a section of discourse or teaching; each of these five sections of discourse ends with a variant of the formula: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings . . ." The author strikes me as a man of prosaic, methodical temperament, painstaking, sober, and unimaginative. M. Vaganay (whose theory of the composition of this Gospel is more elaborate than mine) writes of the author: "One would describe him as lacking in imagination. At least he is too respectful of his materials to allow himself to give rein to fancy."<sup>9</sup> In strong contrast are the lyric splendor, the creative thought, and the prophetic oratory of the personality that discloses itself in the substance of the five discourse sections. It is to the latter that we must look to discover the mind and teaching of Jesus Himself, and especially His attitude to the traditions and hopes of the old Israel.

## THE BELIEFS OF THE EVANGELIST

BUT first a word or two about the beliefs of the author of the book, whom I propose to call Matthew, as does tradition, and who may be thought of as a representative member of the primitive Church of Jerusalem in the days before the conversion of many Gentiles in the eastern half of the Mediterranean basin. For him, Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the expected Son of David (1:1);<sup>10</sup> in Him, and in His word and work, was realized the messianic hope of Israel. Hence Matthew is fond of finding and pointing out fulfillments of detailed prophecies in the events of Jesus' life. Being the Messiah, Jesus is endowed with supreme power "in heaven and on earth" (28:18); and it is in virtue of this supreme universal authority that after His resurrec-

9. *Op. cit.*, p. 243.

10. "Book of the generation of Jesus Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham." Cf. Gen 5:1: "This is the book of the generation of Adam." Did Matthew imitate this scriptural passage in order to emphasize that human history moves between two poles, descent from Adam and ascent to Him who named Himself "the Son of Man"?

tion He commissions His twelve disciples (or rather eleven, since one of them, Judas Iscariot, had proved unfaithful) to carry His revelation to others. Matthew, of course, takes it for granted that it is of Israel that Jesus is the Messiah and Redeemer. It is true that he holds that the good tidings of Jesus, that is to say the faith and way of patriarchs and prophets brought to a perfection transcending its past nature, is to be carried to all the nations of the world (28:19). But this universalism is hardly wider than what can be found in the Book of Jonah or in chapters 40-56 of Isaiah.<sup>11</sup> It is by no means a universalism that dispenses with the idea of the chosen people; on the contrary, actual redemption for the Gentiles will result from or involve their incorporation into the people of God.<sup>12</sup>

In the belief of Matthew, Jesus is the messianic Son of David. But, being that, He is also something more. There is a strand of messianic doctrine in the Scriptures of Israel that expects redemption through the direct intervention of God Himself in the history of the chosen people:

*Strengthen ye the drooping hands,  
And make firm the tottering knees;  
Say ye to the faint-hearted:  
Take courage, fear not!  
Behold, your God is about to avenge,  
God's requital has come,  
He Himself has come to save you!*

*O that thou wouldst cleave the heavens and come down,  
That the mountains may tremble before thee.*

*Get thee up on a high mountain,  
O Sion, bearer of glad tidings!  
Lift up thy voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, bearer of glad tidings!*

11. For a recent study of this section of the Book of Isaiah see Ulrich Simon, *A Theology of Salvation* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1953).

12. The Greek word *ekklesiā*, which we translate "church," is used in the Septuagint to translate *kahal*. The *kahal*, or assembly, of the Lord is Israel in its sacred aspect, i.e. practically "the people of God." It has been suggested that in Matthew the word *ekklesiā* translates the Aramaic *kenusha'*, which often means "synagogue" and is used in the Syriac Sinaitic codex to translate both *synagōgē* and *ekklesiā*; see Karl Schmidt, *The Church* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950), translated from his article in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (1938) by J. R. Coates.

*Lift it up, fear not!*  
*Say unto the cities of Judah:*  
*Behold your God!*  
*Behold, the Lord Yahweh*  
*Shall come as a strong one,*  
*And His arm shall rule for Him;*  
*Behold, His reward shall be with Him,*  
*And His recompense before Him;*  
*Even as a shepherd that tends his flock,*  
*With his arm gathers them,*  
*The lambs he carries in his bosom,*  
*The suckling ewes he gently leads.*  
 (Is 35:3-4; 64:1; 40:9-11) <sup>13</sup>

It is in harmony with this prophetic doctrine that God Himself will come to redeem (a doctrine which perhaps transposes into terms of messianic hope the belief that it was the Lord Himself who had redeemed His people in the days of Moses and led them out of bondage in Egypt) that Matthew quotes, in connection with the birth of Jesus, the Isaianic prophecy: "They shall call His name Emmanuel," which, as the translator of Matthew correctly explains, means "God with us" (Mt 1:23; Is 7:14). It is similarly in harmony with Is 35:4 that, in a dream, the angel says to Joseph, the future foster-father of Jesus: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins"—Jesus, Joshua, that is, "Yahweh saves" (1:21). And it may be that this idea of "God with us as our Saviour," occurring thus in the opening paragraphs of the book, is repeated in its closing verse, where the risen Jesus says to the eleven disciples: "And behold, I am with you all the days till the end of the age." If this fusion of the notion of a Messiah of Davidic descent with the idea of a direct divine intervention in history seems to go beyond any clear indications in Israel's Scriptures, it must, I think, be conceded that all the *ingredients* of Matthew's beliefs are rooted in the inspired wisdom of the Israel of old.

## THE REIGN OF THE HEAVENS

TURNING now from the beliefs of Matthew himself to the teaching of Jesus as represented in this Gospel, we may first note two points about

13. Translation by Edward J. Kissane in *The Book of Isaiah* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1943).

the form of the teaching. The distinguished Hebrew and Old Testament scholar C. F. Burney pointed out that "considerable portions of our Lord's recorded sayings and discourses are cast in the characteristic forms of Hebrew poetry";<sup>14</sup> this is true, for instance, of the prayer "Our Father," of which Burney offers a translation into rhythmical Galilean Aramaic, and of the commission to Peter (16:17-19), similarly translated by Burney, but it is also true of many other passages in Matthew's record of the sayings of Jesus. Jesus' use of parables can be closely paralleled by the *meshalim* of the rabbis. None of the rabbinic *meshalim* can be proved to be as ancient as the first half of the first Christian century, since the talmudic literature, from which we derive most of our knowledge of early rabbinism, hardly begins before A.D. 70. But it cannot easily be supposed that the rabbinic use of *meshalim* is an imitation of their use by Jesus, and we can therefore infer that this literary (or rather oral) form was already current in Palestine when Jesus taught, and that He adapted it to His own purposes. More generally it may be said that not only the style but the mental processes disclosed in the teaching of Jesus are those not of Hellenism but of the traditional culture of Israel; they reflect the Israelite way of looking out upon the world and of looking up to its Creator. Jesus cannot be regarded as a Greek philosopher; He is much more like an Israelite prophet, not a dialectician but One who proclaims the word and way of the Lord.

At the outset of His ministry Jesus is described as preaching: "The kingdom [or rather, "the reign," since the underlying Semitic word means "sovereign dominion"] of the heavens is at hand" (4:17). Here we note the reverential substitution, common in Palestinian Israelite circles at that time, of "the heavens" for "God." The actual words here used may well be a précis of Jesus' teaching, and therefore may be attributed to Matthew rather than to Jesus Himself. But in chapter 10 we are told that, when sending the Twelve out on a missionary journey (to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"), Jesus said: "Preach, as you go, telling them, The reign of the heavens is at hand" (10:7). And in 24:14 He says: "This good news of the reign shall be proclaimed in all the inhabited world." The noun *euangelion*, here and

14. C. F. Burney, *The Poetry of Our Lord* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 15.

elsewhere translated "good news," reminds us of the verb "to announce good news" found in Is 40, quoted above, and in Is 61:1: "The Lord has sent me to proclaim good news to the meek," which itself is alluded to by Jesus in Mt 11:5: "The poor have the good news announced to them." Thus Jesus presents Himself as fulfilling these prophecies.

The idea of the messianic reign of God hardly needs illustration from the Scriptures of Israel. It comes into prominence in Isaiah, chapters 40-55, the Book of Israel's—and, of course, of all the world's—Consolation, and especially in Daniel.<sup>15</sup> It would appear that Jesus took up this messianic expectation, affirmed that it was on the point of realization, and called on His hearers to prepare for it by "repentance" (4:17), by conversion, by a full turning of heart and of works to God; just as Amos had bidden his contemporaries to "prepare to meet their God," since the "day of the Lord" was coming (4:12; 5:18). Jesus thus presents Himself, at the very least, as heralding an imminent and epoch-making act, an intervention of the Holy One of Israel in Israel's history.<sup>16</sup>

15. In the vision of Daniel 7 "one like unto a son of man" receives an everlasting and universal royal dominion, which later in the same chapter appears to be identified with the dominion of God. In Matthew also we read often of the reign of God, but sometimes (as in 13:41) of the reign of the Son of Man, the latter culminating in the Great Assize (25:31-46), whence those "on the right hand" pass into the possession of the "kingdom of their Father" (see 25:34, cf. 13:43).

16. The coming of God's reign has always remained a Jewish hope. It is kept alive, for instance, in the *Alenu*, a prayer commonly dated as of the third century A.D. and, since the fourteenth century, used by most congregations to close their daily services. Having asked that all idolatry be destroyed and that all the children of flesh invoke the true God, it continues: "Let all the inhabitants of the world perceive and know that unto thee every knee must bow, every tongue must swear allegiance. Before thee, O Lord our God, let them bow and worship; and unto thy glorious Name let them give honor; let them all accept the yoke of thy kingdom, and do thou reign over them speedily, and for ever and ever. For the kingdom is thine, and to all eternity thou wilt reign in glory; as it is written in thy Torah, The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. And it is said, And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall the Lord be One, and His Name One" (see *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, trans. and ed. J. H. Hertz, New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1952, p. 211). In its traditional Jewish interpretation, "acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom" implies faith and obedience, believing in the one God and adhering to the Torah and all its commandments. Jesus too speaks of the yoke of the kingdom, or, rather, of His yoke: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is gentle, and my burden light" (Mt 11:29-30). This, then, is His message: the reign of God is here whenever men accept all that He is and all that He brings.

## THE GOOD NEWS AND THE TORAH

WE MAY now examine the teaching in the first of Matthew's five great sections of discourse, the Sermon on the Mount. I take this as the incomplete record of an actual sermon of Jesus, with some editorial additions in the shape of authentic sayings of Jesus uttered on other occasions but conveniently recorded here by Matthew. It is a statement, much of it in highly poetical and oratorical form, of the towering moral and spiritual goals which should inspire the repentance of Jesus' hearers, because these are the principles that will inspire, and be required by, the reign of God. It depicts an ideal; it does not lay down a code. This is not to say that the morality of the Sermon on the Mount is impractical and unrealistic; the ideal it sets up is not to be dreamt about but to be striven for, a perfection to be aimed at. Here is a new spirit leading to new deeds, a revelation of God's will for His children in face of which they will indeed always have to confess that "they are unprofitable servants," (Lk 17:10), but which will continually spur them to new efforts. Yet this new pattern of perfection, set forth in the first eight Beatitudes (with which the record of the Sermon opens), derives its language and ideas, practically its whole material content, from the Scriptures of the old Israel. We might say that it is the product of a profound rereading of the Scriptures by One who taught, and thought, "with authority."

At first sight the Sermon on the Mount may seem to be more akin to the morality of the prophets than to the prescriptions of the Torah of Moses; hence this new-old teaching inevitably raises the question of its relation to the Mosaic Torah. The revelation of Mount Sinai had given the chosen people precise and definite rules of life: Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness. This new revelation, given on another mountain, proclaims: Blessed are the patient, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice—that is, that justness which is God's gift, and no less that final manifestation of His justice when He shall reward His friends who have waited for Him, the poor and the clean of heart. And blessed are they that suffer persecution in the cause of justice, the new justice which is His Way. Did this new Teacher deny the divine origin and the authority of the Torah? Did He propose to abrogate it?

Was He, in other words, to be judged by His Israelite hearers to be a skeptic or a religious revolutionary? Some commentators have thought that in this sermon Jesus does in fact abrogate the Torah. But to my mind this is a mistake in exegesis, and is historically most improbable. What could have been more damaging to the credit of Jesus' mission than such public disloyalty to the faith and traditions of Israel? As a matter of fact, as if to answer our question, Jesus explicitly says: "Do not think that I have come to destroy the Torah [the Law] and the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill" (5:17). Judging by the context, the word "fulfill" here means "to reaffirm in a new and higher synthesis."<sup>17</sup> And so Jesus goes on to take various moral precepts from the Mosaic Torah and to teach that to observe the letter of these precepts is not sufficient—the moral or spiritual principle underlying the precept is to command one's full interior allegiance. Thus: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, Thou shalt do no murder; if a man commits murder, he must answer for it before the court of justice. But I tell you that any man who is angry with his brother must answer for it before the court of justice, and any man who says Raca to his brother must answer for it before the Council; and any man who says to his brother, Thou fool, must answer for it in hell fire" (5:21-22). Obviously this is no abrogation of the precept against murder. On the contrary, it is implied that anger is or may be the spring of murder, and that it is not enough to eschew the worst effects of anger but that we must master the evil passion itself and thus eschew all its effects. It should be observed that the whole tone of the passage suggests not formal legislation but oratorical hyperbole.

It may be argued indeed that in one case Jesus does appear to contradict the Torah: "You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you that you should not offer resistance to injury . . ." (5:38-39). At first sight the contradiction here may seem to be formal. But it should be remembered that the motive of the legal prescription in question was to restrict immoderate private revenge, by insisting that the compensation exacted should not exceed the wrong suffered.<sup>18</sup> When Jesus recommends to His hearers that they surrender all claim to compensation, it is a step forward in the same

17. See the note on 5:17 in M.-J. Lagrange, *Evangile selon saint Matthieu* (Paris: Gabalda, 1927).

18. Ex 21:24. We may suppose that the motive of this law was in fact twofold: to satisfy the claims of justice, and to restrict the impulse of revenge.

line. Once again, the recommendation should be taken as the oratorical expression of a principle of magnanimous forgiveness, not as a legal prescription. I should therefore argue that Jesus showed Himself to accept and to be in harmony with not only the messianic hope of the old Israel but the divinely sanctioned Torah itself.

In the same way He takes three practices characteristic of the pious Israelite—almsgiving, prayer, and fasting—and, while giving each of them implicit approval, warns His hearers against the danger of ostentation, of performing these practices with outward show in order to obtain a reputation for piety (6:1-18). Here again, as in the case of the moral principles underlying the Torah, the emphasis is on the interior motives and the "interior life": "When thou art praying, go into thy inner room and shut the door upon thyself, and so pray to thy Father in secret. . . . At thy times of fasting, anoint thy head and wash thy face, so that thy fast may not be known to men, but to thy Father who dwells in secret" (6:6, 17-18). Thus it appears that the morality of the Sermon on the Mount differs from that of the rabbinical schools not because it substitutes a new code for the Torah, but because, unlike the rabbis and the Catholic moral theologians, it does not apply the code to particular cases but seeks to bring to light the spirit of the code and to develop its latent tendency. Hence, when Jesus sums up duty toward one's fellow-men in the Golden Rule ("Do to other men all that you would have them do to you"), He does not offer this as an alternative to the Torah, but says: "This *is* the Torah and the prophets"—this is the meaning of the inspired moral teaching of the Scriptures (7:12).

The Sermon, it has been suggested, reaffirms the Torah in a new and higher synthesis. The same attitude to the sacred traditions and institutions of Israel, to prophecy, to the wisdom of which Solomon's was the accepted prototype, and to the Temple itself, underlies three similar sayings:

Something more than Jonah [the prophet] is here (12:41).

Something more than Solomon is here (12:42).

Something greater than the Temple is here (12:6).

That an astounding claim is implicit in these sayings is obvious. But it is also plain that the claim begins by allowing the reality of divine authority latent in Israelite institutions.

## THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

AFTER what has been said, it is hardly necessary to labor the point that Jesus accepts the doctrine of the divine election of Israel. The Twelve, in the instructions they receive for their first missionary journey, are bidden to go "not on the way of the Gentiles nor into a city of the Samaritans" but, as has already been mentioned, to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5-6). It is true that, upon evidence of the faith of a Roman centurion, Jesus says that "many will come from the east and the west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the reign of the heavens," while the "sons of the reign" will be cast into outer darkness (8:11-12). But the reference to the three patriarchs and the very phrase "sons of the reign" imply the special privileges hitherto accorded to Israel, whereas the admission of Gentiles to the sacred fellowship is presented as a paradox. When a Canaanite woman seeks a cure for her demoniac daughter, Jesus replies: "I was not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24). We shall see that the extension of the good news to the non-Israelite world was eventually fully authorized by Jesus Himself, but its purpose was not to establish an entirely new society of believers, rather to incorporate Gentile converts into the age-old people of God, refashioned and renewed by the work of redemption.

The earlier part of Jesus' public life was an appeal to the members of the chosen people to recognize that the moment of crisis had come, to repent and believe, and so to qualify for the blessings involved in the advent of the reign of God. The appeal consisted in a proclamation of the good news, confirmed by miracles, just as, in the scriptural narrative, the mission of Moses had been confirmed by miracles. Externally the appeal seems to have had a good deal of success, as we may infer from the sending forth of the Twelve to extend the area from which converts were being drawn. "The harvest is great but the harvesters are few" (9:37). But it seems clear that Jesus was, or became, profoundly dissatisfied with the real response to His message. Not only did Pharisees suspect and criticize His behavior, some going so far as to suggest that His exorcisms were the effect of the exercise of diabolic power (12:24); the response of the masses was also inadequate, as we learn from the important passage:

*Woe to thee Chorazain, woe to thee Bethsaida  
 For if in Tyre and Sidon had been done the miraculous  
 works that have been done in you  
 They would long ago have repented in sackcloth and  
 ashes;  
 But I say unto you, Tyre and Sidon will fare better  
 in the day of judgment than you.  
 And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted to the sky?  
 Thou shalt descend even as far as Sheol;  
 For if in Sodom had been done the miraculous works  
 that have been done in thee,  
 She would have survived until today.  
 But I say to you, the land of Sodom will fare better  
 in the day of judgment than thou.*

(11:21-24)

The story was to reach its climax a little later in Jerusalem when Jesus met the officials face to face. But already in the Galilean period chapter 13 shows that Jesus had recognized that a mass conversion was not going to take place. This recognition is marked by a change in His public preaching, consisting in the substitution of parables for plain statement. He explains to His disciples that the reason for this change is that the crowds, by their inadequate response, have shown that they lack the spiritual insight needed for a fuller apprehension of the mysteries of the reign of God. This insight is, however, not entirely lacking in the disciples, that (comparatively small) circle of those who have accepted Jesus not just as the fashionable "craze" of the moment but as their master and instructor in revealed truth.<sup>19</sup> To them He points out (in this same chapter) that they are actually witnessing the fulfillment of the messianic hope: "But blessed are your eyes, for they have sight; blessed are your ears, for they have hearing. And, believe me, there have been many prophets and just men who have longed to see what you see, and never saw it, to hear what you hear, and never heard it" (13:16-17). And in succeeding chapters we see Jesus devoting Himself especially to teaching and training this little group (as Isaiah had taught the little flock of his own disciples) to fulfill their predestined role as the kernel of the Israel of the messianic remnant. They are to be not a mere number of individual believers but

19. They are the "little ones" to whom the Father of Jesus has "revealed these things" (11:25).

a society hierarchically organized, in which leadership will be exercised by the Twelve under the presidency of Simon bar-Jonah, the Rock of Jesus' messianic "assembly," the major-domo or viceregent in His kingdom (16:18, 19).

There is something extraordinarily pathetic, as well as sublime, in this audacious identification of the true Israel with a little group of more or less illiterate and mainly Galilean men, whose only claim to distinction was that they had seen and accepted the messianic truth revealed to them, and not revealed to "the wise men" of Israel, by Him whom Jesus did not shrink from calling His heavenly Father (11:25). That the identification was deliberate cannot be doubted. At the last meal eaten by Jesus with His disciples He describes His blood as the blood of the Covenant poured out for many for the remission of sins (26:28); and this, in the circumstances, can only mean that God's Covenant is henceforward with the little society of Jesus' followers. And to this little band, in the persons of the Eleven, Jesus, after His resurrection, entrusts the mission to all mankind that was the reason of the divine vocation of the people of God, as set forth in the great central section of the Book of Isaiah.

#### THE MESSIAH

WHAT place does Jesus assign to Himself in this fully conscious and creative messianism? It is obvious, in the first place, that He stands forth as the disciple of no man. No rabbi could claim Jesus as his pupil or mouthpiece. He taught "with authority and not as the scribes" says Matthew (7:29), and this is the impression conveyed especially by the repeated formula of the Sermon on the Mount: "It was said to the men of old . . . but I say unto you." Nor would Jesus admit dependence on John the Baptist, since He explicitly states that though John be "greatest among the sons of woman," yet he that is least in the reign of the heavens is greater than John (11:11); while on the other hand He clearly claims that where He, Jesus, acts, there the reign of the heavens is already, though perhaps mysteriously, present and in operation: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the reign of God has come upon you" (12:28).

Only rarely, in the Matthaean record, does Jesus accept for Himself the actual title "Messiah." When Simon bar-Jonah, speaking for the

group of disciples, confesses Him to be "the Messiah, the Son of the living God," Jesus "bade the disciples tell no one that He was the Messiah" (16:20). And when the High Priest at the trial adjures Jesus to say whether He is "the Messiah, the Son of God," He replies: "The suggestion is yours; but I say to you, henceforth you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming upon the clouds of heaven" (26:64). On the other hand, He clearly claims, in His reply to the messengers of John the Baptist, to be "He that should come," the expected messianic redeemer of Israel (11:2-6). It seems possible that the actual title "Messiah" had, in the popular mind, political associations that Jesus wished to avoid.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast with this reserve in respect of the title "Messiah," the title "the Son of Man" is frequently used by Jesus but never by Matthew writing in his own person. As designating a particular individual, this title is at first sight as strange, whether read in Greek or translated back into Aramaic, as it would be to speak in English about "the Human Being."<sup>21</sup> The fact is that it identifies Jesus with the "one like unto a son of man" who, in the vision of the seventh chapter of Daniel, is brought before "the Ancient of Days," invested with royalty and its

20. It is noteworthy that one of the Twelve was "Simon the Cananaean" (10:4), i.e., probably "the zealous" or "the Zealot," as Lk 6:15 interprets the appellation (probably a transliteration of the Aramaic *qana'na'*; see *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, London and New York: Nelson, 1953, *ad loc.*). If this disciple (and possibly others in the entourage of Jesus) had formerly belonged to the Zealots, the dangerous nationalist party, we can well understand the need for caution in the presentation of the messianic claim.

21. "A son of man" in Hebrew or Aramaic means "a member of the human race," just as "a son of the prophets" means "a member of one of the prophetic guilds." Frequently the expression is no more than an idiomatic equivalent of "I" or "myself." But uttered by Jesus it acquires a certain mysteriousness, alluding to the wonder He is; it intimates His messianic office and at the same time humbly hides His greatness. The rabbis have, of course, commented on the phrase as found in Ezekiel. One of their speculative interpretations is this: "Man" is an expression of love (being created in the image of God), of brotherliness (all men having but one father), and of friendship. Hence, when God said to Ezekiel: O son of man, He meant: son of pious, of just parents; son of those who do the works of love; or son of those who, throughout their lives, let themselves be humbled for the glory of the All-Present and the glory of Israel (see Lev. R. 2:8; cf. *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon, London: Soncino Press, 1939, IV, 25). There are also rabbinical passages which understand "son of man" as referring to the Messiah. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (ca. A.D. 250), contrasting Daniel's "son of man," who comes with the clouds of heaven, and Zechariah's "king," who comes lowly and riding upon an ass, used to say: If the Israelites are worthy, the Messiah will come with the clouds of heaven; if not, He will come lowly and riding upon an ass (see Sanh. 98a; cf. *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. I. Epstein, London: Soncino Press, 1935-48, *Sanhedrin*, pp. 663-664).

insignia, and given "an everlasting kingship." This vision is as it were presupposed in the scene of the Great Assize in chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel, where the Son of Man is depicted as coming, endowed with majesty and the title of king, accompanied by "all the angels"—like the Ancient of Days in Daniel, attended by "thousands of thousands, ten thousand times a hundred thousand"—and Himself taking His seat upon the throne of His glory.

All this is in the future. But the same title is used of Himself by Jesus in a variety of contexts of His earthly life and mission. The Son of Man, we are told, has nowhere to lay His head for a night's repose. He is judged to be a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, because He does not imitate the outward austerities of a John the Baptist. He will be "in the heart of the earth" three nights and days, like Jonah in the belly of the sea-monster. His treatment by men will be like that which caused the death of John the Baptist. He will be handed over, by the treachery of one of His own chosen disciples, into the hands of men who will kill Him; but He will be raised from the dead. If any explanation can be given of this strangely humiliating career and this ignominious death, it is that "the Son of Man came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (20:28).

What has happened in these passages to the glorious Danielic figure of one like unto a son of man? The answer, apparently, is that, by an astonishing stroke of creative imagination and profound spiritual insight, this figure has been synthesized with the Isaianic figure of the Servant of the Lord, in whom was no beauty nor comeliness, who was despised and the most abject of men, who has borne our infirmities and was bruised for our sins, who shall lay down his life for sin, and by his knowledge will give righteousness to many; who has delivered his soul unto death, and borne the sins of many, but who, by reason of his utter self-sacrifice on behalf of sinners, will divide the spoils with the strong (Is 52:13-53:12). It is in this wonderful prophecy that the meditations of the old Israel on the problems of sin, suffering, and justice reach their climax. And the fusion, in the teaching of Jesus, of these two figures—the Son of Man and the Servant of the Lord—seems to turn the extreme humiliation of the one into the glory of the other, which it anticipates, while it makes the supreme glory of the other more sublime by reason of the humiliation which preceded it. It means also, we may infer, that the universal reign of the one like a son of man,

foretold in the Book of Daniel (Chap. 7), is not to be the reign of Israelite dominion over unwilling Gentile subjects, but the result of that spiritual enlightenment of the Gentiles which is the prophesied work of the Servant of the Lord, the "Light of the Gentiles" (Is 42:6). The point of fusion of the two figures may be said to be the anticipated resurrection of Jesus; and the fact of His resurrection confirmed the truth of his teaching. Just as the glory of the reign of God, reserved as regards its full and final manifestation to the post-historic age, is anticipated in God's reign mysteriously present, to the eyes of the disciples, in the historic mission of Jesus and entrusted thereafter to the stewardship of "the Rock," so the majesty of the Redeemer and divine Lord of Israel is veiled beneath the humble semblances of the Servant of the Lord in whom God Himself is saving His chosen people. And those who, with eyes enlightened by the heavenly Father of Jesus, pierce the veil and see what many prophets have desired to see and yet have not seen, are called to follow Him to His post-historic glory by the way of suffering and apparent failure—the way He Himself has pioneered (16:24-27).

#### SON OF MAN, SON OF GOD

I HOPE that this very brief examination of the Gospel of Matthew, and of the teaching therein attributed to Jesus, will show that all the ingredients so far enumerated of this teaching are (as I have already claimed for Matthew's own beliefs) drawn from the Scriptures and traditions of the old Israel. At the moment of decision, the official leaders of the nation rejected Jesus' message and claims. But what they rejected was not a human compound of Israelitic beliefs and pagan ideas or superstitions, such as the Baal-worship against which the prophets had inveighed. Rather was it a highly original, profoundly moral and spiritual, reinterpretation and development of most authentically scriptural elements.

It may indeed be objected that the Danielic figure of "one like a son of man" is identified in the Book of Daniel itself with the "people of the saints of the Most High" (7:18), and that it is therefore unscriptural to interpret it as prefiguring an individual Messiah. But it may be questioned whether the collective interpretation exhausts the meaning of the Danielic passage; for the ancients, as for Thomas

Aquinas,<sup>22</sup> the prince—and the Messiah was to be the Prince of His people, the royal Son of David—"personifies" the community he governs. On the other hand, there may be a hint, in the mysterious saying "Inasmuch as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it unto me" (25:40), of a self-identification of Jesus, the Son of Man, with those who constitute His messianic people or community. In any case, it will not be denied that the expectation of a personal Messiah was authentically scriptural in its essence, and that to take the Danielic figure and reinterpret it in a personal sense was not to go beyond the liberty exercised by the prophets themselves in developing the teachings of their predecessors.

There remains one title applied to Jesus, and one claim made by Him, which we have not yet considered. At His baptism by John the Baptist and again at His transfiguration, we are told that there was a voice from heaven, or "out of the cloud," saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."<sup>23</sup> In the subsequent story of the temptation of Jesus, the first two temptations are prefaced by the words: "If thou art (the) Son of God" (4:3, 6), and in 8:29 two demoniacs address Him with the words: "Why dost thou meddle with us, Jesus, Son of God?" At 14:33, after Peter's walking on the water, "those in the boat came and said, falling at the feet" of Jesus: "Thou art indeed (the) Son of God." There is something more deliberate about Peter's confession: "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16). At the trial Jesus is adjured to say if He is "the Messiah, the Son of God," and passers-by at the crucifixion say: "Come down from the cross if thou art (the) Son of God," and "the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, say: He told us, I am (the) Son of God," while after Jesus' death the centurion and his companions say: "No doubt this was (the) Son of God" (27:40, 43, 54). In none of these passages does the title come from the lips of Jesus Himself, though nowhere is He said to have refused the appellation. In 24:36 some manuscripts read: "As for that day and hour, they are known to none, not even to the angels in heaven, nor to the Son; only the Father knows them," but it is just possible that the words "nor to the Son" are a corrupt reading here, borrowed from the parallel passage in the

22. *Sum. Theol.* I-II, q. 90, a. 3c and ad 2; q. 97, a. 3 ad 3.

23. 3:17 and 17:5. It is probable that in these passages the word "beloved" is equivalent to "unique."

Gospel of Mark. A clear instance of the use of the title by Jesus of Himself is 11:27: "My Father has entrusted everything into my hands; none knows the Son truly except the Father, and none knows the Father truly except the Son, and those to whom it is the Son's good pleasure to reveal Him." This passage, however, is underlined by the frequent occasions on which Jesus refers to God as "my heavenly Father," or "my Father who is in heaven." True, the disciples are also taught to regard and address God as their Father, but nowhere does Jesus put Himself on a level with them by speaking of "our [that is: your and my] Father"—though He does speak of His disciples as His "brethren" (25:40). It must not be forgotten that the account of the temptations, with the repeated "If thou art the Son of God," must have come to Matthew ultimately from Jesus Himself. And the contrast, in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, between the rich man's servants and his son ("They will have reverence for my son"—21:37) points to a relationship between Jesus and His heavenly Father different in kind from that between the prophets and their God.

Is it possible to find a scriptural basis for this, the loftiest of the self-appellations of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew? That Israel was the "son" of God, that God was, in a higher sense than Abraham himself, the "father" of the people of His predilection, was a thought dear to the inspired writers of the old Israel (Os 11:1; Deut 32:6; Is 63:16; 64:8). And in the second Psalm the king—is he not the King-Messiah?—is addressed by the Lord: "Thou art my son, this day I am begetting thee." As messianic King and therefore the supreme personification of Israel, Jesus could apply these scriptural passages to Himself. It is doubtful, however, whether He who was "gentle and humble of heart" (11:29) would have done so without precautions against being misunderstood, of which we find no trace in Matthew's record, had not this self-appellation sprung from the consciousness of a unique relationship not derived from His messianic mission but intrinsic to His very being. And it would be in keeping with this consciousness that when, in the last paragraph of this Gospel, He sends his disciples out to seek new members of the new-old Israel in all the world, He bids them baptize them "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (28:19). Here, in this filial consciousness, we have what may be called the essential novelty in the good news. At the same time, this filial consciousness justifies us in regarding

the good news as a genuine reaffirmation and reinterpretation of the revelation given through Moses and the prophets; and over and above this as a further and fuller revelation and self-giving of Him whose merciful promise to Moses had from the first been "I will be with you" (Ex 3:12). "Behold," says the Son, "I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age" (Mt 28:20).

## *Cornelia and Irving Süssman*

### MARC CHAGALL, PAINTER OF THE CRUCIFIED

IN 1947 Marc Chagall painted a picture called *Self-Portrait with a Clock*. The clock is centered at the top of the painting like the dove in certain Renaissance paintings of the Blessed Virgin. If one looks at it from a little way, it is indeed the shape of a bird, with the curved body of a bird in half-stayed flight, and with arms raised like half-spread wings. On the face of the clock the slowly moving hands are approaching three—three o'clock is imminent, the hour of Christ's death on the cross. Beneath the clock, the painter stands in grave contemplation, his hand, with palette and brushes, dropped to his side. His head is slightly bowed and his cheek rests against the head of a sad-eyed donkey. Why are they sorrowful? They have paused before a painting of the crucifixion which occupies almost a third of the right-hand side of the canvas. The painter has stopped his work, and he and the animal, which seems to remember that once it carried the Saviour on its back, stand in a moment of melancholy suspense while the clock approaches the hour of three. In the painting which they contemplate, the crucified Christ has a *tallit*, a Jewish prayer shawl, wrapped around His loins.

There has surely never been a self-portrait of this kind painted by a Jew. In an interview with Raïssa Maritain, Chagall said: "Each of us constitutes a personality, it is necessary to have the daring to exteriorize it."<sup>1</sup>

#### THE LADDER

CHAGALL has a whiplike ability to sting the senses, intellect, and spirit, the body and the soul. He is a disturbing painter. Little things in his canvases, things that are not centers of interest, haunt the memory long

1. Raïssa Maritain, *Marc Chagall* (New York: Editions de la Maison Française, 1943), p. 48.

after the eye has left the picture. It is through them, these little things, that the meaning of the large center of interest is to be invaded.

Such a "little thing" is the Chagall ladder. There are ladders, many ladders. Jacob dreamed of a ladder. And a sermon attributed to St. Augustine speaks of a ladder reaching toward heaven which we build us if we but step on our vices.<sup>2</sup> But these are not Chagall's ladders. Or are they? Chagall's ladders resemble the other two, but his haunt and disturb as neither of the others can; perhaps because their relationship to the scenes in which they appear is enigmatic and requires exploration—we see Chagall's ladders in such strange places.

In an early oil called *Burning House* (1913),<sup>3</sup> the world is in panic fear. A house is on fire. The house is a familiar type in all the artist's paintings. It is a Vitebsk house, picturesque, love-filled, and narrow. It is, in fact, too narrow and small to hold the humanity which necessity has crowded in it. A face stares out of the window, frozen in a state of inaction. The face is too large for the window, so that the impression is one of a head, a mind, that has become detached from the body and has therefore lost the ability to make the body act. And it should act! This is a decisive moment. The house is on fire. The door is open, but the head sits facing, not escape, but some dream of escape. Outside the house a woman stands, to the rear, behind a rather fluid stone wall that seems to grow out of the very paving stones of the road. She can do nothing but cry havoc as she wards the smoke from her face with one hand and with the other tries to still the grief that wells up from the very bowels of her being. Near the front door a man is in action. He is doing something about the conflagration. He is a decisive being, but ineffectual. The small bucket of water which he carries so gracefully—each drop so precious—would have no effect in quenching the fire that threatens to consume the Vitebsk shelter. To the left a frightened horse, pulling a farmer's wagon, rears up. The sweet beast has no ears—as if it is beyond hearing what man has to say to it. It is leaping heavenward. The driver of the wagon, on his knees, seems to be imploring the heavens for help. Significantly, the horse has a collar but no reins. The horse is beyond man's control now. As a matter of fact, the animal does not even have a tail by which the man could, if he

2. St. Augustine, *Serm. Supp., de Temp.* CLXXVI, 1, 4 (PL 39:2082).

3. Another title of the same painting is *La Calèche volante* (*The Flying Carriage*).

were thinking of such a thing, guide it. Heavy smoke covers the sky. The world seems in danger of destruction. And then a disturbing detail lashes the mind and feelings of the observer. There is a ladder on the roof; a ladder that leads upward—the large rungs are at the bottom, the small at the top.

Why the ladder? One might just as well ask the question here, so near the beginning of the artist's career, as ask it later when the ladders have increased beyond subconscious unfoldings. Reasons for the ladder have, of course, been given. Chagall himself tells of an uncle who was a painter and carried a ladder around with him on the rounds of his labor. But such a homely explanation will hardly do with a Chagall. Besides, the artist himself states: "It doesn't matter to me if people discover with joy and satisfaction the enigma of my paintings in these innocent adventures of my relatives."<sup>4</sup> Chagall, like all great artists, knows that in his work there is an easy answer and a hard answer: if you seek the easy answer, then you will find the easy answer.

The ladder in *Burning House* recalls a ladder in an earlier painting, one done in 1909 when Chagall was barely twenty and before he went to Paris. It is called *The Funeral*. Of this canvas, Isaac Kloomok says: "The composition is primitive in style. The perspective is primitive. The buildings are in the upper part of the canvas, the funeral procession in the lower part. Both, the row of houses and the procession, go parallel to each other and to the surface plane of the canvas. All the figures are flat, almost two-dimensional. It looks as if the whole procession were made of cardboard and pasted on."<sup>5</sup>

Here the artist has painted a wintry scene. Snow covers the street. It is evening. In the upper level to the left is a church with a cross on it. The cupola of the church is broken. The cross is falling down. Birds are flying about. In the foreground, on a lower level, the funeral procession goes by. There are six figures in it, including a little horse. The funeral procession is hurrying. There is a great urgency about getting the corpse buried. The seventh figure, which is the corpse, lies in the black wagon, his dead white face only discernible. A dog follows the procession through the snow. Unexpectedly, there is a ladder in the

4. Chagall, *Ma vie* (Paris: Stock, 1931); as quoted by James Johnson Sweeney, *Marc Chagall* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946), p. 8.

5. Isaac Kloomok, *Marc Chagall, His Life and Work* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), p. 18.

painting, bridging the lower to the upper level of the canvas. It stands against a lamp post. The lamplighter is lighting the street lamp.

The detail of the ladder is no mere psychological accident. The significance is too obvious: it must be religious. But years later, when the religious meaning of Chagall's paintings had reached the pens of the art critics (importantly enough, after he had studied the paintings of Giotto and El Greco in the middle thirties), he denied any religious intent: "I am not, and never have been, religious."<sup>6</sup>

Lionello Venturi, however, less fearful than many a writer on Chagall, weighs his denial of religious intent: "The answer, perhaps, was given by Jacques Maritain in 1929: 'Chagall knows what he says; he does not, perhaps, know the range of what he says. That St. Francis would have taught him, as he taught it to the larks.' And in 1938 W. Weidlé wrote of *The Falling Angel*: 'The subject is not religious, but the art takes its very life from religion.' He meant, of course . . . that since his childhood his familiarity with a spiritual world has been such that, without knowing it, he impresses his religious feeling on everything he creates. . . . Certainly, amid the human martyrdom of today Chagall's pity is God's pity, his sorrow is God's sorrow."<sup>7</sup>

In painting after painting this disturbing "little thing," the ladder, appears, reaching upward—to what? It is as if the very people of these canvases were waiting for the artist to "exteriorize" *that* for which the ladder was needed. And suddenly the artist unfolds the climax, the plot. As if the curtain had risen on the final act of a play, the crucified Christ is revealed and there is the ladder leaning against the cross.

#### LEANING AGAINST THE CROSS

IN *Crucifixion in Yellow* (1943)—a beautiful composition which, despite the horror of man's inhumanity to man depicted there, shines with God's great love—the crucified Figure wears the head phylactery and His loins are covered with a *tallit*; there are the marks of the winding straps of the other phylactery still showing on the outstretched arm. The *tallit* is the shawl in which the pious Jew, mindful of God's awe-

6. Lionello Venturi, *Marc Chagall* (New York: Pierre Matisse Editions, 1945), p. 45.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

some presence, robes himself when at prayer. The phylacteries, the *tefillin*, are the small leathern boxes encasing four biblical passages; bound around head and arm, they recall that it was the Lord God, the Lord alone, who brought Israel out of Egypt, the Lord to whom every first-born belongs and who must be loved with all one's being. Because *tallit* and *tefillin* mark the Crucified in this painting of Chagall's, Kloomok maintains that "it is a Jew on the cross, a crucified Jew . . . his pain is Jewish, without Christian mysticism . . . the pain that all Jews carry in their hearts for their six million brothers and sisters tortured and murdered."<sup>8</sup>

If the One on the cross were any Jew in his torment and nothing else, if He were not Jesus crucified, the Man of pains, wounded for our rebellions, whose stripes were our healing (cf. Is 53:3, 5), the picture would be "earthbound," a conception of art which Chagall would not tolerate. Furthermore, in this period of his growth, Chagall felt that it was "necessary to change nature not only materially and from the outside, but also from within, ideologically, without fear of what is known as 'literature.'"<sup>9</sup> What had been but a seed in his early paintings now emerges as the full flower. His paintings reveal the universal aspect without which there can be no greatness. It is no longer a Jew, but *the Jew*, that he is painting. Or, as Raïssa Maritain has put it: "The Jews in the work of Chagall are, in the transposition and abstraction of art, an image of the imperishable Israel."<sup>10</sup>

Exactly, the universal and undying Jew. Chagall has not abandoned, but gone beyond, his grandfather sitting on the roof eating carrots; his uncle Noah, who plays the violin like a *schusterook*, a shoemaker; beyond everything that might possibly limit his conceptions to the immediate, to the earthbound. The limited world of Vitebsk, where he was born in 1889, was stifling to him.

*Vitebsk, I am leaving you.*

*Stay alone with your herrings.*<sup>11</sup>

So he wrote in 1909 when he came to the realization that Paris, the world of Jew and Christian, was the center of the world he dreamed of. When he returned from Paris to his parents' house, the smallness

8. Kloomok, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

9. Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

10. Raïssa Maritain, *Chagall ou l'orage enchanté* (Paris: Editions des Trois Collines, 1948), p. 66.

11. Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

of the world he once knew made him wonder how he could possibly have thought that this was the world. "When I looked down from the 'loftiness' of my present stature upon the little house where I was born, shrinking as far as I could, I asked myself how indeed could I have been born there. How could one draw his breath there?"<sup>12</sup>

But he was born there. He was born a second time, as it were, when he saw the world as a *universe*—when he saw Christ crucified, greater than the Jews in their grievous persecution, greater than the angel blowing the *shofar*, greater even than the Torah.

The *Crucifixion in Yellow* is a masterpiece of conceptual painting as well as a masterpiece of color, design and "space filling." Christ—a Jewish Christ, Christ the Son of her who is a daughter of Abraham—dominates the picture. He towers above everything, including the large Scroll of the Law which, very close to Him, fills the left side of the canvas. But it is not only a Jewish Christ we see here; much less is it a crucified Jew "without Christian mysticism." It is the Christ who came to redeem all mankind; His side pierced; Christ with a face like one of Giotto's Christs; above all, it is Christ with a golden halo circling His compassionate face—a Christian, medieval halo. To the right of the Christ-figure are the wandering, displaced people of the world, including the Vitebsk Jews with their loads on their backs. Beneath these figures are the burning houses. One small figure at the feet of Christ holds his hands upward. Is he afraid of what he sees? Or is he awed and thankful that Christ is there for *all*, holding the Torah which is his, the little figure's? At the bottom of the picture, seated on a royal-blue horse, is a mother with her child in her arms, the mother dressed in green and russet gold, her face a cobalt blue that is all transparence. Is it the Madonna with the Christ Child? The child is about to take the breast, to drink the milk which, in a burning, drowning, blasted world, spells hope. The mother is smiling and the child, too, is happy and strong. To the left of the picture, a fish—no longer the herring that the artist's father knew in Vitebsk—seems to be holding up a drowning woman. Behind her a ship is sinking and taking down with it a tortured figure.

In the midst of fear and destruction, the cross stands a tower of strength, and He who is fastened to it is pity and peace. A bearded, brown-capped and brown-clad Jew is placing a ladder at the foot of

12. Kloomok, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

the cross. He rises out of the burning horizon and the feeling is that he will get the ladder to rest against the crucified Christ. Despite Kloomok's interpretation that "a Jew with a ladder is close to the cross—he had come to take off his brother from the cross, but fell, himself, into the abyss of disaster,"<sup>13</sup> there is nothing in the painting to give this impression. The Jew is not falling "into the abyss of disaster"—he is remarkably upright, almost as if he were braced, holding onto the ladder, the ladder which he knows will bridge the lower to the higher level.

In 1938, when Chagall painted his *White Crucifixion*, he put over Christ's head the legend: "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews." He wrote it in Hebrew, not forgetting, however, to add the Latin initials I.N.R.I. It is a strongly traditional Christ, even though the cloth around His loins is a Jewish prayer shawl. This was the first of the Crucifixion series. Here the ladder rests against the cross, its base standing in the burning flames without being consumed. A Vitebsk Jew is running away, out of the picture, away from the ladder. But in *Crucifixion in Yellow*, a later painting, the Jew is holding on to the ladder, placing it between the Torah and the Cross of Christ.

Then there is the *Descent from the Cross* (1947), in Kloomok's words "archaic and mystic" in mood. "Its clear, light colors—gray or ivory, with only a little blue on the wing of an angel—are related to one another with extreme rarity and delicacy,"<sup>14</sup> says Raïssa Maritain. And as are its tones, so is the whole painting of great tenderness. The horrors of the day are only suggested in the background. In the center is the body of Christ, no longer suffering, all light. Around it moves nothing but love. A sweet burden, tenderly it is taken down, tenderly received. And there is in the painting even the loving sadness of an angel, even the compassion of a beast<sup>15</sup>—a whole universe of love. It is therefore barely adequate when Kloomok says that *Descent from the*

13. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

14. Raïssa Maritain, *Chagall ou l'orage enchanté*, p. 114.

15. The one who lowers the dead Christ from the cross has the head of a bird, but the body, hands, and feet of a man. To explain this strange imagery, Kloomok has recourse to the four creatures of Ezekiel; to Homeric poetry, in which the Greek gods assumed the forms of animals and birds; or to the ancient sculptures of Egypt, Assyria, and Chaldea, which represented the gods as beasts and birds (p. 88). Nothing could be further from the mark. Nor is the strange imagery, so important for the understanding of Chagall, a caricature, a disrespectful caprice, Raïssa Maritain warns us: "No, here where it is least expected, there breaks in the world of innocent beings, never absent from any of Chagall's paintings. It brings to Christ, whom men have put to death, the offering of peaceful purity. And could it not have been that there was a bird there?" (*Chagall ou l'orage enchanté*, pp. 114-115).

Cross "is not a symbol of the Jewish people's suffering, but a statement that Jesus was a Jew."<sup>16</sup> Once more the ladder is in its significant position. At the foot of the ladder, between Mary the Mother and Mary Magdalene, stands an old Jew, helping by holding in one hand a triple light, while with the other he reaches out to the body of the Lord.

Is it not possible that Chagall may yet be thought of as one who has set a ladder against the Cross for many to climb? Is it not possible that he will help many to see the ladder which leads from Jewish suffering to Christ's, from all men's sorrow to His, and not only to His Passion, also to His peace? Yes, there is a ladder from the earth of even modern tears to the hill of peace, and Chagall seems its painter. "Chagall is a conscious artist. While the selection and combination of his images may appear illogical from a representational viewpoint, they are carefully and rationally chosen elements for the pictorial structure he seeks to build."<sup>17</sup> Chagall is a conscious artist. When he uses a cross he means it to be a Christian cross, for he depicts it thus and in no other way; when he portrays Christ, he means Christ and names Him, the King of the Jews. He is a conscious artist.

In *The Yellow Christ* of the middle forties, which is not the *Crucifixion in Yellow*, the artist has painted himself seated in front of his easel. He is working on a Crucifixion which resembles the icons of the Russian villages Chagall was so fond of, a Crucifixion with the breath of simple, primitive life, a conception of Christ in which there is love, acceptance, and longing. In the moment we glimpse in the canvas, the artist has turned to watch the approach of an old, bent Jew leaning on his stick. It has been said, humorously, that Chagall is thinking here not of the picture he is painting but of the old Jew—thinking, probably, of what his old grandfather would do to him with the stick if he caught him making Christian images. But in actuality the picture states quite plainly what the artist is thinking and doing; he is painting Christ crucified, and an old Jew approaching.

#### THE GHETTO UNDER THE CROSS

FOR nearly two thousand years, no Jewish artist dared to paint the figure of Christ, Christ in His Passion; but suddenly, in the twentieth

16. Kloomok, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

17. Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

century, the Cross emerges in Jewish art, most powerfully in the paintings of Marc Chagall. There is the Cross, with a ladder near-by, so that man may climb up to it, telling of man's separation from Christ and his chance of return to Him. With such intensity, drama, and magnitude is the crucifixion portrayed that one must conclude: this is the great theme of all his paintings. One becomes aware that above the little villages, above the floating lovers, above the forlorn Jews clasping the Torah, above the manger-faced beasts with violins, above the ladders, the ladders which are everywhere—there is the Cross. The longer one stays with Chagall's work, the fuller is the realization that it is all of a piece, that from beginning to end it tells one story: the ghetto under the Cross, indeed the world under the Cross, and the ladder which reveals itself as Jacob's ladder, after all.<sup>18</sup>

*The ladder of Jacob, when he was sleeping  
in Haran—with naught but a stone for pillow—,  
where he dreamed the angels went up and down,  
that ladder was thy cross; above it speaks  
to us the voice of God: "I am with thee!  
I will keep thee and bring thee to thy land!"  
For thy cross is the ladder unto glory. . . .*<sup>19</sup>

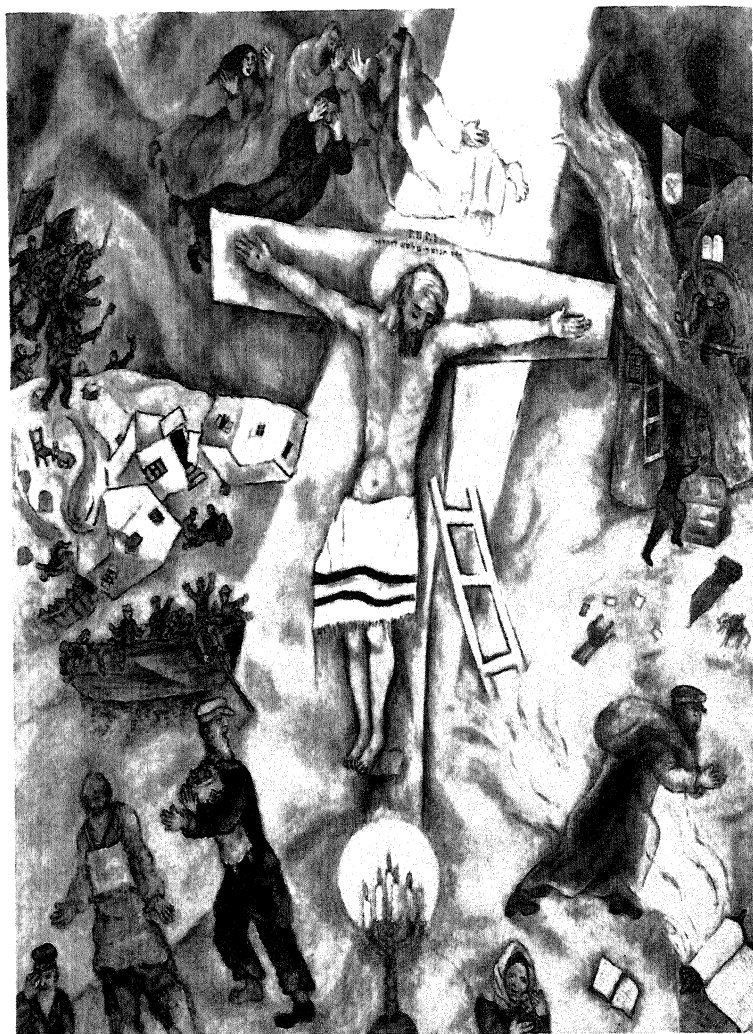
All these centuries, the Crucified has been hanging over the ghettos with His outstretched, waiting arms, and hardly anyone has seen Him there. Now Marc Chagall has looked up and seen Him. This we feel

18. Henri de Lubac, S.J., in *Aspects of Buddhism* (copyright 1954 by Sheed and Ward, Inc., New York, p. 61), speaks of "the Sacred Ladder, which is obviously . . . Jacob's Ladder," and goes on to say: "This symbol was very popular in the Syrian tradition. 'Christ on the Cross,' says James of Sarugh, 'stood on the earth, as on a ladder of many rungs.' The West was not unaware of this symbol: even more significant . . . is a passage in an old Swedish missal which contains this prayer to Christ, to be said at the moment of the adoration of the Cross: 'Lead us as by a ladder to heavenly things.' And St. Catherine of Siena, in one of her visions, likewise contemplates Christ as a bridge set up between heaven and earth. Naturally, this ladder or bridge, which is Christ, stands at the center of the earth, and from earth to heaven there is no other way except through this center, for Christ on the Cross is the sole Mediator between man and God." In the notes to *Aspects of Buddhism*, p. 151, de Lubac quotes Aphraates, *Homily on Prayer* (Patr. Syr. I/1:146): "The ladder which Jacob saw is the mystery of our Saviour, by whom men ascend from the bottom towards the top; it is also the mystery of the Cross of our Saviour, which was raised like a ladder and at whose summit stood the Saviour."

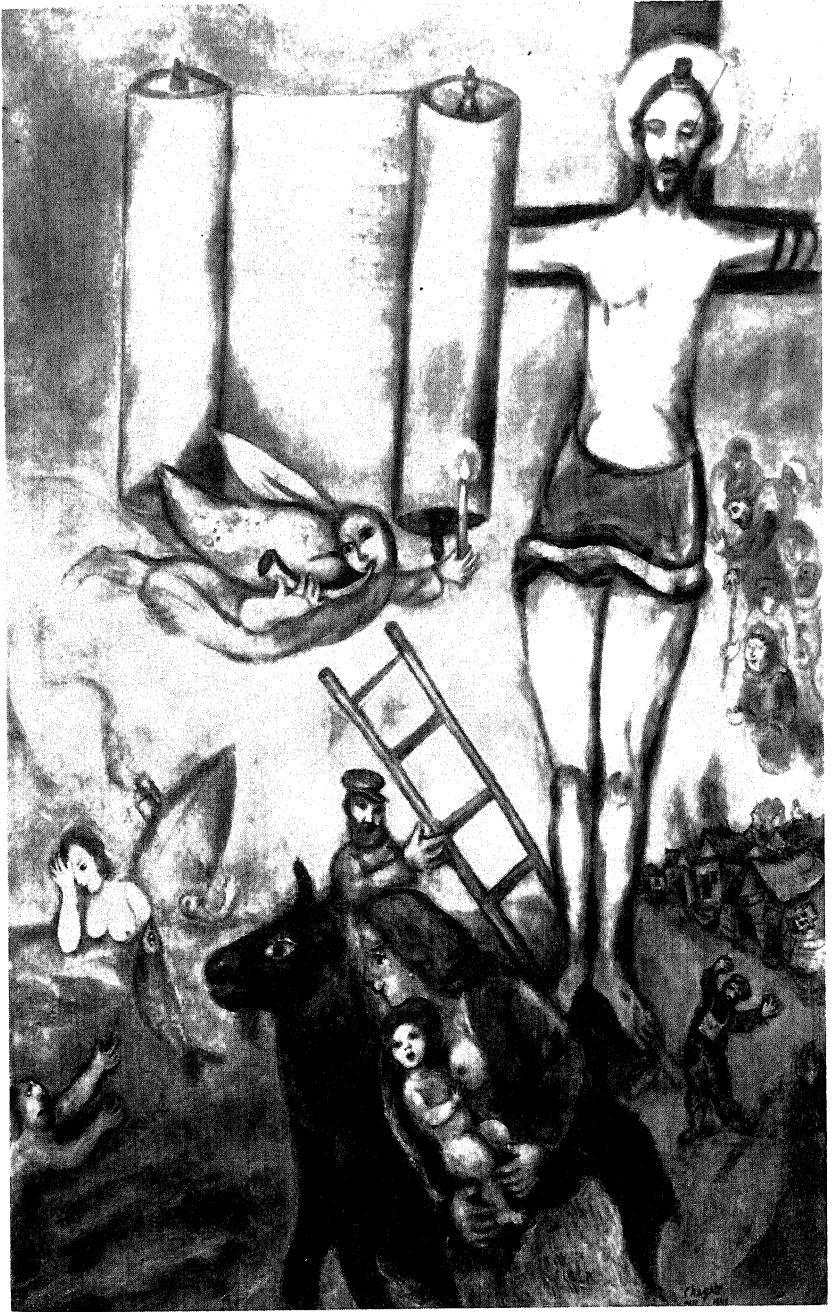
19. Miguel de Unamuno, *The Christ of Velasquez*, trans. Eleanor L. Turnbull (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 50.



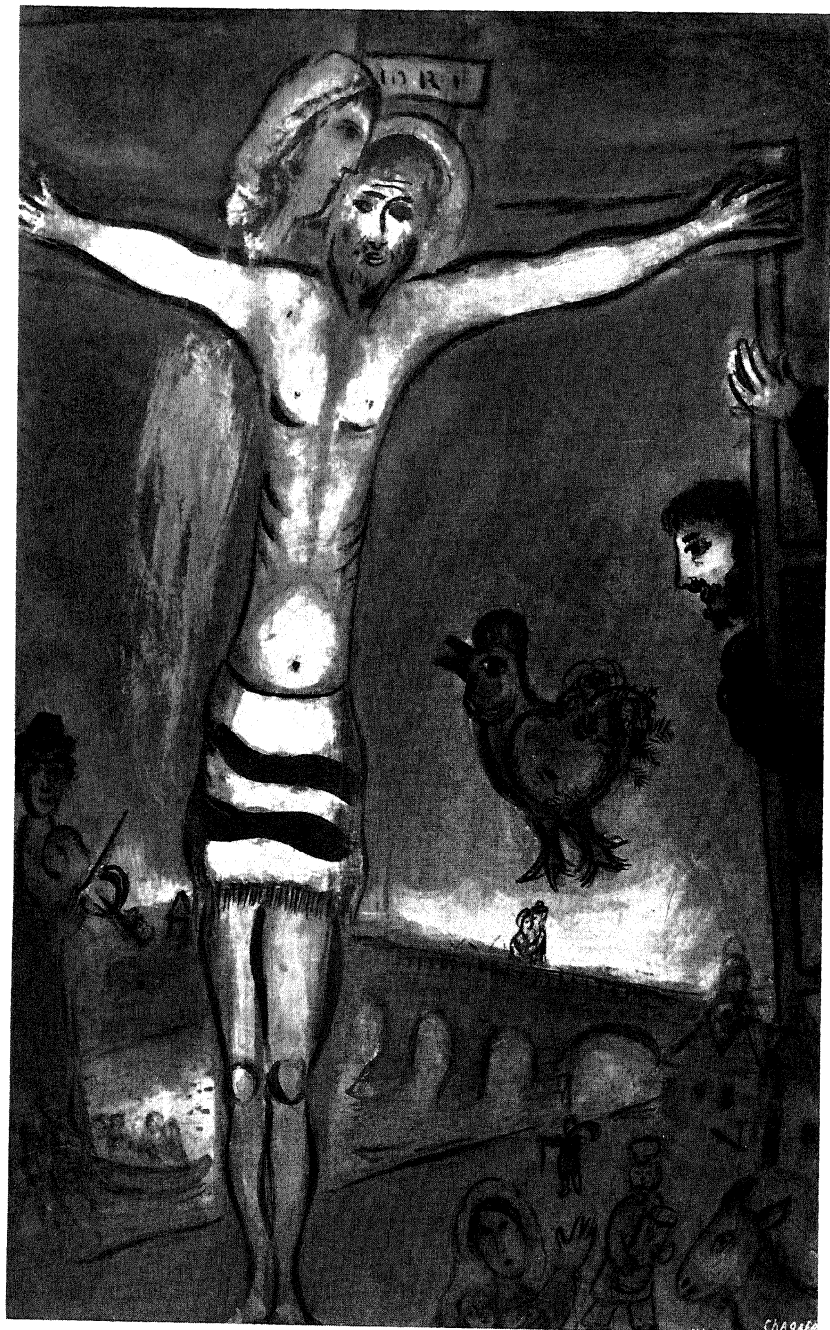
MARC CHAGALL: Self-Portrait with a Clock (1947)



MARC CHAGALL: White Crucifixion (1938)



MARC CHAGALL: Crucifixion in Yellow (1943)



MARC CHAGALL: The Crucified of the Bridge (1951)

before all his paintings, for to one who has experienced the message of the crucified Jesus which Chagall's mature work "exteriorizes," all his other work comes under this vision and speaks this message. Christ is not "contemporized" in a literary sense, not brought down to modern times—He is there at this moment, and if one looks up one will see Him; the Torah is with Him and without Him there is no Torah, and all the little people praying are with Him and without Him there is no prayer; and there is a ladder if one would but step on it.

Why does Chagall paint Christ in His crucifixion?

To the Jew, though he does not know it, Christ is always there, crucified. Chagall, who has apprehended this, has thus become the recording artist of the Jew in the diaspora, but not in the ordinary sense, rather in a deeper sense—he is the recording artist of the "Jewish subconscious" since Calvary. He has looked deep into the Jewish soul and seen Christ crucified and what he has seen he has painted. That what he has painted has turned out to be not only the "Jewish subconscious" but also the subconscious of the Christian who has lost his faith—this is what makes him the recording artist of "the Gentile in the modern diaspora." For Chagall has revealed the Crucified whose image is locked away in the closed, musty soul of modern man. Though he does not abandon Vitebsk, he goes beyond it; and his message is not for one people alone, it is for all: Christ is with us, and He is with us crucified, for we have crucified Him not only at a single moment in history, but are doing so momentarily, over and over again, and in a hidden way we know this.

It is this hidden knowledge modern man has of himself that makes Chagall so greatly accessible to our time, not only as a Jew whose central theme is Christ on His cross—though this in itself is strikingly significant—but above all as a man who sees that which *is*. This is how Christ is in the world of today: in white vesture as the Giver of peace, but on His cross as our Victim, on His cross where we continually put Him. The Jew Chagall can speak to the lapsed Christian about this because this "Christian" is in a state of "diaspora"—perhaps the Jew can speak to the modern Gentile about this better than any Gentile can speak to himself, because the Jew understands the state of "diaspora"; the exile is familiar territory. The exile, the "diaspora," the world of flight, so tremendously evoked by Max Picard, is today's world—and it is this that we see in Chagall's Crucifixions.

"He has painted the entire universe, and left out nothing,"<sup>20</sup> writes Raïssa Maritain in a poem on Marc Chagall, and she continues with a poignant description of the great *White Crucifixion*. Down its center descends a great shaft of light—Raïssa Maritain calls it "a great space of ivory in a wasted world"—and in it rises the cross with Christ nailed to it; at His feet stands a lighted candelabrum with flames so firm, radiance so bright, for here is the Light that all the world's horror cannot put out. Around His loins is the Jewish prayer shawl, and about His head the glory, and over it, in Latin and in Hebrew, "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews." Below the cross, beneath His arms of compassion, there are victims of persecution: a Jew clasping the Torah, looking around desperately, not knowing where to flee; another running to save the little that is in the sack on his shoulder; a third paralyzed with fear, bearing a sign on his chest, "Ich bin Jude"; an old rabbi, his hand to his eyes; and a woman, clutching her child to her heart. On all sides ruin and havoc: the synagogue on fire, the burning houses upside down, people and chairs and books tumbling out of them, and a threatening band of assassins flourishing its banners and weapons over the village. In the sky hover figures of Jews, old and grief-stricken. Are they the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and is the woman with them Rachel the mother, "weeping for her children" (Jer 31:15)? On the water drifts an overloaded boat, with no place to go. Where can Jews go? There is no place for them on earth, no place on earth where Jews are wanted.

In the midst of this, "across the wasted world," hangs the crucified Christ, head slightly bowed, as if even through closed eyes He is looking down, watching, seeing all, on His face deathly white sorrow. One wants to move closer to Him and beg Him: Of what art thou thinking, my crucified Christ? What art thou saying to us, persecuted and persecutors, victims and slayers? All white is thy body, for thou art the

20. Raïssa Maritain, *Chagall ou l'orage enchanté*, pp. 32-33. Similarly Ph. Secretan in "Marc Chagall, Juif et Russe" (*La Vie intellectuelle*, February 1951, p. 115): "He has loved, loved everything. The little horse and the dog turned upside-down, the rooster and the juggler, the lover in the sky and the winged clock. The blue angel and the red angel, him who falls from the sky, and the woman fish. Then there is Christ extended across a ruined, wasted world. . . . The thoughtful rabbis and the violinists who play on their hearts in the snow." Having said this, Secretan asks whether Christ is not for Chagall also the One in and through whom all things hold together, the One who enshrines perfect unity, whether He is not for him "the Image of totality."

living bread hanging over a world of death and sin. What art thou saying, O Christ of our wounds? <sup>21</sup>

# THE CLOUD OVER THE GHETTO

ALL these centuries, Christ has been hanging over the ghettos, seeing but unseen. Why did Chagall look up and see Him?

Not long ago a young Jewish scholar argued that the Jews never rejected Christ because they never encountered Him.<sup>22</sup> This is an astonishing, provocative contention. There is, in spite of its vast historical inaccuracy, a certain psychological truth in it. The Jews encountered Christ once at a single moment in history, encountered Him as a people, and as a people acquiesced in the rejection of Him by their leaders. From that moment in history onward, all that concerned Christ was carefully withheld from following generations, as parents withhold a painful and terrible secret from their children. Generation after generation united in an unspoken pledge of silence: the painful and terrible secret must be kept from the children. Of course "the children" were living in the world and news of this "secret" was bound to reach them, and reach them it did, not as "good news" but as "bad news," not as a message of love but all too often as a message of hate. In this way, for hundreds of years, generations grew up encountering Christ only as an "excuse" for their neighbors to despise or destroy them—which was, of course, not an encounter with Christ at all, rather with the devil, who often does his important work under the mask of piety. They lived in their tight little communities and the crucified Christ hung over them obscured by the devil's smoke. Here in these ghettos an intense and passionate life went on, all the more intense and passionate because so concentrated and driven in on itself, a life centered around the synagogue, the Torah, age-old traditions, customs, and folklore. Squalor, poverty, grief, suffering, insecurity, the everlastingly imminent menace of persecution by one's neighbors, were miraculously interpenetrated and infused with beauty, devotion, charm, and a strange kind of joy—one must surely use the word "miraculously" for one has only to look at the squalor, poverty, grief, suffering, and insecurity of

21. Is it too farfetched to compare Chagall's *White Crucifixion* with Velasquez's *Christ*, as seen by Unamuno in his poem *The Christ of Velasquez*?

22. Arthur A. Cohen, "The Encounter of Judaism and Christendom," *Cross Currents* (Spring 1951), pp. 91-92.

our modern slums to see that no such grace interpenetrates the life there. In all of Chagall's paintings, there is this singular quality of the Jewish ghetto.

Raïssa Maritain speaks of the "joy" of his paintings, of the peculiarly "Jewish" quality of this joy, which was the very air of the ghetto:

The tender, spiritual joy which pervades his work was born with him in Vitebsk, Russian Vitebsk, Jewish Vitebsk. It is therefore imbued with melancholy, pierced by the sting of nostalgia and of hard hope. Truly, Jewish joy resembles no other; it might be said that with roots struck deep into the realism of life, it draws from it, at the same time, the tragic sense of life's frailty and of death. The Jewish bride weeps under the nuptial canopy. The little Jew who dances does not lose the memory of his wretchedness; indeed, by dancing he mocks it, and he accepts it as his God-given lot. When he sings, it is sighing, for he is filled with the past sufferings of his people, and his soul is bathed with a prophetic intimation of unimaginable sorrows in store for them. Has God not foretold them? Has He not taken pains, as He has for no other people, to tell them, through Isaiah, through Jeremiah, and through the other great voices in the Bible, about the purifications His love reserves for them? Those Jews whose souls are not delivered up to the worldly world but are washed each day in the living water of Scripture—they know all this. They know it, the Jews of Chagall. Look at the faces of his musicians; like those of his beggars and his rabbis, their faces are eternally true, miraculously able to speak life's joy and, at the same time, to meet the torment and death.<sup>23</sup>

Gifted jesters and comedians came out of these ghettos, and the wittiest of story tellers, the famous Sholom Aleichem who in the little character of Tevyeh transmitted "Jewish joy" to the world.

Tevyeh, "a little, bearded Jew in a ragged capote," sits on the driver's seat of his clumsy cart. He "keeps his eyes half closed," for he has no inclination to look on the beauties of nature. "His stomach is empty, his heart is in his tattered boots"; the rouble a day he earns carting wood "will not buy a day's food for ten stomachs, one of them a horse's." And he talks to his horse:

"Pull, miserable monster! . . . Drag, wretched beast in the likeness of a horse! You're no better than I am! If it's your destiny to be Tevyeh's

23. Raïssa Maritain, *Chagall ou l'orage enchanté*, pp. 62-64.

horse, then suffer like Tevyeh, and learn like Tevyeh and his family to die of hunger seven times in the day and then go to bed supperless. Is it not written in the Holy Book that the same fate shall befall man and beast?"

But then Tevyeh takes back his argument:

"No!" he says. "It is not true. Here I am at least talking, while you are dumb and cannot ease your pain with words. My case is better than yours. For I am human, and a Jew, and I know what you do not know. I know that we have a great and good God in heaven. . . ."

In the midst of all this Tevyeh realizes that it is time to say the afternoon prayer; he steps down from the cart and begins to pray "when a demon takes hold of his horse, for without warning, without visible or comprehensible cause, the exhausted creature breaks into a wild and idiotic gallop, and Tevyeh, clinging to the reins, pants after it, sobbing breathlessly: 'Thou feedest all things in mercy, and keepest faith with the sleepers in the dust.' (Stop! Indecent creature! Let a Jew say his prayers, will you. . . .)"

And so Tevyeh prays, trying to hold onto his horse, but at the same time not permitting this to interfere with his prayers until "as suddenly and as imbecilically as it had set off on its wild gallop, the horse comes to a dead stop, and Tevyeh finishes his prayers standing still and facing east, the sweat pouring down his face and beard."

Sholom Aleichem describes the old cemeteries with their "tumbled and worn tombstones" where "a Jew—more frequently a Jewess—in the last extremity of poverty or sickness, would go or send someone to the grave of his parents with a message to be delivered direct to the Almighty," and where it was not uncommon to overhear a wife speaking to her dead husband thus:

"Mazel tov, my husband in the true world, congratulations and good luck! I'm marrying off our oldest daughter, our first one, but I haven't a rouble for her trousseau, and not the first kopeck for the instalment on the dowry. Where am I to get it, my husband? Where? Answer me!"<sup>24</sup>

In *Burning Lights* Bella Chagall pictures the beginning of the Sabbath as it was celebrated in her childhood home in Vitebsk. The child waits for the closing of the shop, the close of the working week:

24. Maurice Samuel, *The World of Sholom Aleichem* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), pp. 9, 12, 32, 33.

The last to leave the shop is mother. She tries all the doors once more to see that they are locked. Now I hear her pattering steps. Now she shuts the metal door of the rear shop. Now her dress rustles. Now her soft shoes slip into the dining room. In the doorway she halts for a moment: the white table with the silver candlesticks dazzles her eyes. At once she begins to hurry. She quickly washes her face and hands, puts on a clean lace collar that she always wears on this night, and approaches the candlesticks like quite a new mother. With a match in her hand she lights one candle after another. All the seven candles begin to quiver. The flames blaze into mother's face. As though an enchantment were falling upon her, she lowers her eyes. Slowly, three times in succession, she encircles the candles with both her arms; she seems to be taking them into her heart. And with the candles her weekday worries melt away. She blesses the candles. She whispers quiet benedictions through her fingers and they add heat to the flames. Mother's hands over the candles shine like the tablets of the decalogue over the holy ark.

I push closer to her. I want to get behind her blessing hands myself. I seek her face. I want to look into her eyes. They are concealed behind her spread-out fingers. I light my little candle by mother's candle. Like her, I raise my hands and through them as through a gate, I murmur into my little candle flame the words of benediction that I catch from my mother.<sup>25</sup>

These brief descriptions can give only a fragmentary picture of the life that was lived in the Jewish ghettos. Life in the ghetto ranged from Sholom Aleichem's old Hebrew teacher—"blind in one eye and short-sighted in the other," who wore "spectacles without lenses" and when asked why, answered triumphantly: "Well, it's better than nothing, isn't it?"—to the rapture of the small child devotedly helping his father search out all the leaven in preparation for Passover.<sup>26</sup> This whole range is preserved in its essence—which is that of a great shattered crystal whose broken fragments, sometimes ludicrous in shape, still give off vivid bursts of light—within the paintings of Marc Chagall.

This was the ghetto. This was where generations of Jews lived, over them the high mystery of the Passion, obscured by the devil's smoke

25. Bella Chagall, *Burning Lights* (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1946), pp. 48-49.

26. See Irving Süssman, "A Seder with Tata," *The American Hebrew* (April 22, 1949), p. 4.

through which its grace yet obscurely penetrated. But none dared look up and see the crucified Christ there.

#### THE CLEARING OF THE CLOUD

NEVER in all those long years of the ghetto were the Jews as a people to encounter Him. But a strange thing was going on in its little houses, for over one hundred years, from the middle of the eighteenth into the late nineteenth century. In the middle of the eighteenth century a Jewish mystic arose, the Ba'al Shem, the founder of Hasidism. The Ba'al Shem and his disciples were poor and lowly, and they went among the poor and lowly, speaking of the continuous interaction between heaven and earth; teaching that even the smallest and the least was dear to his Creator; and opening their rite-bound hearts to the power of constant personal communion with the Lord God. Very much like the first Franciscans, the "little rabbis" of Hasidism reached right into the hearts of the poor and abysmally low, and pulled out exaltation. It was perhaps this century of hasidic prayer that dispersed the diabolical fog which had obscured Christ, for the power of fresh, innocent prayer drawn out of the deep wells of need, the power of that which flows between man and God when man trustingly puts even a black and grimy hand in God's, is beyond estimate. When man puts this soiled hand of his in God's, he does not know—how can he know?—what he is asking; but he *is* asking, and God answers, and when He answers fog and smoke melt away, the air is purified, and there stands the Truth.

The mystical "little rabbis" taught their "children" the freshness, the newness, the personal quality of prayer—it may have been such loving prayer that made some look up and see that the air above the ghettos had suddenly lost its obscurity. And there hanging over them, as He had been for hundreds of years, was Christ, crucified. He was there as He is always in the midst of suffering and pain and persecution. Did He not say that anything, good or evil, done to the least of His brethren is done to Him? Wherever men are busy killing, wounding, oppressing other men, there He is, and it is to Him that they are doing this. The diabolical fog had cleared; even the black smoke of Hitler's assembly-line cremations could not obscure the mystery of the Passion hanging over the villages. And so, in the *White Crucifixion*, Christ is

stretched "across the wasted world in a great space of ivory," in pure incandescence.

Chagall painted a Jewish Christ. It took more courage than mere painter's daring to exteriorize this concept. In his *Crucifixion in Yellow* his Christ wears the Jewish phylacteries and a great Torah is unrolled at His right side while under it a little angel holds a candle and blows the ram's horn—one has the feeling that the Jews will, one by one, look up and see Him, see who it is that hangs above them, see that it is He who holds up the Torah, who holds up their prayers. And then the Jewish diaspora will be ended—the little angel will blow the *shofar*, the ram's horn, while the little candle will send its mighty beam over earth and sky.

It is so that Christ is portrayed to the Jews by Chagall, forcibly, distinctively, as *their* Christ. The Spaniards have their Spanish Christ portrayed by El Greco and Velasquez, the Germans their German Christ portrayed by Matthias Grünewald; there have been French Christs and Italian Christs; Chinese Christs and Mexican Christs—for He is portrayed to every people in its image. As the Blessed Virgin spoke to Bernadette in the vernacular, so Jesus appears in the "vernacular." But it is from the Jews that "the Christ is according to the flesh" (Rom 9:5). And yet there has never been a representation of a Jewish Christ. Now there is: Chagall has painted the Jewish Christ, the Christ of the diaspora.

The Christ of the diaspora. "The world's an orphans' home,"<sup>27</sup> writes Marianne Moore. So it almost seems in our twentieth century, for the Jewish exile and suffering is nearly lost in the great exiles and sufferings of our time: when whole peoples are uprooted, whole communities set upon by their fellow-men; when weapons whose destructiveness seems almost to match God's creativeness are brandished over the face of the earth; and when many Christians, fallen into inertia and the sole quest for material well-being, are in flight from God. This is indeed the century of the "diaspora"—and it is to this century that Chagall speaks, pointing to the Crucified who hangs over the burning cities, above the atom bomb, whose smoky mushroom cloud cannot obscure Him, above the suffering world. Above this our lost

27. Marianne Moore, "In Distrust of Merits," *Collected Poems* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 137.

world, in a great space of ivory, Christ is extended, head slightly bowed, eyelids down, watching behind them. Of what art thou thinking, my crucified Christ? What art thou saying, O Christ of our wounds? "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

There is in Chagall's paintings the ladder, and the winged clock, the winged clock whose hands approach three—"The Bird of Time has but a little way to Fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing."<sup>28</sup> The hands of the clock approach three, as if they said: "Now is the acceptable time, now the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2).

#### UNIQUE SELF-PORTRAIT

CHAGALL has painted a Jewish Christ, yet the Crucified on his canvases is not only the Christ of the Jews but the Christ of all, the Redeemer of every man. Has he painted Him as his own Deliverer too? A recent painting, *The Spirit of the Town* (1946), has for its background snow-covered Vitebsk, its houses in a peaceful row, smoke rising from its chimneys against the dark sky. A white horse draws a sleigh while his peasant driver whips him. In one corner is a candelabrum, while in another the mantle of the Torah floats majestically, crowned with two lions holding the tables of the commandments. In the center of the canvas is the artist, palette and brushes in his right hand. As in his *Self-Portrait with a Clock*, he stands before an easel on which is mounted a painting of Christ on the cross, one of Chagall's loving animals—is it a donkey, or a deer?—gazing up at Him. He has given himself two faces: one looking earnestly, eagerly, at Christ; the other waiting to meet the eyes of Bella, his wife, who had died the year before. Her spirit, moving through the left side of the picture, is close to him, but her face is turned away and seems buried in her arm. The artist's left hand is extended, palm upward, toward the crucified Christ. Is he seeking Christ's love for his beloved; does he tender her soul to Him? At the base of the picture, somewhat between Chagall and his wife, is a woman with a Madonna face, her crossed hands holding a rooster. She seems their support, their bond. Is she Mary, "mother of fair love and of hope" (Ecclus 24:24)? And what of the cock in her

28. *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1902), stanza 7.

loving arms? Perhaps the bird in its innocence felt that hers were the arms of all refuge and fled to her, as the loving little animal must have run from afar to be at the foot of the cross.<sup>29</sup>

Has Chagall painted Christ as his own Deliverer? In an even later picture, *The Crucified of the Bridge* (1951), the spiritual journey which the viewer of his paintings takes with Chagall seems to reach its climax. Not since the artist's early canvases, where lovers hand in hand float blissfully through space or rest contentedly in the hearts of flowers, do we find a more peaceful, a more tranquil painting. Color, mood, line, expression, and concept unite in a single response, as if in the artist's long and ardent dialogue with God, the answer had been given. The painting has the rich unity of a musical chord vibrating through the universe. One has to pause for a moment and think of some of the earlier works, to receive the full impact of this late, culminating Crucifixion.

In *Obsession* (1943), eleven years earlier, Chagall had painted a terrifying nightmare, a cry from the depths of the abyss: the horror of a world in which the cross is torn down, lies fallen on the ground. Here Chagall faces a Christ not standing over Vitebsk, not standing over the Jew, not standing over the world. There is no ladder in this picture. No ladder leading upward. There is no escape. To the left of the canvas, in a swirl of turbulent clouds, an anguished woman looks down upon the toppled cross. And below her, to the left of the fallen Crucified, hovering over Him, an old Jew holds upright a trinity of candles burning in a heavy candelabrum. But one candle of the

29. In the *Self-Portrait with a Clock*, the figure in bridal white—Bella, the beautiful one—has drawn very near the crucified Lord and is about to place a kiss on His cheek. Opposite her, by the head of Christ, there is again the mysterious rooster. Perhaps it should be borne in mind that there was among the Jews of eastern Europe a custom of offering, on the eve of the Day of Atonement, a cock as a kind of vicarious sacrifice, as a ransom—*kapparah*. This makes particularly pertinent an interpretation of Chagall's roosters proposed by Walter Frei. Throughout Chagall's work, he suggests, the cock is an expression of sacrifice. The cock is present in many of his earlier paintings which celebrate human love as the sign of the sacrifice that two people bring to their higher unity in love. In one of these paintings the lovers veil themselves in the rooster's tail, in another they ride on its back through the night. But even when they float through space, the world they traverse is and remains this world. Yet human love tends beyond itself. Though it is, of course, only an *image* of the love of God, it is an image of the love of *God*. It is to be expected, then, and it is deeply meaningful that the sacrificial bird, the rooster, should appear when Chagall paints Jesus Christ, in whom God's love for man is manifest in the flesh and is given even unto death. See "Zwischen Himmel und Erde," *Judaica*, VIII, 1 (March 1952), pp. 37-38.

trinity is canting over and there is a frightening impression that this one falling light will take the other two down with it and the world will be plunged into darkness. In the foreground, Chagall's rooster, his bird of peace, lies dying. Almost filling the center of the canvas is a burning house. A woman stands at the side of the house wringing her hands. In front of the flaming structure a dark horse, harnessed to a cart, stops, frozen with fear. A mother tries to urge the horse on. Her infant child weeps, agonized at the mother's fright. But the horse will not, cannot, move. No path of escape is open. The fallen Christ blocks the path. The path is blocked; there is no way out, no hope; for there can be no hope unless the cross stands upright—stands upright as it always stands when Chagall is painting his reality and not his nightmare.

Yet *Obsession* is more than an artist's nightmare, more than a man's terrible obsession that the Cross may be thrown down; it is the portrait of an agonized cry from the depths of an abyss: "Lord, I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mk 9:23). But in the background of this very picture, the answer is written, in such small letters that at first one barely sees it: a religious procession, a procession of faith, moves across a hill at the right of the canvas, moves forward strongly, banner aloft, down the hill toward the fallen cross; and the cupola of the church past which the faithful march bows in the direction of the procession, in the direction of Christ.

To turn from this painting to *The Crucified of the Bridge* is to turn from darkness to light, almost from damnation to deliverance. Upright, glowing with heavenly light, the Crucified so dominates the picture that His cruciform body is seen to be the sacred axis of the world. Though stretched on the cross, He does not seem to be hanging but to be standing, firmly, among mankind. Unlike the other Crucifixions, this one shows Christ's eyelids raised, His eyes wide open. The rooster is in the air, jubilant, singing. Above the bridge, which stretches across the lower background of the picture, a band of lemon gold rises into the darkening sky as the last light of day ascends and the evening's peace descends. On the bridge a pair of lovers stand in each other's arms. The fiddler, to the left of Christ, his hat placed squarely on his head, is calmly fiddling. The peddler, no longer persecuted, his pack on his back, a cane in his hand, is taking a quiet promenade. A Jew in the lower right foreground is carrying his Torah,

his head turned to look at the mother and child who are near the feet of Jesus, at the base of the picture. The mother's left hand is raised toward Christ. The child is sweetly asleep on her other arm. Even the donkey, its head seen in the lower right-hand corner, smiles as though "after life's fitful fever" it may now rest. Houses are righted again; the homeless, who in earlier paintings seemed helplessly adrift, are now—in what contrast to the boatload of suffering humanity depicted in *White Crucifixion!*—floating serenely to shore, to the shore on which stands the Crucified, the sacred axis of the world.

It is not just because of the stone bridge in the background that this painting is called "The Crucified of the Bridge": He bridges what was separate before, and the whole scene mirrors the reconciliation and harmony He wrought on the cross. Dramatically underlining the theme of reconciliation and harmony, the spirit of Bella Chagall, which in the painting *Spirit of the Town* is depicted with head turned away as the artist points to the Crucified, now is shown embracing the Saviour. Clad in a bridal veil, she prints a kiss on the thorned and haloed head of Christ. Her face is aglow, like a tinted rose. And on the other side of Christ, the right side, the artist himself is climbing the ladder. The ladder, solidly rooted, is anchored to the left arm of the cross itself, and Chagall, an awed expression on his luminous face, reaches upward for the next rung.

Chagall has said many things about his paintings. He has declared that "art is in some way a mission"; that it is "first of all a state of the soul"; that "books and pictures are not created only with colors and words, but also with a clean conscience. Only the pure heart and soul can lead us onto the road of pure and exalted creations."<sup>80</sup> He has objected to the words "literary," "fantasy," "symbolism," when these words have been used to "explain" his pictures. He shares his journey with the viewer, but of the viewer, too, something is required if he goes with Chagall on this road. Chagall will share what he sees, but he will not expound on what he sees. Pressed for explanations, he has said of his paintings: "I don't understand them at all. They are not literature. They are only pictorial arrangements of images that obsess me. . . . The theories which I would make up to explain myself and those which others elaborate in connection with my work are non-

sense. . . . My paintings are my reason for existence, my life and that's all."<sup>31</sup>

The viewer is invited to look where Chagall looks. Chagall looks at Christ. And he has found the ladder leaning against the Cross. Will he climb it? Is he climbing it? He has portrayed himself looking at the Crucified. Surely there has never been such a self-portrait painted by a Jew.

31. Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 7. The paintings discussed in our present study are not the only ones Chagall has devoted to Christ crucified. There is, for instance, *The Angel* of 1945, in which a flaming spirit, and no less sun and moon, stand in awe before the Christ, through whom and unto whom all things were created (cf. Col 1:16), whose outstretched hands are sure to bring all things to peace. Is the angel beckoning those on earth to gather around the Son of Man? There is an earlier drawing of 1941, called simply *Crucifixion*, in which Christ mercifully reigns in a world of terror and unrest. His arms are spread out like wings, as if to call all who are burdened. A Jew in his gaberdine seems to have heard the call and moves close that he may hold Him in a shy but loving embrace. In *Crucifixion in Russia*, a water color of the same year, again houses burn, people are homeless. A ship is ready to take them to a new land and to freedom. But before they reach the ship, a gigantic Christ looks down on the exiles and under His loving eyes they are able to comfort one another. His arms are opened wide as if to make a roof over them. Will these arms be their roof forever? Again, there is *The Painter*, drawn in pencil and wash between 1940 and 1942. It shows a bare room—nothing but a window to let the light through; a floor to walk on; and an empty chair, perhaps the painter's waiting welcome for a companion. Chagall himself is seated in a meditative mood before an unfinished Crucifixion, as if he were reflecting that what a man needs are the simple necessities, love, and above all the mercy of God shining from the Cross. Who can doubt that Chagall's extraordinary persistence in painting the Crucified betrays the extraordinary significance of the Crucified in his life?

John M. Oesterreicher

## THE ENIGMA OF SIMONE WEIL

A SPECIAL exemplar of sanctity for our time—the Outsider as Saint in an age of alienation, our kind of saint.” “A life closely akin to that of the great Christian mystics; a witness consecrated by death, an agony linked with the Cross of Christ.” “A giant, she lived the Incarnation and the Crucifixion—God’s servant.” So write an American, a Frenchwoman, an Englishman; a Jew, two Christians.<sup>1</sup> And theirs are only a few of the many ecstatic comments on a life which has stirred believers, unbelievers, and not-yet-believers alike. The German Catholic writer Reinhold Schneider goes even further than most of Simone Weil’s admirers when he calls her “one of the few genuine promises that have come to us out of the darkest years, a Christian in a sense that can hardly yet be grasped, a challenge to believers and unbelievers. . . . Her life is the Christian answer pure and simple.”<sup>2</sup>

The merest glance at her writings proves Simone Weil’s sense of kinship with men of any faith and none, particularly with the alienated, those whose faith the world has stolen. She considered her vocation that of a link “at the intersection of Christianity and everything that is not Christianity.”<sup>3</sup> No less do her words seem to confirm her closeness to Christ and the Church. Only a year before her death, she declared that she adhered entirely and lovingly to the mysteries of the Christian faith; that although outside the Church, or “more exactly, on the threshold,” as she corrected herself, she felt she was really within

1. Leslie A. Fiedler, in his Introduction to Simone Weil’s *Waiting for God*, trans. by Emma Craufurd (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1951), p. 3; Marie-Magdeleine Davy, *The Mysticism of Simone Weil*, trans. by Cynthia Rowland (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), pp. 18, 77; Donald Nicholl, “Simone Weil, God’s Servant,” *Blackfriars*, XXXI, 365 (Aug. 1950), pp. 364, 371.

2. As quoted in a brochure, *Simone Weil*, by her German publishers, Kösel, Munich.

3. *Waiting for God*, p. 76. Wherever an English translation of Simone Weil’s books exists, it only is referred to, even when I do not follow its translation but have essayed my own.

it. "I belong to Christ; at least I like to think so,"<sup>4</sup> she said then; and only a little before, she had seen herself as delivered "into Christ's hands as His captive."<sup>5</sup> So ardently was she drawn to the Eucharist and to the speaking stillness of Catholic churches that, while in Marseilles, she called her heart "transported, forever, I hope, into the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar";<sup>6</sup> later, in London, she spoke of her urge "to seek nourishment in the spectacle of the Mass."<sup>7</sup> To her, Christ was our hunger, our great need: "If we had chlorophyll, we should feed on light as trees do. Christ is this light."<sup>8</sup> The thought of God's anger brought her no fear, only aroused love, she confessed, while the thought of His favor and mercy made her tremble. But what tore her heart was the feeling that in the eyes of Christ she was a barren fig tree.<sup>9</sup> As she thought of her wretchedness, she resolved all the more to take Christ for her model. When a true artist looks at his model, she said in one of the last entries in her journal, he gives it all his attention and becomes one with it, so that, almost without his knowing, hand and brush re-do what the eye sees. This is the way we ought to look at Christ, she wrote, for to think of Him thus would make evil disappear, not immediately, but little by little. And she added: "To this end one must think Christ as God *and* man."<sup>10</sup>

## HER LIFE

LIKE these her words, Simone Weil's life seems to bear out the picture of one imitating the Christ stripped of garment and sightliness, indeed the Christ of the agony.<sup>11</sup> Born of Jewish parents in Paris in 1909, into a warm and prosperous home, she was yet drawn to the secret of suffering. More than that, her soul was stamped with grief and pain and

4. J. M. Perrin, O.P., and Gustave Thibon, *Simone Weil as We Knew Her*, trans. by Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 53.

5. *Waiting for God*, p. 95.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

7. Perrin and Thibon, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

8. *La Connaissance surnaturelle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 245; see also *Gravity and Grace*, trans. by Arthur Wills (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1952), p. 47.

9. *Waiting for God*, p. 101.

10. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 334; see also Perrin and Thibon, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

11. Brief accounts of Simone Weil's life can be found in Perrin and Thibon, *op. cit.*; Fiedler, *loc. cit.*; and E. W. F. Tomlin, *Simone Weil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

pursued by a sense of failure. Once as a child, already eager for burdens, she sat down in the snow and would not go on because her older brother, and not she, had been given the heaviest baggage to carry. Again, in 1914, at the beginning of the war, when she was five, she was told that the soldiers at the front had to go without sugar. For the first time a sense of human hardship entered her comfortable and protected world, and at once she decided that she would deny herself what others were denied. Only a little later, she refused to wear socks because the children of workers had none to wear. It must have been these memories which made her say in an autobiographical letter: "From my earliest childhood I have always had the Christian idea of love for one's neighbor."<sup>12</sup> As she was haunted by the misery of others, so she was haunted by physical pain. When about twenty, she began to suffer from severe headaches, which never entirely left her. So severe did they become at times that everything seemed a nightmare, that once she wondered if she "had not died and fallen into hell without noticing it."<sup>13</sup>

At the age of fourteen, Simone Weil was overcome by a dread of futility; beside her brother, a mathematical genius, she felt mediocre and without talent. What brought her near despair was the notion that she was not only feeble and stupid but barred from the transcendent realm of truth "to which only the truly great have access." Rather than live without that truth, she wanted to die. But after months of inner darkness, she became convinced that anyone, even one untalented, can break through to the kingdom of truth, if only he has the earnest desire and gives himself to it with the concentration truth deserves. Invisibly, then, he becomes a genius too.<sup>14</sup>

Still, the sense of inferiority seems never to have left her, in spite of her obvious intellectual gifts and her academic success, in spite of the protests and praise of her friends. And never did she forget the casual remark of one of her mother's visitors, which, when she was but a child, had sharpened her inner conflict. "One is genius itself," the visitor had said, gesturing toward the brother; "the other beauty."<sup>15</sup> But since she did not look for charm or beauty in herself, rather for an all-penetrating mind, she was bitterly unhappy; and here may lie the

12. *Waiting for God*, p. 65.

13. Thibon, in his *Introduction to Gravity and Grace*, p. 9.

14. *Waiting for God*, p. 64.

15. Fiedler, *loc. cit.*, p. 15.

root of her effort to do away with whatever in her physical appearance might be appealing or even gracious, so that, many years later, her friends could speak of the strange sight she made. Her typical costume was an oversized brown beret, a shapeless cape, and large floppy shoes; there was little grace in her movements or in her monotonous, fiercely persistent voice. Not that she was ugly, Gustave Thibon remarks, but she was "prematurely bent and old-looking through asceticism and illness, and her magnificent eyes alone triumphed in this shipwreck of beauty."<sup>16</sup> The kingdom of truth must have appeared to her as the domain of men; therefore, perhaps, her attempt to wipe out all charm, indeed every trace of womanliness. Not only did she shun outward affection—a kiss, an embrace, seemed disgusting to her—she rejected all warmth and consolation. "I feel," she wrote, "that it is necessary and ordained that I should be alone, a stranger and an exile in relation to every human circle without exception."<sup>17</sup>

Despite her lasting fear of mediocrity, Simone Weil did exceptionally well in her studies: she entered the Lycée Duruy at sixteen, and, after a brilliant examination, attained her *agrégation de philosophie* from the Ecole Normale Supérieure at the early age of twenty-two. That same year, in 1931, she was appointed to her first teaching position, at the *lycée* in Le Puy. But she was not content to be a professor. Those were the years of a world-wide depression, and her compassion for the weak and poor made her take up the cause of the workers. When the unemployed marched on the Prefecture, she marched with them. She limited her spending to the meager earnings of the lowest paid domestic servant; anything over she gave either to syndicalist causes or, with the greatest discretion, to a few individuals in need. Often, too, she left her books to sing with the workers or to share in their sports. All of this caused her difficulties with the school administration of Le Puy. One of her supervisors threatened to report her and have her license revoked, to which she is said to have replied: "Sir, I have always considered revocation as the normal crowning of my career."<sup>18</sup> This may be only legendary; in any case, far from being taken seriously, her radicalism was, in the mind of the authorities, no more than that of a young and harmless girl.

16. Perrin and Thibon, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

17. *Waiting for God*, p. 54.

18. Thibon, in his Introduction to *Gravity and Grace*, p. 14.

Hungry for martyrdom, however, and for a greater share in the lot of the workers, she asked for a leave of absence and went to Paris, where, among other jobs, she operated some sort of drilling machine in the Renault plant. To suffer all the hardships of the industrial laborer, she rented a room in the workers' quarter and lived entirely on her meager wages. Sometimes hungry, often exhausted and rejected, exposed to the tyranny of the assembly line, she could not stand the strain, contracted pleurisy, and had to abandon her attempt. Looking back on what she had seen in the factories and thinking of the millions whose fate was like that of her fellow workers there, she wrote later that "men struck down by affliction are at the foot of the Cross."<sup>19</sup> And of herself she said:

After my year in the factory . . . I was, as it were, in pieces, soul and body. That contact with affliction had killed my youth. . . . I had known quite well that there was a great deal of affliction in the world, I was obsessed with the idea, but I had not had prolonged and first-hand experience of it. As I worked in the factory, indistinguishable to all eyes, including my own, from the anonymous mass, the affliction of others entered into my flesh and my soul. Nothing separated me from it, for I had really forgotten my past and I looked forward to no future, finding it difficult to imagine the possibility of surviving all the fatigue. What I went through there marked me in so lasting a manner that still today when any human being, whoever he may be and in whatever circumstances, speaks to me without brutality, I cannot help having the impression that there must be a mistake and that unfortunately the mistake will in all probability disappear. There I received forever the mark of a slave, like the branding of the red-hot iron the Romans put on the foreheads of their most despised slaves. Since then I have always regarded myself as a slave.<sup>20</sup>

That her strength had not measured up to life as a factory worker could not stifle her desire to help others and obliterate herself. It was the time of the Civil War in Spain, so, after a short convalescence, she went to aid the Loyalists, though she abhorred violence. Her venture was short-lived, however: a victim of her own clumsiness, she scalded her feet with boiling oil. The medical care given her was so poor that, as had happened before, her parents came to her rescue, taking her

19. *Waiting for God*, p. 124.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

home to recover from her burns and humiliation.<sup>21</sup> Not long afterwards, she went to Portugal, where she visited a small, poor seaside village, as it celebrated the feast of its patron saint. Miserable and all alone, she watched the procession go from fishing boat to fishing boat, while the full moon shone on people and sea. The women were carrying candles and singing songs as sad as that of the Volga boatmen, when suddenly she was certain that "Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of slaves, that slaves cannot help belonging to it, and I among the others."<sup>22</sup> For the first time she sensed that in Christ was the answer to human misery. The following year she spent two days in Assisi, for she had loved St. Francis as soon as she knew about him. There, in Santa Maria degli Angeli, where he used to pray, she was for the first time in her life forced to go down on her knees.

Holy Week of 1938 the twenty-nine-year-old Simone Weil passed with the Benedictines of Solesmes, attending all the liturgical services. Though she was suffering so greatly from her headaches that every sound was like a hammer against her, she was able to rise above her pain, "above this wretched flesh, to leave it to suffer by itself, heaped up in a corner." "In the unheard-of beauty of the chant and the words," she found "a pure and perfect joy," which, as she herself said, gave her a grasp of the possibility of loving God in the midst of affliction. Hearing again and again words like "Christ was made obedient, obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross," she felt them become part of her: "The thought of the Passion of Christ entered into my being once and for all."

Also at Solesmes was a young English Catholic, whose angelic radiance after Communion gave her the first inkling, as she put it in her "Spiritual Autobiography," of the supernatural power of the sacraments. He introduced her to the English metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, which led her to the discovery of George Herbert's poem:

21. Fiedler (in "Simone Weil: Prophet out of Israel," *Commentary*, XI, 1, Jan. 1951, pp. 36-39) has drawn attention to the recurrent pattern of bathos in Simone Weil's life. Whether in Le Puy, in the factories, in Spain, or later in London, what starts out as an unlimited desire, an undertaking of heroic dimension, founders; some incongruous circumstance or accident brings it to frustration. Might not this pattern of incompletion and anticlimax offer an insight into the workings of her soul?

22. *Waiting for God*, p. 67.

*Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,  
 Guiltie of dust and sinne.  
 But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack  
 From my first entrance in,  
 Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,  
 If I lack'd anything.*

*"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here":  
 Love said, "You shall be he."  
 "I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,  
 I cannot look on thee."  
 Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,  
 "Who made the eyes but I?"*

*"Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame  
 Go where it doth deserve."  
 "And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"  
 "My deare, then I will serve."  
 "You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat":  
 So I did sit and eat.*

Simone Weil learned the poem by heart and, conquering the tormenting pain in her head, made herself say it over and over. It was during one of these recitations, she confided, that "Christ Himself came down and took possession of me." She emphasized that her experience was not the result of any reading of the mystics—she had done none. Nor were sense or imagination involved; there was no vision or dialogue, only the certainty of Christ's nearness. Never before had she surmised the possibility of a real contact between a human being and God, but at that moment she felt in the midst of her suffering "the presence of a love, like that which one can read in the smile of a beloved face."<sup>23</sup>

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–69. For more than three years following this encounter with Christ, Simone Weil did not pray, that is, turn to God with words thought or spoken, fearing, as she wrote, "the power of suggestion that is in prayer." But in the summer of 1941 she learned the Our Father in Greek, reciting it afterward every morning and often during the day in the vineyard where she was working at that time. If her mind wandered, she would begin again as often as necessary till she could say it "with absolutely pure attention." Even the very first words sometimes transported her thought to a space outside the senses, to an infinity of silence. At times, also, during this prayer, and at other moments too, she felt Christ present, but His presence was then "infinitely more real, more piercing, more clear, more full of love, than that first time when He took possession of me" (*ibid.*, pp. 70–72).

But her suffering was not to end. Wishing no life away from danger, she stayed in Paris after the outbreak of the second World War; only when it was made an open city did she move with her parents to Marseilles. There she met Père Perrin, a Dominican, blind but keen-eyed to the needs of others. She was grateful for his true and rare friendship, the more since she thought that for others she hardly existed, was as unnoticed by them as "the color of dead leaves"; that all her other friends, at one time or another, had hurt her, giving in to an animal instinct to wound the already wounded.<sup>24</sup> But ever beset by the fear of being influenced by, or dependent on, anyone; filled with an extreme desire to guard what she called her "autonomy"<sup>25</sup>—the protective wall she had built around her wounded self—she denied herself the fruit of that friendship.<sup>26</sup>

Her conversations with Père Perrin inevitably turned her thoughts to the question of her baptism. However, in the opinion that it was her vocation to stay among "the immense and unfortunate multitude of unbelievers"; on the strange assumption that this vocation required her to be uncommitted, "indifferent to all ideas without exception, including for instance materialism and atheism"; in a horror of receiving the sacrament without absolute purity of intention, a purity so absolute that she would not be running the risk of "even a single instant or a single inward movement of regret"; and in the absence of an express command from God, imposing His will on hers and thus compelling her to act—she decided not to be baptized, at least not then. She thought it possible that God might show His will at the moment of her death, or that some day she might "suddenly feel an irresistible impulse to ask for baptism" and run to ask for it. It is more than doubtful that Simone Weil ever understood baptism as a sacrament of mercy, a wonder of forgiveness, for she added to the other reasons that kept her

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 92.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 204–205.

26. In his Introduction to *Waiting for God*, Fiedler has this astonishing remark: "It was at Father Perrin's request that Simone Weil 'experimentally' took communion" (pp. 27–28). In a letter to me, Père Perrin has expressly denied ever having made such a suggestion to Simone Weil; nor could he have done so, for to a Catholic, "experimenting" with a sacrament is unthinkable. Presumably Fiedler misread Père Perrin's Introduction to *Attente de Dieu* (Paris: La Colombe, 1950), in which he writes: "Elle savourait [le mystère eucharistique] expérimentalement" (p. 15). These words do not mean that she received Communion in an experimental manner; rather that, in the opinion of Père Perrin, her soul tasted, experienced, as it were, the truth of the mystery.

from the font her "unworthiness" and "inadequacy," her "serious and even shameful faults" in her relations with others.<sup>27</sup> Still, for the few remaining years of her life, the question of whether she should be baptized seems never to have left her; it was no rare thing for her to seek out other priests with whom to discuss it.<sup>28</sup>

No longer able to teach, because of the anti-Jewish laws of the Vichy government, she wished, when she arrived in Marseilles, to work as a farmhand. Père Perrin introduced her to Gustave Thibon, a Catholic writer who lives among the vineyards of the Rhone valley. There she worked for some time, first in the fields, then in the vineyards—labors much too strenuous for her frail body; and yet she refused all comforts, without realizing that her austerities often caused trouble or pain for others. Thibon, who admires her and speaks of her with true affection, cannot help noting that there was "at the very heart of her self-stripping a terrible self-will, the inflexible desire that this stripping should be her own work and should be accomplished in her own way." Again he writes: "Though utterly and entirely detached from her tastes and needs, she was not detached from her detachment. . . . Her ego was, as it were, a word which she may perhaps have succeeded in effacing, but which was still *underlined*."<sup>29</sup>

Having returned to Marseilles for the winter, she sailed the next spring for Casablanca en route to New York. There was anguish in her heart at leaving so many, friends and strangers, behind in peril. But at last, in the hope of joining the Resistance movement, she consented to accompany her parents. "It seems to me as if something were telling me to go," she wrote, and added: "I hope that this abandoning myself to it . . . will finally bring me to the haven, . . . the Cross."<sup>30</sup>

27. *Waiting for God*, pp. 48, 85, 56, 47, 74-75, 50, 46.

28. Her *Letter to a Priest*, for instance (trans. A. Wills; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954) is one long inquiry as to whether one who held opinions like hers, which, she said, "form a barrier between me and the Church" (p. 9), could be baptized. (This *Letter* was written while Simone Weil was still in New York and was addressed to the late priest-artist Père Marie-Alain Couturier, O.P., who was then living in the United States. Shortly afterward she left for England, and so it remained unanswered.) Though her thoughts often returned to the question of baptism, her understanding of it always remained defective. At about the same time that she wrote her *Letter to a Priest*, she called baptism "solely the desire for the new birth." This desire is not without efficacy, she wrote, but added—and thus revealed anew one of her deep-seated difficulties—that "it ought not to imply submission to a social organization" (*La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 183).

29. Perrin and Thibon, *op. cit.*, pp. 114, 119.

30. *Waiting for God*, pp. 58-60.

In New York, her compassion went out to the Negroes of Harlem; every Sunday she went to a Baptist church there in order to be an "exile" among the "exiles." Still she was unhappy, "at the very edge of despair," because the affliction spread over the earth obsessed and crushed her. "I can free myself from this obsession only if I myself have a large share of danger and suffering," she wrote to London. And again: "I beseech you to get me to London, do not leave me here pining in sorrow"; "I implore you, if you can, to obtain for me the amount of sufferings and dangers needed to save me from being worn out by grief in sterility."<sup>31</sup>

London, where she arrived in November 1942, brought her a grave disappointment. Yearning to sacrifice herself either in saving the lives of others or in sabotaging the work of her country's invader, she asked to be sent into occupied France on some arduous assignment. Though she begged and begged, she was refused, because her Jewish features would have imperilled any such venture. Instead, the Free French authorities asked her—more, perhaps, with the intention of keeping her busy than of using her ideas—to write a study on the possibilities of bringing about the regeneration of France.<sup>32</sup> This kept her at her desk long into the evenings, and often her chair or the office floor served her for a bed. She would eat no more than the people of France had, and so gave many of her ration coupons to the poor. Often she would abandon her intellectual pursuits and spend hours with her landlady's backward child, telling him stories and giving him some of the joys of childhood. "I have never yet been able truly to resign myself to the fact that all human beings other than myself are not completely preserved from every possibility of affliction,"<sup>33</sup> she had once written to Thibon.

Worn out, finally, by her many privations and by tuberculosis, she had to be taken to a hospital; but any special comforts or privileges ordered for her there caused her only distress. Too wasted to respond to treatment, she longed for the country, where she died on August 24, 1943. She died, the doctors said, mainly from "voluntary starvation, as

31. Perrin and Thibon, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

32. After the war, her study was published as *L'Enracinement*, in English *The Need for Roots* (trans. by Arthur Wills; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1952). But most of Simone Weil's writing was not done with publication in mind. Thus her "books" are mainly collections, made after her death, of letters, essays, journals, and so on.

33. Quoted by Thibon in his Introduction to *Gravity and Grace*, p. 10.

she felt that any food she took would be denying her countrymen."<sup>34</sup> But she was not unappreciative: the last entry in her diary, which speaks of education and the importance of "to know," ends abruptly with the solitary word "Nurses." Was this a last sign of her gratitude?

## HER THOUGHT

SO ENDED the life of one who wished to suffer with all the sufferers of earth, who indeed begged them, as one begs a blessing, to let her partake of the bread of their affliction. Was she not, then, "profoundly Christian, without being baptized"?<sup>35</sup> No doubt, "she touched those deeps of distress and anguish that cannot be reached without encountering the Face in which are written all the pains of men."<sup>36</sup> Still, for all her desire to suffer, even to suffer like Christ, Simone Weil was not a Christian. This is not a statement that I make lightly. But if one looks not at one or the other isolated sentence of hers but at the whole range of her thought, no other conclusion is possible.

## GOD, GRAVITY, AND GRACE

"Thy kingdom come," Simone Weil prayed, but explained it to mean: "May thy creation disappear absolutely, beginning with me and with everything with which I have ties, whatever they may be."<sup>37</sup> Thus she turned into its opposite what the prophets had hoped for and what Jesus proclaimed as near and coming ever nearer: that the wings of God's love will be spread over all, that death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor pain (Apoc 21:4), because all things will be transfigured in a heaven and an earth altogether new. Why could she not hold this hope? Why was hope, that glorious mark of the Old and New Testaments, alien to her? Why did she make indifference and nonfulfillment a fetish?

Whatever the answer, the fact is that Simone Weil declared "distance" (one of her key words) to be God's manner toward us. He is "absent" from His world, she said, and His power here below is "an infinitely poor little thing."<sup>38</sup> "On God's part creation is not an act of

34. Tomlin, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

35. Davy, *Introduction au message de Simone Weil* (Paris: Plon, 1954), p. 249.

36. Jean de la Croix Kaelin, O.P., in his excellent "Réponse à Simone Weil," *Nova et Vetera*, XXVII, 1 (Jan.-March 1952), p. 32.

37. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 333.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

self-expansion but of restraint and renunciation. God and all His creatures are less than God alone. God accepted this diminution. He emptied a part of His being from Himself,"<sup>39</sup> she wrote. But this is not the God of Scripture, who is overflowing generosity, ever spending Himself, never spent; who in creating shares without either gain or loss; who shares because He is goodness. He is goodness, and it is the way of the good to spread itself, but it is its mystery that in spreading itself it is not thinned, it does not suffer the least diminution. No doubt, the God of Israel is a hidden God (Is 45:15), but to Isaiah and to the Christian, "hidden" does not mean what it meant to Simone Weil: that "necessity is God's veil," that, in other words, "God has committed all phenomena without exception to the mechanism of the world."<sup>40</sup> Far from being absent, He is with us; every page of Old and New Testaments tells His presence, help, and mighty acts. "Behind me and before, you hem me in and rest your hand upon me" (Ps 138:5): so the Psalmist. And Moses, taking leave of his people, tells them that the eternal God is a dwelling place, their home and refuge, and that "underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut 33:27). The God who is in heaven, in inaccessible light, but is nonetheless with His people as their strength—this is the God of revelation: the God of Israel, the God of Christians. But Simone Weil made her own image of God.

God, as she pictured Him, had surrendered the universe to the rule of blind force, a surrender she called His "impartiality," His "indifference," and, strange though it may seem, His "caress."<sup>41</sup> The world thus became for her the domain of *pesanteur*, gravity, down-drag, one in which all things were forever falling. There were, however, rare rays of light which illumined our darkness: grace, in which she saw the one exception to the pull of dead weight. But for a Christian grace raises man's humanity above itself, makes him grow toward God, indeed live in Him, whereas to her it seems to have been the power from above which makes man desire what she called decreation:

I must withdraw so that God may make contact with the beings whom chance places in my path and whom He loves. It is tactless for me to be there. It is as though I were placed between two lovers or two friends. . . .

39. *Waiting for God*, p. 145.

40. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 157.

41. *Ibid.*; *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 92.

If only I knew how to disappear, there would be a perfect union of love between God and the earth I tread, the sea I hear. . . .

*And death, robbing my eyes of their light,  
Restores to the day they sullied all its purity.*

May I disappear in order that those things that I see may become perfect in their beauty from the very fact that they are no longer things that I see. . . .

When I am in any place, I disturb the silence of heaven and earth by my breathing and the beating of my heart. . . . To me [the created world] cannot tell its secret, which is too high. If I go, then the Creator and the creation will exchange their secrets.<sup>42</sup>

There are a thousand reasons—or is there only one, sin?—for a man who thinks he is alone to feel defeated and to look on himself as a stain on the universe. Yet for Simone Weil it was not sin that sullied the universe but her very existence. What a contrast to Genesis and Gospel, which show man as God's favorite, unbelievably loved! While the redeemed man knows himself to be the cantor of creation, leading the chorus of all the irrational creatures and turning their mute obedience into song,<sup>43</sup> Simone Weil can think of herself only as an interloper, as a discord in the harmony of created things.

This is not all. For her, God and man inevitably miss each other, except in some "fourth dimension." There is no need to enter into a discussion of her "fourth dimension"; whatever it may have symbolized for her, her view cannot be reconciled with the Christian faith, for

42. *Gravity and Grace*, pp. 88-89.

43. This Christian knowledge has a profound interpreter in the Dominican mystic Henry Suso. "I place before my inward eyes myself with all that I am—my body, soul, and all my powers—and I gather round me all the creatures which God ever created in heaven, on earth, and in all the elements, each one severally with its name, whether birds of the air, beasts of the forests, fishes of the water, leaves and grass of the earth, or the innumerable sand of the sea, and to these I add all the little specks of dust which glance in the sunbeams, with all the little drops of water which ever fell or are falling from dew, snow, or rain, and I wish that each of these had a sweetly sounding stringed instrument, fashioned from my heart's inmost blood, striking on which they might each send up to our dear and gentle God a new and lofty strain of praise for ever and ever. And then the loving arms of my soul stretch out and extend themselves toward the innumerable multitude of all creatures, and my intention is, just as a free and blithesome leader of a choir stirs up the singers of his company, even so to turn them all to good account by inciting them to sing joyously, and to offer up their hearts to God. 'Sursum corda'" (*The Life of Blessed Henry Suso by Himself*, trans. by T. F. Knox, Orat., London: Methuen, 1913, pp. 32-33).

such is the good news: No other frame, no other continuum, is needed for the encounter of God and man; it happens in the here-and-now. In grace God moves toward man and draws him close, saying to Israel and to man, for whom Israel stands, that He loves him with an everlasting love and reaches out to him in pity (Jer 31:3). If their meeting fails, it is because of man's resistance to the divine invitation, so that Christ's parables are one long lament over man's "I cannot come." But according to Simone Weil, the meeting is bound to fail because God is still and man refuses to be impassive. In what I consider one of the saddest entries in her American diary, she wrote: "God and mankind are like a pair of lovers who have made a mistake about the place of their rendezvous. Each one is there before the hour, but each in a different place, and they wait, wait, wait. He is upright, unmoving, nailed to the spot for all time. She is distracted and impatient. Woe to her if she has enough and goes away! For the two points they are at are the same point in the fourth dimension."<sup>44</sup>

To this she added: "The crucifixion of Christ is the image of the fixedness of God." But the crucifixion is nothing of the kind; no image of immobility, it is rather the sign of His utter concern for man. When God-made-man goes after man, even to the point of suffering, what else does it mean if not that He "runs" after him so that He may persuade him to come His way? So little does the Church think of the Crucified as "fixed," still, and unmoving, that in her liturgy she makes Him plead: "What more should I have done for thee that I have not done? O my people, wherein have I grieved thee? Answer me." Though the nails fasten Jesus' arms to the wood, the arms are open. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself" (Jn 12:32), He said, and again: "The thief comes only to steal, and slay, and destroy [the sheep]. I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10). The words are clear, there is nothing equivocal about them. Christ came and preached, lived and died, that we may live: such is His own message, such the witness of the apostles and the teaching of the Church. In Simone Weil's eyes, however, He died that we may learn to die; He suffered to redeem us not from sin but from existence. "To love truth means to endure the void and consequently to accept death," she wrote. "Truth is on the side of death."<sup>45</sup>

44. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 92; see *Waiting for God*, pp. 135-136.

45. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 56.

Even if the few quotations I have given so far were all I knew of Simone Weil, I should have no doubt that what has often been called her "message" is not part of the Christian message.<sup>46</sup> Though I respect her deep anguish, I have to say this plainly, for no human hands may tamper with Christ's testament, not even the hands of one who suffered much. But lest it be felt that I have moved too quickly and have dealt with her thought and spirituality in a summary fashion, I should like to discuss more fully her relationship to Christ, her interpretation of His divinity, of His crucifixion and resurrection, her views on creation and the meaning of man, and, finally, on Israel.

#### CHRIST, ONE OR MANY?

From the very beginning, when, at the sight of the procession in the Portuguese fishing village, she sensed that Christ was the answer to human misery, Simone Weil had a distorted view of the gospel. Christianity was to her "pre-eminently the religion of slaves." Slaves, in her language, are men struck down by "affliction"—that blind necessity, that anonymous suffering which deprives its victims of their personality, turns them into things, freezes them with a metallic coldness, and puts them at the greatest possible distance from God.<sup>47</sup> But to her, as we have seen, the chains were not to be broken nor the distance bridged nor the void filled; on the contrary, the very void was glorified. Christianity, which is nearness to God and not distance, is thus inverted. One has only to remember what St. Paul wrote to the Romans and the Galatians: that before they came to believe they were slaves to sin, to lust and lawlessness, slaves to the gods who are not, to the blind "elements of the world"; but that now, as men of faith, they are sons, known by God, loved with an infinite love (Rom 6:6, 19; Gal 4:3, 8). Freed from the dominion of cold fate and of their own vagaries by Christ, they have been given a new life; separation and distance ended, they have entered into an organic relationship with God, a true communion. In this St. Paul echoed Christ Himself: "No longer do I call you servants . . . I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15).

46. The American reader who wishes to compare this conclusion with the findings of others has two significant studies within easy reach: Georges Frénaud, O.S.B., "Simone Weil's Religious Thought in the Light of Catholic Theology," *Theological Studies*, XIV, 3 (Sept. 1953), pp. 349-376; and Gerda Blumenthal, "Simone Weil's Way of the Cross," *Thought*, XXVII, 105 (Summer 1952), pp. 225-234.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

Now, if one remembers that it is Christ who determines what Christianity is, then Simone Weil's view of it as "the religion of slaves" is not a slight exaggeration of a truth but a very basic misconception which was to vitiate her whole religious thought.

Again, after her inner encounter with Christ during a recitation of Herbert's "Love bade me welcome," when she felt He had descended to take possession of her—what was her response? "I still half refused, not my love but my intelligence."<sup>48</sup> She wrote "intelligence"; what she unknowingly referred to, however, was a world-outlook rooted in emotions: that drift of the soul and bent of temperament which in all men is the last to yield to Christ because it so resists unmasking. But *she* thought her wrestling with her soul to be a wrestling with God "out of pure regard for truth," and went on to say: "Christ likes us to prefer truth to Him because, before being Christ, He is truth. If one turns aside from Him to go toward the truth, one will not go far before falling into His arms." This sounds subtle and courageous, but it contradicts "pure regard for truth," for Christ never so much as hinted that He "liked" such a preference; rather did He say: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn 14:6). In Him, in His word and work, is disclosed what God is like and what God wills for and of men; and therefore He demands an unconditional "yes," a total commitment, which Simone Weil's formula seeks to evade.

Proof that she evaded Christ's full embrace is that, in fact, she never did "fall into His arms." In spite of her reiterated "one must think Christ as God and man," she went, driven by a strange restlessness, from Him to Greek philosophy and poetry, to Egyptian myths and the Hindu scriptures, ever looking for Him elsewhere. When Saul saw the glory of Christ, he asked: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Ac 22:10), and had himself led straight to the city to be baptized. But when Simone Weil had encountered Christ, she wandered far and wandered wide. She "came to feel that Plato was a mystic," indeed "the father of Western mysticism," almost an evangelist, who knew and taught the Christian mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Passion, the wonders of mediation, of grace, and of salvation through love.<sup>49</sup> She saw

48. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 70; *La Source grecque* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), p. 70; *Letter to a Priest*, p. 27. This is how Simone Weil turned Plato into a mystic. In her essay "God in Plato," she quotes a few lines from the sixth book of the *Republic*, which in

the *Iliad* "bathed in Christian light."<sup>50</sup> But this was only a first step; shortly afterward she was to declare that "the gospel is the last marvelous expression of the Greek genius, as the *Iliad* is the first," of that Greek spirit which enjoins—this is still Simone Weil speaking—the seeking of "the kingdom and justice of our heavenly Father" to the exclusion of all other goods and which lays bare human suffering in a being at once divine and human.<sup>51</sup>

In her strange wandering, Simone Weil also "came to feel . . . that Dionysus and Osiris are in a certain sense Christ Himself," and only a little later she rejoiced that the words of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, so "marvelous," so "Christian in sound," were "put into the mouth of an incarnation of God."<sup>52</sup> The full meaning of these words from her

Jowett's translation read: "I would not have you ignorant that, in the present evil state of governments, whatever is saved and comes to good is saved by the power of God, as we may truly say." Paul Shorey's translation for the Loeb Classical Library is: "And you may be sure that, if anything is saved and turns out well in the present condition of society and government, in saying that the providence of God preserves it you will not be speaking ill." Simone Weil's rendering is very different: "One must needs know this. Whoever is saved and becomes what he ought to be, the cities being as they are, must be said to be saved, if one wishes to speak correctly, by the effect of a predestination which proceeds from God." And she adds this comment: "It is impossible to affirm more categorically that grace is the one source of salvation, that salvation comes from God and not from man" (*La Source grecque*, pp. 78-79). But of religious salvation, of grace and predestination, there is nothing in Plato's text. What he speaks of is simply this: Only by God's power can a philosopher be preserved from the corrupting pressure of public opinion.

50. *Waiting for God*, p. 70.

51. "The *Iliad*, or, The Poem of Force," *The Wind and the Rain*, VI, 4 (Spring 1950), p. 245. According to Simone Weil, the true subject of the *Iliad* is force, which turns man into a thing, indeed into a corpse. No one can escape its dominion, for even he who seems spared has its threat constantly hanging over him. To know the bitterness of this human lot, to know this pitiless necessity, and yet not to seek pity, not to resort to illusion and exaltation: this, in her opinion, is the miracle of the *Iliad* and its Christian light—a light, she tells us, the Christian martyrs lacked, because they died rejoicing. Whatever may be the merits of her interpretation from a literary point of view, the joyless resignation, the *amor fati*, she finds in the *Iliad* is the very opposite of Christian resignation. And yet a Christian reading of Homer is not foreign to the patristic tradition. For many ancient writers, the *Odyssey's* "mast with the yard across it" recalled the wood of the cross, to which the Christian must be bound by the cords of the spirit as Odysseus was lashed to the mast with ropes. "Let us flee from the old way as from the Sirens," Clement of Alexandria cried out. "It strangles man, turns him away from truth, snatches him from life. . . . Let us flee from the island of wickedness, heaped with bones and corpses, where pleasure, a pretty harlot, sings. . . . Pass by pleasure, sail past the song. . . . Bound to the wood of the cross, thou shalt live, free of corruption" (*Exhortation to the Greeks*, xii, PG 8:237-240). Cf. Hugo Rahner, S.J., "Heiliger Homer," in his masterly *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1945).

52. *Waiting for God*, p. 70.

spiritual autobiography becomes clear when they are held next to those that precede them: "I never wondered whether Jesus was or was not an incarnation<sup>53</sup> of God; but in fact I was incapable of thinking of Him without thinking of Him as God." Or when they are read along with her *Letter to a Priest*, where she wonders whether Melchizedek was not "already an incarnation of the Word," and continues: "At all events, we do not know for certain that there have not been incarnations previous to that of Jesus, and that Osiris in Egypt, Krishna in India, were not of that number."<sup>54</sup>

"An incarnation of God"—this is not the high, awesome, and chaste wonder that is Jesus; here the mystery is flattened down to the promiscuity of the pagan myths. Some have thought that Simone Weil's view of Jesus as one of several incarnations may have derived from her overwhelming compassion with the forgotten, neglected, or down-trodden peoples of the earth. Marie-Magdeleine Davy, so often a victim of her unbounded admiration for Simone Weil, has even placed her in the neighborhood of St. Bridget of Sweden, who had Christ declare that instead of sluggish Christians, given to vanity, pride, and lust, He would choose for Himself the poor, that is, the despised pagans, and say to them: "Enter, and rest in the arms of my love."<sup>55</sup> Doubtless, Simone Weil had compassion with those outside the Church—though one is never sure whether her compassion was not, at least in part, the result of her rebelliousness against the Church and against all that *is*—but she did not wish to invite those who do not know Christ to come to Him; on the contrary, she had a horror of any missionary effort, she called it "bad" and said she would "never give even so much as a dime" toward it.<sup>56</sup> No, in her errors about Christ, Simone Weil was not the victim of too much compassion, rather, I fear, of an unfree heart. There is a kind of defective love which, afraid of total giving, prefers the general to the concrete, mankind to the neighbor,<sup>57</sup> the many to the

53. Unfortunately, the English translation of *Attente de Dieu* is at fault when it translates the French original, *une incarnation de Dieu*, by "the Incarnation of God."

54. *Letter to a Priest*, p. 19.

55. Davy, *Introduction au message de Simone Weil*, p. 148; St. Bridget, *Revelationes Extravagantes*, 84.

56. *Letter to a Priest*, pp. 30-34.

57. This preference of Simone Weil's appears in many ways. A striking example is this passage from her diary: "God alone is the unity of the universal and the particular. God is a universal person. Someone who is all." This is but little removed from plain pantheism, and it is of one piece with it when she adds: "One does not

one, and which seems to have made Simone Weil more nearly at ease with a heavenful of "mediatory gods," remote, mythical, without "localization in time and space,"<sup>58</sup> than with the *one* Christ, the Only-Begotten of the Father, born in Bethlehem when Herod was king of Judaea and Augustus emperor of Rome.

It was not that Simone Weil discovered in the yearnings of all men an intimation of the Answer, in their writings an echo of the Word. She was not like one who, with eye filled with the image of her only beloved, ear filled with his voice, hears and sees his onliness everywhere. This would have been the marvel of a flowering heart. But, as all her human relationships without exception show, her heart was injured and shrunken at its roots; and so injured, she "could" not abide with Christ, the One, beside whom there is no other. Fearful of engaging herself without reserve, always torn—she once wrote: "At present I have the impression that I am lying, whatever I do, whether it be by remaining outside the Church or by entering it"<sup>59</sup>—she seemed compelled to "multiply" the Incarnation and to see in the various religious traditions but "different reflections of the same truth, and perhaps equally precious."<sup>60</sup>

In her flight into "universality," Simone Weil was not satisfied with Christ as He is, as the apostles saw Him and as the Church believes in Him. While in the United States, she drew up a list of twenty-seven "images of Christ," among which figure Odin, Adonis and Orestes, Antigone and Snow White;<sup>61</sup> and without batting an eyelash, she offers to us the thought that "Baal and Astarte"—who represent nature worship at its grossest, against whose lewd and sensual rites Scripture cried out as an abomination—"were perhaps representations of Christ and the Virgin."<sup>62</sup> In all seriousness she maintained as probable that

love humanity; one loves this or that man. This is not a legitimate love; to love mankind is alone legitimate" (*La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 251). Needless to say that here she completely contradicts the biblical command which gives us the neighbor to love, not mankind. She also makes clearer now what she meant when she said: "From my earliest childhood I have always had the Christian idea of love for one's neighbor." It was not the Christian idea: for her to love was to love impersonally, impartially, anonymously, "equally," as sun and rain do (see, for instance, *Waiting for God*, pp. 97-98).

58. *Letter to a Priest*, pp. 25, 20.

59. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 32.

60. *Letter to a Priest*, p. 34.

61. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, pp. 290-291.

62. *Letter to a Priest*, p. 15.

many of the names of Greek divinities, such as Apollo, Eros, and Proserpine, were "in reality various names for designating one single divine Person, namely the Word."<sup>63</sup>

These and similar ideas were not the fruit of scholarship, not the inescapable result of hard scientific work, for their scientific basis is more than weak, it is nil; and there are many indications that Simone Weil knew this. Yet, in spite of her honesty and almost brutal candor in other areas of her life, she seriously maintained these ideas out of what must have been an inner compulsion. I can see no other explanation for the way she dealt with ancient texts and turned them in favor of the bias she shared with Marcion, that the pure Christian faith has its roots anywhere but in Israel and that it owes nothing to the Old Testament. To give only one example: "The Egyptian *Book of the Dead*," she wrote, "at least three thousand years old, and doubtless very much older, is filled with evangelic charity," and then went on to quote from these protestations of guiltlessness: "Lord of Truth, I bring thee the truth . . . I have destroyed evil for thee . . . I have killed no man. I have made no man weep. I have let no man suffer hunger. I have never been the cause of a master's doing harm to his slave. I have never made any man afraid. I have never adopted a haughty tone. I have never turned a deaf ear to just and true words."<sup>64</sup> But what she presents to us as a sign of the presence of the evangelical spirit in Egypt long before Jesus preached in Israel is in fact its very opposite. It is a magic formula with which a man hoped to force his way into the Underworld. An unabashed insistence on one's own purity and perfection, it is devoid of humility, it knows nothing of sin, it shows no repentance, it begs no forgiveness. Why was Simone Weil oblivious of all this? Why did she not see the true character of this spell? How could she describe it as "words as sublime even as those of the Gospel"?<sup>65</sup> Was it because she wished to "prove" one of her preconceptions? In any case, her very next words are: "The Hebrews, who for four centuries were in contact with Egyptian civilization, refused to adopt this sweet spirit. They wanted power."<sup>66</sup>

This want of care, this recklessness, with which Simone Weil treated texts is particularly embarrassing in her willful use of the words and

63. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

65. *Waiting for God*, p. 144.

66. *Letter to a Priest*, p. 14.

acts of Christ, as when she writes: "Christ began His public life by changing the water into wine. He ended by transforming the wine into blood. He thus marked His affinity to Dionysus."<sup>67</sup> A fountain, a swamp—both are water, but one is living and clean while the other is foul and dead. No more can we equate the wine of Christ and the wine of Dionysus, and to make Christ the author of the equation is the height of arbitrariness. Further, from the fact that some of Christ's sayings (for instance, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you") have a structural similarity to the algebraical expression of the proportional mean (as  $a$  is to  $b$ , so  $b$  is to  $c$ ), she leaped to the conclusion that this similarity was intentional, that Christ recognized Himself not only as the Suffering Servant of whom Isaiah speaks or as the fulfillment of the bronze serpent in the desert, but "in the same way in the proportional mean of Greek geometry, which thus becomes the most resplendent of the prophecies."<sup>68</sup> Even if her premise were true—which, of course, it is not—there would be no ground for a conclusion that here is the "most resplendent" of the prophecies; she just wanted it to be so. It was her constant temptation to turn Jesus, the Seed of Abraham and Son of David, into the heir of Hellas. Instead of gathering all things under the headship of Christ, instead of redeeming the spirit of antiquity by His spirit, as a Christian wishes to do, she tried to "redeem" Christ in the eyes of antiquity. Or, in the words of Charles Moeller: "Instead of illuminating Greece by Christ, sought for His own sake, she illuminated Christ by Greece."<sup>69</sup>

Traditional Christianity, she tells us, cannot explain St. Paul's Christ, "the firstborn of every creature," "the reconciliation of all things" (Col 1:15, 20); only Pherecydes, Pythagoras, and Plato could do so. Thus she called Christ "the unity extending across all things," "the harmony," "the Soul of the world."<sup>70</sup> And by this she did not wish to say that the ultimate Meaning groped for by the pre-Socratic philosopher, by Pythagoras, and by Plato, is real and true in Christ; rather that St.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

69. See his excellent study on Simone Weil in his *Littérature du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et christianisme*, I, *Silence de Dieu* (Tournai: Casterman, 1954), p. 237.

70. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 200. Figuratively speaking, Christ might well be called "the Soul of the world." But this can hardly be what Simone Weil had in mind, for later in her American diary there is this entry: "Even the notion of Microcosmos implies the Incarnation. A human being who has for soul the Soul of the world" (*ibid.*, p. 263). Not a single thread ties this to the Christian faith.

Paul only restated what they saw and knew. Why was she ever trying to withdraw from the clear and common belief of the Church into things obscure and "untold," into esoteric teachings of the past, if not to withdraw from her self? In the midst of the often so fantastic entries in her journal is a meditation which, terribly overstated though it is, is most moving as it tells her desire to be a tool of truth: "The soul that is outside of justice—outside of faith—lies. To say 'I' is to lie. Lord, I am nothing but error. Error is nothing but nothingness. Lord, that my whole soul may know this, and all the parts of my soul, and even my body. That my soul may be to my body and to God only what this pen is to my hand and to the paper—an intermediary."<sup>71</sup> So she prayed, sincerely I am sure, and yet shunned all safeguards against error. To be that pure instrument, what better—indeed what other—way would there have been for her than to submit to the Church as voice and bond of truth? But a *magisterium* teaching with authority, a social body in which wisdom has a home—this irritated her.<sup>72</sup> She wanted to go it alone, to live in a self-imposed exile which allowed her to keep company with the dim and distant figures of mythology.

#### CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND RISEN

To say that she had a predilection for the dim and distant is not to say that Christ was unreal to Simone Weil; Christ fastened to the cross was fearfully and lovingly real, and yet the Christ she looked up to was not the real Christ. At Solesmes, where she heard Jeremiah's Lamenta-

71. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

72. Though she herself was never known to give way in the least in an argument, Simone Weil wanted the Church to relax the rule of truth. Needless to say, she objected to the Church's denunciation of error, the *anathema sit*. But what is strange is that she thought its use kept "the Church from being Catholic other than in name" (*Letter to a Priest*, p. 63; see also *Waiting for God*, p. 77). To be Catholic, then, seems to have meant to her to give free rein to the greatest variety of doctrines, and her ideal of the Church seems to have been an omnium-gatherum, an anarchy. "The society of those who love Christ," she once said, "is not really a society, it is a friendship." And when she spoke of friendship, the qualities she most insisted on were distance and the absence of any pleasure in, or even desire for, oneness of mind. She had a deep horror of the "collective," of social pressure, of public opinion, and once called the devil "the father of prestige." But one wonders whether her repugnance was pure in its inner origin, since time and again she confused the collective and the truly social, pressure and authority, and placed the general consent of the faithful on a par with public opinion. "One must not be an 'I,' much less a 'we,'" is one of her mottoes. "Cultivate the feeling of being at home in exile. To be rooted in no-place." (*La Connaissance surnaturelle*, pp. 200, 272; *Waiting for God*, pp. 200-209; *Gravity and Grace*, p. 86.)

tions and the suffering of Christ sung, "the thought of the Passion," she tells us, "entered into my being once and for all,"<sup>73</sup> the Passion, in which Love submits, suffers, not by constraint but by consent.<sup>74</sup> The real proof that Christianity is divine, she wrote, is in the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"<sup>75</sup> It "is the perfect beauty of the accounts of the Passion" that is the thing miraculous, the thing that "compels me to believe. . . . The cross is enough for me."<sup>76</sup> She calls the cross a balance and a lever, a going down, necessary for a rising up: "Heaven's descending upon earth raises earth to heaven."<sup>77</sup> It is the balance on which God outweighed the entire universe; on which a body, frail and light, but God, lifted up the whole world. Archimedes' "Give me a point to stand on and I will move the world" is answered by the Crucified. The cross is the fulcrum, "there can be no other. It has to be at the intersection of the world and that which is not the world. The cross is this intersection."<sup>78</sup>

It is impossible to quote the many passages that show Simone Weil's awareness of the Passion; often and vividly she expressed what her inner being realized, that here is the heart of the Christian faith, here the Christian way. But all the time her realization was awry, for she tried to sever the Passion from the mystery of the Resurrection, with which it is one, for it is Christ's dying *and* rising which are our salvation. "If the Gospel omitted all mention of Christ's resurrection," she wrote, "faith would be easier for me."<sup>79</sup> Hers were not the objections of those who think that science forbids them to accept the Easter mystery; her difficulties were within herself—but that is not to say they were more valid. During His Passion, she declared, Christ was stripped of every appearance of justice, so that even His friends were no longer fully aware that He was perfectly just. And she went on to ask: How else could they have slept while He suffered? How could they have fled? How could they have denied Him? But "after the resurrection," she continued, "the infamous character of His execution was effaced by the glory; and today, after twenty centuries of adoration, the debasement

73. *Waiting for God*, p. 68.

74. *Intuitions pré-chrétiennes* (Paris: La Colombe, 1951), p. 55.

75. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 139.

76. *Letter to a Priest*, p. 55.

77. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 145.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 146; see also *Letter to a Priest*, p. 72; and *Waiting for God*, p. 136.

79. *Letter to a Priest*, p. 55.

which is the very essence of the Passion is hardly felt by us any more. All we remember is the suffering, and that only vaguely, for sufferings imagined always lack 'down-drag.' We no longer picture Christ to ourselves as dying the death of a common criminal. Even St. Paul wrote: 'If Jesus Christ is not risen, vain is our faith' (1 Cor 15:17), and yet the agony on the cross is something more divine than the resurrection: it is the point where the divinity of Christ is concentrated. But today the glorious Christ conceals from us that He was made 'a curse' (Gal 3:13)."<sup>80</sup>

This much is clear: Simone Weil did not doubt that Christ had risen, but His resurrection was not to her liking, warring as it did against her concept of God and the world, and the idea she had thus formed for herself of the Passion. She had little regard, almost disdain, for anything that was not suffering, which she called "man's superiority over God."<sup>81</sup> To her, pain, and nothing else, was purity, that is, pain in the extreme, the death agony; hence she felt that once Christ was accepted, not only as the Victim but also as the King of glory, His image was distorted; that only before He was thus accepted, only when helpless, tormented, and deserted had He been for His followers "an absolutely pure being."<sup>82</sup> "Christ's healing the sick, raising the dead" she saw as "the humble, human, almost low part of His mission," while, in a complete misuse of the word, she named "supernatural" "the sweat of blood, the unsatisfied longing for human consolation, the supplication that He might be spared, the sense of being abandoned by God."<sup>83</sup> Her American notebooks begin beautifully: "The resurrection is Christ's pardon to those who killed Him." But a few lines later she adds: "The joy of Easter is not that which follows sorrow, not freedom

80. *Intuitions pré-chrétiennes*, p. 84. Simone Weil may be right that there are many Christians who would like the glory without the cross, many also who today shed tears for the Crucified and yet would have been unmoved had they really seen Him (*La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 288). But this does not in the least change the fact that the pain of Christ and His triumph are inseparably one. It is not on Easter Sunday but on Good Friday that the Church sings: "We adore thy cross, O Lord, and we praise and glorify thy holy resurrection, for behold, by the wood of the cross, joy came into the whole world." Hence it is misleading to say, as some admirers of Simone Weil have done, that though she failed to understand the glorious half of the Christian message, she had a profound grasp of the sorrowful. There is no halving of the gospel.

81. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 131.

82. *The Need for Roots*, p. 220.

83. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 139.

after chains, fill after hunger, reunion after separation. It is the joy which hovers over sorrow and fulfills it."<sup>84</sup> She is obviously wrong: the Easter alleluia *is* the song of freedom, it *does* hymn the breaking of the chains, the conquest over dust and death. The resurrection *is* victory, *is* triumph; sin *will* cease and the good endure. But Simone Weil had become so infatuated with the idea of unrelieved suffering and self-effacement as the very meaning of our life that the resurrection, as the unfolding of Christ's power, the manifestation of His Lordship and oneness with the Father, put her at a loss.

"The infinite which is in man is at the mercy of a little piece of iron; such is the human condition." When a dagger is touched to a man's throat, everything in him is reduced to that point, his life is delivered to cold metal, and God seems far away.<sup>85</sup> Simone Weil saw this, man's fragile state, with great clarity. But she looked at it so often and so long that she saw little else, that she became almost blind to the rest of man's condition and abhorred the thought of consolation. "There must be no consolation," she wrote; and again: "To explain suffering is to console it; therefore it must not be explained."<sup>86</sup> If we go without consolation, the bliss of nonconsolation will be ours. We must seek no relief, no recompense, no reward. We must not sweeten what is bitter by belief in immortality or belief in the providential ordering of events. We must dismiss such comforts, we must reduce ourselves to nothing,

84. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 13.

85. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 135.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 165. Harsh though it may seem, I cannot resist the thought that for all her many attempts to share the hardships of others and to be poor with the poorest, Simone Weil lacked real pity for man. Nor did she understand God's tenderness toward him, whom He made "frail" and in need of consolation. She wanted the Cross, and the Cross alone, never the kingdom, to be preached to the afflicted (*La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 26). Again she wrote: "We must not weep, so that we may not be comforted" (*Gravity and Grace*, p. 60). Struck by the fact that her counsel contradicts the beatitude, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mt 5:5), Thibon tries to soften it by saying, in an editorial note, that here she "is only condemning the tears wrung from us by the loss of temporal goods—tears which man sheds over himself." Be that as it may, when Jesus saw a widow lamenting the loss of her only son, He thought well of her tears—man's vernacular—He had compassion on her and gave her back her son (Lk 7:12-15). Simone Weil called this "human," and she was right; but in calling it "almost low," she showed that she had not grasped the marvel of Christ's humanity. That in Him appeared God's *philanthrōpia*, God's love for man, a creature made of flesh and blood, and not of light, confused her. And as she did not understand the Incarnation, so she did not understand the Church, who pleads our weakness and in her liturgy does not cease to pray to the God of Israel to redeem us from our troubles (Ps 24:22).

to absolute solitude. Only then do we possess the truth of the world, she argued, and the truth is that the world would have no reality were it not for our attachment. Hence we must accept the void. We must kill ourselves by killing in spirit all that we love and every desire that it might last.<sup>87</sup> This is what she called detachment. But it is not Christian detachment.<sup>88</sup> "One must uproot oneself," she wrote, "cut the tree and make of it a cross and then carry it every day."<sup>89</sup> But this is not the Christian cross.

Having come to Christ's crucifixion with the thought—or should I say the idol?—of unrelieved suffering, Simone Weil saw in it little else than the "absolute stripping of all sensible help, even of the love of God in so far as it can be felt"; more, she called it the "supreme tearing apart," the "infinite distance between God and God."<sup>90</sup> Fitting the Lord's suffering to her own interpretation, she narrowed it almost to the piercing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" in which, she said, "Christ accuses His Father of having abandoned Him."<sup>91</sup> This is how she saw it: Rent by affliction, our souls continually plead "Why?," seeking a purpose, a design, which is not; but if they do not cease to love, if they cherish this emptiness, then they truly sing. Likewise, or rather, incomparably so, "the cry of Christ and the silence of the Father make together the supreme harmony, of which all music is but an imitation."<sup>92</sup> All our cries of anguish vanishing "into the void," all our appeals "eternally without response," extol God's glory, but none so fully as Jesus' unheard plea on the cross; it is "the perfect praise of God's glory."<sup>93</sup>

Need I counter that Simone Weil's understanding of Christ's cry is not Christian? For to the Christian, suffering is not without purpose and his pleas do not strike against dead walls. They are heard, he knows, because Christ's cry was answered in the resurrection. It was answered even before. But I must not move too quickly, for what mystery could be more tormenting than that He who hung on the cross

87. *Gravity and Grace*, pp. 57–61.

88. Simone Weil has often been likened to St. John of the Cross. Though there is at times a similarity of language, there is no kinship of spirit. Detachment, for St. John the way, was for Simone Weil a goal.

89. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 86.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 143; *Waiting for God*, pp. 123–124.

91. *Intuitions pré-chrétiennes*, p. 103.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

93. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 86.

had said: "I and the Father are one," and now begged: "Why hast thou forsaken me"? To see the face of Love covered with spit, sweat, tears, and blood is to shudder; to know His soul at once flooded with bliss and engulfed in grief is to be dumbfounded. Yet so it is: like a peak bathed by the sun while the foot of the mountain is in shadow, His soul's summit lived in glory while that part of His soul directly concerned with His living among men and with His body was enveloped in darkness. Not simply darkness, but *our* darkness. His was not the agony of one fearful for his own salvation but the agony of the Saviour of the world. Weighted down though He was by His seeing the sins and ills of all, His sorrow was lightened and lighted by His knowledge that He was enduring it for us. This and nothing else is the meaning of St. Paul's words Simone Weil quoted so often, that He, the Sinless, was made sin, made "a curse": not that He was accursed Himself but that He bore the curse of our wickedness; taking upon Himself our bitter lot, identifying Himself with our anguished state, He set us free. But Simone Weil wrote: "The Cross is hell accepted. Suffering is a passing toward the nothingness on high or that below."<sup>94</sup> No, Jesus was not abandoned to the despair and nothingness which is hell; when given over by His Father to the cruelty of His persecutors, He was given over to the demands of His own love—a love so far from withdrawal that even in the midst of pain He promised paradise to the penitent thief, and to His mother the world.

The cry of Golgotha *was* piercing, Simone Weil was right but more so than she thought: wrung from the lips of the Innocent, it pierced the heavens. She was right: it was the question of all sufferers which the great Sufferer made His own; and yet it was, at the same time, the answer He gave to His foes, indeed His authentication for ages to come. For the cry was the beginning of a long psalm every Israelite was wont to pray, a psalm which begins in grief and ends as a song of hope; a vision which describes the bitter and yet triumphant trials of the Messiah—something Simone Weil completely overlooked. Could there be the slightest doubt, then, that when Jesus uttered its first words, the whole twenty-first psalm and its total meaning were before His mind? Here are some of its pleas and prophecies:

*I am a worm, not a man;  
the scorn of men, despised by the people. . . .*

94. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

*I am like water poured out;  
 all my bones are racked. . . .  
 They have pierced my hands and my feet . . .<sup>95</sup>  
 they divide my garments among them. . . .  
 But you, O Lord, be not far from me;  
 O my help, hasten to aid me. . . .  
 I will proclaim your name to my brethren. . . .  
 All the ends of the earth  
 shall remember and turn to the Lord;  
 All the families of the nations  
 shall bow down before Him.  
 For dominion is the Lord's,  
 and He rules the nations.*

When Christ, then, cried out His distress with a loud voice, He solemnly proclaimed that He suffered in virtue of messianic mercy, and that risen, He would lead the nations and bring them under the kingship of Yahweh. O Wisdom which, to confound the would-be-wise, used a cry of anguish to claim victory!<sup>96</sup>

#### CREATION AND MAN'S EXISTENCE

"My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This moment is the incomprehensible perfection of love, the love that passes all understanding."<sup>97</sup> If we ask Simone Weil why it bespeaks such love and praise, she answers us: "Because there cannot be two more separated than are the Father and the Son at the moment in which the Son uttered the

95. The translation of this verse follows the Septuagint. Today's Hebrew text being unintelligible, many reconstructions have been suggested, for instance: "They have bound my hands and my feet," or: "My hands and my feet are wasted away." For a discussion see Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1953), I, 100-101.

96. For a profound meditation on Christ's cry, see Charles Journet's "La quatrième parole du Christ en Croix" (*Nova et Vetera*, XXVII, 1, Jan.-March 1952, pp. 47-69), to which these two paragraphs owe much. Fiedler, in his article on Simone Weil in *Commentary*, writes: "There is scarcely a Christian church that dares remind its faithful that the final words of Jesus were words of despair, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!'" (p. 41). Quite apart from the fact that the Catholic Church does not hesitate to remind her faithful of this cry—it is part of her liturgy—the cry is not "the final words of Jesus." To suppress "It is consummated" (Jn 19:30) and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46) is to destroy the meaning of the cry and to give to the reader unfamiliar with the Passion an entirely false impression, though even such a reader ought to realize that the cry was not uttered in despair. For is it likely that any man in despair would turn to heaven and say the loving words "My God, my God"?

97. *Intuitions pré-chrétiennes*, p. 131.

eternal cry: 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"<sup>98</sup> In order to understand her answer, we must look again at her philosophy of creation. Here are some excerpts from her American diary:

Even before the Passion, already in the act of creation, God empties Himself of His divinity, humbles Himself, takes the form of a slave.

For God, creation did not consist of extending Himself but of withdrawing Himself. . . . The creation, the Passion, the Eucharist—always the same movement of retreat. This movement is love.

God's great crime against us is having created us; it is that we exist. Our great crime against God is our existence. When we forgive God our existence, our existence is forgiven by God.

The Passion is the punishment for the creation. The creation is a trap where the devil catches God. God falls into it through love. . . . Faith is believing that God is love and nothing else. This is not yet the right expression. Faith is believing that reality is love and nothing else. As a child, in jest, hides himself from his mother behind a chair, so God amuses Himself by separating God from creation. We are this jest of God.

Our sin is the will to be, and our punishment is the belief that we are. The expiation is the will to be no longer; and salvation for us consists in seeing that we are not. Adam made us believe that we are; Christ showed us that we are not. To make us understand that we are not-being, God made Himself not-being.

The prodigal son demands of his father the share that falls to him, and then squanders it in loose living. . . . This share is free will. . . . "Give me my share," this is original sin. Give me free will, the choice of good and evil. This gift of free will, what is it if not creation itself? What from the viewpoint of God is creation, is sin from the viewpoint of the creature.

In what sense has Christ atoned for mankind? To atone is to restore what one has taken unjustly. Mankind stole free will, the choice of good and evil. Christ gave it back in learning obedience. Birth is a participation in the theft of Adam. Death is a participation in the restitution of Christ. But this participation does not save unless it is consented to. Salvation is consenting to die.

My existence is a lessening of God's glory. God gives it to me that I may desire to lose it.<sup>99</sup>

98. *Ibid.*

99. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, pp. 14, 26, 225-226, 222, 175, 167-168, 169,

I find it painful to read and write down these words, so completely divorced from all biblical faith. They are gnosticism in all its deceiving glamour,<sup>100</sup> with every tie to Judaeo-Christian wisdom gone. Gone is God's majesty, the God who speaks, and earth and hearts tremble; gone the God of whom St. Paul said, and it was in Athens that he spoke: "He is not far from any one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Ac 17:27-28). Gone is the world that God not only made but sustains with loving power, the heavens and the earth which He beheld and which were good in His sight and forever sing His glory. Gone is the dignity of man, whom the Church's liturgy proclaims as "marvelously created and ennobled, and even more marvelously renewed." Gone also the meaning of time rooted in eternity, of "timeless time" (Péguy); for Simone Weil time and space are hardly more than the stage for man's disappearance.

The whole of the Old and New Testaments cries out against her many confusions. She tries in some way to reconcile the irreconcilable, Moses and Mani,<sup>101</sup> and so makes the Lord, the All-Ruler, to whom is

and 132. In defense of Simone Weil's "We are not-being," some writers invoke St. Catherine of Siena's "I am she who is not, and thou art He who is." But this comparison is no more substantial than that with St. John of the Cross. The doubled knowledge of God and self (Bl. Angela of Foligno's "double abyss") was indeed a recurrent theme with St. Catherine. "Thou art life, eternal God, and I am death. Thou art light and I am darkness. Thou art infinite and I am finite," she prayed, a lover's way of saying that her being is from Him and that whatever goodness and wisdom there is in her is from Him. This is not my interpretation, for here is another of her prayers: "In thy nature, eternal God, I perceive my own nature. And what is my nature? My nature is fire." What a world of difference, too, between Simone Weil's and her vision of creation! "Eternal Father, how came it to pass that thou didst create us?" St. Catherine asked. "The fire [of thy love] compelled thee . . . thou didst not look upon the offense we would cause thee. . . . Thou didst remain in charity, for thou art nothing but the fire of charity, thou art mad with love of thy creation." (From various Letters and Prayers of St. Catherine, as quoted by Johannes Jorgensen, *Saint Catherine of Siena*, trans. by Ingeborg Lund, New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1944, pp. 302, 375, 369, and 341.)

100. One of the first to point out the gnostic element in Simone Weil was Père Robert Rouquette, S.J., in his "Mystère de Simone Weil," *Études*, LXXXIV, 268 (Jan.-March 1951), pp. 88-106. Marcel Moré, in "La Pensée religieuse de Simone Weil," *Dieu Vivant*, No. 17 (1950), pp. 35-68, has shown certain parallels between Simone Weil and the Cathari, but in trying to present her as a conscious and willful heretic, he has, I fear, overstated his case. However wrong her thought, her sincerity, I think, cannot be doubted.

101. Lest any reader think that I am imputing intentions to Simone Weil that were not her own, I quote from her *Letter to a Priest*, in which she writes: "There is not, as far as I can see, any real difference—save in the forms of expression—between the Manichaean and Christian conceptions concerning the relationship between good and evil" (p. 41). To speak only of their basic tenet: According to the

glory and honor and power because He has created all things (Apoc 4:8, 11), a victim of the devil. Again, not only does she identify man's existence and man's sin, she misinterprets the gift of freedom as if it were essentially its abuse. Blinded to the fact that freedom is the very life and the idiom of a thinking being who cleaves to the good, she cannot see that what makes man God's likeness is his response-ability, that he is answerable for his life because he is spoken to by God and given the awesome power to answer. Her confusion goes further still, for she does not see how absurd it is to call freedom man's theft, which is the same as saying that he was free before he was free, that he is before he is. Nor does she seem to feel the enormity of speaking in one breath of God's love and of His crime in having created man. Thus all is discarded, God's dignity and man's, and all, it seems, for the sake of the void, which looks so much like the pagan nightmare of primeval chaos. Why? One cannot help wonder, Why?

But one is not astonished that, having started on this road, Simone Weil followed it with relentless logic. And yet one shudders to read a prayer of hers, in which she equates her own idea of "decreation" with the following of Christ, and so asks for an utter stripping, not of selfishness but of her very existence. "Say to God," she wrote in her American diary:

Father, in the name of Christ, grant me this.

That it be beyond my power to make any movement of my body, even the merest attempt at movement, correspond to any act of my will, as if I were a complete paralytic. That I be incapable of receiving the slightest sensation, like one who is completely blind and deaf and deprived of his other three senses. That it be beyond my power to forge the least link between two thoughts, however simple, as if I were one of those complete idiots who not only cannot count or read but who have never learned to speak. That I be insensible to any kind of pain or joy and incapable of any love for any being, for any thing, even for myself, as if I were an old man, completely doddered.

Father, in the name of Christ, really grant me all this.

That this body of mine move or be still, with perfect suppleness or

Manichaeans, there are two eternal principles, light and darkness. The god of light, good and holy, is the maker of the spiritual world, whereas darkness is the maker of matter and made it like itself, evil. It is against this doctrine that the Church proclaims in her creed her belief in God the All-Maker, Creator of heaven and earth, of spirit and matter, of all things visible and invisible. Could there be a greater clash of doctrines?

rigidity, in uninterrupted conformity with thy will. That my hearing, my vision, my taste, my smell, my touch, receive the perfect and exact imprint of thy creation. That this intelligence of mine be fully lucid and link up all ideas in perfect conformity with thy truth. That my sensibility experience every shade of pain and joy in the greatest possible intensity and in all their purity. That my love be an utterly devouring flame of loving God for the sake of God. That then all this be torn out of me, be devoured by God, be transformed into the substance of Christ, and be given as food to the wretched who lack all nourishment for body and soul. And that I myself be paralyzed, blind, deaf, idiotic, and doddering.

Father, work this transformation now, in the name of Christ. And though I ask it with an imperfect faith, give heed to my petition as if it were uttered with perfect faith.

Father, since thou art the Good and I am the mediocre, wrest from me this body and this soul to make them things that are all thine. And let there remain of me, even through eternity, only this wrestling itself, or even nothing.

One could ask this, she went on to say, only in spite of oneself. But if, in spite of oneself, it is asked with entire and unreserved consent, indeed with violence, then the soul enters into its nuptial night with God, for, she said, "marriage is a rape consented to." And the result of this union is "to make of the personhood of a man a simple go-between for his flesh and God."<sup>102</sup> Here, of course, the bridal imagery so dear to the author of the Song of Songs, to the prophets, to St. Paul, and to Christ Himself, is perverted, for it is not the way of God's love (nor is

102. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, pp. 204-205; see also Davy, *The Mysticism of Simone Weil*, pp. 52-54. The idea of personhood seems to have frightened Simone Weil. All through her writings there are passages which refer to God as personal and impersonal. Some have thought that when she said "impersonal" she really meant "suprapersonal," for God is indeed everything He is superabundantly. It is difficult, however, to attach such an interpretation to the following sentence: "The Father in heaven, who abandons His Son and keeps silent; the Christ abandoned, nailed in silence—two impersonal Divinities which are reflected each in the other and make only one God" (*La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 78). In any case, she leaves no room for doubt that human personhood must go, and calls not our personhood but its renunciation the image of God in us (*ibid.*, p. 37). "The great obstacle," she wrote, "to the loss of personhood" (which loss she called "the goal") "is the feeling of guilt." The practice of virtue, she added, is for the sake of ridding oneself of this feeling and so attaining this "goal"—not for the sake of coming closer to the word which God speaks at the birth of each man, that is, of becoming more a person, but for the sake of becoming less (*ibid.*, p. 165). Further: What is sacred in man is the impersonal aspect in a human being, hence the concept of human rights is specious ("Beyond Personalism," *Cross Currents*, II, 3, Spring 1952, pp. 59-76).

it the way of man's) to violate and to trample underfoot man's being, rather to lift it up and make it new.

What Simone Weil asked in her prayer is something that can never be asked in the name of Christ. The road she walks in it is not His road, which leads to transfiguration and not to nothingness. But she held unfeignedly that the man striving for perfection must become a corpse, as it were, in order to be the abode of the Divine, for only inert matter—"more beautiful than the most beautiful of human beings"<sup>103</sup>—responds, she said, to God's justice. This thought is bound up with her conception that the human soul consists of two parts: one created, mind and will, which, in creating, God abandoned, since it is not Himself; the other uncreated, which, being Himself, He retains under His care and which for Simone Weil is supernatural love, or "the Life, the Light, the Word . . . the presence of God's only Son here below."<sup>104</sup> Those in whom He is thus present are "not adopted sons of God," she declared with great emphasis, "but true sons. Yet the Son is unique," she went on in her speculation, and "it is therefore He who enters these souls. But in that case even the greatest saints will not see the kingdom of heaven. For almost all have done or said things which, it seems, Christ would not have said or done." She continued with what for one who has had even a glimpse of Christ is unbelievable despair: "After all, there is perhaps only one man saved in a generation. For the others, those who are not positively lost, one must imagine something equivalent to the notions of purgatory, reincarnation, etc."<sup>105</sup>

Here and elsewhere Simone Weil's thought varies and is not always consistent on small points; still, as a whole, her philosophy is altogether consistent, and it is—I cannot see how one can draw any other conclusion—as far removed as can be from the teaching of the Church, indeed from any outlook which, by even the most strenuous stretching of the term, can be called Christian. When she said that she adhered completely to the mysteries of the Christian faith, this profession is emptied of meaning by her having added that her adherence was of love and not of affirmation, and that the dogmas of the Church are owed "respectful attention, not adherence."<sup>106</sup> Likewise her saying that her heart had been forever transported into the Blessed Sacrament—so

103. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 260.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

106. Perrin and Thibon, *op. cit.*, p. 53; *Letter to a Priest*, pp. 57, 60.

convincing when read by itself—does not have the meaning a Catholic would attach to it, since Simone Weil thought that for the Greeks the Eleusinian mysteries, for the Hindus yoga breathing, for Druids and certain Californian Indians lightning, were also more or less sacraments, even the equivalent of the Eucharist.<sup>107</sup> Few things reveal more subtly that her thought, at least, was nowhere near the threshold of the Church than her turning the eucharistic mystery upside down. She liked to say that "at the center of the Catholic religion a little formless matter is found, a little piece of bread."<sup>108</sup> The truth is exactly the opposite: Christ is the center. In the sacramental order, the world of the spirit is not reduced to matter; on the contrary, matter is raised to become the server of grace; it is freed as it were from down-drag, made the bearer of the Spirit, and in the Sacrament of the Altar it is the merest veil for the Christ of glory. No sacrament of decreation, the Eucharist is the hallowing of man and of all creation.

#### ISRAEL

Having all along misconstrued the mysteries of faith, Simone Weil had to misunderstand, even rebel against, the God-given mission of the ancient Israel. "The Jews, that little bunch of uprooted men, have caused the uprooting of the whole round globe," she wrote. Christianity, through its link with Israel's past, was thus for her a thing without roots, roots, that is, in the life of the nations. Colonial conquest, capitalism, Marxism, even anti-Semitism, every uprooting movement, she made follow on the spiritual invasion of the world by this handful of "fugitive slaves." Again she wrote: "*Israel*. The whole of it, starting from Abraham and including him, is foul and atrocious, as if by design (except for some prophets). As if to tell as clearly as can be: Watch out! Here is evil!"<sup>109</sup> Her vocabulary here is borrowed from the crudest anti-Semitism, from the vilifications of those who make the Jews a whipping boy for their own sins. But in Simone Weil they were the merest logic. How could she help hating the intimate of the one God,

107. *Letter to a Priest*, p. 16; *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, pp. 313, 146.

108. *Waiting for God*, p. 199.

109. *La Pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1948), pp. 192, 189; see also *Gravity and Grace*, p. 219. *Gravity and Grace*, the English translation of *La Pesanteur et la grâce*, omits a whole chapter, entitled "Israel," containing this and many similar passages. No doubt, the publishers wished to spare the sensibilities of their readers, and not least those of Simone Weil's admirers. But does not such an omission misrepresent Simone Weil's thought?

who allows no other gods beside Him? Though often sinning, stiff-necked, and unfaithful, Israel was yet chosen to be His champion, and so, by this its role in the economy of salvation, rejects everything she stands for and stands for everything she rejects.

Having made her own image of God, a silent, absent God, Simone Weil could not hear the God of Israel, the God who speaks and who says:

*Can a woman forget her suckling babe,  
be without compassion for the child of her womb?  
Even these may forget,  
yet I will not forget you.*

(Is 49:15)

He is the people's and the world's Ruler, Shepherd, Bridegroom, whose prophets knew they served a Sovereign, loving and therefore jealous. They loathed compromise, the carrying of water on both shoulders; they denounced idolatrous wanderings to hilltops and groves. And as they were compassionate, they were severe, threatening punishment, invoking God's fire on those who whored after new and false gods, Elijah even slaying the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. All this galled Simone Weil. "The curse of Israel weighs on Christianity. Atrocities, the Inquisition, the extermination of heretics and unbelievers—this is Israel,"<sup>110</sup> she cried out. It is true, the Church is the heir of prophetic anger, indeed the only one to keep it alive, though for her the slaying of the wicked is not and can never be the answer to evil, nor was it the ultimate answer for the prophets; even Elijah realized that God was not in the fire or the storm but in the gentle whisper of air. For the Church the Cross is the final word, but love and forgiveness are perverted unless they are seen as the love and forgiveness of the God who is stern because holy.

The true God is Simone Weil's stumbling block and not the Jews, not those Christians who have forgotten forbearance toward unbelievers, who have thought to solve evil by the sword and not the Cross. "Christianity has become totalitarian, conquering, exterminating, because it has not developed the notion of God's absence and nonaction here below. It has attached itself to Yahweh as much as to Christ,"<sup>111</sup> she wrote, and heaped abuse on the God of Israel as a "carnal God,"

110. *La Pesanteur et la grâce*, p. 190.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

a "tribal God," a "heavy God."<sup>112</sup> Deaf to the blasphemy she uttered, she did not tremble to say that "Yahweh, Allah, Hitler, are earthly gods," that the devil "who offered to Christ to accomplish for Him the centuries-old promises to the Messiah was none other than Yahweh," or at least "an aspect of Yahweh."<sup>113</sup> Only because she was herself a "fugitive," utterly homeless, could she equate the prophecies of the advent and the temptations in the desert, could she mistake the cosmic visions of the Old Testament for worldliness and materialism.

For all her repeated "waiting, waiting," Simone Weil lacked essential patience and reverence for time: time to her was not a gift but misery.<sup>114</sup> Tellingly she demanded: "We must get rid of our superstition of chronology in order to find eternity."<sup>115</sup> The God who does not disdain time, who enters it as it were that man may meet Him, overturned her concept of life, and therefore she rejected the marvel of a progressive revelation, in which God made Himself known to His people step by step, leading it to that mount which is Christ.<sup>116</sup> She could not see that Israel's swinging back and forth between splendor and slavery, between virtue and sin, holy zeal and idolatry, that the dramatic interplay between grace and freedom, was part of a divine plan. In fact she sneered at God's bringing up Israel as one does a son: "To talk of 'God the educator' in connection with this people is a bad joke . . . a shocking lie which has vitiated our civilization at its

112. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190; *Gravity and Grace*, p. 219.

113. *Gravity and Grace*, p. 129; *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, pp. 273, 46. For a Catholic, Israel's divine election is not a matter of opinion but of faith, and the God of Israel is his God. It is astonishing, therefore, or rather distressing, to see how lightly many of Simone Weil's friends and critics have treated her outbursts against the Jews. Gustave Thibon simply calls her "the daughter of the people marked with the sign of contradiction . . . and her passionate anti-Semitism is the most striking evidence of her descent" (Perrin and Thibon, *op. cit.*, p. 119). Gabriel Marcel sees her as "non-conformist . . . very far from sparing her co-religionists" ("Simone Weil," *The Month*, II, 1, July 1949, p. 12). Walter Warnach speaks of "the fanaticism of a renegade who rages against her own origin" ("Simone Weil: Das Geheimnis einer Berufung," *Wort und Wahrheit*, VIII, 10, Oct. 1953, p. 749). All this evades the issue, where it does not distort it. T. S. Eliot, who recognizes clearly that Simone Weil "falls into something very like the Marcionite heresy," can yet say that she "castigated Israel with all the severity of a Hebrew prophet" (in his Preface to *The Need for Roots*, p. viii). There was nothing of the Hebrew prophet in Simone Weil, for his severity is of love, but not so hers. The critic who has dealt most fully and most admirably with Simone Weil's stand toward Israel is Charles Moeller in "Simone Weil devant l'Eglise et l'Ancien Testament," *Cahiers Sioniens*, VI, 2 (June 1952), pp. 104-131.

114. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 92.

115. *Letter to a Priest*, p. 48.

116. Collect for the feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria.

base.”<sup>117</sup> Nothing easier than to be shocked at the many crimes the Bible records, for in contrast to pagan historians, the sacred writers did not idolize their people; with a candor that transcends the natural tendency to conceal, they laid bare its faults and the weaknesses of its great figures. Nothing easier, but nothing more revealing, for the Bible tests every man: if he looks at Israel’s many failures and does not see in them his own, he has not undergone the change of heart Christ demands, his self still reigns where God ought to reign. In the same light must be judged Simone Weil’s pronouncement: “A people chosen for blindness, chosen to be the executioners of Christ.”<sup>118</sup> Whoever sees the Crucified and then points at the Jews instead of striking his own breast is far from His spirit. Indeed, if a man should dare to deny his own part in Christ’s death, he is in danger of denying himself his part in His redemption.

Without doubt, Simone Weil’s chief accusation against Israel is that its whole life was worship of the Great Beast, service of the collective, to her the only real idolatry; what made it accursed in her eyes was that “never till the Exile,” so she thought, did its God “speak to the soul of man.”<sup>119</sup> This, of course, is patently untrue. Did He not speak to Abraham, to Moses, to Samuel, and to many others; and when He gave the Law, saying “Thou shalt,” was the “thou” not every member as well as the whole people? Stripped of their vituperation, her remarks point to a truth she saw and did not see, a truth the Church lives by: that salvation is social. It is not as isolated individuals, not as shreds or splinters, that men are saved, but as members of God’s people or at least as linked to it by faith and love. For how could there be salvation without the bond of charity? This, and not the Great Beast, is the significance of “Israel,” and this the Church has inherited, so much so that Père de Lubac can say that though her membership comes overwhelmingly from the nations, the very idea of the Church comes from the Jews.<sup>120</sup> Thus during the Easter Vigil, before she blesses the waters

117. *La Pesanteur et la grâce*, pp. 189–190.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

119. *Ibid.*, p. 189; *Gravity and Grace*, pp. 219, 216.

120. Henri de Lubac, S.J., *Catholicism*, trans. by L. C. Sheppard (New York: Longmans, Green, 1950), p. 23. For a Jewish answer to Simone Weil’s accusation against Israel, see Martin Buber, “The Silent Question,” in his *At the Turning* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), pp. 29–44. Strangely enough, Buber seems to blame her antagonism toward the Jews on “a conventional conception of Judaism created by Christianity” (p. 40). But surely he knows that the Church has always considered the Marcionite divorce of the Old and New Testaments one of her

of baptism, the Church prays: "Grant that the world in its fullness pass over to the sonship of Abraham and the dignity of Israel." To which Simone Weil replies: "Christianity ought to be purged of the heritage of Israel."<sup>121</sup>

It was not as men that she hated the Jews, but as symbols. The Old Testament stood in her way like the mighty trunk of an oak, which she could not bend, while the New, its crown, with branches supple and leaves tender, seemed to yield to her manipulations.<sup>122</sup> Thus she could at times think herself close to the Church, but can any question remain that the sum of her philosophy is altogether outside the Christian orbit? It is even a betrayal of her own best insights, of, for example, this inimitable sentence: "God loves not as I love but as an emerald is green. He is 'I love.'"<sup>123</sup>

## ENIGMA

STATING the enigma does not solve it, does not explain the origin of this strange philosophy of negation. Many have shown its historical antecedents, but no reference, however valid, to Plato or Pythagoras, to the Manichaeans or the Cathari, accounts for Simone Weil's gnosticism, for "gnosticism projects into myth one's inner experience."<sup>124</sup> It is always the turning into metaphysics of an emotional conflict, of a drama that engulfs a man's whole being; in it a man mistakes the mold of his heart for the mold of the universe.

What then is the inner source of Simone Weil's thought? How does

greatest enemies. And as if to round out the confusion Simone Weil has caused, Fiedler, after a clear account of her anti-Semitism, claims her as "a Jewish heretic rather than a Christian one," and calls her a "prophet out of Israel" with Hosea, the holy fool, as her spiritual ancestor. See his *Commentary* article, pp. 45-46.

121. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 173.

122. Simone Weil's attempt to make certain parts of the Old Testament fit her frame of mind shows once more that she could not free herself from her fetters. Nothing good must be said about the Jews; therefore she fancied that the book of Job, which she liked, must have been the translation and secularization by a Jew of a non-Jewish tale of a savior-god. Also Isaiah must be in part non-Jewish (*La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 218). To climax this, she asked whether the story of Noah's drunkenness and nakedness—another sign of biblical candor—was not a distortion of history by the Hebrews "as Semites and murderers of the Canaanites" (*Letter to a Priest*, p. 41).

123. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 77.

124. G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion* (1951), p. 17; as quoted by Claude Tresmontant, *Etudes de métaphysique biblique* (Paris: Gabalda, 1955), p. 16.

it come that a woman so profoundly drawn to the Lord yet remained so far from Him? Why did she not accept the entire Christ? Why did she try to impoverish His messianic ministry by limiting it almost to the Passion, and why did she reduce the Passion to hardly more than the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"? Why did she wish, at least at times, that Christ had not risen, that He were without His Church, that He were without link to the Israel from which He sprang? Why did she wish to remain at the intersection of Christianity and non-Christianity, all alone? Again, why did she conceive of God as withdrawn from, and powerless in, His creation? Why did the world seem to her to be ruled by necessity and down-drag? Why did she long to be reduced to a little pile of inert matter, even to nothingness, and think humility the consent to the horror of such reduction? <sup>125</sup> Why did she prefer the impersonal to the personal, affliction to God's comfort, death to life? Why did she proclaim decreation as the goal?

I should hesitate to answer these questions and to probe into the secrets of her soul had Simone Weil herself not told us, almost in so many words, how determining an experience the spiritual crisis was that she went through at the age of fourteen. As she discovered the mathematical genius of her brother, she felt dwarfed and excluded from the kingdom of truth; she thought herself unworthy to exist. Her brother's exceptional gifts threw her, as she tells us, "into one of those bottomless despairs of adolescence." There were months of "inward darkness," of deep anguish, which no one can imagine who has not lived through it. "Seriously" she "thought of dying." <sup>126</sup> This temptation to suicide she repressed, but did she ever fully conquer it? What saved her from it was the idea that it was still possible for her, in spite of her "mediocrity," to become a genius if only she concentrated perpetually on, and gave her undivided attention to, truth.

Little by little, then, she developed a philosophy that was certainly uncommon and had sparks of genius; but it retained all the darkness of its birth. Into it went the unworthiness, the dwarfdom and reduction she had imagined. She had felt deserted and alone; now she wanted to be and considered it a virtue. The social seemed evil, the Great Beast. Absence, distance, withdrawal—all guises for her despair—became the

125. *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, p. 48.

126. *Waiting for God*, p. 64.

structure of the universe. She had been tormented by the allurements of death; now she could die slowly and heroically. Hence her desire to be submerged in the mechanism and anonymity of factory life, to be mutilated and branded by the iron of misery, to bear the mark of a slave.<sup>127</sup> Hence her passion for manual labor: "Through work man turns himself into matter," she wrote. "Work is like a death." Hence too her passion for "absolute solitude," for "unconsoled affliction." She could hardly have been more candid than when she remarked: "Two ways of killing ourselves: suicide or detachment."<sup>128</sup> It would be rash to judge her, for no one can know how strong all those early impulses were and how they may have hindered her vision and imprisoned her will. Only a hard man could withhold from her his compassion. But as she deserves compassion, she deserves our honesty too. And in honesty one cannot but see and say that, though she may never have fully realized it, her philosophy was a holding on to the pain of her youth, a longspun suicide.<sup>129</sup> What disturbed her early life, what bent her thought, also injured her spirituality; and she spelled it out in her "Spiritual Autobiography" when she closed it with the strangest of all confessions: "Every time I think of the crucifixion of Christ I commit the sin of envy."<sup>130</sup> Envy and death; worse, to envy Christ His death—what could reveal more clearly and more depressingly her still unredeemed heart?

In this her anguished heart was her philosophy born. True, she is not the only one in our day to have fallen under the unnatural spell of death. The poets who hail the void, the philosophers who make man move from nothingness to nothingness, are not few and their followers are many; and among them, all that is night is preferred to the light of day. Simone Weil certainly knew this mental atmosphere, but there is little or no evidence that it was the origin of her philosophy. In fact, she was violently opposed to some of the men who were the authors of this climate. But in spite of all the many and important differences between her and them, in spite of her many exceptional qualities, she is still somehow one with them. For so much is hope "the very stuff of

127. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 66-67, 117, 120.

128. *Gravity and Grace*, pp. 235, 57, 60.

129. Nothing reveals more sadly how bitter the world had turned for her and how she turned all into bitterness than this entry in her diary: "Christ's birth was already a sacrifice. Christmas ought to be a feast as sorrowful as Good Friday" (*La Connaissance surnaturelle*, pp. 169-170).

130. *Waiting for God*, p. 83.

which our soul is made" (Gabriel Marcel), so much is despair a betrayal of man's freedom, that who abandons the first and woos the second must pay a penalty: Simone Weil, who sought to flee time, produced only a philosophy that is dated.

A dark fabric woven of subtle despair—such is Simone Weil's thought. And yet for all her shielding herself against love, for all her resistance to happiness, indeed to the joy of Christ, she could not help longing. While still in Marseilles she wrote a parable of her life, which has been called the parable of "love wedded to affliction" and which forms the Prologue to her New York and London diaries:

He entered my room and said: "Wretched one, who understands nothing, who knows nothing. Come with me and I shall teach you things you do not dream of." I followed him. He took me to a church. . . . He led me up to the altar and said to me: "Kneel down." I said to him: "I have not been baptized." He said: "Fall on your knees with love before this place, as before the abode of truth." I obeyed. He made me leave and go off to an attic from which, through the open window, one saw the whole town spread out. . . . He bade me sit down. We were alone. He spoke. Occasionally someone entered, joined the conversation, then left. . . . Sometimes he would fall silent, taking bread from a cupboard, which we shared. This bread truly had the taste of bread. Never again have I tasted anything like it. He would pour for me and pour for himself wine which had the taste of the sun and of the earth upon which that city was built.

But one day he—the man of this parable is none other than Christ—made her leave, though she fell on her knees, held him, and begged him not to drive her out. She wandered about the city, never knowing where the attic was and never seeking it, for she felt that it had all been a mistake, that her place was almost anywhere but there. Thus sorrow seems to be the parable's last word, but in the end hope breaks in:

I cannot help at times repeating to myself, with fear and remorse, a little of what he told me. How do I know whether I remember it exactly? He is not here to tell me. I know well that he does not love me. How could he love me? And yet, deep within me, something, a point of my soul, cannot resist thinking, though I tremble with fear, that perhaps, in spite of everything, he loves me.<sup>131</sup>

*Pierre Charles, S.J.*

## THE LEARNED ELDERS OF ZION

### INTRODUCTION

WE LIVE in a time when the fear of conspiracy is in the air. The free nations are confronted with a genuine conspiracy of world-wide range and unearthly danger, Communism, and it is all too easy for some people to detect its ramifications even where they do not exist. Persons who lack adequate and accurate information, and do not know how to obtain it, are particularly prone to this sort of suspicion and fear. They constitute what is called the "mass mind." Conventional, uninformed, uncritical, suspicious, and gullible, they accept as a substitute for established fact the rumors launched by individuals who claim to have "inside information," the sources of which, naturally, cannot be divulged. Such spreaders of supposedly secret knowledge cast themselves in the role of counter-conspirators, and people already disposed to believe in conspiracy as the one underlying cause of adverse events are equally disposed to believe the rumors spread by the "counter-conspirators."

And who are the villains in these conspiratorial dramas? They are likely to be persons or groups of persons who are "different," or "foreign," or otherwise outside the limited understanding or acceptance of the mass mind. Often such persons are identified only by labels which, repeated frequently enough and with sufficiently scornful an intonation, become fear-words and hate-words. At present such labels include not only "communistic," a title which identifies real conspirators, but "leftist," "liberal," "intellectual," and the like—which may not. The labels are pinned on any "outsider," who is subject to suspicion simply because he is not "one of ours." In normal times such attitudes are regrettable, but not of major importance. In times of stress, such as the present, they can lead to the infringement of basic human rights and freedoms, if not to actual persecutions and purges.

This tendency to blame all untoward developments, from the crash of an airplane to the fall of a nation, on conspiracy, is not new. In the late Roman Empire there were many who looked on the young Church as a

conspiracy, the aim of which was the destruction of Rome. How often have the Jesuits been accused of "secret power and plotting"! In the same way the Jews have been the perennial butts of the charge of conspiracy. The Nazi agitators in the 1930s portrayed them as the authors of Germany's disgrace after World War I. To the American Christian Fronters of the same period the Jews were the cause of the Depression. Even now it is not rare to hear of "organized Jewry" and the "controlled Jewish press," the "Jewish bankers," the "Jewish movie industry," and so on, always with the implication that the Jews are up to some devilry aimed at the damage or destruction of Christian society.

A classical and unusually noisome specimen of this sort of anti-Semitism is exposed in the following study, written by the late Pierre Charles, S.J., and published in 1938.<sup>1</sup> The "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" were from the beginning a fraud and a lie, propagated by a typically obscure, unscrupulous, fanatical rumor-breeder, and swallowed whole by easily frightened people all over the world. Published in the United States in the early 1920s and sold by the millions, the Protocols were exposed repeatedly, but the fraud was hard to kill, if indeed it is dead even now and not merely waiting for a new opportunity to arouse hysteria and hate.

Father Charles's exposé is neither the earliest nor the most complete. To mention only two others, published in this country, Herman Bernstein's *The Truth about "The Protocols of Zion"* (1935) and *An Appraisal of the Protocols of Zion*, by John S. Curtiss (1942), both give a more complete analysis of the hoax and its sources. Yet there are good reasons for making Father Charles's article (with a few added footnotes) available in English. For it is a monument to the honesty and courage of a great theologian and a great Christian, one who was for forty years professor of dogmatic theology at the Jesuit College in Louvain and who was the first to hold the chair of missiology at the Gregorian University in Rome. The Jews were ever the object of his Christian love and concern. He prayed for them to the Mother of our Lord: "You are indeed of their stock . . . you are of the house of David and of the tribe of Israel. It is impossible that you should not have a tender compassion for your unhappy people so often persecuted by Christians."<sup>2</sup> No wonder that the anti-Jewish measures of the Nazi tyrants in the middle '30s stirred him, as they did other Catholic leaders. In 1934, the year after Hitler's rise to power, the Archdiocesan authorities of Cologne, in an official publication answering Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, expressly denied the authenticity of the Protocols and declared that

1. *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXV, 1 (1938), 56-78.

2. Charles, *Prayer for All Men* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1941), p. 121.

they should be banished from serious discussion.<sup>3</sup> No less fearless, Father Charles published the present paper when the Führer's power was becoming more terrifying every day—when, in his own words, the Jews throughout Central Europe were "trapped, plundered, harassed, exiled, victims of 'Aryan clauses,' barred from the universities, relegated to ghetto benches, streaming out of Germany, Austria and Poland, with their synagogues burned, or closed, as in Russia."<sup>4</sup> It is therefore because of, and not in spite of, the date of its first appearance, that this essay is memorable.

Yet it is not only the learning, the love, and the fearlessness of its author that give this study authority. When it was attacked, the editors of the review in which it had appeared—all of them Jesuit professors of theology at Louvain—in a rare move took up its defense and made its thesis their own. They concluded their statement with a note that should be as stirring now as it was then: "What we demand and insist on here is that all, Christians, pagans, or Jews, be given that elementary token of Christian charity, namely care for truth, the impartial search for truth; that they be given it in everything that concerns them. If the Protocols are a lie—and they are—Catholics and priests must be the first to say so and to say so aloud, because they are disciples of Him who is the Truth."<sup>5</sup>

WILLIAM GRANGER RYAN

IN OCTOBER, 1934, in Zürich, and in May, 1935, in Bern, a lawsuit was brought before the Swiss courts, with the Association of Jewish Communities of Switzerland and the Jewish Community of Bern as plaintiffs, and Theodor Fischer, former *Führer* of the Swiss National

3. *Studien zum Mythos des XX. Jahrhunderts* (Köln: Erzbischöfliches Generalvikariat, 1934).

4. Charles, "Est-ce bien sérieux?" *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXV, 8 (1938), 969.

5. "Les Protocoles des Sages de Sion: Point final," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXV, 8, 1084. The English Jesuit review *The Month* of December 1938, in an editorial on "The Credulity of Anti-Semitism," endorsed Father Charles's findings and conclusions, and expressed its regret that Father Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp., in the "second edition of *The Mystical Body of Christ in the Modern World* still hesitates to disassociate himself completely from the puerile forgery called the Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (p. 491). And following on a letter by Father Edgar R. Smothers, S.J., who was the first in the United States to draw attention to Father Charles's study, the Jesuit weekly *America* of April 30, 1938, reiterating its own previous rejection of the Protocols, wrote in one of its Comments: "This Review believes that Catholics, so often the victims of bigotry and hatred in the past and still wrathful over the Klan, the dark horrors of the Smith campaign, the Black Legion and the Nazi persecution, should be chary of giving the least credence to similar attacks, similarly inspired, against the Jews" (p. 76). See also Dr. David Goldstein, *Jewish Panorama* (Boston: Catholic Campaigners for Christ, 1940), pp. 125-129.

Socialists and editor of the newspaper *Der Eidgenosse* ("The Confederate"), and Silvio Schnell, head of the National Front of Switzerland, as defendants. Fischer had published the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion; Schnell had distributed them and put them on sale. In this, it was charged, they had violated the law against improper literature, *Schundliteratur*. The cantonal law of Bern provides penalties for *Schundliteratur*, but it does not define this rather vague term. In German, *Schundware* means inferior merchandise; *Schundpreis* what is dirt cheap; and *Schund* plain and simple means low-class goods, rejects, trash, a charlatan's remedies. The plaintiffs maintained that the Protocols, being a forgery maliciously attributed to the Jews with the intent of rendering them odious, fell in the category of *Schundliteratur*.

The arguments before the court of the first instance proved with dazzling clarity that the Protocols were indeed a forgery. On the 14th of May, 1935, the tribunal declared them *Schundliteratur*, handed down a stern opinion and, by virtue of the cantonal law of Bern, ordered Schnell to pay a fine of twenty, and Fischer a fine of fifty, francs. The plaintiffs had demanded nothing more. There was no question at all of an action for damages but rather of a simple application of the criminal law.

At once the defendants lodged an appeal, which was pleaded before the Supreme Court of the Canton of Bern on the 27th of October, 1937. Its decision, reversing the judgment of the lower court and acquitting the defendants, could make the little-informed public believe that the magistrates of Bern considered the Protocols authentic. Nothing could be further from the truth. The decision confirmed the judge of the first instance in his evaluation of their influence on the public.<sup>6</sup> But the legal question arose: Just what is the *Schundliteratur* penalized by the cantonal law of Bern? The Supreme Court declared that, in the mind of the legislator, Article 14 of the cantonal law had to do with immoral or pornographic literature, and that the Protocols, though certainly a work of bad faith, a malignant and venomous forgery, be-

6. "It may well be asked," the court of appeal declared, "whether in the long run it is permissible to compel one part of the Swiss people (the Swiss Jews) to rely upon newspaper publicity and educating the people as defense against such an absolutely unwarranted and unqualified insult and besmirching," but expressed its confidence in the cool judgment of the majority of the Swiss people. See Emil Raas and Georges Brunschvig, *Vernichtung einer Fälschung* (Zürich, 1938), pp. 58-59.

longed, not to that obscene literature against which the Bern law wishes to protect the public, but to political literature, which the federal state and not the canton has the duty to watch over. But in order to show, within the limits of its power, its disapproval, the court, though acquitting the defendants, ordered them to bear all the costs of the defense.

It is certain that the judgment of the lower court risked creating a dangerous precedent. Almost all religious controversies would end by leading to the law court. Let a Protestant accuse Catholics of Mariolatry, of giving Mary the adoration due to God alone, and the judge, on the complaint of the Catholic, would have to hand down a judgment on "hyperdulia," the special honor and veneration of the Blessed Virgin. Let a Catholic declare Calvin and Zwingli guilty of heresy, and the court would have to pronounce on the orthodoxy of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. One readily understands that the appellate court had to reject such a widening of the definition of *Schundliteratur*.

This decision, which was a great disappointment to the Jewish complainants, in no way affects the question of the authenticity of the Protocols. But it may serve as an occasion for an exposé of the question, a question which would have been solved long ago had passion not blinded so many minds.

## THE SPREAD OF THE PROTOCOLS

IN 1905—the date is important—Sergei Nilus, a Russian, had printed in Russian at the government press at Tsarkoe Selo a book as strange in title as in content. In its preface he stated: "In 1901, I succeeded in obtaining from a person of my acquaintance . . . a manuscript which was put at my disposal and in which was exposed, with extraordinary precision and truthfulness, the Jewish-Masonic world conspiracy, which must bring our corrupt world to its inevitable ruin. This manuscript I submit here, under the general title of *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, to all who wish to hear, see, and understand." It ought to be noted that in Sergei Nilus's book the Protocols are but an appendix. The body of the work is a revised edition of another publication by the same author, which had appeared in Moscow in 1901 under

the title *The Great in the Little: The Coming of the Antichrist and the Rule of Satan on Earth*.<sup>7</sup> The Protocols of the Elders of Zion were re-edited by Sergei Nilus in 1911, 1912, and 1917, always in Russian. A copy of the 1905 edition can be found in the Library of the British Museum.<sup>8</sup>

In the fall of 1919, a German, Captain Mueller von Hausen, under the pseudonym Gottfried zur Beck, translated, not, as is sometimes said, Nilus's book itself, but its appendix, that is, the Protocols, adding notes, explanations, and references of all kinds. The volume carries the title *Die Geheimnisse der Weisen von Zion*, "The Secrets of the Wise Men of Zion," and its pages 68-143 contain the Protocols as published by Nilus. Handsomely done from a typographical point of view, the volume is dedicated "To the princes of Europe," as a warning to put themselves on guard against the Jewish conspiracy which menaces thrones and altars.

Vigorously sponsored by the German nobility; backed by Prince Otto von Salm, by Prince Joachim Albert of Prussia, and even by ex-Kaiser Wilhelm, who recommended it to his visitors at Doorn; popularized in cheap editions; trumpeted by the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* of Count von Reventlow and by the *Kreuzzeitung*, which incessantly proclaimed the Jewish peril and saw in the Protocols the explanation of Germany's misfortunes—the work set out on a triumphant career throughout the world.

A Polish translation appeared in about 1920; three French editions followed one another in rapid succession; soon there was an English edition, three American, one Scandinavian, one Italian, and one Japa-

7. In the first edition of *The Great in the Little*, in 1901, Nilus declared that, through democratic institutions like constitutions, parliaments, universal suffrage, and universal compulsory education, the Antichrist had already conquered the whole of Europe. Only the holy rule of the Czar could halt the victorious march of the Evil One. And when the Antichrist appears in person, he will be welcomed and acknowledged by all the Jews, because he himself will be a Jew. With the help of secret societies, he will dethrone emperors and kings, and establish a universal kingdom—in this his chief tool will be the introduction of democratic institutions. All this, Nilus assured his readers (or rather, the one reader he had in mind, the Czar), he knew through the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost. When, in 1905, he published the second edition, with the Protocols as an appendix, he pointed to the Protocols as the perfect proof of his inspiration. Is it too much to assume that in his obsessive fear of democratic institutions and in his urge to save Czarist absolutism, we have one of Nilus's hidden motives?

8. This copy is preserved under the date of August 10, 1906. The number given it is C. 37. e. 31. P. 30679.

nese. In 1925 there appeared an Arabic translation, which naturally spread like fire in the Near East, where ethnic antagonism furnished it abundant fuel. The French High Commissioner of Syria forbade the sale of the volume, but its success only increased. The London *Times* of May 8, 1920, had an article full of alarm over this strange plot for which the Jews were responsible and the plan of which was found in the Protocols. For almost three weeks in July of the same year, the *Morning Post* ran lengthy editorials on it, which were soon afterwards published in book form as *The Cause of World Unrest*. An American edition appeared forthwith, and a special review was founded by Henry Ford to make the Protocols known and to proclaim the Jewish peril. This was the *Dearborn Independent*, whose subscribers almost at once numbered three hundred thousand. Its articles on the Protocols were also collected into a volume, of which more than half a million copies were sold.<sup>9</sup>

In a backflow, the movement crossed the Atlantic again and returned to Germany. The book Henry Ford had financed was translated by Theodor Fritsch under the title *Der Internationale Jude*, "The International Jew," and, since 1922, it has gone into twenty-one editions. After that came a deluge of brochures, digests, and commentaries. Of *Das Schuldbuch Judas*, "The Ledger of Juda,"<sup>10</sup> by Wilhelm Meister, 150,000 copies were sold; of Alfred Rosenberg's commentary on the Protocols, 50,000. In his *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler invokes the Protocols to justify special measures against the Jews. Here is one of the

9. Henry Ford has long since repudiated the articles which appeared in the *Dearborn Independent* and were collected in the book *The International Jew*. In a letter dated June 30, 1927, to Louis Marshall, then chairman of the American Jewish Committee, he wrote that he had given his personal attention to them for the first time. "As a result of this survey I confess that I am deeply mortified that this journal, which is intended to be constructive and not destructive, has been made the medium for resurrecting exploded fictions, for giving currency to the so-called *Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion*, which have been demonstrated, as I learn, to be gross forgeries, and for contending that the Jews have been engaged in a conspiracy to control the capital and the industries of the world, besides laying at their door many offenses against decency, public order and good morals. . . . I deem it to be my duty as an honorable man to make amends for the wrong done to the Jews as fellowmen and brothers by asking their forgiveness for the harm that I have unintentionally committed, by retracting so far as lies within my power the offensive charges laid at their door by these publications. . . ." Mr. Ford reiterated this stand on a number of occasions. See Sigmund Livingston, *Must Men Hate?* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), pp. 46-47, 326-327.

10. The German word *Schuldbuch* means "ledger," but also "book of guilt." This choice of an equivocal word was probably deliberate.

passages referring to them: "How far the entire existence of this people is based on a continuous lie is shown in an incomparable manner and certainty in the 'Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion,' so infinitely hated by the Jews. They are supposed to be a 'forgery,' the *Frankfurter Zeitung* moans and cries out to the world once a week: the best proof that they are genuine after all. What many Jews may do unconsciously is here exposed consciously. But this is what matters. It makes no difference from the head of which Jew these disclosures come, but decisive it is that they demonstrate, with a truly horrifying certainty, the nature and the activity of the Jewish people and expose them in their inner connection as well as in their ultimate final aims."<sup>11</sup>

In Belgium, the organ of the National Corporative League of Labor, with its two editions, *L'Assaut* and *De Stormloop*, reprinted the Protocols in installments, and did not fail to present them as a plan of general destruction of Christian society, thus "justifying" all preventive measures and all reprisals.

For this is the tragic knot of the problem. We deal here with no mere literary question. The hatred of the Jews, nourished by the publications which have multiplied around the Protocols, uses them to preach and practice violence against all Jews, to represent them as abominable conspirators, and to demand—either from the authorities or, if this be unavailing, from the faceless crowd—savage sanctions and collective penalties.

## A FIRST GLIMPSE

WE ARE not yet examining the origin of the Protocols, but shall content ourselves for the moment with opening them and studying them in themselves. Unquestionably, they purport to be a sort of plan—both complicated and naïve—for the disorganization of society in order to bring about an absolute rule by the Jews.<sup>12</sup>

An unbiased reader cannot fail to be astonished by statements like these: "We shall create an intensified centralization of government in

11. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), pp. 423-424.

12. There are alleged to have been twenty-four meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion. The minutes of, or rather, the reports on, these meetings, are numbered, and make up the Protocols of Zion. In this paper, references to the Protocols indicate, by a Roman numeral, the meeting, and by an Arabic numeral, the paragraph of its "report" or protocol, in order that the reader may compare our quotations with any edition. We follow here "The Briton's" translation.

order to grip in our hands all the forces of the community . . . our kingdom will be distinguished by a despotism of such magnificent proportions as to be at any moment and in every place in a position to wipe out any *goyim* who oppose us by deed or word" (V, 1). "All the wheels of the machinery of all states go by the force of the engine, which is in our hands, and that engine of the machinery of states is—gold" (V, 6). "By all these means we shall so wear down the *goyim* that they will be compelled to offer us international power of a nature that by its position will enable us without any violence gradually to absorb all the state forces of the world and to form a super-government. In place of the rulers of today we shall set up a bogey which will be called the super-government administration. Its hands will reach out in all directions like nippers and its organization will be of such colossal dimensions that it cannot fail to subdue all the nations of the world" (V, 11). "We must be in a position to respond to every act of opposition by war with the neighbors of that country which dares to oppose us: but if these neighbors should also venture to stand collectively together against us, then we must offer resistance by a universal war" (VII, 3). "Throughout all Europe, and by means of relations with Europe, in other continents also, we must create ferments, discords and hostility" (VII, 2). "God has granted to us, His chosen people, the gift of the dispersion, and in this which appears in all eyes to be our weakness, has come forth all our strength, which has now brought us to the threshold of sovereignty over all the world" (XI, 8). "When we come into our kingdom our orators will expound great problems which have turned humanity upside down in order to bring it at the end under our beneficent rule. Who will ever suspect then that all these peoples were stage-managed by us according to a political plan which no one has so much as guessed at in the course of many centuries?" (XIII, 5-6). "When we come into our kingdom it will be undesirable for us that there should exist any other religion than ours of the one God with whom our destiny is bound up by our position as the chosen people and through whom our same destiny is united with the destinies of the world. We must therefore sweep away all other forms of belief" (XIV, 1). "And how far-seeing were our learned elders in ancient times when they said that to attain a serious end it behooves not to stop at any means or to count the victims sacrificed for the sake of that end. We have not counted the victims of the seed

of the *goy* cattle" (XV, 8). "When the King of Israel sets upon his sacred head the crown offered him by Europe he will become patriarch of the world" (XV, 23). "In a word, to sum up our system of keeping the governments of the *goyim* in Europe in check, we shall show our strength to one of them by terrorist attempts and to all, if we allow the possibility of a general rising against us, we shall respond with the guns of America or China or Japan" (VII, 6).

We may as well halt here with these monotonous quotations. Similar ones could be gathered from almost every page of the Protocols, and their constant repetition quickly becomes irritating. I reproduce these only as examples, and in order to show what feelings they are able to provoke in a credulous reader when they are detached from the whole of the Protocols, in which they float as in a pool.

But if the Protocols are studied a little more closely as a whole, it does not take long to see that these cynical plans for the overthrow of the world are of a pitiable poverty, that they swarm with contradictions, that they perpetually assume the greatest problems solved, and that the means they extol are of an altogether reassuring ineptitude. If these mysterious Wise Men of Zion own no other wisdom than what they parade in these pages, the world can sleep peacefully.

#### WORLD FINANCE

LET US take some examples. Four entire meetings, XX, XXI, XXII, and XXIII, are devoted to the financial program these Learned Elders will set up in their world super-government. They take pains to tell us, and to tell us again, that their whole policy rests on figures: "The sum total of our actions is settled by the question of figures" (XX, 1). There is not a single figure anywhere else in the Protocols. But let us watch the Wise Men at work. They will avoid burdening the people with heavy taxes, and will take care that the tax load be equitably distributed (XX, 2). As a program, this is not exactly new. They speak of a progressive tax on property as a stupendous innovation (XX, 3-4), and of a stamp tax covering all important transactions (XX, 12). "Just strike an estimate," they add with great naïveté, "of how many times such taxes as these will cover the revenue of the *goyim* states" (XX, 13). Money will be made to circulate (XX, 14). A court of account will be instituted (XX, 17), as if such a court existed no-

where and as if it were an institution unprecedented and unheard of. The monetary policy of the Protocols displays an ingenuousness which alone proves the incompetence and thoroughgoing ignorance of those who drafted them. That the reader may judge for himself, I quote: "You are aware that the gold standard has been the ruin of the states which adopted it, for it has not been able to satisfy the demands for money. . . . With us the standard that must be introduced is the cost of working-man power, whether it be reckoned in paper or in wood. We shall make the issue of money in accordance with the normal requirements of each subject, adding to the quantity with every birth and subtracting with every death" (XX, 22-23).<sup>13</sup> This naïveté truly goes beyond all bounds: the problem of the creation of money and that of its distribution are confused; and the creation of new money in accordance with the ups-and-downs of the population is one of those discoveries only a perfect ignorance can make.

There is more and better to come. I quote: "Stagnation of money will not be allowed by us"—nothing is said of how this is to be accomplished—"and therefore there will be no state interest-bearing paper, except a one-per-cent series, so that there will be no payment of interest to leeches that suck all the strength out of the state" (XX, 34).

Still more of this wonderful stupidity. These Wise Men have the air of believing that the circulation of private money will suffice to assure that the state will always have enough of it in its coffers and be able to finance all its enterprises. And without troubling themselves in the least about the interest rate on the money market, they declare once and for all that, with the abolition of perpetual loans and government bonds, borrowers will infallibly be drawn by the offer of treasury bonds at one per cent. The Elders conclude this beautiful explanation by bragging that all this proves their genius and that they are God's chosen people (XX, 37). Further, they go on to show this genius with even greater clarity at another meeting when, referring again to internal loans, they declare that nowadays all these loans are consolidated by so-called floating debts (XXI, 8), which is almost as clever as saying that all the world dries its clothes by plunging them into the water.

13. Here "The Briton's" translation is not entirely clear. What is meant is that the Elders will issue a currency based on a country's working power, a currency in either paper or wood.

I ask seriously, where is the greenest candidate in economics who would have the slightest chance of passing an examination, however elementary, if he committed such enormous blunders?

Next their signs of genius in the organization of stock exchanges. "We will destroy all money markets, since we shall not allow the prestige of our power to be shaken by fluctuations of prices set upon our values"—what values? one must ask, since there will no longer be any government bonds—"which we shall announce by law at the price which represents their full worth without any possibility of lowering or raising. Raising gives the pretext for lowering, which was indeed where we made a beginning in relation to the values of the *goyim*. . . .<sup>14</sup> These (our government credit) institutions will be in a position to fling upon the market five hundred millions of industrial paper in one day, or to buy up for the same amount. In this way all industrial undertakings will come into dependence upon us. You may imagine for yourselves what immense power we shall thereby secure for ourselves" (XXI, 10-11). How the government, unable to have recourse to loans, unable to levy any but very moderate taxes on the taxpayer, will make these marvelous hauls, the Wise Men do not confide to us. This is just the point. By the same literary device, a man could simply say that he was to be the ruler of the rain and the wind, and from having said so, conclude that the planet's fair weather and foul would henceforth depend on his will.

The Learned Elders of Zion, or, to be exact, the one among them who reeled off these beautiful discourses, goes on to say that he has endeavored to show to them their secret plans and their financial policy, and concludes: "In our hands is the greatest power of our day—gold: in two days we can procure from our storehouses any quantity we may please" (XXII, 1-2).

These, then, are the Jews who—according to all those who credit the Protocols—have exposed in them their financial program, their shrewdest notions. I ask: Is there, in any part of the world, a minister of finance, a banker, a business man, a simple reader who still has his common sense and who possesses the rudiments of economics, who would not judge this plan—if one can dignify it by that name—to be a rigmarole of stupid incoherencies? If there is in it even the shadow

14. The French translation seems closer to the "genius" of the original. It reads: "The rise is the cause of the fall, and it is through the fall that we have been able to discredit the public stock of the *goyim*."

of a financial policy, a single sensible or even tangible suggestion, and, above all, if the conspirators pictured here have delivered to us the secret of the system which must render the state safe from all bankruptcy and enable it to find unlimited wealth, without loans, without excessive taxes, with nothing but the little joke of treasury bonds at one per cent—quick, let's get going and all of us profit from the disclosure of this secret! No more budgetary deficits, no more unemployment, no more crises! All that is needed, so the Protocols say, is to issue paper money at every birth and recall it at every death, to replace the gold standard by the wood standard, and to fix the value of securities by law, without possibility of fluctuation.

This, then, is the silly humbug which millions of readers have taken to be a system frighteningly wise and around which there has been raised the cry of world peril.

It seems that the Learned Elders of Zion have foreseen all this. In fact, we read in the IX meeting: "You may say that the *goyim* will rise upon us, arms in hand, if they guess what is going on before the time comes; but in the West we have against this a maneuver of such appalling terror that the very stoutest hearts quail." Oh! What is this terror? I quote: "The undergrounds, metropolitans, those subterranean corridors which, before the time comes, will be driven under all the capitals and from whence those capitals will be blown into the air with all their organizations and archives" (IX, 13).<sup>15</sup> It is as simple as that.

#### CHILDISHNESS AND CYNICISM

THE PROTOCOLS contain not only a financial program; the whole first part sets forth "the secret of the relations of the Jews to the *goyim*" (XXII, 1). It is here that the most cynical statements abound. When we try to understand the system expounded in the Protocols, it appears to be a defense of despotism, but of an enlightened despotism, which preserves the trappings of liberal rule and the externals of morality, and

15. Here the Russian forger shows his hand. Opposed to all technological progress, he sees in subways a Jewish plot, and it does not occur to him, nor to his Elders, that if the great cities are blown up, Jews will die with all the rest. It is not only subways that the forger, or whoever was behind him, dislikes. He dislikes all forms of modern education, for instance "object lessons." And whom does he make responsible for them? The Jews. For thus say the Elders: "The system of bridling thought is already at work in the so-called system of teaching by object lessons, the purpose of which is to turn the *goyim* into unthinking submissive brutes waiting for things to be presented before their eyes in order to form an idea of them" (XVI, 8).

which, unembarrassed by scruples, reserves to itself the whole reality of power. Since the people are stupid and worthless animals, they need a firm ruler, but this despot must not have the air of a tyrant, rather must he show himself under the guise of a protector. Indeed, in this first part of the Protocols, he is frequently called "President." Instead of declaring war, he will contrive to foment trouble among his neighbors, and then will not intervene except as a peacemaker. Instead of choosing administrators of integrity, he will surround himself with creatures who owe him everything and so serve him well. Instead of an independent press, he will manage to have an official press. Censorship will assure that nothing dangerous to himself be published. He will set up his own journals of opposition, which will say only what he permits them to say, but, because they will be thought free, they will have the more influence on public opinion. Nor will there be an independent bench: judges will be pensioned off at the age of fifty-five, a measure which will permit ever new appointments and thus leave room for favoritism. Rather than a national army, there will be a strong police force; and in order to draw public attention away from political questions, there will be the diversive maneuver of great public works. Commerce and industry will occupy people's minds, and in exchange for the liberties that have been taken away, they will be given abundant prosperity and well-being. "We have got our hands into the administration of the law, into the conduct of elections, into the press, into liberty of the person, but principally into education and training as being the cornerstones of a free existence" (IX, 9).

Amazing in this first part of the Protocols is the minuteness of certain details of organization and the incoherence of the whole. It will be the President's prerogative to appoint the presidents and vice-presidents of the Lower House and the Senate (X, 15), to propose temporary new laws, even amendments to the new republican constitution, and to decree right and justice (XI, 2). The number of representatives will be reduced; if, however, they persist in their opposition, they will be by-passed by an appeal to the whole nation (X, 15). The President will be "responsible" (X, 11)—to whom is hard to say, since the two Houses do not have the power to dispute measures taken by the government (X, 15). Then again, the editor of the Protocols does not know the least thing about political institutions, though he declares that everyone knows them. He does not even know the dis-

tion of the three branches of government: when he comes to enumerate them, he omits the judiciary power while listing the executive twice, under two different names (X, 8).

To keep the press in check, the Learned Elders have found no newer measures than the stamp tax, the deposit of bonds, fines, and suppression. All this is quite old and recalls particularly the legislation of the Second Empire in France. Finally, a last pearl among the many one could gather: whenever a crime is committed, Protocol XII enjoins, it shall be known only to the victim and to chance witnesses, these alone (XII, 19). Such enormous naïvetés are beyond comment.

The more one examines the Protocols, the more they show themselves to be absurd, contradictory, childish. This childishness is only thrown into relief by declarations of provoking cynicism. What remains is inept. See, for example, the new organization of legal proceedings, without distinction of civil and criminal: "We shall set the profession of law into narrow frames which will keep it inside this sphere of executive public service. Advocates, equally with judges, will be deprived of the right of communication with litigants; they will receive business only from the court and will study it by notes of report and documents, defending their clients after they have been interrogated in court on facts that have appeared. They will receive an honorarium without regard to the quality of the defense. This will render them mere reporters on law-business in the interests of justice and as counterpoise to the proctor who will be the reporter in the interests of prosecution; this will shorten business before the courts. In this way will be established a practice of honest unprejudiced defense conducted not from personal interest but by conviction. This will also, by the way, remove the present practice of corrupt bargain between advocates to agree only to let that side win which pays most" (XVII, 1).

An examination of the contents of the Protocols alone compels a first conclusion: they contain absolutely nothing which in the least resembles any plan or organization whatever. The authors are ignorant of the elements of finance; they have no knowledge at all of political institutions; they mingle extraordinary naïvetés with impudent pretensions. There is nothing constructive in them, not even in the preparation of the general destruction. Above all, there are flagrant contradictions. I defy anyone to draw from these pages, which claim to be a program, the merest shadow of a sketch of a program.

## MYSTERIOUS PARALLELS

HENCE THE mystery thickens. Where do the Protocols come from? They exist. They were edited by someone. What is their origin?

Since 1905, Sergei Nilus has maintained that they were read in secret session at the Zionist Congress in Basel in August, 1897, and that their purpose was to unfold before the Jews, assembled at the bidding of Theodor Herzl, the general plan of Jewish world conquest. A secret agent, sent to this Congress by the Czarist government, is supposed to have made a copy and carried it off, and after grotesque adventures—told with important variations—the manuscript is said to have ended up in the hands of Nilus.<sup>16</sup>

There is no need, I am sure, to note that the first Zionist Congress had but a very limited objective: to examine the possibilities of a Zionist movement. The invitation, of which a photographic reproduction has been published, said that all sessions and discussions would be completely public; that those who called the Congress guaranteed that no government, and in particular not that of Russia, would be able to take offense at anything to be said or done at Basel; that nothing would happen which could put the participants in opposition to the laws of any country or to their civic obligations. No one has ever been able to prove that these conditions were broken in any way whatsoever or that a single secret session was held. But Nilus declares that there were

16. It is characteristic of the kind of literature the Protocols represent that its sponsors' statements about its provenance cannot be verified. Nilus himself gave various, indeed conflicting, accounts of how he came into possession of the Protocols. But all his accounts had one thing in common: the witnesses he cited were, even then, impossible to summon. A nobleman already dead at the time of publication, a lady whose name he had forgotten, a nameless member of the Zionist Congress, a secret agent whose identity was never revealed—these were the people who, Nilus alleged, were instrumental in bringing the Protocols into his hands. But the gullibility of his readers was put to an even greater test. In his Preface to the fourth edition of the Protocols, he said he had learned—"authoritatively from Jewish sources," of course—that the Protocols, as "a strategic plan for the conquest of the world," were worked out by the leaders of the Jewish people during the many centuries of their dispersion" (cf. *The Protocols and World Revolution*, Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1920, pp. 6-7). Butmi, another sponsor of the Protocols, was even more specific. Though written down only in our day, they were, he maintained, and others with him, first elaborated on Mount Zion, by King Solomon together with other Jewish sages, in the year 929 before the birth of Christ (cf. John S. Curtiss, *An Appraisal of the Protocols of Zion*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1942, p. 29).

some twenty-four. Of these twenty-four secret sessions, no one else has ever had the slightest knowledge; on the contrary, the testimony to this effect of journalists, stenographers, and no less of the participants in the Congress, as given at the libel suit before the Bern court, was absolute.

But there is really no need to dwell on this. For we know the source of the Protocols. On the 16th, 17th, and 18th of August, 1921, *The Times* of London published the whole story.<sup>17</sup> Philip P. Graves, its correspondent in Constantinople, had come across a small volume in French, one of a number of old books that had belonged to a former Czarist officer and member of the political police, the Okhrana. In reading it, he saw at once that it contained a whole series of passages clearly parallel to the text of the famous Protocols. Though its front pages were missing, it was quickly identified. It was the work of a Parisian lawyer, Maurice Joly: *Dialogue aux Enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu, ou La Politique de Machiavel au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, "Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu, or The Politics of Machiavelli in the Nineteenth Century." When it was first published, the author did not give his name but signed it "By a Contemporary." It was published in 1864 by A. Mertens, rue de l'Escalier 22, Brussels, and had iii and 337 pages, its preface being dated at Geneva on October 15, 1864. I myself have examined the copy in the Royal Library in Brussels, where it bears the inventory number III.2151. There is also an anonymous edition of Paris, 1865, and another, also without the author's name, of Brussels, 1868.<sup>18</sup>

The book's whole purpose was a violent satire on the policy of Napoleon III, who is represented as a despot making a show of preserving the appearances of a liberal regime. Napoleon's name is never mentioned, Machiavelli speaking in his stead. Montesquieu plays the role of the honest man scandalized by the hypocrisy and cynicism of his interlocutor.

A few quotations will suffice to establish the parallel between the

17. A lengthy excerpt from the articles in *The Times* appears in Herman Bernstein, *The Truth About "The Protocols of Zion"* (New York: Covici Friede, 1935), pp. 259-262.

18. A complete English translation of Joly's work was made by Dorothy Nash and David Bernstein, and can be found in Herman Bernstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-258. Though we have made our own translation, the numbers we attach to quotations from the Dialogue refer to the pages of this Nash-Bernstein edition.

Protocols and the Dialogue. The first pages were missing, as we know, from the copy of the Dialogue found in Constantinople in 1921. Well, the Protocols begin abruptly at the eighth page of Joly's Dialogue.

## DIALOGUE

Let us leave words and comparisons alone, that we may cling to ideas. Here is how I formulate my system. (p. 83)

The evil instinct in man is more powerful than the good. (p. 83)

Men aim at power, and there is none who would not be an oppressor if only he could; all, or almost all, are ready to sacrifice the rights of others to their own interests. (p. 83)

What restrains these ravenous animals who are called men? (p. 83)

At the origin of societies, it is brute force without curb, afterwards it is the law, that is, force again, regulated by forms. (p. 83)

Political freedom is but a relative idea. (p. 83)

The state is lost, either by being divided, or by being dismembered because of its own convulsions, or by falling prey to foreign nations because of its own divisions. In

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Putting aside fine phrases we shall speak of the significance of each thought. . . . What I am about to set forth, then, is our system. (I, 1-2)

It must be noted that men with bad instincts are more in number than the good. (I, 3)

Every man aims at power, everyone would like to become a dictator if only he could, and rare indeed are the men who would not be willing to sacrifice the welfare of all for the sake of securing their own welfare. (I, 3)

What has restrained the beasts of prey who are called men? (I, 4)

In the beginnings of the structure of society they (men) were subjected to brutal and blind force; afterwards—to Law, which is the same force, only disguised. (I, 5)

Political freedom is an idea. (I, 6)

Whether a state exhausts itself in its own convulsions, whether its internal discord brings it under the power of external foes—in any case it can be counted irretrievably

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such conditions, the people prefer despotism to anarchy. Are they wrong? (p. 83)

States, once constituted, have two sets of enemies: those within and those without. What weapons shall they use in war against the foreigners? Will the two enemy generals inform one another of their plans of attack so that each can defend himself? Will they deny themselves night attacks, snares, ambushes, battles in which the number of troops is unequal? . . . And these snares, these ruses, all this strategy indispensable to warfare, you do not want employed against the enemies within, against the disturbers of the peace? (pp. 83-84)

Is it possible to lead by pure reason the violent masses moved only by sentiment, passion, and prejudice? (p. 84)

Has politics anything in common with morals? (p. 84)

It is written: *Per me reges regnant*, which means literally: "God makes kings." (p. 112)<sup>19</sup>

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lost. . . . The despotism of capital . . . reaches out to it a straw. . . . (I, 8)

If every state has two foes and if in regard to the external foe it is allowed and not considered immoral to use every manner and art of conflict, as for example to keep the enemy in ignorance of plans of attack and defense, to attack him by night or in superior numbers, then in what way can the same means in regard to a worse foe, the destroyer of the structure of society and the commonweal, be called immoral and not permissible? (I, 9)

Is it possible for any sound logical mind to hope with any success to guide crowds by the aid of reasonable counsels and arguments . . . ? Men in masses and the men of the masses, being guided solely by petty passions, paltry beliefs, traditions and sentimental theorism. . . . (I, 10)

The political has nothing in common with the moral. (I, 11)

*Per me reges regnant*. "It is through Me that Kings reign." And it was said by the prophets. . . . (V, 6)

19. This faulty translation of Prov 8:15 is part of the satire, for it is Machiavelli who thus quotes Scripture.

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Before thinking of changing public opinion, one must daze it, strike it with uncertainty by as-sounding contradictions, work on it with continual diversions, dazzle it with all kinds of different actions, mislead it imperceptibly in its path-ways. (p. 117)

We content ourselves with registering here the result of some sound-ings. In the passages that are not quoted here, the dependence of the Protocols on the Dialogue is no less close. But let us go on.

I would institute, for instance, huge financial monopolies, reser-voirs of the public wealth, on which the fate of all private fortunes would depend so closely that they would be swallowed up together with the credit of the state the day after any political catastrophe. You are an economist, Montesquieu; weigh the value of this combina-tion. (p. 118)

It is superfluous to call attention to the naïveté of our forger and the rather awkward way in which his recital dissolves the figure of Montesquieu into thin air.

(My goal would be) to develop enormously the predominance of the state by making it the sover-eign protector, promoter, and re-munerator. (p. 118)

Here and there our little policeman adds a few tendentious words:

The aristocracy as a political force is dead; but the landed bour-geoisie, because of its independ-ence, is still an element of danger-

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In order to put public opinion into our hands we must bring it into a state of bewilderment by giving expression from all sides to so many contradictory opinions and for such length of time as will suffice to make the *goyim* lose their heads in the labyrinth. (V, 10)

We shall soon begin to establish huge monopolies, reservoirs of co-LOSSAL riches, upon which even large fortunes of the *goyim* will depend to such an extent that they will go to the bottom together with the credit of the states on the day after the political smash. You gentlemen here present who are economists, just strike an estimate of the signifi-cance of this combination! (VI, 1-2)

In every possible way we must develop the significance of our super-government by representing it as the protector and benefactor of all those who voluntarily submit to us. (VI, 3)

The aristocracy of the *goyim* as a political force, is dead—We need not take it into account; but as landed proprietors they can still be

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ous resistance to governments; it may be necessary to impoverish them or to ruin them completely. For this purpose it is enough to increase the burdens which weigh on landed property, to keep agriculture in a state of relative inferiority. (p. 119)

The great industrialists and manufacturers will be dealt with advantageously by stimulating them to a disproportionate luxury, by raising taxes on salaries, by striking deep and competent blows at the sources of production. . . . A sort of zeal for freedom, for the great economic principles, will, if need be, easily conceal the true goal. (p. 119)

What must be achieved is that there be in the state only proletarians, a few millionaires, and soldiers. (p. 119)

# PROTOCOLS

harmful to us from the fact that they are self-sufficing in the resources upon which they live. It is essential therefore for us at whatever cost to deprive them of their land. This object will be best attained by increasing the burdens upon landed property—in loading lands with debts. These measures will check land-holding and keep it in a state of humble and unconditional submission. (VI, 4)

To complete the ruin of the industry of the *goyim* we shall bring to the assistance of speculation the luxury which we have developed among the *goyim*, that greedy demand for luxury which is swallowing up everything. We shall raise the rate of wages which, however, will not bring any advantage to the workers, for, at the same time, we shall produce a rise in prices of the first necessities of life . . . we shall further undermine artfully and deeply sources of production . . . we shall mask (our real designs) under an alleged ardent desire to serve the working classes and the great principles of political economy about which our economic theories are carrying on an energetic propaganda. (VI, 7-8)

There should be in all the states of the world, besides ourselves, only the masses of the proletariat, a few millionaires devoted to our interests, police and soldiers. (VII, 1)

## SLIPS OF THE FORGER

THE FORGER hired to render the Jews odious<sup>20</sup> did not always do his work with care. He read the phrases of the Dialogue askew. Here is an example:

It is necessary to incite abroad, from one end of Europe to the other, the revolutionary fermentation that is suppressed at home. Two considerable advantages would result from this. The liberal agitation outside makes tolerable the repression within. Moreover, in this way one keeps in check all the powers, among which one can create order or disorder at will. The important point is to entangle by cabinet intrigues all the threads of European politics in such a way as to play one power against the other. (p. 119)

Throughout all Europe, and by means of relations with Europe, in other continents also, we must create ferments, discords and hostility. Therein we gain a double advantage. In the first place we keep in check all countries, for they will know that we have the power whenever we like to create disorders or to restore order. All these countries are accustomed to see in us an indispensable force of coercion. In the second place, by our intrigues we shall tangle up all the threads which we have stretched into the cabinets of all states by means of the political, by economic treaties, or loan obligations. (VII, 2)

Obviously, what for Joly is a means the Russian has turned into a consequence. Having suppressed the first "advantage" of Machiavelli's policy ("The liberal agitation outside makes tolerable the repression within"), he introduces an "in the second place" in the middle of the next sentence. Could one be more lacking in intellectual scruples?

20. One way of rendering the Jews odious is to have the Elders of Zion speak abusively of the Gentiles again and again. The Protocols sneer, for instance, at "the bottomless rascality of the *goyim* peoples, who crawl on their bellies to force, but are merciless towards weakness, unsparing to faults and indulgent to crimes . . ." (III, 16). This is copied almost verbatim from the Dialogue, which makes Machiavelli sneer at "the unfathomable cowardice of humanity . . . servile in the face of force, pitiless in the face of weakness, implacable before blunders, indulgent before crimes. . . ." (Herman Bernstein, *op. cit.*, p. 102). The only real change is that where the Dialogue has "humanity," the Protocols have "the *goyim* peoples"—and here is indisputable evidence of the malice of the forger.

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The power of which I dream . . . must draw to itself all the forces and all the talents of the civilization in whose heart it lives. It must surround itself with publicists, lawyers, jurisconsults, practical men, and administrators, men who know thoroughly all the secrets, all the strength, of social life, who speak all languages, who have studied men in all circles. . . . Along with this, a whole world of economists is needed, of bankers, industrialists, capitalists, men of vision, men of millions, for everything resolves itself basically into a question of figures. (pp. 120-121)

The nations have an indescribable, secret love for the vigorous geniuses of force. Of all violent deeds marked by the talent of artifice, you will hear it said, with an admiration that overcomes all blame: "True, it isn't good, but it is clever, it is well done, it is strong." (p. 129)

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Our directorate must surround itself with all those forces of civilization among which it will have to work. It will surround itself with publicists, practical jurists, administrators, diplomats and, finally, with persons prepared by a special super-educational training in our special schools. These persons will have cognizance of all the secrets of the social structure, they will know all the languages that can be made up by political alphabets and words; they will be made acquainted with the whole underside of human nature, with all its sensitive chords on which they will have to play. . . . We shall surround our government with a whole world of economists. This is the reason why economic sciences form the principal subject of the teaching given to the Jews. Around us again will be a whole constellation of bankers, industrialists, capitalists and—the main thing—millionaires, because in substance everything will be settled by the question of figures. (VIII, 1-2)

The mob cherishes a special affection and respect for the geniuses of political power and accepts all their deeds of violence with the admiring response: "Rascally, well, yes, it is rascally, but it's clever! . . . a trick, if you like, but how craftily played, how magnificently done, what impudent audacity!" (X, 2)

Joly's Machiavelli predicts his coup d'état. This evidently refers to Napoleon III's coup d'état on December 2, 1851. The Russian imputes this coup d'état to the Wise Men of Zion, without explaining what such a thing as a world-wide coup d'état could be. Machiavelli goes on, always followed step by step by the Czar's policeman:

I will have ratified, by a popular vote, the coup that I have carried against the state; I shall speak to the people in terms like these: "Everything was going wrong; I have smashed it all, I have saved you, do you want me? You are at liberty to condemn or to absolve me. . . ." (p. 130)

When we have accomplished our coup d'état we shall say then to the various peoples: "Everything has gone terribly badly, all have been worn out with suffering. We are destroying the causes of your torment. . . . You are at liberty, of course, to pronounce sentence upon us. . . ." (X, 4)

Generally, the Russian drops Montesquieu's replies and tailors Machiavelli's cynical remarks so that they fit end to end. In this instance, however, he did not happen to notice the change of speaker:

Machiavelli: I will establish a suffrage without distinction of class or property qualification, by which absolutism will be established in a single stroke.

Montesquieu, answering: Yes, for by one stroke you break also the unity of the family . . . and you make numbers a blind power which operates at your will. (p. 130)

We must have everybody vote without distinction of classes and qualifications, in order to establish an absolute majority. . . . We shall destroy among the *goyim* the importance of the family. . . . We shall create a blind, mighty force which will never be in a position to move in any direction without the guidance of our agents. . . . (X, 5)

The suffrage of which Machiavelli speaks is a clear allusion to the Napoleonic plebiscite. On his own, the Russian adds the tremendous ineptitude, "the absolutism of the majority."<sup>21</sup> All the parliamentary organization with which the X and XI meetings concern themselves

21. Where "The Briton's" translation, which we follow throughout, has "an absolute majority," the French translation used by Père Charles has "the absolutism of the majority."

is copied from that of the Dialogue; and here again the not very clever forger has left his own mark on his work:

Thus one finds everywhere, under various names, but with jurisdictions almost always the same: a ministerial organization, a senate, a legislative body, a council of state, a court of cassation. I shall spare you the whole useless development of the respective mechanisms of these powers, whose secret you know better than I. (p. 132)

Under various names there exists in all countries approximately one and the same thing. Representation, ministry, senate, state council, legislative and executive corps. I need not explain to you the mechanism of the relation of these institutions to one another, because you are aware of all that. (X, 8)

The French court of cassation does not correspond to anything organized in Czarist Russia; hence our policeman strikes it from the list.

It is impossible to quote everything; one really should print the two works side by side. But we must still point out that the whole legislation on the press is copied word by word from the Dialogue. The press shall be divided into official and semi-official journals and a sham opposition.

Like a god Vishnu, my press will have a hundred arms, and these arms will give a hand to all possible shades of opinion. (p. 153)

Like the Indian idol Vishnu they will have a hundred hands, and every one of them will have a finger on any one of the public opinions as required. When a pulse quickens these hands will lead opinion in the direction of our aims. (XII, 12)

The same Vishnu appears again, and, for Joly as well as for the Russian, each of his hundred hands holds a spring of the social machine.<sup>22</sup>

22. These are the exact words in the Protocols: "Our kingdom will be an apologia of the divinity Vishnu, in whom is found its personification—in our hundred hands will be, one in each, the springs of the machinery of social life" (XVII, 7). Here again the author of the Protocols apes Joly's Dialogue (cf. p. 188), but hardly ever has he slipped so badly. Is it possible that the supposed Learned Elders of Zion, who are portrayed as immeasurably proud of their Jewish heritage and who are said to be preparing the enthronement of a Jewish king of the house of David to rule over all the earth, would choose a Hindu god as the personification of their kingdom?

Like Vishnu, "trial shots" <sup>23</sup> appear in both:

I try combinations, projects, sudden decisions, in short, what you call in France trial shots. (pp. 154-155)

Trial shots like these, fired by us in the third rank of our press, in case of need, will be energetically refuted by us in our semi-official organs. (XII, 16)

The press will be afflicted by the stamp tax and the deposit of bonds (XII, 3), and "books of less than thirty sheets will pay double" (XII, 7). Joly and the author of the Protocols give the advantages of this system in literally identical detail.<sup>24</sup>

The regulations concerning the legal profession, the enforced retirement of judges at the age of fifty-five, and all the benefits which absolutism will draw from such measures—these are almost the same word by word in Joly and the Protocols.<sup>25</sup> Only instead of abolishing the court of cassation,<sup>26</sup> the Russian abolishes the right of cassation (XV, 19), which is not exactly a stroke of genius. The policy of Napoleon III toward the papacy, the French garrison in Rome, the "guardianship" over the sovereign pontiff, are all found again in the Protocols. For the Russian did not take the trouble to remove the marks of the original when he made the Elders of Zion say: "When the time comes finally to destroy the papal court the finger of an invisible hand will point the nations towards this court. When, however, the nations fling themselves upon it, we shall come forward in the guise of its defenders as if to save excessive bloodshed. By this diversion we shall penetrate to its very bowels and be sure we shall never come out again until we have gnawed through the entire strength of this place" (XVII, 3).<sup>27</sup>

23. Where our translation has "trial shots," the French of both the Dialogue and the Protocols has *ballons d'essai*, "trial balloons."

24. Herman Bernstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 147, 151.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168; XV, 14.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

27. These words are nothing but a summary of Napoleon-Machiavelli's speech in the Dialogue, along with Montesquieu's replies: "The only role that I wish to bear . . . would be just that of defending the Church. . . . Not only would I check any enterprise against the sovereignty of the Holy See on the part of the neighboring states, but if, by misfortune, it were attacked, if the pope were to be driven out of the Papal States, as has already happened, my bayonets alone would bring him back and would keep him there always as long as I live." "That would indeed be a master stroke, for if you kept a perpetual garrison at Rome, you would practically have the Holy See at your command, as if it were in some province of your kingdom. . . . But if you should find a pope who resisted your intrigues and braved your anger, what would you do?" "In that case, under pretext of defending the temporal power, I would bring about his fall" (pp. 187-188).

Machiavelli does not forget the universities:

I consider it very important to proscribe the study of constitutional politics in the teaching of law. (p. 182)

We shall exclude from the course of instruction State Law as also all that concerns the political question. (XVI, 2)

And the reason is literally the same:

At the age of eighteen, one gets involved with the making of constitutions as one makes tragedies. (p. 182)

The universities must no longer send out from their halls milkops concocting plans for a constitution, like a comedy or a tragedy. (XVI, 2)

Lastly—for one cannot put down everything—here is this little typical phrase from among the passages which are strictly parallel:

After having covered Italy with blood, Sulla<sup>28</sup> could reappear in Italy as a private individual; no one touched a hair on his head. (p. 163)

Italy, drenched with blood, never touched a hair on the head of Sulla<sup>28</sup> who had poured forth that blood. (XV, 3)

Even the sequence of topics is the same in the Dialogue and the Protocols. The whole financial policy is described in Dialogues 18, 19, 20 and 21. These are chapters XX and XXI of the Protocols, into which the forger has mixed the absurdities already remarked, which alone should have opened the eyes of the least discerning. But he suppressed Dialogue 22, which speaks of Napoleon III's gigantic constructions and criticizes, without naming him, Haussmann's architectural megalomania. Do I have to continue? Those who deny the plagiarism have not compared the two works, or else their incompetence in matters of criticism makes it imperative on them to hold their tongues. A horse or a foot, truth has the right that its path be not hindered.

*Per me reges regnant*, "It is through Me kings reign," we read in the Protocols. That at the Zionist Congress of Basel, the Learned Elders of Zion should have quoted holy Scripture in the Latin of the Catholic translation is in itself enough to betray the forgery. The forger did not even take the slight precaution of quoting the sentence in the original Hebrew: *bi melakim yimeleku*.

28. Here is another striking example of slavish copying, which our present texts do not fully show. Joly's Dialogue carried the misprint "Sylla" instead of "Sulla," and early versions of the Protocols mechanically followed suit. Present-day editions, however, have corrected the error.

Worse still, he betrays himself by an error in date. At the X meeting, the Wise Men of Zion declare: "We shall arrange elections in favor of such presidents as have in their past some dark, undiscovered stain, some 'Panama' or other" (X, 13).<sup>29</sup> Of course, this passage is not to be found in Joly's Dialogue, published as it was in 1864; it is an addition of the forger. The only president of the French republic he could have had in mind here was Emile Loubet, elected on February 18, 1899, whom the people of Paris greeted, on his return from Versailles, with cries of "Panama, Panama!" What serious reader would not be certain that the passage in the Protocols was written after this date? But the Zionist Congress of Basel, where the Protocols are alleged to have been drawn up, took place in August, 1897.

The proofs of fraud are so overwhelming that even those most bitterly opposed to the idea have ended by admitting it. The desperate expedients to which they have resorted so as not to lose the poisoned weapon of the Protocols are based on no solid knowledge. Maurice Joly was a Jew, it has been claimed, and his real name Moïse Joël, and this in spite of the publication of his baptismal record, with the names of his godparents. But be he Jew or Turk, the nature of his Dialogue is not altered. It is nothing but a criticism of the "Machiavellian" rule of Napoleon III—a rule which came to an end in the military disaster of September 2, 1870—and in no way a program of reform or of world revolution.

It has been said—I have even received letters to this effect—that the Zionists gathered in Basel in 1897 purposely plagiarized Joly so that, in the event that their Protocols should one day be discovered, they could take cover behind the alibi and make people believe them a forgery. This is almost as clever as saying that the pyramids of Egypt

29. This is the background of the cry "Panama, Panama!" In 1885, Cornelius Herz, a Jewish adventurer, was commissioned by the bankrupt Panama Canal Company to obtain permission from the French Parliament for the issuance of bonds. Herz used for his lobbyist Baron Jacques de Reinach, also a Jew, who, in order to get their consent, bribed a great many of the legislators. In 1892, the whole scandal became public. Reinach, not, it seems, without Herz's harassment, committed suicide. The bribed legislators and the officials of the Panama Canal Company, who had approved the bribery, were called before a parliamentary investigation, but were treated very lightly. Loubet, then premier, had to resign on the ground that he had been negligent in the whole affair. When, in 1899, he became president, the crowds reminded him of the scandal by crying "Panama, Panama!" If we give credence to the Protocols, we not only have to assume that the Learned Elders of Zion were gifted with extraordinary foresight in that in 1897 they knew what would happen in 1899, but also that they did not mind at all smearing themselves by bringing up, without the least necessity, a scandal in which Jews were involved.

were built to serve as a bridge over the Danube, or that Notre-Dame de Paris is meant to be a fortress guarding the passes of the Pyrenees. As we have seen, Joly's book is nothing but a satire on the Second Empire. To say, then, that in copying this volume and adding to it cynicism and drivel, the Zionists transformed it into a program of world domination is pure folly.

Finally—for one must finish some time—the enemies of the Jews have asserted that the authenticity of the Protocols is an idle question, for even if they are false, the Protocols are true—true, since they are an exact portrayal of the Jewish way of thinking and acting. This is, for instance, the assertion of Adolf Hitler. Such an assertion evidently admits of no further discussion. If an accusation is based on nothing but itself, so that it is independent of all proofs, if these proofs can be destroyed without forcing the accusation to be withdrawn or modified, then there is no longer any criticism, any learning, any justice, and every calumny is permitted.

## CONCLUSION

(1) IF THE Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion are taken as a program, they are nothing but a bizarre sequence of ramblings without significance, betraying at every step the incoherent thought of their editor and his ignorance of the most elementary concepts. No one could ever put this program into practice, for it swarms with contradictions and obvious inanities.

(2) It has been proved that these Protocols are a fraud, a clumsy plagiarism of the satirical work of Maurice Joly, made for the purpose of rendering the Jews odious, and exciting against them the blind and heedless passions of the crowd.

(3) The Zionist Congress of Basel had nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with the composition of the Protocols.

(4) The object sought by the authors of the fraud is open to discussion. It seems to have been related to the inner problems of the Russia of 1905 and the Czarist Manifesto of October 30 of that same year.<sup>30</sup> But in order not to mix conjectures with a conclusion clear in itself, we will not examine this point further.

30. The Czarist Manifesto of October 30, 1905, promised "true inviolability of person, the freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, and union" (V. I. Gurko, *Features and Figures of the Past: Government and Opinion in the Reign of Nicholas II*, Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1939, p. 399). The Czar's concessions were followed a few days later by a wave of absolutist demonstrations and Jewish pogroms, organized by the police.

Far from being responsible for the Protocols, the Jews are really their victims, indeed their innocent victims.<sup>31</sup> This must be said, and said aloud, out of respect for the truth, to serve which is our absolute duty.

A final thought. One might be tempted to discouragement on seeing that in our Europe, with its proud learning and its whole arsenal of historical criticism, a fraud so evident, the work of an ignorant and clumsy policeman, could deceive and still deceives millions.

Or should we not rather acknowledge the profound truth of Newman's remark that men never lack logic, that they are frighteningly, relentlessly logical? The disagreements which separate them are not at all derived from shortcomings in reason. They have their origin in an inner zone much deeper than that in which judgments are formed, in what Newman calls "assumptions," that is, orientations at once confused and imperative; there man engages himself as a whole, with his desires and passions, his fears and furies, even his dreams and his resentments. Starting off from these orientations, logic works its way through everything, caring but rarely to adapt itself to reality, but making everything it meets serve the conclusions imposed in advance.

Did not the Lord say to Nicodemus that before he could understand, he would have to be born again and strip himself of everything? But hatred is like the legendary garment of Deianira, which Heracles could not take off. Hatreds are, alas! the treasure man guards most fiercely, and fiercely he abuses those who would rob him of it.

31. The Jews are the immediate victims, but the unscrupulousness which created and spread the Protocols does not stop with them, for what at the start gives itself out as self-defense against the Jewish menace all too easily becomes, by an inner logic, aggression against the Church. Proof of this: in the forefront of the exploiters of the Protocols are anti-Catholics like General von Ludendorff, whose wife wrote "Deliverance from Jesus Christ," and Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler's philosopher, who called the Pope the "sorcerer of Rome," the crucifix an instrument of "power-greedy churches," and the Church "after demonic Judaism, the second alien system which has to be overcome" (Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1932, pp. 186, 467, 604). Once let loose, hatred cannot be halted: for reasons not only psychological but also theological, it will leap from the Jews to Christ and the Church.

# PERSPECTIVES

*Bertram Hessler, O.F.M.*

## KOHELET: THE VEILED GOD

### I

AS THE Old Covenant draws toward its close, we meet a unique figure, perhaps the darkest and, at first sight, the most enigmatic of all its figures. Even his name is wrapped in silence: he calls himself, in his own tongue, "Kōhelet"; we call him, in ours, "The Preacher," and the work which preserves his words "The Book of the Preacher" or Ecclesiastes.

There is no end to the riddles about this figure. As early as the first Christian centuries, God-fearing rabbis found his words a stumbling block and therefore wished them struck from the Canon; only after long, embittered controversy was it decided that this wise man wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that hence his work was a holy work. Time and again in the course of the centuries, the same dispute blazed anew. By some the book was called "the high song of skepticism," by others "the high song of the fear of God." Some saw in its author an "enlightened" Jew who, having wandered from the faith of his fathers, blindly and indiscriminately drank in all the wisdom of Hellenism, all that Greek philosophy of his day offered in the way of unthought-out problems and interpretations of life. Others considered him a pious Jew who, unbroken in the midst of conflicting philosophical opinions on the worth or unworth of life, clung to the God of the fathers; who, shaken by the insight that life's ultimate issues were insoluble, answered with a defiant "still," with the "nevertheless" of faith. Or a pious man who, rather than inquire into the meaning and value of existence, fled blindly into the sheltering arms of God. Finally, there were those who thought him like an ostrich burying his confused head in the desert sands of ancestral faith.<sup>1</sup>

1. Among the works on Kōhelet in English are two important Jewish commentaries which differ in many respects from Father Hessler's interpretation. Rabbi Vic-

Yet all who have ever encountered this puzzling man of wisdom have been stirred by him in their very souls, have been unable to free themselves from his grip. Soon the enigmatic sage no longer seemed an unknown, a nameless man of the third or second century before Christ, but some one well known, who expressed what had long been burning in their souls, even lain on their tongues, though a last reserve had forbidden them to spell it out. He was simply man—man as he wrestles with the dark questions of existence and bleeds from a thousand wounds; man bare, naked, at the limits of himself, standing before the veiled God.

It depended then on the strength of their own souls if this wise man became for his readers one "who taught the people knowledge" (12:9), a leader to his God, as holy Scripture puts it; or whether he became for them a leader astray, who abandoned them in the dreary desert of their own selves all alone, who left them cynics, despising the world and denying life, failures in their search for God, and perhaps even murderers who slew God in their own breasts.

## II

VANITY of vanities," says the Preacher; "vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (1:2). This, set at the beginning and the end of his work,

tor Reichert sees in Kohelet a "juxtaposition of piety and skepticism" which he considers part of "the whole paradox of the Jewish mind." "Stoic fatalism and Epicurean hedonism have their say," he maintains, "yet in the end we rise to the higher synthesis of reverence for God and obedience to His commandments" (*The Five Megilloth*, ed. A. Cohen, Hindhead, Surrey: Soncino Press, 1946, pp. 105, 106). Rabbi Robert Gordis thinks of Kohelet as a man whom personal experience or reflection had robbed of the traditional Jewish faith, yet who, like any Jew of ancient times, cannot doubt the reality of God for an instant. Dr. Gordis finds Kohelet's "skeptical outlook . . . rooted in his temperament" and "nurtured also by his position among the well-to-do classes of society." "To taste life's joys without self-deception and to face its sorrows without despair" is his teaching, which, according to Dr. Gordis, fills "an everlastingly significant function." Summing up, he writes: "In the deepest sense, Koheleth is a religious book, because it seeks to grapple with reality" (*Koheleth—The Man and His World*, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1951, pp. 112, 118, 121, 122). For the most recent evaluation by a Catholic scholar, see the study by Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., "The *Pensées* of Coheleth," in the festive issue of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* honoring Archbishop Edwin V. O'Hara (XVII, 2, April 1955, pp. 304-314). Explaining the looseness of its composition by placing it in the same literary genre as Pascal's *Pensées*, he calls it the reflections and jottings of a mature man on the meaning of life (edited, and perhaps reworked to some extent, by one of his disciples), which seem to anticipate Christ's pointed question: "What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Mt 16:26). [Editor.]

seems to be the grand sum of his disappointments, the alpha and omega of his long, and yet so meaningless, life. Meaningless, for now that he has come to the end of his days, there dawns on him the shattering knowledge: what he was, he has remained, a wretched, helpless man, trapped within the laws and limits of his nature. After many laborious years, he has to confess that they all came to nothing; that the paths of his life—the twisted and the straight, the steep and the plane—brought him, by long and tiring journeys, only to his journey's start: to himself, to his own miserable being. He is still delivered to the order of nature, faring exactly like the wind, "which blows to the south and turns about to the north; round and round the wind moves, only to return to the beginning of its round"; or like the rivers, which all "flow into the sea, yet never does the sea grow full; to the place where the rivers go, thither must they go again" (1:6, 7). And he knows also that all that remains for him is to go the way of all who went before him, to sink into the ocean of oblivion. "There is no remembrance," he laments, "of those of former times, nor will those that are to come be remembered by those that will come after" (1:11).

In the midst of this unremitting round of things he feels powerless in spite of all his energy; handed over to dark, blind laws; tossed to and fro from grief to gladness, from gladness to grief, from love to hate, from hate to love. Thus he avows:

*Everything has its appointed time and every  
undertaking under the sky its hour.  
There is an hour to be born and an hour to die.  
An hour to plant and an hour to uproot that  
which is planted . . .  
An hour to weep and an hour to laugh;  
An hour to mourn and an hour to dance . . .  
An hour to embrace and an hour to shun em-  
bracing . . .  
An hour to keep and an hour to cast away . . .  
An hour to love and an hour to hate;  
An hour for war and an hour for peace.*

(3:1-8)

Then, with tired resignation he draws up the balance: "What profit has a man of all his toil with which he toils beneath the sun?" (3:9; 1:3). For all his labor, he is but the sport of conflicting forces, not the master of his life.

In this continual hither-and-thither, man's life rushes away and, all at once, they are here, "the evil days of which you say: they please me not; when the sun is darkened, and the light, and the moon, and the stars" (12:1-2), when vitality sinks and the world becomes like a wide landscape in the heat of noon. All living things have crept into hiding, the streets are a waste and the stillness of death is in them, all is desert. The almond tree withers, its leaves fall; the grasshopper has to drag itself along over the dry grass, its end is near; and like all life our own cherished life too vanishes in this landscape of death. "Then the silver cord is severed, the golden bowl is shattered, the pitcher is broken at the fountain, the wheel falls broken into the well. The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God, who made it." All that is left us is to call after this departing life the one word: "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity" (12:3-8).

Through the dark door of death, man walks into an icy silence, and takes with him on this last journey not even the comfort that he is any better than the beast, for experience tells him clearly and unmistakably: "As the one dies, so dies the other, for there is the same breath of life in both of them. So man has no advantage over the beast. All go to one place, all come from dust and all return to dust. Who knows whether the spirit of men mounts upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?" (3:18-21). To this bitter sentence, the Preacher has apparently only this to add: "So I saw that there is nothing better for man than to rejoice in his works. This is his portion, for who shall permit him to share in what shall be after him?" (3:22).

Yet is not this flight into life ultimately a flight from life? Is this man, who seems to have nothing further to say on the problem of life than "Eat your bread with joy. Drink your wine with gladness. . . . Let your head not lack for oil. Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all your days, vain as they are" (9:7-9)—is he not at bottom one whom life has broken? Has he not grown weary; does he not seek to drug life's anguish in the delirium of pleasure; must he not see time and again how, from the icy regions of death, frost settles on the joyous flowers of his life to destroy them?

### III

BUT now there seems to rise before our eyes another *Kohelet*. Having spent many long and wakeful nights careworn and pondering, he is at

last resigned, pushes his books aside, puts out the lamp on his study table, and speaks: "As for the rest, be warned, my son! Of making many books there is no end and much study wearies the flesh" (12:12). Yes, there seems to rise another *Ḳohelet*, who knows no other way out of the dark riddles he has met in his studies than flight. But his flight is not into life and its pleasures, it is flight to God: "Let us all hear the concluding word: Fear God and keep His commandments. Such is every man's duty, for God shall bring every work to judgment, every hidden thing, whether it be good or evil" (12:13-14). So he counsels, and yet must confess that this flight fails, for fleeing from darkness he falls into new darkness. His flight does not take him to the father-arms of his God but only to the limit of his own self, to his own finitude and miserable creatureliness. He arrives at a chilling, inaccessible mystery, the "veiled God": "As you do not know how the breath of life enters the child in the womb of a woman, so you do not know the doings of God, who does all things" (11:5). His cry of distress, his anguished questions, his unceasing "why" and "wherefore," remain unanswered; they die away in the icy, silent mystery of his God: "God is in heaven and you are on earth" (5:1).

Must not this bitter cold mystery of a hidden God bring man to torpor, even to death? Is not that fear of God to which the Preacher exhorts us really the paralyzing anguish of the creature, laming our whole life? What good does such fear of God do us? Does not *Ḳohelet* himself say: "One lot comes to all, to the just and to the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean, to him who brings sacrifice and to him who brings not. As with the good, so with the sinner. As with him who swears, so with him who swears not" (9:2)? Indeed, he avows: "I have seen the wicked carried to their graves with honor, while those who had done right had to wander from the holy place and were forgotten in the city. This too is vanity" (8:10).

With all this, who would not rather be among those who think that "*Ḳohelet* the pessimist," "*Ḳohelet* the hedonist," "*Ḳohelet* the skeptic" is the more consistent—he who sings, with wounded heart, of the vanity of life, and all the while, though with trembling hands, serves up the goblet of joy? And who would not look with pity, perhaps even a certain contempt, upon the other *Ḳohelet*, who flees into the dark mystery of a God shrouded in icy silence, heedless of our cries of distress, and stifling our shouts of joy on our very lips? Who would not

prefer the one to the other?—provided, to be sure, that there *is* this double *Ḳohelet*.

## I V

BUT so far we have ignored one thing. The book *Ḳohelet* is part of the Book of Books, of holy Scripture; it is a book of revelation, and the words of the Preacher are therefore—so St. Paul witnesses—helpful in instructing, reproving, correcting, and educating us in holy living (2 Tim 3:16). As Christians, we ask of this, as of every other book in the Old and New Testaments: What is its soteriological significance? In other words, what is its task in the history of salvation? What task did it have to accomplish for the man of the Old Covenant, and what task does it still have to accomplish for us men of the New, who live in the fullness of time? Hence we ask: Where is the key to unlock the enigmatic words of that unknown man who stands near the turning from the Old to the New Dispensation?

The key is first in the bitter knowledge that all things earthly are but shadows, and shadows of shadows, for from the beginning to the end the cry, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," sounds through every experience of the Preacher. But others before him had found this key to the interpretation of the world and of life, and countless others after him, down to a Schopenhauer, a Heidegger, a Jaspers, indeed all the disillusioned and despairing of our unhappy day, perhaps even including ourselves. They all philosophized, or else acted and lived, out of the anguish life begets. Obviously, to experience the vanity of earthly things required no disclosure by the Spirit of God.

Another key must be hidden in the book to make us understand what is really meant by the hollowness of all things creaturely, a key given not by experience but by revelation. What it unlocks is not the fact of hollowness—this we experience sorely enough in our own persons almost every day—but its reason, its cause; not the "that" but the "why" of all the darkness that envelops our lives.

The great unknown at the threshold of the New Testament becomes thus the great knower, who knows of this key and, as far as is given him, unlocks with it the riddles of human existence. *Ḳohelet* knows of mankind's radiant beginning; he knows that "God has made everything beautiful in its time, even eternity has He set in the hearts of

men" (3:11). But he knows also of a darker sequel, of a guilt which became man's doom. It is not without significance that the Preacher hammers again and again, with utmost intensity, into the ears of his hearers: "No one has power over the breath of life"; "All go to one place, all come from dust and all return to dust" (3:20; 6:6; 8:8).

There is in these words the luminous knowledge of the sentence pronounced by the Creator-God in mankind's bright morning: "Because you have eaten of the tree of which I have commanded you not to eat: Cursed be the ground because of you; in toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, since out of it you were taken; for dust you are and unto dust you shall return" (Gen 3:17-19). Since that hour man lives in awayness from God, no longer in nearness. Since that hour the fear of God is, as a sign of distance, the soul's stand, the stand, that is, of man the sinner.

This fate some bore in penance and submission, awaiting the hour of grace when God would step out of His remoteness, when He would be no longer veiled but unveiled. Others opposed it in titanic defiance and so continued the sin which was the sin of the first human pair: rebellion against the limits of creaturehood and the haughty will to invade God's realm as their own lords. "You will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). Thus, as the history of salvation took its course, there were those who tried to wrench from life an ultimate meaning and unshakable safeguard in earthly civilization and culture; theirs was a world from which the name of God was obliterated and which, "stripped" of Him, saw itself as God. Even in the first pages of the Bible, we have a hint of this (Gen 4:17-24). Again, some sought to make their existence secure in the expansion of political power, combining nations into a mighty, Godlike empire: we know the story of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). Then there were those—and here we are at the Preacher's own period—who tried to wrest a last significance from life by means of philosophical systems, by the motto, for instance: Enjoyment is the last fulfillment of life; or: To know the mysteries of the world is to enter the realm of the divine; or: The creation of a just social order, of a commonwealth, is the true unfolding of life. Against all these, the unknown Preacher, his heart wounded but believing, hurls a determined "no," and utters an all the more determined "yes" to

the lot apportioned man by God since man's first sin. It is his "yes" of submission to life's darkness, of hopeful waiting for the hour when God's unveiling of Himself will lift the veils of our existence and take away its night.

# V

THROUGH the words of the Preacher, from beginning to end, run a "no" and a "yes," a "no" which denies that life's mysteries can be disclosed from within the world, and a "yes" which waits till God unveils them.

This is his "no": Man cannot of himself thrust through the limits of his creaturely state, he cannot break through the iron yoke of natural laws to which he is fettered as creature. The most visible proof is death: relentless, armed with natural law, it will call man from the stage of life, as it does any other creature, when his God-set hour comes. "All go to one place, all come from dust and all return to dust" (3:20).

But not even for the brief span given him does man succeed in being a sovereign, at home in this world. Time and again he experiences that he is not alone in determining his life, that there is a higher will determining it with him, down to its smallest details. It is precisely here that he senses the whole calamity of his creaturely existence: not even for the brief span between birth and death can he create for himself an undisturbed and indestructible home. Ultimately he remains a homeless wanderer, a fugitive. "The just and the wise, together with their works, are in the hands of God. Whether love or hatred will come to him man does not know. Anything may be his future" (9:1-2).

It is not knowledge that can help man transcend the limits of his finitude; nor can it assure him, in this world, of firm ground to stand on. To his era's craze for knowledge and to the human defiance that wishes, by means of knowledge, to thrust into the realm of the divine—Kohélet hurls an equally defiant "no." And this he puts into the mouth of Solomon, whom the ancient Orient considered to be without a doubt the embodiment of the wise man. To him God had said: "Lo, I shall give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will have been none before you like you nor will any like you arise after you" (3 Kg 3:12). Now, what does Kohélet make this wisest of all the

wise tell of himself? "Lo, I have acquired great wisdom, greater than all who reigned before me over Jerusalem, and my heart has seen abundant wisdom and knowledge. Yet when I put my heart to know how it is with wisdom and knowledge, how it is with madness and folly, I came to see: This too is chasing after wind. For in much wisdom there is much grief, and who adds to knowledge adds to sorrow" (1:16-18).

Thus in the end knowledge awakened in this wisest of the wise not happiness but the great sadness of life. Again and again it took him to the frontiers of his creaturehood, and there he, the wise, like the fool, ran against the great night which enshrouds life—death, the dark door through which wise and foolish, man and beast alike, have to pass. They have to pass through it (2:15-16), and yet no human eye can ever penetrate its darkness. "No advantage has man over the beast. As dies the one, so dies the other. All is vanity. Who knows whether the spirit of man mounts upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?" (3:19, 21). At this frontier, then, the man of wisdom encountered the veiled God Himself. "No man can fathom God's work here under the sun. However much he strives to read its meaning, he will not understand it" (8:17). So knowledge ends in darkness, and to those who offer it as the answer to life's riddle, *Qohelet* replies with a defiant "no."

No more can vitality and its satisfactions grant ultimate fulfillment to human existence. Again *Qohelet* opposes a stark "no," this time to the motto: Enjoy the pleasures of life. And again it is Solomon whom he makes his mouthpiece, to whom it was said: "Even the things you have not asked, I shall give you, both riches and honor, so that there will be no king like you all the days of your life" (3 Kg 3:13). But Solomon too had to acknowledge: "Great works have I done, houses I built for myself and vineyards I planted. I laid out gardens and orchards planted with every kind of fruit tree. I made pools to water the forest of growing trees. I bought menservants and maidservants and I had slaves born in my house. I owned cattle and sheep, much more than all who lived before me in Jerusalem. I heaped together silver and gold and the treasures of kings and provinces. I acquired men singers and women singers, all the delights of men, of young women a great number. So I grew great, greater than all who had been before me in Jerusalem. . . . Whatever my eyes desired I did not deny to

them, nor did I refuse to my heart any pleasure. . . . And then I turned to look on all the works my hands had wrought and on the labor I had spent on them. And lo, all was vanity and chasing of wind. Nothing is gained under the sun" (2:4-11).

The Preacher has yet another "no" to speak, his last, defying all those who think that by social activity they can wrest a meaning from this fleeting life, that they can give ultimate security to human existence by means of a welfare state. But theirs is a calculation which omits a decisive factor: man's sinfulness, which blights all such efforts at the root, which again and again wrecks them at the very start. "Still another thing I saw under the sun: the place of law taken by wickedness, and the place of justice taken by wickedness" (3:16).

## VI

WERE this triple "no" of scorn wisdom's final word, *Qohelet* would really be nothing but a pessimist, a negator of life. But that is just what it is not: for him "no" is not wisdom's end but wisdom's beginning. It is the point of departure from which he soars to that higher wisdom which teaches him to submit to the limits of his creaturehood, modestly to remain within the boundaries God's will has set for him. *Qohelet* knows full well that within this frame there is to be had a relative satisfaction and fulfillment, for to him the world is by no means essentially corrupt. He knows that the very first page of Scripture judges the world thus: "God saw all that He had made; and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). So he too can say: "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (3:11). The things of earth turn evil only in the hands of man, who misuses them for his own selfish purposes. Hence *Qohelet* can counsel: "There is nothing better for man than to eat and to drink and to let his soul be merry in all his labor. Indeed, I saw that this too comes from the hand of God. For who can eat or who can be merry without Him?" (2:24-25).

Hence the things of earth are emptied of meaning for man only when used by him against their meaning, as if they were the ultimate fulfillment of his creaturely existence and could fill the space in man that God alone can fully fill. *Qohelet* is not filled by them, not sated. He is a man who stands at the bounds of his creaturehood as one ultimately un-filled—more, as one who is broken but not broken apart, broken by his self but raised by his God. He does not despair, rather

does he believe, hear, and obey. And this is the issue of his wisdom: "Fear God and keep His commandments. Such is every man's duty, for God shall bring every work to judgment, every hidden thing, whether it be good or evil" (12:13-14).

His heart wounded but his faith strong, Kohelet bows before his God. Since man's first sin, this God is no longer the near God but God afar, a God no longer of unveiling but of veiling. He is a God who grants to sinful man no insight into the ultimate reasons behind His ways; indeed, a God who appears to human eyes simply enigmatic, contradictory in His doings, cold in His relationship with the world.

This darkness which envelops God grows more a burden, and the fear of God, sign of His farness, becomes more and more a bending under the weight of His hiddenness, because what is particularly taken from man the sinner is a clear gaze into the beyond. What he can humanly know of it is not much more than that it is the ceasing of life here on earth, the ceasing of all man's vital functions: "The living know at least they they will die, but the dead know nothing. No reward is given them anymore, their memory is forgotten. Their love, their hatred, their passion—all have perished long ago. Nevermore will they have part in anything that is done under the sun" (9:5-6).

Perhaps nowhere else than in the dark uncertainty about these questions of ultimate concern is there so manifest the calamity of the man of sin, who wanted to be like God, knowing good and evil. As punishment he was thrown back from an existence immediate to God to an existence immediate to himself, that is, to his own mortal being. From that moment every road was blocked on which his own efforts could carry him from his world-immanence to the realm of the divine; from that moment there remained to him only one possibility—in obedience and alertness to stretch his arms toward his Creator and in patience to await the hour when God would step out of His veiledness and descend to man.

The words of the Preacher are grave, very grave; words in which resound the unspeakable suffering and the whole calamity of man's sin-laden existence; words which show with inexorable force—as do no others spoken in the course of sacred history—the shadows which the hiddenness of God spreads over man's life and lot: the disharmonies of empirical life, the disharmonies of the ethical realm, the disharmonies which the dark fate of death sends into man's existence, the disharmonies which the obscure, God-given order of the world

brings about. They are words of confession, but at the same time words of renunciation. Unconditionally they break with man who rules himself and on his own tries to change his misery; they break with man who looks on himself as a god. And in this breaking, they grow into words of desire, into a burning cry for the unveiling of this God before whom man sees himself a riddle and a wretchedness; they become a penetrating cry for the revelation of the New Testament, which is "truth and life" (Jn 14:6).

## VII

WHAT the Apostle says of the whole Old Testament, that in its innermost essence it was "a tutor leading to Christ" (Gal 3:24), is true also of the enigmatic figure of the Preacher. As the days of the Old Dispensation neared their end, he revealed man's utter wretchedness. Thus he too is a tutor leading to Christ, and thus his words turn into one of the most stirring messianic "prophecies." By disclosing the misery of man the sinner in his remoteness from God, by leading him again and again to the limits of his own being and before the mystery of God veiled, his words awaken in him a desire for God's unveiling. They also make him ready to reach toward Him in whom God clearly and forever stepped out of His veiling into the unveiling, to reach toward Him who is "the likeness of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), "the brightness of His glory and the image of His being" (Heb 1:3). But for us, men of the New Testament, the words of Kohelet standing at its threshold, disclose no less the gladness of our redemption.

For Jesus, the Christ, is God's final emergence out of the veiling into the unveiling, the light which illumines the night of God's hiddenness. On His face we see shining the glory of God the Father (2 Cor 4:6). And this radiance of the divine glory issuing from Him takes from our face the shadow of care, anguish, and greed, or even the devil's darkness, and lets the face of man redeemed become again the mirror of God. In Christ, God receives man back into the arms of His father-goodness, into His love, and puts on his lips the words "our Father," leading him thus from anguish and concern into the carefreeness of a child of God. The troubled words: "No man knows what the future will bring, for who can declare to him what shall be?" (8:7), He answers with the assurance: "Do not be anxious, saying, What shall we

eat? What shall we drink? Or what are we to put on? (After all these things the Gentiles seek.) For your Father in heaven knows that you need them all" (Mt 6:31-32). To man's fearful lament: "None has power over the breath of life, to hold back the breath of life; none has power over the day of death and there is no discharge from [its] agony" (8:8), God replies in Christ: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in me, even if he die, shall live" (Jn 11:25). Death, the great affliction, is "swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor 15:54), is merely the last dusk behind which God's glory will rise and radiate forever, will rise as the last veils fall from our mortal eyes and we see Him face to face.

To the Preacher, still, "the day of death is better than the day of one's birth" (7:2); for the redeemed man, the day of death is the day of birth. While the Preacher laments: "What profit has a man of all his toil with which he toils beneath the sun?" (3:9; 1:3), the redeemed man rejoices: "Our present light affliction, which is for the moment, prepares for us an eternal weight of glory that is beyond measure" (2 Cor 4:17). Indeed, for redeemed man, mere endurance of this fleeting world is changed to the looking forward "in blessed hope to the glorious coming of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:13). He looks forward to the final unveiling of God at the end of days, which will be God's definitive unveiling not only before our eyes but also in ourselves. For He will "refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of His glory by exerting the power by which He is able also to subject all things to Himself" (Phil 3:21).

The Preacher's first and last word is of the great futility of life: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" The redeemed man's first and last word is "O blessed vanity" for he knows that, through Christ, God has planted into the perishable world even now the seed of imperishableness. The Preacher—man, prisoner of his limits and his sins—laments the worthlessness of existence, but man freed by the good news turns the lament into jubilation: "The eager longing of creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For creation was made subject to vanity—not by its own will but by reason of Him who made it subject—in hope, because creation itself also will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God" (Rom 8:19-21).

*Richard Kugelman, C.P*

## HEBREW, ISRAELITE, JEW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A STUDY in semantics may seem useless erudition, yet these three names are a précis of the mystery of a unique people; they speak of an awesome design.

Since the New Testament authors did not coin the words Hebrew, Israelite, and Jew, but found them current in the language and literature of their people, a brief survey of the origin and meaning of these names in the Old Testament is a necessary introduction to our inquiry.

## HEBREW, ISRAELITE, JEW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

TODAY *Hebrew* ('*Ibri*) is frequently identified with the roaming, aggressive *Ḫabiru* ('*Apiru*, *Khapiru*) mentioned in the celebrated cuneiform tablets which have been discovered in recent years in Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, and Egypt, the texts of Rim-Sin of Larsa (ca. 1758-1698 B.C.) and of Nuzu, Ras Shamra, Boghazköy, and Amarna (ca. 1400 B.C.). From these documents it is quite evident that the name *Ḫabiru* designated not an ethnic group but rather a social or economic class, either nomads who threatened the sown areas of settled peoples, or poor vagabonds who had sold themselves voluntarily into slavery. But the identification of *Ḫabiru* and Hebrew, while attractive, is by no means established.<sup>1</sup> There still are authorities who,

1. G. Ernest Wright, "How Archaeology Helps the Student of the Bible," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. II (May 1940), p. 31, indicates the attractiveness of the Khabiru theory: "It has been pointed out that the great majority of the references to 'Hebrews' in the Old Testament belongs to the Patriarchal period and the period of the sojourn in Egypt. The term is usually employed when an Egyptian speaks to an Israelite, or when an Israelite identifies himself to an Egyptian, or when the Israelites as a group are named along with some other people or peoples. This certainly supports the suggestion that 'Hebrew' bore something of the same connotation as Khabiru or 'Apiru; and we are reminded again of the fact that Abraham was

like the ancient rabbis, consider Hebrew an ethnic name derived either from the patriarch Eber, the great-grandson of Shem and ancestor of Abraham (Gen 10:24), or, more commonly, from the verb 'b r (to cross over). It would then designate the descendants of Eber, or "the people from across the river," that is, the Jordan, or perhaps the Euphrates, in any case from the East.<sup>2</sup> In the Bible we find non-Jews using the name Hebrew to designate Jews, and Jews applying it to themselves when speaking to foreigners.<sup>3</sup> In Gen 14:13 and Jon 1:9 the name is quite clearly an ethnic designation. In 2 Mac 7:31, 11:13, and 15:38, and in Jdt 10:12, 12:10, and 14:16, Hebrew is certainly a national name, evidently an archaism employed to avoid the undertone of contempt attached to the name Jew. A similar use of the word occurs in Josephus, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the *Book of Jubilees*.<sup>4</sup> In rabbinical literature Hebrew becomes a philological term designating the "sacred language" of the Bible and the ancient script. With Josephus this use is extended so that Hebrew designates Aramaic, the language of the post-exilic Jews of Palestine, and the "Hebrews" becomes practically a synonym for the Palestinian Jews.<sup>5</sup>

*Israel* is the Old Testament "sacred" name for the Jewish people, the name proper to them as God's chosen, covenanted people. With

spoken of as 'the Hebrew' (Gen 14:13), and that later Israelites were taught that their father was a 'nomadic' or 'fugitive Aramean' (Deut 26:5)." See W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), pp. 182-183; "Nova Documenta de Hābiru," *Biblica*, Vol. 33 (1952), pp. 561-562. E. Kraeling, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 77 (Feb. 1940), pp. 32-34, rejects the identification of Hebrew and Khabiru for philological reasons. So also E. Dhorme in the article "Amarna," *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, I, 220. G. Ricciotti, *The History of Israel* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1955), I, 151-152, concludes that the identification "rests . . . on a shaky philological foundation."

2. See A. Lukyn Williams, article "Hebrew," *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by J. Hastings, II, 325-327. Ricciotti (*op. cit.*, pp. 150-151) admits the possibility of both these etymologies. He points out that the Septuagint renders "Abram the Hebrew" in Gen 14:13 as *peraitēs* = *peraitēs*, "the man from beyond, the one going over," thus favoring a derivation from 'b r. If derived from Eber, Hebrew would include other peoples descended from the ancient patriarch. While Hebrew and Israelite are employed as synonyms in the Bible, there are traces of an ancient distinction, as in 1 Kg 14:21.

3. On the lips of Gentiles: Gen 39:14, 17; 41:12; Ex 1:16; 2:6; 1 Kg 4:6, 9; 13:19; 14:11; 29:3. On the lips of Jews: Gen 40:15; Ex 1:19; 2:7; 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13.

4. See K. G. Kuhn, article in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, III, 369,b.

5. See Gutbrod, article, *ibid.*, 375-376, for the loci.

the exceptions of Gen 32:29 where it is given to the patriarch Jacob, and of the period of the divided monarchy when it has a political connotation as the name of the northern kingdom, Israel in the Old Testament never designates an individual, a tribe, or the people as a political entity. It always connotes the character and mission of the people God chose for His singular purpose and tied to Himself in a special bond. Hence Israelite names the Jew as a member of the covenanted people. The etymology of the word is in keeping with this religious use. Israel very probably is formed from the root *s r b* (to be strong) and the divine name *El*. It has the appearance of what grammarians call a jussive form and probably means "May God prevail" or "May God rule." This etymology is in line with the traditional, popular etymology of Gen 32:29, where the origin of the name is linked to Jacob's mysterious struggle with God when he had forded the Jabbok. There it is given the meaning of "striver with God," because he wrestled for the blessing of the Lord and would not be without it.<sup>6</sup>

*Judah* (from which *Jew* is derived) is the name of the fourth son of Leah and Jacob, and of the tribe descended from him. During the period of the divided monarchy it designated the kingdom of the south (the tribes of Judah and Benjamin), which was ruled by the dynasty of David of the tribe of Judah. Although the word may have a beautiful religious meaning ("May Yahweh be praised"),<sup>7</sup> Judah (and Jew) never acquired the religious quality of the name Israel.

After the destruction of the schismatic kingdom of the north in 722 B.C., the name Israel recovered its exclusive religious significance

6. R. de Vaux, article "Israël," *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, IV, 730, calls this etymology "more probable" but lists two others as worthy of consideration: (a) from *s r r*, for which the meaning in Arabic "to shine" is postulated, that is, "God enlightens"; thus K. Vollers, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, IX (1906), p. 184, and H. Bauer, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, XXXVIII (1935), col. 477; and (b) from *y s r*, not attested in Hebrew but found in Arabic and Ethiopic with the meaning "to cure," hence "God heals"; thus W. F. Albright, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XLVI (1927), pp. 154-158. Other interpretations have been offered. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1925), V, 307, lists some more or less imaginative explanations of the name Israel. For instance, "the one who tries to sing instead of the angels," or "the one who is joyful like the angels at the time of their singing," or again "he who walks straight with God." Philo interprets the name as "the man who sees God" and as identical with the Logos. Following his allegorical exegesis without, however, accepting his concept of the Logos, some of the Church Fathers, like Justin the Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, at times interpret Israel to mean Christ.

7. See *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of The Old Testament*, by Brown, Driver, Briggs, p. 397; also A. Legendre, article "Juda," *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (Vigouroux), III, 1755-56.

and was used by the prophets Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah to designate the kingdom of Judah and the Jews as the people of God. The exiles in Babylon and later the repatriates conformed to this usage. Since the territory of the repatriates practically coincided with the limits of the former kingdom of Judah, the name Jew was also used. But the post-exilic literature shows a marked preference for Israel, which, because of its religious character, was intimately bound up with the messianic hopes of the people. Israelite was the name by which the people designated themselves, while Jew was the name by which they were known to Gentiles. The practice of First Maccabees is a good illustration of this use. In the narrative sections of the book the author employs Israel, when he himself is referring to his people. But when he records the words of Gentiles referring to the chosen people, he places the name Jew on their lips.<sup>8</sup> In diplomatic letters addressed to Gentile states, and even in official, civil documents addressed to their own people, the Jewish rulers use the name Jews, not Israelites.<sup>9</sup> This practice shows quite conclusively that Jew was a political designation, while Israel was a sacred, religious name. The exclusive use of Israel in books of an exclusively religious character, for instance, Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sirach) and the Psalms of Solomon, confirms the distinction between the two names.

The Jews of the Diaspora adopted the terminology of their Gentile environment and usually called themselves Jews, reserving the sacred name of Israel for the language of prayer. The practice of Second Maccabees is thus quite different from that of First Maccabees. The author himself calls his people Jews. Israel occurs only five times and always in prayers.<sup>10</sup>

## HEBREW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE noun Hebrew, *Ebraios*, occurs only three times in the New Testament (Ac 6:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). The adjective *Ebraïis* also occurs three times (Ac 21:40; 22:2; 26:14), while the form *Ebraïsti* is met with only in the writings of John, five times in the Fourth Gospel

8. 1 Mac 10:23; 11:50; 8:22-32; 11:30-33; 14:20-23.

9. 1 Mac 8:20; 14:27-47; 12:1-23; 13:41-42.

10. See 2 Mac 1:25, 26; 10:38; 11:6 for the use of Israel in prayer; 9:5 gives the liturgical formula "the Lord, the God of Israel." Jew appears frequently, for instance, in 2 Mac 1:1-10; 8:32; 6:1, 6, 8; 10:8.

and twice in the Apocalypse. In Acts and the Fourth Gospel these adjectives are philological terms designating the language used by the Palestinian Jews, that is, Aramaic. The Apocalypse, however, uses *Ebraïsti* to mean Hebrew rather than Aramaic (9:11; 16:16). This lack of precision in the use of the word, while worthy of notice, is not extraordinary. It occurs also in Josephus<sup>11</sup> and even occasionally in the rabbinical literature, which usually distinguishes *'ibrit* from *aramit*.<sup>12</sup>

From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that the primitive Christian community of Jerusalem comprised two groups, Hebrews and Hellenists: "Now in those days, as the number of the disciples was increasing, there arose a murmuring among the Hellenists against the Hebrews that their widows were being neglected in the daily ministration" (6:1). This, incidentally, is the first occurrence of the noun *Ellēnistēs* in Greek literature. It is derived from the verb *ellēnizein* (to speak Greek) and means "one who uses the Greek language," implying that he is not an *Ellēn*, a Greek by blood. At the time this murmuring arose in Jerusalem, the members of the Church were all Jews, including only those proselytes who had accepted circumcision and the Jewish Law. The distinction between Hellenist and Hebrew is therefore a distinction between Jews, a distinction of language, not of blood.<sup>13</sup> A similar division of the Jewish world into Hebrew (Aramaic-speaking) and Greek (Greek-speaking) is met with in rabbinical literature.<sup>14</sup> It would however be an oversimplification to characterize the name Hebrew in Ac 6:1 as merely a philological term. In a two-language country such as Palestine then was, it would be difficult to understand the neglect of the Hellenist widows by the Hebrew almoners if difference of mother tongue were the only barrier between the two groups. It fits the situation better if we see in Luke's use of Hebrew the same extension of the linguistic term found in Josephus, by which it designates the Jews of Palestine, because they spoke Aramaic, a language akin to Hebrew, while the common speech of the

11. See Gutbrod, *loc. cit.*, p. 375.

12. See Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, II, 442-443.

13. E. Jacquier, *Les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1926), p. 184; St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. XIV* (PG 60:113). Cadbury in a long excursus in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, edited by F. Jackson and K. Lake, V, 59-74, argues that the Hellenists are Gentiles who have entered the Church without passing through Judaism. But such a practice before Peter's reception of Cornelius is inadmissible. See J. Renie, *Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1949), p. 101.

14. See Strack-Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, II, 444; 448, d.

Diaspora Jews had become Greek. The root of the trouble between the Hellenists (Jews from the Diaspora) and the Hebrews (native Palestinians) of the early Christian community of Jerusalem seems to have been the "stiffness" of the native Palestinian toward his coreligionist born in the Dispersion.

Ac 21:40, 22:2 indicate that Paul spoke Aramaic fluently. When Christ appeared to him at the supreme moment of his life, He called him *Saoul*, *Saoul*, which is the Semitic form of his name and which, fortunately, is retained in the Greek text of all three accounts of his Damascus hour (Ac 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). This indicates that he possessed this fluency not only because of the years he spent in Jerusalem as a student of Gamaliel, but first because Aramaic was his mother tongue, the language spoken habitually in his father's house at Tarsus. For the heavenly Vision certainly addressed Paul in the language of his thoughts, and he himself says expressly that the glorified Christ spoke to him in the "Hebrew dialect," that is, Aramaic (Ac 26:14). Although born in the Diaspora, in Tarsus of Cilicia, Paul calls himself a Hebrew (2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5), never a Hellenist. He is in fact "a Hebrew of Hebrews." Since Hebrew in the extended sense designated a Palestinian Jew, this expression of Paul can only mean that his family was of Palestinian origin and, it would seem, not long resident in the Diaspora when he was born.<sup>15</sup> Because the mother tongue of his home was Aramaic and his strict Pharisee father tenacious of the customs of the old country, Paul considered himself a Palestinian Jew (Phil 3:5) and would yield to no one on the purity of his Jewish blood (2 Cor 11:22).<sup>16</sup>

#### ISRAELITE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

ISRAELITE occurs only nine times in the New Testament, but Israel very frequently, indeed sixty-six times. With the exception of Rom 9:6 (and perhaps Phil 3:5), Israel never directly refers to the patriarch Jacob but only to his descendants, that is, to the people as a whole. As in the Old Testament, it is a religious name designating the Jews

15. This would account for the false tradition cited by St. Jerome that Paul was born in Gischala of Galilee (*Comm. in ep. ad Philem.* 23, PL 26:617).

16. The New Testament use of Hebrew warrants in itself no conclusion concerning the location of the addresses of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The title, dating from the second century, would be apt for exiled Palestinians living in Italy as well as for Jewish Christians of Palestine.

as God's covenanted people, stressing His elective grace and loving guidance. Hence, as in First Maccabees, it is the usual name employed by the Jews themselves and is never found on the lips of Gentiles.

*The Synoptic Gospels:* In Mark's Gospel Israel is found only twice. Once it is on Jesus' lips when He answered the scribe's question as to the first of all the commandments with the great word of the Old Testament: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one God; and you shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart" (Mk 12:29-30; Deut 6:4-5). The second time it is on the lips of Jesus' enemies when they sarcastically refer to His messianic claim: "He saved others, himself he cannot save! Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe" (Mk 15:31-32). In both these passages the religious significance of the name is quite marked. In Matthew and Luke, Israel is met with more frequently. While the emphasis on the religious connotation of the term varies in degree, it is always present. Gutbrod, however, in his scholarly article in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, denies a religious connotation to Israel in Mt 2:20.<sup>17</sup> He maintains that "land of Israel" there, like the expression *Erez Israel* of the rabbis, is merely a geographical designation with no religious overtones. But Matthew's accommodation of Hosea's "Out of Egypt I have called my son"—the son being for the prophet the people of Israel—to Jesus' sojourn in Egypt indicates that he intends an analogy between the Jews' entrance into Canaan after the Egyptian bondage and Jesus' return to Palestine from His Egyptian exile (Os 11:1; Mt 2:15). "Land of Israel" in this pericope has then the meaning "land of promise," the land of God's chosen people. Has it not the same religious significance for the rabbis? In Mt 9:33, 10:23, and Lk 4:25, 27, Israel is likewise employed geographically without any diminution of its sacred character.

This sacred character is marvelously evident in Luke's gospel of the infancy. Mary's joy in the help God has given "to Israel, His servant, mindful of His mercy" (1:54); Zachary's praise, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and wrought redemption for His people" (1:68); Simeon's waiting for the Messiah as "the consolation of Israel" and his welcoming Him as "the glory for Thy people Israel" (2:25, 32); his prophecy, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel" (2:34)—they all give wit-

17. *Loc. cit.*, p. 386.

ness to the people's appointed role as an instrument in the scheme of salvation.

The religious meaning of Israel is, of course, especially marked in Jesus' use of the name. His praise of the believing centurion: "I say to you that I have not found such great faith in Israel" (Mt 8:10; Lk 7:9) accentuates the spiritual meaning of the term. Israel is the chosen people among whom Jesus, the Messiah, looked for and had a right to expect faith. The reason for His special and, as far as His personal ministry went, exclusive mission to the "lost sheep of Israel" (Mt 15:24) was not their piteous need, which they shared with Gentile sinners, but their membership in Israel, the people to whom Moses had said: "You are a people sacred to the Lord, your God, who has chosen you from all the nations on the face of the earth to be a people peculiarly His own" (Deut 14:2). Therefore Jesus bid His apostles: "Do not go in the direction of the Gentiles, nor enter the towns of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:5-6). Only after Good Friday, when the religious leaders of Israel had rejected Him, did Jesus command the apostles "to make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). Thus, in the mysterious providence of God, their shutting themselves to the Christ made an opening for the nations, or, in the words of St. Paul, "by their offense salvation has come to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:11).

Jesus' promise to the apostles that they would be like the ancient judges of Israel, indeed would be coregents with Him, the Messiah (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30), raises a problem which we shall consider at some length when discussing Paul's use of the name Israel. This is the problem: Does Israel in the New Testament also designate the Church of Christ, the New Covenant as the perfection of the Old, as the fulfillment of its great promises? "And Jesus said to them, Amen I say to you that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, shall also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28). The phrase "the twelve tribes of Israel" designates the totality of the chosen people. Even after the destruction of the northern kingdom and the "loss" of the ten tribes that comprised it, the expression continued in use. In "the regeneration," that is, in the "new world," "the world to come" spoken of by the prophets, namely the messianic era, the apostles who have left all to follow Jesus will share in His sovereign

rule over God's chosen people.<sup>18</sup> When Jesus spoke these words the apostles shared the popular hope for a temporal restoration of the nation under a glorious Messiah. Since Jesus had told them that His own mission was limited to His own people according to the flesh (Mt 15:24) and had forbidden them to preach to Gentiles and Samaritans (Mt 10:5-6), the apostles could have understood the expression "the twelve tribes of Israel" only as a reference to the Jewish people. But when Matthew, years after the Resurrection and Pentecost, composed his Gospel and recorded this promise, he and his Christian readers could not have failed to see in it a reference to the jurisdiction over the Church contained in the apostolic office.<sup>19</sup>

The observations just made are applicable also to Lk 22:30. Luke, however, places this promise, as well as Jesus' lesson on the spirit of humble service that must characterize the authorities of His Church, in the setting of the Last Supper, after the institution of the Eucharist and the announcement of Judas's betrayal (Lk 22:14-30). It is quite probable that Luke has removed these sayings from their original context and placed them in the Supper setting under the influence of the liturgical practice of the primitive Church.<sup>20</sup> Jesus' logia on humble service would be particularly appropriate at the Christian liturgical gatherings and were probably recalled on their occasion. "For which is the greater, he who reclines at table, or he who serves? Is it not he who reclines? But I am in your midst as he who serves. But you are they who have continued with me in my trials. And I appoint to you a kingdom, even as my Father has appointed to me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and may sit<sup>21</sup> upon thrones, judging

18. In ancient civilizations the act of judging was considered the essential act of royal power. "Judging" therefore connotes "ruling" and should not be restricted to "pronouncing sentence." See M. J. Lagrange, *Evangelie selon saint Matthieu* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1927), p. 382.

19. Lagrange, *op. cit.*, pp. 380-382. J. Knabenbauer, *Evangelium secundum Matthaeum* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1893), pp. 164-168, gives a summary of the opinions of the Fathers. St. Jerome, strange to say, comments that Christ promises His apostles that they will "condemn" the Jewish people who had refused to believe their preaching—rather typical of Jerome's irascible temper. The passage is commonly understood to refer to the final judgment at the end of the world. But A. Calmet, *Commentarius Literalis in Omnes Libros N.T. Tomus Primus* (Wirceburgi, 1787), pp. 368-369, sees in this promise a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. He attempts ingeniously, but unsuccessfully, to explain how the apostles had part in that judgment of the year A.D. 70.

20. See P. Benoit, "Le Récit de la Cène dans Lc XXII, 15-20," *Revue biblique*, XLVIII (1939), pp. 357-393, especially pp. 389-390.

21. Reading, as in Mt 19:28, *kathēsthe* (Vulg. *sedeat*) with the Codex Vaticanus rather than *kathēsēsthe*, whence the probability of a harmonization of Lk with Mt 19:28.

the twelve tribes of Israel." Read in the context of the Last Supper and of the Christian liturgical gatherings, it is "hardly doubtful that the 'table' is the eucharistic table and the 'judging on the thrones' signifies the government of the spiritual Israel, which is the Christian community."<sup>22</sup> The kingdom in which the apostles partake of the table of Christ is the Church with its eucharistic banquet. This exegesis does not exclude the usual eschatological interpretation, for "the Eucharist is the figure and the pledge of heavenly beatitude, but the attention is directed first to the eucharistic banquet in the kingdom already present, and to the authority of the apostles in this same kingdom, that is, in the Church."<sup>23</sup>

Jesus' use of Israel in this promise to His apostles may have influenced John's description of the Church in his Apocalypse as "the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the children of Israel" (Apoc 7:4).

*The Fourth Gospel:* Israel occurs four times in the Gospel of John, Israelite once (Jn 1:31, 49; 3:10; 12:13; 1:47). In all five texts it designates the Jew as a member of the people God singled out for a special destiny.

*The Apocalypse:* In the Apocalypse John employs Israel three times. In the first text, where the Church at Pergamum is censured because she permitted in her midst Gnostics, men holding "the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, that they might eat and commit fornication" (2:14), the term designates the ancient Jews, the chosen people of the period of the exodus. The other two texts (7:4; 21:12) offer strong evidence for the thesis that John regarded the Church, "the New Jerusalem," as Israel standing on a mountain great and high, now encompassing the whole world, with its portals open to all peoples. Many recent Catholic commentators of the Apocalypse, J. Sickenberger, A. Gelin, A. Wikenhauser, and J. Bonsirven agree in explaining the 144,000 as a symbol of the Church. They see in this symbol of the 144,000 sealed out of every tribe of Israel a promise that God will protect the faithful members of His Church in the midst of the calamities which His providence sends for the chastisement of the wicked world. The Apocalypse, in the opinion of Père Bonsirven, professes the Pauline thesis, "maintaining that the Church is the true Israel; the 144,000 to be protected can-

22. P. Benoit, *loc. cit.*, p. 390. See also A. Valensin-J. Huby, *Évangile selon saint Luc* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1952), p. 413.

23. Valensin-Huby, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

not be Jewish Christians only, because at the end of the first century the majority of the faithful were of Gentile origin."<sup>24</sup> Similarly Wikenhauser: "The marking with God's seal places the servants of God under the special protection of God. This cannot be applied solely to Jewish Christians and denied to Gentile Christians."<sup>25</sup> Finally, the description of the Church in Apoc 21:12 as the "New Jerusalem," having twelve gates inscribed with the names of "the twelve tribes of the children of Israel," seems a conclusive confirmation of this exegesis.<sup>26</sup>

*The Acts of the Apostles:* Israel and Israelite occur quite frequently in the Acts of the Apostles and, with two exceptions, only in the first half of the book.<sup>27</sup> These chapters narrate the history of the primitive Church in its Palestinian homeland, while the second half of the book treats of Paul's missionary activity in the Gentile world. This squares well with what has been said about the practices of First and Second Maccabees. In the Acts, Israel always keeps its religious connotation, but with varying degrees of emphasis. When the apostles address the Jewish people as "Israelites," they are reminding them of their responsibility as members of God's covenanted people to do God's will and accept His Messiah, Jesus. One Sabbath, in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, after the reading from the Law and the Prophets, Paul arose and said: "Israelites and you who fear God (i.e., Gentile proselytes who accepted Israel's faith but shied away from circumcision and much of

24. J. Bonsirven, *L'Apocalypse de saint Jean* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1951), p. 167.

25. A. Wikenhauser, *Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1949), p. 60. Also J. Sickenberger, *Erklärung der Johannesapokalypse* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1942), pp. 87-89; A. Gelin, *Apocalypse* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1946), p. 617. Others, for instance J. Schaefer, *Die Apokalypse* (Klosterneuberg: Volkliturgisches Apostolat, 1933), p. 117; C. C. Martindale in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: T. Nelson, 1953), col. 967b; and E. B. Allo, *Saint Jean, L'Apocalypse* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1933), pp. 109-110, see in the symbolic 144,000 the expression of John's hope for the future turning of the Jewish people to Christ as foretold by Paul (Rom 11). According to them, John sees first a great number of sealed, that is, baptized, from among the Jews, and after this, a vast multitude, impossible to count, out of all nations. For the Church is the people made of Jews and Gentiles.

26. See the works cited above: Sickenberger, pp. 191-192; Gelin, p. 662; Wikenhauser, p. 137; Bonsirven, pp. 317-318; Allo, p. 346: "Doubtless St. John had in mind the spiritual Israel, but if he speaks here of the historic Israel and a little later (verse 14) of the 'twelve apostles,' he wants to show the unity of the Old and New Testaments; in any case, the teaching of these verses is the universality, the 'catholicity,' of the heavenly Jerusalem." Ezekiel (Chap. 48) is the source of John's symbol.

27. Israel, Ac 1:6; 2:36; 4:10, 27; 5:21, 31; 7:23, 37, 42; 9:15; 10:36; 13:17, 23, 24; 28:20. Israelite, Ac 2:22; 3:12; 5:35; 13:16; 21:28.

the Mosaic Law), hearken. The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they were sojourners in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm led them forth out of it." Then, having taken his hearers in one bold sweep through sacred history, he confessed: "From his (David's) offspring, God according to promise brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Ac 13:16-17, 23). Gutbrod remarks on this last verse: "The Israel that receives the promise and the Israel that enjoys the fulfillment of the promise is one and the same, God's community."<sup>28</sup> So Paul declares to the leaders of the Jewish community of Rome: "Brethren . . . it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain" (Ac 28:17, 20).

*The Epistles of Paul:* In the Pauline corpus Israel occurs eighteen times, nine times in the Epistle to the Romans, and Israelite three times, twice in Romans,<sup>29</sup> the name keeping its religious significance throughout. Israel is the people the Lord has adopted like a son; to whom He has granted the glory of His nearness, the Shekinah; with whom He has made the Covenant; to whom He has given the Law, the worship, and the promises (Rom 9:4). Eph 2:12 is a striking illustration of Paul's use of the word. Before the coming of Christ the Gentiles were "without God in the world," *atheoi*, deprived of "citizenship," *politeia*, in Israel, the people of God. A learned rabbi, steeped in the history and theology of the Old Testament, Paul was almost fiercely proud of the privileges of God's chosen people. His faith in the election of Israel never faltered. As a Christian he believed and maintained stoutly that he was a true Israelite, because the Church of Christ is the Israel of God. For Paul the Church is not a substitution for a discarded Old Covenant. The Church is the perfection of the ancient Covenant, because she is the realization of all its promises. The Church, in Paul's thought, is identified with the Israel of David, of the exodus, of the patriarchs, just as the mature man is identified with the boy and the infant. Chapters 9 to 11 of his Epistle to the Romans give the first steps in the development of his argument for this basic thesis of his theology. He establishes from biblical history that "they are not all Israelites who are sprung from Israel; nor because they are the descendants of Abraham, are they all his children; but 'Through

28. *Loc. cit.*, p. 389.

29. Israel, Rom 9:6, 27, 31; 10:19, 21; 11:2, 7, 25, 26; 1 Cor 10:18; 2 Cor 3:7, 13; Gal 6:16; Eph 2:12; Phil 3:5; Heb 8:8, 10; 11:22. Israelite, Rom 9:4; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22.

Isaac shall your descendants be called.' That is to say they are not the sons of God who are the children of the flesh, but it is the children of promise who are reckoned as posterity" (Rom 9:6-8). The Apostle is not opposing, in this passage, a spiritual Israel (the Church) to a fleshly Israel (the Old Covenant). Neither is he concerned with proving that any besides those of Jewish descent might inherit the promises. He is occupied solely with establishing that the divine oath sworn to Israel is and will be fulfilled even if some of the Jews keep aloof from the Christ.<sup>30</sup> For certainly, physical descent from Abraham and Jacob is not in itself a ground for inheriting the promises. The proof is God's election of Isaac to be the bearer of His promise and His exclusion of Ishmael; and, more striking still, the rejection of Esau, the first-born of Isaac and Rebekah, and the choice of his twin, Jacob, to carry on the holy line of patriarchs (Rom 9:9-13). Thus Paul proves that God's pledge to Abraham, to all the patriarchs, and to the whole people of Israel, has not been made void, even though the majority of the people have not believed in Jesus the Christ. For Paul, Israel in its theological, sacred significance is not coextensive with the Jewish people. It is at once narrower and wider. One can be a Jew, a blood descendant of Jacob and Isaac and Abraham, and yet not be, in the fullest and truest sense, an Israelite, a real member of God's covenanted people. Through their unbelief in Jesus, the Seed of Abraham, who makes true the promises, the majority of the Jewish people have cut themselves off from the Israel of fulfillment. It is in this sense that they are like

30. M. J. Lagrange, *Épître aux Romains* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1931), p. 228; J. Huby, *Épître aux Romains* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1940), p. 332; V. Jacono, *Le Epistole di S. Paolo ai Romani, ai Corinti e ai Galati* (Rome: Marietti, 1952), p. 181, are representative of many Catholic exegetes who see in Rom 9:6-8 a distinction between the Israel of God (the Church) and Israel according to the flesh (the Jews). But this conclusion is wider than the argument of Paul in this context warrants. It is a reading into Rom 9:6 of the argument and conclusion of Gal 3-4. Myles Bourke, *A Study of the Metaphor of the Olive Tree in Romans XI* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), p. 41, expresses concisely the precise point of Rom 9:6-8: ". . . these verses refer not to Abrahamic sonship of non-Hebrews, but to a selection made within the physical progeny of Abraham, in virtue of which some of his physical descendants are not his sons in the spiritual sense." See W. Sanday and A. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 242. A. Viard, *Épître aux Romains* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1949), p. 112, would even limit the "Israel of God" of Gal 6:16 to Judaeo-Christians. Renée Bloch, "Israélite, Juif, Hebreu," *Cahiers Sioniens* (March 1951), pp. 11-31, adopts this view. But this does not seem to do justice to the argument of Gal 3:16, 27-29 and all of chapter 4. Gal 6:16 understood in the context of that argument must refer to the whole Church. See also note 33.

"branches broken off." And it is in this sense that Paul refers to the Jews in 1 Cor 10:18 as "Israel according to the flesh."

"Physical connection with the Jewish stock was not in itself a ground for inheriting the promise. That was the privilege of those intended when the promise was first spoken, and who might be considered to be born of the promise. This principle is capable of a far more universal application, an application which is made in the Epistle to the Galatians (3:29; 4:28), but is not made here (Rom 9:6-8)."<sup>31</sup> In chapters three and four of Galatians the Apostle argues that the seed in whom the promises of Abraham are fulfilled is Christ. If he believes and is baptized, anyone, irrespective of his origin, is incorporated in Christ, and the man of faith becomes a child to the patriarch, inherits "the blessing of Abraham" and "the promise of the Spirit" (Gal 3:7, 14). "For all you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are the offspring of Abraham, heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:27-29). Thus Gentiles, "who were once afar off, have been brought near through the blood of Christ," who before were "excluded as aliens from the community of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," have received in Christ "citizenship in Israel" (Eph 2:12-13). The Church is therefore the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16), the Israel of His aim, the Israel He planned and prepared through the long generations that sprang from Abraham's loins, the Israel He saw when He pledged to the patriarch a Blessing to "all the nations of the earth" (Gen 12:2-3; 18:18) and children as numerous "as the stars of the heavens, as the sands on the seashore" (Gen 22:17).

Thus the Church does not supersede and replace Israel. She is Israel. Mary, the apostles, the disciples, the hundred and twenty gathered in the Cenacle (Ac 1:15), all the many thousands of Jews who believed in Jesus, constitute the "faithful remnant" of which the prophets spoke.<sup>32</sup> "The converted Jews may be very few in number; it must be so in order that they may be 'the remnant,' but few as they are, they form the holiest part of the new people, and it is only because of

31. Sanday-Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

32. The expression occurs more than fifty times, especially in Isaiah, for instance, Is 1:9; 10:20-22; 11:11-12; Zach 8:11-12; Soph 3:13; Jer 31:7.

insertion with them on the same stem that the Gentiles become Israel.”<sup>33</sup> The majority of the Jews have been broken off from the tree of Israel because of lack of faith. But the tree, God’s chosen people, still lives on in the holy remnant that accepted the Messiah. Gentiles are admitted into Israel the way branches of wild olive are grafted on to the cultivated tree (Rom 11:17–24). It is thus that Isaiah (Chap. 55 and 56) envisaged the future, and thus that Paul calls the Church the Israel of God. The Gentile Christians supported by the stem, “the faithful remnant,” share in the fatness of the olive tree and are branches by the gracious mercy of God. As for the “natural branches” that have been broken off, “they are most dear for the sake of the fathers” (Rom 11:28), and “God is able to graft them back” (Rom 11:23).<sup>34</sup>

33. L. Cerfaux, *La Théologie de L'Eglise suivant saint Paul* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1948), p. 39. Concerning the Remnant see *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, IV, “Der Rest im Alten Testament” by Hertrich, pp. 200–215, and “Der Restgedanke bei Paulus” by Schrenk, pp. 215–221. In his article “Was bedeuten ‘Israel Gottes’?” in *Judaica*, V, 2 (June 1949), pp. 81–93, Gortlob Schrenk argues vigorously that “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) refers only to Jewish Christians, precisely to Jewish Christians who do not share the errors of the Judaizers of Galatia. N. A. Dahl, in “Zur Auslegung vom Gal 6:16,” *Judaica*, VI, 3 (Sept. 1950), pp. 161–170, answers Schrenk’s arguments and shows how the context of chapters 3 and 4 of Galatians offers strong support to the exegesis of “the Israel of God” as the whole Church, while it is very unfavorable to Schrenk’s exegesis. Dahl’s article is followed immediately (pp. 170–190) by a long answer from Schrenk, “Der Segenswunsch nach der Kampfpistel.” He points out that both interpretations are ancient. St. John Chrysostom (A.D. 354–407) saw the whole Church in the Israel of God of Gal 6:16, while St. Ephraim (A.D. 306–373) restricted it to Jewish Christians. I think Schrenk is absolutely right in his basic thesis that the Jewish Christians constitute the *Auswahl Israels*, the faithful remnant. But I cannot follow him in his refusal to grant Gentile Christians citizenship in this Israel of God. Were not proselytes considered members of Israel?

34. It might not be amiss to point out that when Paul speaks of the Jews as torn from the tree, he certainly does not wish to prejudge the eternal salvation of the individual Jew. That he calls his disbelieving kinsmen “branches broken off,” and only a little later speaks of them as “most dear for the sake of the fathers,” shows that the first expression does not refer to their inner state of soul. This he leaves to God to judge. The Jews are “branches broken off” because their disbelief in Christ cuts them off from membership in the Church. Still, through faith and love, a Jew can be orientated toward, and invisibly linked to, the Church, the one Body of salvation. Again, “broken branches” is a metaphor, and metaphors must never be pressed too far: for the Apostle the Jews are not just dry wood. Without doubt, denial of Christ against one’s better knowledge is death, but disbelief in Christ because of inculpable ignorance, though it is an appalling loss, need not kill the faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which is life. Needless to say, however, that according to the spirit of Paul and the teaching of the Church, a Jew (and for that matter any man) who is saved though—without his fault—he has not believed in Christ, is still saved through Him.

## JEW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

*The Synoptic Gospels:* The rather infrequent use of Jew, *Ioudaios*, in the synoptic Gospels agrees with the Palestinian practice as illustrated by First Maccabees. Jew is the Gentile name for the people and is used by Jews themselves only when speaking to Gentiles. The Magi inquire: "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" (Mt 2:2), and the title Pilate placed over Jesus' cross bore the inscription "The King of the Jews" (Mk 15:26; Mt 27:37; Lk 23:38). In Lk 7:3: "And the centurion hearing of Jesus, sent to Him elders of the Jews," the evangelist, speaking from the viewpoint of the Gentile soldier, adopts his terminology. Mark's "for the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat without frequent washing of hands" (7:3) is a parenthesis intended for Gentile readers unacquainted with Jewish customs. Referring to the rumor started by the chief priests that, by night, while the guards at the sepulcher were asleep, the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus, Mt 28:15 continues: "And this story has been spread among the Jews even to this day." The omission of the article before Jews in the Greek text suggests that the meaning is "among some Jews," that is, among those Jews opposed to the Church. If this is so, then Matthew is employing the name in the restricted sense that is typically Johannine. But this verse may be an added observation of the Greek translator and so reflect the usage of a later period.

*The Acts:* In the Acts, the name Jew is met frequently (78 times), most often (67 times) in the last fifteen chapters, which narrate Paul's apostolate in the Gentile world. In these chapters Luke adopts the terminology current among Gentiles and Jews of the Diaspora. The same principle explains the use of Jew in six texts of chapters 9, 10, and 11. In all these (9:22, 23; 10:22, 28, 39; 11:19) the name occurs in a Gentile environment. A few instances (2:5, 11, 14) are apparent exceptions, but the principles underlying the usual practice explain these texts too. In verse 5 Luke wants to distinguish Jews of the dispersion from the pagans among whom they dwell, and in verses 11 and 14 Jews by birth from proselytes. In a few texts of the Acts (12:3, 11; 13:50; 14:18; 17:5, 13), Jew has a nuance of enmity to the Church. This is especially marked in 12:3, 11.

*The Epistles of Paul:* Paul employs the name Jew in an exceptional manner. In the synoptic Gospels and in Acts the name is usually found

in the plural, except of course when applied to an individual. In Paul Jew is used in the singular and without the article. It does not indicate an individual, a member of a nation and a religion, but it is a type, almost an abstraction, designating a religious entity or a religious attitude. The Pauline contrast of "Jew and Greek" or "Jew and Gentile" is a good illustration of this use.<sup>35</sup> This contrast is founded not precisely on ethnic differences but on a religious reality that is the result of God's action in history. The Jew is the recipient of God's revelation and of the Law. He possesses advantages other men do not enjoy (Rom 3:1; 9:4). This use of Jew as a type is quite evident in Rom 2:28-29 where the Apostle opposes "the Jew who is so outwardly" and "the Jew who is so inwardly." In the context the genuine Jew, "the inward Jew," is one who not only knows the Law but keeps it. Thus for Paul, true Jew and Jew by blood are not synonymous. The true Jew is one who has the virtues which his religious faith supposes; true circumcision is of the heart. Père Lagrange observes on this passage: "By this incontestable principle that God esteems only true virtue, that of the interior, of the heart and soul, Paul was preparing his theory of the true Israel, which gives to Christians the right to claim, in the spiritual sense, all the privileges conferred on Israel by the Old Testament."<sup>36</sup>

The basic religious note Paul attaches to the word Jew is observance of the Law. He applies the term to Jewish Christians who observe the Law (Gal 2:13), but also to Jews who do not believe in Christ. So in 1 Cor 9:20-21, when he says: "I have become to the Jews a Jew . . . to those under the Law, as one under the Law. . . ."

*The Apocalypse:* Jew occurs only twice in the Apocalypse (2:9; 3:9). In both texts Christ, through the mouth of John, denies this honorable name to Jews hostile to the Church. Implying that they do not form "the synagogue of God," He calls them "a synagogue of Satan," the adversary of God. Of course, it is not the Jewish people that is said to serve Satan, but only the foes of the Church. The Jews who persecute the Church "say they are Jews, and are not, but are lying," an expression which recalls the "outward Jew" of Rom 2:28-29. In the Apocalypse, however, the implication is clear that the true

35. See Rom 1:16; 2:9, 10.

36. Lagrange, *Épître aux Romains*, p. 57. Origen, *In lib. Jesu Nave*, Hom. XIII (PG 12:889), citing this passage writes: *Qui in occulto Judaeus est, id est Christianus*, "The inward Jew, he is the Christian." But Paul applies the name only to Jews by birth.

Jews who form "the synagogue of God" are the Christians.<sup>37</sup> Yet a promise is held out that even Jewish persecutors will turn to Christ. Because the bishop of the Church at Philadelphia has been steadfast and patient under persecution, Jesus, "the Holy One, the True One, He who has the key to the house of David," has caused "a door to be opened" before him: Jews will come and worship and know that the Lord loves the Church (Apoc 3:9).

*The Fourth Gospel:* While Israel occurs rarely in the Fourth Gospel, Jew, almost always in the plural, appears very often: seventy times. A few times, as in the Synoptics, it occurs on the lips of non-Jews as an ethnic and religious name for the Jewish people. Thus Pilate begins his interrogation of Jesus: "So you are the king of the Jews?", then asks Him: "Am I a Jew?", and later turns to His accusers: "Do you wish that I release to you the king of the Jews?" (18:33, 35, 39). Thus the pagan soldiers, mocking Him: "Hail, king of the Jews!" (19:3). Thus the title on the cross (19:19). So too the Samaritan woman calls Jesus a Jew (4:9), and He Himself adopts her terminology when, assuring her that Israel is the people destined to give the Saviour to the world, He says: "Salvation is from the Jews" (4:22).<sup>38</sup> The Gentile origin of the first readers of the Fourth Gospel accounts for the quite frequent use of Jew to designate the inhabitants of Palestine during Jesus' lifetime and to explain Jewish terms and customs.<sup>39</sup> Long absence from Palestine and life in a Gentile environment led John to adopt the terminology of the Gentiles. Hence in many texts Jew is employed as an author of the Diaspora (such as the author of Second Maccabees) would use it, as a conventional name for the people without any further nuance.<sup>40</sup> It should be noted, however, that Jn 8:31, 11:45, 12:11 refer to Jews who believed in Jesus.

Besides these uses John employs Jew in a manner peculiar to himself. Frequently the name designates the enemies of Jesus, "the Jews" becoming almost a stereotyped expression for opposition to Him. "The

37. J. Bonsirven, *op. cit.*, p. 11; Wikenhauser, *op. cit.*, p. 37; Allo, *op. cit.*, p. 35, explains that "synagogue of Satan" is an intended contrast with the "synagogue of God" of Num 16:3 and 20:4.

38. In rabbinical literature Jew is met with on the lips of Samaritans; see Strack-Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, II, 424.

39. Jn 2:6, 13; 4:9; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; 19:40, 42.

40. Jn 4:9; 8:31; 10:19; 11:19, 31, 33, 36; 12:9, 11. "All this shows that in John *Ioudaios* is often simply the designation of the men with whom Jesus dealt, a designation appropriate for readers who were remote in culture and time" (Gutbrod, *loc. cit.*, p. 380).

Jews," then, are the leaders of the nation, those adversaries of Jesus whom the synoptic Gospels call "the chief priests, the Pharisees (scribes) and the elders." "The Jews therefore were looking for Him at the feast, and were saying, Where is he? And there was much whispered comment among the crowd concerning Him. For some were saying, He is a good man. But others were saying, No, rather he seduces the crowd. Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of Him" (7:11-13). These "Jews" are clearly distinguished from the crowd, likewise Jewish. Since they are an object of fear to the people, they must be influential persons, chief priests or leading Pharisees, who were seeking Jesus' death because He had violated the Sabbath and made Himself God's equal. (For the distinction between Jesus' enemies and the people, see 7:15 and 7:20, 7:32 and 7:31, 8:3 and 8:2.) A comparison of John's pericope of the expulsion of the merchants and money-changers from the Temple (2:13-22) with the parallel narratives of the Synoptists confirms this identification of "the Jews," in this restricted sense, with the religious leaders who opposed Christ. Jesus engages in a discussion with "the Jews" who are indignant at His action and question His authority (Jn 2:18, 20). In Mt 21:15 and Mk 11:18 the chief priests and scribes, in Lk 19:47 the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people, are angry and desire to put Jesus to death. "The Jews therefore said to Him: What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things?" (Jn 2:18). "And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, and said to Him, By what authority do you do these things? and, Who gave you this authority to do these things?" (Mk 11:22-28; Mt 21:23-27; Lk 20:1-8).<sup>41</sup>

Renée Bloch makes a very penetrating observation. With the exception of a single reference to the scribes (8:3) and to the elders (8:9), the Fourth Gospel never speaks of scribes, elders, Herod, Herodians—an indication that the collective expression "the Jews" must embrace Jesus' adversaries of Galilee as well as His enemies among the leaders of the nation in Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup>

The various senses in which John uses Jew are evidence that the special nuance of which we are speaking is not contained in the word

41. Other instances of the limited use are Jn 2:18, 20; 5:16, 18; 7:1; 8:48, 52, 57; 10:33; 13:33 and frequently in the Passion narrative, 18:12, 14, 31, 36, 38; 19:7, 12, 31, 38.

42. R. Bloch, *loc. cit.*, p. 29.

itself. Moreover, the distinction the evangelist makes between "the Jews" and "the crowd" is conclusive proof that he intends his special use of the name to be taken in a restricted sense. Whenever used in this way, "the Jews" are for him not the Jewish people but cliques, groups that are inimical to Jesus. The origin of this special use is to be sought in the symbolism of John's Gospel. The Jews opposed to Jesus are indeed characters of history, but they are also in the intention of John the type of opposition to the Christ. "It is not the concrete reality of these men and hostile groups which preoccupies John," as Renée Bloch puts it so well. "These men, these groups, these Jews, represent for him the attitude of refusal; they become the type of opposition to the Incarnate Word, a historical symbol of the struggle of the darkness against the Light. It is the universal drama of this struggle between the Word made flesh and the darkness of the world which is at the center of the evangelist's attention. The concrete historical element is but a symbol, but a sign. It is this theological vision—of which the Incarnation is the foundation and to which the Prologue gives the key—that commands the literary structure and even the terminology of the Gospel. Hence the most characteristic Johannine sense of the expression 'the Jews'—which could be called pejorative<sup>43</sup>—can be understood only in this framework." For John, Renée Bloch insists, the drama which took place within the Jewish people around the year 30 represents the universal and, at the same time, most intimate drama of faith and refusal, which has a particularly poignant character in the people in whose bosom the Word was made flesh. The refusal of the Jews is thus the symbol of all refusal, while the faith of those Jews who came to believe is the symbol of all Christian faith.<sup>44</sup>

The devout Christian who, conscious of the role of sin in the drama of Jesus, identifies himself with those Jews who condemned Him and

43. Is "pejorative" really the right word? No doubt, an unthinking reader may take John's restricted and symbolic use of "the Jews" as derogatory, antagonistic, but it was never meant to be so. What the evangelist is doing here is using a common figure of speech, synecdoche, in which the part is named instead of the whole ("a hundred head" instead of "a hundred cattle"), the whole instead of the part ("science says" instead of "scientists A, B, and C say"), the species instead of the genus ("Kodak" instead of "camera"), or the genus instead of the species ("creature" instead of "man"). With John, it is the whole for a responsible, a representative part; we all do this every day when we say: "The French (meaning: the French Assembly) turned out their government," or: "America (meaning: the American tennis team) won."

44. R. Bloch, *loc. cit.*, p. 30.

with those who clamored for His crucifixion has rightly understood John's use of the name Jew. But the Christian who associates his Jewish neighbors with those who plotted Christ's death is perpetuating an injustice never contemplated by the apostle. If a man reads John's account of the Passion without the spirit of the gospel, he may well be tempted to point his finger and exclaim: "Those Jews!" But if he reads it with the spirit of the gospel, he will strike his breast and say: "It is I who am the sinner; it is we, all of us, who are the crucifiers of Jesus."

A member of the Israel of God, grafted by the divine mercy into the faithful remnant which continues the chosen people, the Catholic has a family pride in "our holy patriarch Abraham."<sup>45</sup> Like Paul, the desire of his heart is for the salvation of his "kinsmen" the Jews. And he exults in knowing that they, the "natural branches," will surely be grafted back to partake again of the fatness of the stem and contribute to the fullness and beauty of God's olive tree.

45. The Canon of the Roman Mass, *Supra quae propitio*. See the inspirational article "Why Study the Old Testament," by T. Worden in *The Clergy Review*, XXXIX, 6 (June 1954), pp. 341-349; also the beautiful essay *The Elder Brother*, J. M. Oesterreicher (Newark: The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, 1951).

*Hilaire Duesberg, O.S.B.*

## THE TRIAL OF THE MESSIAH

### I

TWO thousand years—still this trial goes on.

Nothing matches the serenity with which the Apostles' Creed affirms: "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." Souls rally around this confession; with lips and heart they cleave to the revelation of the God who is unique and thus universal. The truth they proclaim is therefore unique and universal; it is offered to all men.

The inspiration of this article of the Creed is biblical: "Jesus" is the Hebrew *Yehoshua'* or *Yeshua'*, "Yahweh saves"; "Christ" is the Hebrew *Mashiah*, "the Anointed One"; "Lord" is the Greek *Kyrios*, a royal title, used by the Septuagint to translate the divine name Yahweh. Thus does the Creed evoke the terminology of that Scripture we call the Old Testament. To the point that revealed truth acknowledges copyright, these formulae belong to the Jews.

Indeed the truths of the Creed have been transmitted to us by Jews: by Peter, Paul, and John, and that as the expression of the Jewish hope. Hence the Apostles' Creed is a rallying point not only for Christians but also for Jews. It gives tongue to their religious unanimity in the joy of the Messiah come, the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham: In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Gen 12:3).

The times are accomplished; the Messiah is here! Japheth dwells under the tents of Shem (Gen 9:27).

*It shall come to pass in that day:  
The root of Jesse,  
who stands as ensign of the peoples,  
Him the nations shall seek,  
and His resting place shall be glorious.*

(Is 11:10)

In that glorious perspective, the privilege of the children of Abraham is proclaimed, and its paths lead converted pagans to the temple of Jerusalem; in a semitism of the spirit, the human race recovers its pristine unity.

Salvation is from the Jews; it has come from the Jews; it has come from a Jew.

## II

AND so it is the Jews who announce to us, the Gentiles, the news that the soil of Palestine has brought forth the fruit of salvation, that Jesus of Nazareth, the Legate of God, has dwelt among us and that they have lived beside Him. It is on their witness that the Roman Church has formulated her faith in the terms of the Creed.

But what do I say? Their witness? The majority of the "nation of Israel" opposes to our confession this disclaimer: "The Nazarene was perhaps an estimable rabbi even though only self-taught; perhaps he was also in the line of the prophets, but his audacity was unbounded. As for being the Messiah—certainly not! The expectation of Israel has not been fulfilled. On the memory of Jesus there hangs like a weight the verdict of Pontius Pilate, kept green in the Creed, motivated by the official complaint of the Sanhedrin. Jesus was crucified in the Roman fashion, but as a false prophet, as a blasphemer who made himself the Son of God. In exalting him as the Messiah, by invoking him as God, as the only Son of the Father, the Christian Creed falls into a bizarre error: it does violence to the majesty of the divine monarchy." In brief, the learned among the Jews did not recognize the mission of the Nazarene.

Hence the foreseen unanimity of faith is shattered from the beginning and that in the very bosom of the Jewish people. The heritage of Abraham is split; henceforth, there will be two religions: that of Law and Temple, that of the Nazarene. There will be two contradictory ways of reading Scripture, indeed two editions of Scripture, one of them bipartite, composed of Old and New Testaments. Out of fidelity to our common God, the Messiah is contested and rejected: such is the point of the trial. It perdures from the time of Jesus and only the end of time will vindicate Jew or Christian. Only God or His Legate could sit in judgment on this lamentable contestation, and Jesus, by invoking the

prophecy of Daniel (Mt 26:64; Dan 7:13), foretold the decision to Caiphas when He announced His return in the clouds of heaven.

Mere men cannot pretend to settle the debate with authority. Nevertheless it has arisen; nothing to do but bear with it. There is no question here of pretending that the claims of the two parties are equal, but in adopting the Christian thesis we are not thereby relieved of the concern to allay around us the anguish of soul which springs from this apparent check to the divine plan. Jews and Christians remain brothers in Abraham and the lot of our brothers is our concern. We can hardly answer in the manner of Cain!

### III

WHY and how have the Jews been brought to division on the question of Jesus of Nazareth?

It is a problem of importance. A long-standing divergence of views has embittered their minds. They have treasured the memory of evil procedures, of polemic excesses. On the primitive soil of the controversy, a layer of debris has accumulated, so thick it disheartens our effort. It is essential to return to the spirit of the New Testament, too often misinterpreted.

We Jews and Christians have a common experience of our God; we know that His ways, straight though they be, are for all that astonishing in where they lead. The trial of the Messiah is at bottom God's trial. Hence we must question Him in His Scriptures, with the assurance that the refusal of Jesus by His own people could not have taken Him unawares.

Let us not delay over the procedure nor over the execution of Jesus. For the world's salvation, they are inscribed in the liturgy of Abel and of Isaac, and their scope is infinite. We shall come back to them. Enough for the moment to note that this juridical action is but the result of a position taken in advance and which sought support in the texts: Deuteronomy (13:1-5) fixes the death penalty for false prophets, and such was the legal charge which weighed upon the Nazarene. The lot of blasphemers was hardly more mild (Ex 20:7; 22:28; Lev 24:10-16). This was the Law—it was applied.

On this point the younger brothers yield nothing to their elders, the Jews. If they have not stoned false prophets, they have burned them.

Savonarola, the witch of Orleans—it is Joan of Arc I mean—and so until that thoughtless unfortunate, Michael Servetus, who managed to be condemned simultaneously by the Holy Office and by John Calvin!

True enough, the Geneva which burned him has given Servetus a monument to make amends, Joan of Arc has been canonized, the memory of Savonarola continues to become less offensive. We raise sepulchres to the prophets our fathers killed. Long ago Jesus noted the custom; His comments on it were severe (Lk 11:47-48).

#### IV

THE trial of the Messiah touches on the honor of God; it consists of this dilemma:

Either: In misleading His own, Jesus misled Himself. The case of a crowd of simple folk, fanaticized by some enchanter into anticipating the hour of God, was in those days frequent, even common. It was no more than a mistake as to time, due to impatience. Gamaliel has deftly thrown light on the theology of this sort of incident (Ac 5:35-39). No violence should be used; let things follow their providential course. A flame unnourished by the Holy Spirit dies out of itself whereas, if the Spirit did strike the spark, the zealots who wish to quench it wrestle with God. Now, on the hypothesis that Jesus was a false Messiah—what is then astonishing about “the Nazarene schism,” what rightly alarms religious souls, is that far from having weakened, it persists, grows, basing itself on Scripture and on the fact of the resurrection. Is God tolerant to the point of complicity?

Or perhaps: The Christians are the authentic Jews. This hypothesis is no less disconcerting than the first, because then it must be admitted that the chosen people, the elect, the servant-people, the son-people, the confidant of divine perspectives, the trustee of the promises of the salvific Law, at the very moment when they were living in suspense, panting with hope for a Messiah to come, scanning the Scriptures with all their learning, blundered crudely. Out of zeal for religion, they put the divine Legate to death. Such is the Christian teaching, and it is one which goes back to Jesus Himself: He dramatized it in the parable of the vine dressers (Mt 21:33-45 with its reference to Ps 117:22). What difficulties this interpretation of history raises!

V

THERE is one answer so simple it is false. It consists in gathering those texts of Scripture in which the people of Israel are taken to task for their infidelities and then concluding blandly that their "perfidy" flows from them as from its native source: "Stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ear, you always oppose the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so you do also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you have now been the betrayers and murderers, you who received the Law as an ordinance of angels, and did not keep it" (Ac 7:51-53).

In the mouth of the deacon Stephen, this foreshortening of history has the same meaning as the accusation in the parable of the vine dressers. Its intention is to state not that *the* Jews, but that *some* Jews, have, from one age to another, remained insensible to the illuminating measures of Yahweh because these struck at their conservative prejudices. They had for religious institutions, the Temple for example, an esteem superior to that which they had for the word of God—sudden, alive, harassing, provocative, which alarmed their hearts, hardened in the routine accomplishment of good. Stephen, like his Master, was Jewish. We can hardly find in their reproaches some I-know-not-what sort of racism, a racism which would permit the disciples of Jesus to detect a peculiar affinity between the blood of Abraham and perfidy. The quarrel is among Jews; it would be an impertinence for Gentiles to intrude themselves into the debates between God and His people.

Nor should we lose sight of the fact that the "saints" of the primitive Church often enough caused concern to the bearers of the Good News. Recall the disciples of the Baptist and their distrust of Jesus, the inconstancy of the Galatians, the cliques at Corinth, the Asiatic heresies. According to Stephen, sacred history proceeds in a pattern of shade and light. Hence the racist answer is not the key, for it can be used only against the descendants of Abraham. And to do so would be to miss, in our reading of Scripture, that the Israelites alone were admitted to a dialogue with the living God, that they were the only ones He took into His confidence, indeed the only ones whom He chastened like foolish children.

Reread the divine utterances against the pagans and listen to the tone they take toward Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, or the Pharaohs: there you will gauge the difference between a father's reprimand and the threats hurled against foreign despots. And then turn to the lashing rebukes St. Paul administered to the Corinthians, or the Apocalypse to the churches of Asia. None is clean, none of the elect escapes the reproach of infidelity. The divine arraignment spares no one, moral misery is as universal as is the abuse of divine grace. Such is the burden of the Epistle to the Romans, and the Catechism of the Council of Trent throws the responsibility for the Passion on all sinners.

If the Christ is for Isaiah a sign of rallying, He is for the aged Simeon one of contradiction (Lk 2:34-35). He will reveal the state of consciences, cleanse them of the underbrush of formalist institutions. His coming is a foretaste of the Judgment; it is a trial which denudes our hearts; it justifies God.

## VI

NO NEED for the adverse reactions which surround the divine epiphanies to make us lose our way. They no more put in question the effectiveness of God's action than they do its persistence; the salvation of the human race remains the fixed aim of these heavenly interventions.

Every page of the Bible demonstrates that the partial check and the delayed success are the pattern of salvation. The Synagogue has no more betrayed her mission than has the Church: if, at the time of Jesus, she weakened, it was because she had already brought forth her fruit. One institution declined, another arose: all flesh was to see the victory of our God. If we dare pride ourselves that the Church will never be guilty of the essential error into which the Sanhedrin fell, let us remember that it is because the experience of the past preserves her by putting her on guard against it; let us remember that it is because the Spirit is poured out in abundance on all the living since the day of Pentecost.<sup>1</sup> Far be it from us to appeal to some I-know-not-what wisdom, secreted naturally by the Aryan genius!

Ours it is to read Scripture in a spirit of synthesis and with daring:

1. These two reasons for the Church's firm dwelling in the truth must, of course, be read together. Her experience, her wisdom, are more than human: they are gifts of the Spirit. If she does not fail, it is because of Christ's promise in Mt 28:20 that He will be with her "all days, even unto the consummation of the world." [Editor.]

we shall know then that the divine plan unrolls inexorably but in a zigzag course. The course follows a law of loss and gain, the loss and gain of that supernatural heat generated by the interplay of divine omnipotence and human freedom, which obeys, cooperates—even when it seems to break all bonds, to escape, or to throw up obstacles. Attentive readers of the Bible are familiar with the hesitant pace of the divine advance, those apparent repentings, those retouchings of the original plan God permitted. The Day of Yahweh is drawing near nonetheless, and such readers sense the dawn even while the carnal are persuaded that the night is eternal.

Scripture is a witness between Jews and Christians. The exegesis of Christians is bold, revolutionary, in keeping with the exegesis their Master preached. He came to fulfill the Law, but at the price of what simplifications! Were they arbitrary? By no means; rather were they founded on the experience of many millennia. To show that the first Christians knew what they were doing when they accepted Jesus, consider the scriptural constants they invoked with their coreligionists, the Jews, and later with the Gentiles. Their argument put the doings of God beyond all controversy and that on His own testimony.

Sacred history is ruled by certain laws.

The law of opportunity. There is the sudden thrusting of God into the course of history, offering Himself to His elect as savior or as avenger. Thus Isaiah sped to Achaz to reassure him on the consequences of the alliance between Samaria and Damascus (Is 7).

The law of the incognito. It is evident in those perplexing divine disguises which mislead false sages while illuminating hearts that are right and stripped of narrow native prejudice. Thus the Servant of Yahweh, in whom there was no comeliness, seemed fit for contempt in order that His wounds might redeem His people (Is 52, 53).

The law of the systematic reversal of listed values. It is the vindication of the divine autonomy, unfettered by its own prescriptions. Thus was preference accorded in Genesis to the younger over the elder sons.

The law of munificence. God "breaks" His promises by giving more than He had offered; what was material in the offer becomes spiritual in the fulfillment. Thus the catholic glory of Jerusalem; its spatial bonds broken, it becomes the center of faith.

The law of free vocations. Free as to the call, free as to its answer, it is the law of exact correspondence to the divine invitation. Thus the

"remnant" of Israel is faithful to Yahweh in spite of general apostasy, and this stubborn fidelity saves the mass of the people.

These divine calls are, in short, the fruit of a selection. And how is it made? By God who reveals Himself, by man who gives consent. Gideon recruits shock troops by putting them to the test: keeps the keen, disbands the others. What distinguishes one from the other is endurance and the ability to carry on with a minimum. The indispensable attitude in the relationships between the faithful and Yahweh is to extend Him credit: our religion rests upon the obstinate trust of believers.

Thus Abraham was obedient at once to the law of delay and to the law of munificence. The promises are glowing; the fulfillment is delayed beyond the birth of Isaac, indeed much later yet. That first favor God showed Abraham was no more than a pledge. So also with the law of reversal: it must be accepted without jealousy by the elder brothers; Cain, Esau, the brothers of Joseph broke it to their loss. A supernatural second sight helps track down the divine incognitos. The relatives of Samson reject the old belief that the sight of Yahweh kills: if He shows Himself, it can only be for their benefit. And Rahab, a hostess opportunist by profession, when the occasion presented itself in the person of the Hebrew spies, had the insight to take her profit while the meeting lasted; she and all her family were saved from the ruin of Jericho.

The Christian catechesis discovers these laws and the insights they control once again in the story of Jesus. He is the propitious occasion, not to be missed no matter what people may say. "If I touch but His cloak, I shall be saved," said the woman suffering hemorrhage, and she was healed (Mk 5:28-29). So all the infirm who, on encountering Jesus, pressed forward to implore the alleviation of their ills. The poor worthies of the Gospels had small knowledge of the circumlocutions human respect imposes.

The incognito of Jesus held up badly: the very demons exposed it, and His enemies scented beneath His humility some unwonted grandeur. The law of reversal worked in His favor: this rabbi, this prophet, hardly met the standards. He had attended no schools; He healed on the Sabbath day and it was no secret that He did it deliberately. Besides, He was nothing but a Galilean, a product of that "district of the Gentiles," sprung from the insignificant hamlet of Nazareth.

To what purpose His discourses? To the fulfillment of the Law? But how sharply He abridged it in his commentary! He had biting words for religious institutions. Whither would He lead Israel? Good-natured with sinners, easy of access to peasants, He was hard on the scribes, indifferent to the greater interests of the nation. He fascinated His hearers with paradox, He routed the doctors of the Law. In a word, He was a scandal to the sedate as Job had been a puzzle to his counselors of prudence, as Jeremiah had been an exasperation to the politicians.

## VII

FOR Christians, the religion of the Bible is an uninterrupted "creation" of the cosmos—and it is in Scripture that they claim to have read it. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ works without cease (cf. Jn 5:17). It is a religion of movement because, from the Oak of Mamre to the Burning Bush, from Sinai to the Dedication of the Temple, its manifestations come in series; it is progressive because it is made up of promises which give upon an indefinite future. From stage to stage it moves through a landscape which renews itself, never becoming static. Not that the present abolishes the past; it uses the past in bringing it to perfection, without cease it recalls the past to justify itself and meanwhile it already evokes the future. Truly, the biblical religion is a dynamic religion, never complacent, ever magnifying its God, the indefectible Creator. Enough to say that in the name of the freedom of the Spirit of Yahweh, the religion of the Bible, confronting the partisans of the past, wears the guise of opposition and contradiction. And this is the way the prophets understood it.

Yet that religion was at all times institutional: a solemn cult, regulated, complicated; a priesthood and a royalty, both of them hereditary, established in the form of caste; by a necessary consequence its tendencies were conservative. These institutions were written into the Law, and the whole corpus of Scripture—legislation, narratives, prophecies—became itself an institution, guarded jealously to the letter. To this a tradition was superimposed with its glosses and commentaries. It was as much a guarantee of the future as of the past; it imposed itself with all the weight of divine promulgation.

The Law, the priesthood, the royal line perdured for centuries. They constituted a long spiritual experience, a heritage to be protected. Na-

tionalism, a taste for independence, the control of opinions, slipped in among the divine institutions to safeguard them. Could it be that they might come to supplant them? The risk is common to all religions. Who did not believe in 1870 that the loss of the temporal power would be prejudicial to the papacy? Certainly it is what the enemies of the Church hoped and the faithful feared. It is impossible to escape the tutelage of the milieu in which one lives and difficult to disengage oneself without loss.

The institutions of Israel were the witnesses of the past; they husbanded that future which was called the Messiah. He it was who would give all direction to the Law. He would be at once its fruit and its justification. At His coming it would blossom into victory.

That messianic future, watched for, hoped for, did not come to be without causing certain fleeting glimpses, foretastes, of the Day of Yahweh, that is, of the final moment of this present world when God, holding solemn court, will reveal His justice decisively against every accusation cast up at Him by the impious: indifference to the lot of the just, complicity with those in power. On that Day He will make it clear that the course of the world had been governed with attentive condescension.

Humanity has already had some experience of the Day of Yahweh, partial, it is true, but intended to strengthen the oppressed faithful and to restrain tyrants. There was messianic hope in the prophetic explosions of Ezekiel or Isaiah, in the vocation of Abraham and Moses. The Day of Yahweh shone upon Sennacherib, on the Nebuchadnezzar of the book of Daniel, on the Epiphany; better yet, on the kings of Israel and Judah, on Samaria, on Jerusalem and on her Temple.

Now, whenever the messianic hope manifested itself, it always made life difficult for institutions. Over the ruins of the Temple there echoed the oracles of Jeremiah and of Ezekiel, throwing light on the catastrophe by exposing its cause: the disgust of Yahweh for a house profaned, and by its own worshipers. When Yahweh appears, the earth trembles, the mountains catch fire; the messianic reality always entails an institutional earthquake. If the "new canticle" is to be chanted, the old trimmings must go. The first Christians were imbued with this theology of renewal by substitution. They believed in a progress in religion; they allied themselves with the prophets, harbingers of the Nazarene revolution. It was by the experience of those earlier seers that they ac-

counted for the defection of their own religious leaders in the days of Jesus.

### VIII

THE first Christians found it natural that the guardians of the established order should repay God's legates with contradiction, exile, and death. Such is the meaning of Stephen's apostrophe to the Sanhedrin.

For them, the execution of Jesus found its place in the list of the murders of prophets. He had underlined the point Himself: It cannot be that a prophet perish, outside Jerusalem (Lk 13:33). His end in blood was dyed with the messianic vision. For the evangelists, it fit into the frame of sacred history. Because He was the Messiah, it was that history's climax, but the drama of Calvary had been preceded by rehearsals without number.

What motives peculiar to the epoch led the leaders among the Jews to rid themselves of Jesus? First of all their conservatism, their exaggerated veneration of the Temple, the visible—indeed too visible—center of their religion. The casting out of the money-changers and the jobbers in sacred cattle struck them as an aggression not to be borne. For the same reason Pashhur maltreated Jeremiah and the priest at the sanctuary of Bethel denounced Amos: they prefigure Caiaphas (Jer 20:1-2; Am 7:10-13). And the politicians, no less than the priests, were suspicious of prophets: their freedom of language was insupportable. The king's men had been suspicious of the defeatist Jeremiah, Isaiah had had small success at court; so Herod Antipas could hardly be fond of the Man who picked up where John the Baptist left off and who dealt with him as with a fox or jackal (Lk 13:31-32). This leaves, then, the scribes, the doctors of the Law: why should Jesus have interested them? The Gospels depict the jealousy of these masters smitten with their own teaching, the stubbornness of these professors who were prisoners of their own scholasticism, the impercipient of these pedants riveted to the letter. And one thing leading to another, there is their bad faith, sprung from a corporate self-love wounded to the quick by the success of this young rabbi, His victorious repartee, His stinging rebukes. None of this can be rejected a priori, for has it not all found its place again in the course of our religion since Jesus Christ? Just reread the examination of Joan of Arc.

But the Gospels also reveal to us Jesus' hostility to His contradictors. No doubt it was a loving hostility, both toward the humble whom they exploited and toward those doctors themselves whose ignorant conceit He arraigned. The rabbis' hatred, then, was not completely gratuitous—if there be any reason to hate him who rebukes us in the name of God, whether he be a shepherd like Amos or a child like Samuel.

Among these savage enemies, the evangelists especially denounced the Pharisees. Yet they furnished the best and the most spectacular recruits to the gospel; not to speak of Nicodemus or of Paul of Tarsus, let us mention the moving episode of the enthusiastic scribe which St. Mark reports: "Well answered, Master," he said to Jesus, whom he had questioned as to the first among the commandments. "You have said truly that God is one and there is no other besides Him; and that He should be loved with the whole heart, and with the whole understanding, and with the whole soul, and with one's whole strength; and that to love one's neighbor as oneself is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices. And Jesus, seeing that he had answered wisely, said to him: You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mk 12: 32-34).

This is the way to grasp the secret of the antagonism which set Jesus in opposition to the Pharisees. In our own days the Jews who read the Gospels are still struck by the consonance between the sayings of Jesus and the teaching of the Pharisees. If it were at all possible to consent to situate this matchless Doctor in some one of the sects of His time, it would assuredly not be in that of the Sadducees nor in that of the Essenes, such as the Dead Sea documents describe to us. He would be rather a Pharisee in the sense in which our scribe speaks, that is to say, of a party which puts religion above everything and incarnates it in the Law received from God, burns the midnight oil in study in order to understand and practice it better. To that end they sought, without ever succeeding, to soften its archaic literalism by casuistry. Still, they represented what was most elevated in the religious ideal of Israel—with this reservation: they had a shade too much suspicion that this might be the case.

It was not on the ground of zeal that Jesus condemned them; the Law was the common ground on which the Nazarene and Pharisees met. He seemed to speak of it as they did; His sentences had for them a familiar ring; they were on the point of acquiescing in a doctrine

which sounded like their own. Suddenly the spell was shattered. The kingdom of God—the expression comes from Daniel—was evoked as the fulfillment of the Law and as that without which all justice fades. Jesus introduced a new value, an irresistible ferment. No, the enemies of this Prophet cannot be reproached for having failed to measure precisely the danger into which He put their schools. Their institutions, like the Temple in the time of Jeremiah and thanks to Jeremiah, were indeed in jeopardy.

From the Pharisees to pharisaism is more than just a step. It was pharisaism which killed Jesus. But pharisaism is to the authentic Pharisees no more than a caricature: if it resembles them, it deforms them. It was a betrayal of the pharisaic ideal, the hypertrophy of their love for the Law. Strictly speaking, this infection is a disease peculiar to biblical monotheism and its requirements. From the first day, biblical monotheism insisted on a service of God which is interior and based on faith and love. The external panoply of religion is subordinated to the precept of charity. Ceremonies, if the heart is not in them, are an empty show, a denial of the rights of Godhead. Pharisaism, however, contents itself with the exterior of things and prefers it to the interior. The gesture, the posture, take precedence over conscience. Any Pharisee who keeps his blood cool will admit the existence of this disease.

Pharisaism is the resolve to make two compartments in one's life: that of egotism and sin, and that of religious observance—and to the first it gives the keys of the city. It is the contrary of the biblical religion proclaimed by Jesus and by the Doctor of the Law in their splendid duo (Mk 12:28-34). Pharisaism it is which inspires the "pious" man who is cunning in business, machiavellian in politics, who ruins his rivals but founds a monastery to shelter his mortal remains and arranges Masses for the repose of his soul. Compromise and departmentalization block the capture of the whole of his heart by divine love.

Thus understood, pharisaism is eternal. It prompted the reply of Cain: Am I my brother's keeper? (Gen 4:9) and the deliberators of the petty council which deposed Chrysostom. They reproached him with the innovation of ablutions after the Eucharist but carefully kept silence on their own servile desire to humor the Empress: frauds who invoke the God they dishonor.

Jesus perished a victim of pharisaism. The freethinker Caiphas was

in it with the plotters. He permitted himself to be recruited, along with the Sadducees, by those among the scribes who confounded religious conventions with the religion of the living God. They declared against Him a treacherous, a clerical, a "no quarter" war; their cabal reached its goal in the sentence of Pilate.

## IX

THE death of Jesus, like the death of Joan of Arc, was a crime of the learned, a crime of clerks. They perpetrated it because they lacked spiritual hunger, considering themselves well stocked with erudition and authority, whereas in fact they were drowsing in the incuriosity native to offices and schools. Jesus was a formidable adversary, but they did not sense that His strength came to Him because He was right in His opposition to them and because the Spirit of God dwelt within Him. Their professorial assurance concealed from them the laws of divine action in the world. They have their place in the file of those blind opponents which sacred history lists, "from the blood of Abel the just, even unto the blood of Zachariah" (Mt 23:35).

That murder was a political blunder. Gamaliel saw it clearly: If Jesus were no more than a knave or a visionary, to put Him to death was to create a martyr; better to bury Him in indifference, for every heretic suppressed by violence becomes the founder of a line. It was the misfortune of the Sanhedrin that He was the Just One and that He rose again.

The burning of the Temple by Titus wrought an amputation on the Jewish body; astoundingly, contrary to all expectation, it survived. But at that moment the catastrophe of 71 and then the pitiless war of 135 appeared to be the definitive liquidation of a great past, that centuries-old Covenant inaugurated with Abraham. Neither Jews nor Christians, both committed to the doctrine of providence, could believe it a chance event. For the Nazarenes, it was the "Day of Jesus" which He had foretold to Caiphas; for the Jews, it was a new ordeal, an invitation to enter once more into favor with God. But how? We now know by experience that the ruin of Solomon's building was a spiritual deliverance for both stages of the biblical religion: the disciples of Jesus were set free from a past which was august but an encumbrance; their con-

tradictors were relieved of a cult which had finally become impossible, and they proceeded to draw new resources from the study of the Law. The Synagogue consolidated itself.

But the leaders of the Jews had committed a fault which was grievous in another order: it was a moral failure. They had used spiritual weapons against Jesus. Terrible for those whom they strike, they are full of peril for those who wield them. They paralyze the judgment of the faithful; what they create cannot be withdrawn. These condemnations, even if they thunder forth out of conviction, have this awkward consequence: they re-echo down the centuries with no possibility of appeal; they come forth, as it were, from the tribunal of God. How conscious St. Paul was of the gravity of his step in excommunicating the incestuous Corinthian! And rightly so; that peremptory sentence has outlived his contemporaries; that nameless figure is still for us "the incestuous Corinthian." Did he repent? Did he end as a martyr? Until the Last Judgment we shall know him only in the character which the Apostle has left him. It is difficult to lift the weight of even an unjust religious condemnation—the case of Joan of Arc is an exception. Once formally pronounced, the faithful, if they belong to the entourage of the one condemned, bear it with an ulcerating resignation; if they are outsiders, with an indifference which gives consent. Presumption works in favor of authority: this is why there will be a Last Judgment.

For the future of the religion of the Bible, the decision of Jewish officialdom was a misfortune of incalculable scope. It has bent the course of history as much as the sin of Adam or the episode of the Golden Calf. The headlong act of a few impassioned men staked the destiny of their people on a throw of the dice, just as the incapacity of a general sweeps an army into the horrors of a rout. From generation to generation the possibility of finding again the common path which leads to God has been lost. The Jewish people has been defrauded of its heritage by the rancor of priests and scribes obsessed with their own doctrinaire point of view. The sentence of the Sanhedrin blocks to the Jews the avenues which would lead them to Jesus Christ; it stiffens them in their refusal. How will they disengage themselves? (I speak of the mass, not of a few exceptions.) What curiosity will drive them to review the trial? They would have to beget doubts which to them would already smell of apostasy. And besides, what sources of investi-

gation can they consult? To form an opinion, a Jew has at his disposal nothing but the Gospel accounts; how should he not consider their witness partisan?

But there is still the lesson of the Nazarene triumph. It fills the world; it fills history. The Synagogue opposes it with silence; Talmud and Midrash maintain a silence which is absolute or nearly so on the Nazarene doctrine. Clinging to their own opinions, if you like, but not without logic. The fact of Christ is not acknowledged; the messianic hope must be preserved after as before Jesus. With its own hands, Israel has built its ghetto, given up this present world where its innumerable gifts invite it to play an important part. Over the ruins of the Temple, the Jewish people, unyielding, makes its prayer.

As for Christians, sometimes Jews think of them with bitterness as of false brethren who have supplanted Israel and ravaged the vine of Jacob. Since Constantine Jews have become the guest of Christendom as previously they had been that of the pagan empires. We should like to think the shadow of the Cross gracious to them, we should like to think that it had never weighed arbitrarily on their shoulders. For that, we should have to set aside the memory of pogroms, of so many vexatious measures, of a violent, fanatical proselytism. Even St. Paul dreaded that lack of consideration on the part of the pagans substituted for those Jews (who had not believed). Together with the spectacle of the schisms which tear Christians apart, the memory of a thousand outrages has turned Israel from the Way of salvation for all.

Those among them whom the grace of the Master has conquered lose no time in testifying that it is Scripture which has made them understand that ignominious death in which their nation consented. They have seen it as the paschal sacrifice of the Servant without peer, who took the place of the prophetic lamb. That death crowns the traditional series of bloody sacrifices which it terminates by bringing them to completion, and the ruin of the Temple bears out this vision. As for the shame of the punishment, Jesus explained it to the Emmaus disciples by invoking the Scriptures: "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into His glory?" (Lk 24:26). This is the Christian philosophy of history; let us treasure these insights lest we fall into mere anecdote. The executioners are less important than the laws which presided at that execution, so profitable for the entire world. It is true that egotism, a religious and nationalist egotism, contrary to

the spirit if not to the letter of the Scriptures, animated those assassins, but they were no monsters: we resemble them only too much.

## X

AN old rabbi leaning out of his window muses: "The Messiah has come? I see no change." But Rabbi, remember the countryside we saw from Jerusalem two thousand years ago. Fifteen leagues away, in every direction, the gods of the nations flaunted their might. As the prophets had foretold, they were swept away. Was this thanks to Jews who remained simply Jews or thanks to Jews who had become Christians? Is this no change? Let us praise God for it, the God who, that it might prophesy, opened the mouth of Balaam's ass—at least we can be ranked with that holy beast.

Jesus Christ may divide us, but in our very quarrel He unites us. Since His coming, traditional Judaism is no longer what it was. It survives without Temple, without sacrifice, and that in a splendid fashion, giving proof of a religious vitality impossible not to acknowledge. The Jews carry on their case against us with the same energy they employ to maintain the past—our past—with an eye to the future. All we fear is that they might relax their effort. The temptation is older than yesterday. The Hellenizers apostasized to ape pagan customs, the marranos of Spain sought to implant themselves in a Christian world from which they remained detached at heart. Since their emancipation, the children of Israel have undergone the nationalist allurements of assimilation.

This would be the surrender of their peculiar greatness, which remains the quest for the Messiah. We have an interest in this. The trial of Christ can end only with the victory of the divine Legate, not with the collapse of one party. The Jewish hope complements the Christian. When "He" returns to call the roll of His own, the children of Abraham according to the flesh must not miss the mustering because they have abandoned the faith of their ancestor.

As to the Christians: they must not sleep in the possession of privileges which they have received only in default of those who held them by right. Theirs to maintain the nostalgia for salvation in their elder brothers, treating them with the deference due pioneers, believers whose very downfall stems from zeal.

"Jesus," said Pascal, "will be in agony while the world lasts: we must not sleep the while."<sup>2</sup> Thus for centuries to come we must expect contestation. Jesus is in agony, that is to say, He is in the center of this struggle, and there is only one way we can defend Him: to radiate around us a love so great, a love so pure and selfless, that Israel will at long last be enraptured because it has truly found among us the highest fulfillment of the Law's one commandment: "Love God and your neighbor."

The trial of the Christ continues. It forbids us to sleep.

2. Cf. the bilingual edition of Pascal's *Pensées*, trans. H. F. Stewart (New York: Pantheon Books, 1950), p. 367.

## *M. Thaddea de Sion*

### THE JEWISH BURIAL SERVICE

EVERY part of the Jewish burial service, from the confession of the dying person to the mourners' return to the sad house of mourning, shows reverence, shows faith and hope. The Jews have ever given honor to the dead, to their own dead but also to the non-Jew and to the stranger, even to the criminal and the enemy. Normally the duty of burying the dead rests on kinsmen; but if a body is found unattended (the rabbis of old speak of a *met mizwah*, "a body which is a commandment"), there is an obligation to the dead man which claims the service of the finder. For, as the Talmud puts it, "great is the respect due to human beings."<sup>1</sup> Criminals are to be buried, according to talmudic law, in a place apart, but eventually the dry bones are to be gathered and reinterred in the family tomb.<sup>2</sup> Only the "apostate" is to be refused burial in Jewish cemeteries.

#### THE CUSTOMS

THAT dust might return to dust—not that this is the only reason—it is traditional to hold the burial as soon as possible. And from earliest times, it has been the prevailing Jewish custom to place the body in the earth or in caves of the rock, a custom so unlike that of many pagan nations that it struck the pagan heart of Tacitus as one of the "base and abominable ways of the Jews" (*Hist.* V, 5). Until about a century ago, cremation was looked on with horror, though it was permitted in

1. Meg. 3b; cf. *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1935-48), *Megillah*, p. 14. As is to be expected of the frailty of human nature, so high an aspiration was sometimes lost sight of. There was the more or less general rule of the rabbis that men do not accept condolence on the death of a slave. One rabbi, offered formal religious condolence by his disciples when a slave of his had died, refused it and went so far as to add that the only words to be said in such a case should be the same words that are said at the death of an ox: "May the Almighty replenish thy loss" (Ber. 16b; cf. Soncino ed., *Berakoth*, p. 97).

2. Sanh. 46a; cf. *B. Talmud*, Soncino ed., *Sanhedrin*, p. 305.

exceptional circumstances, such as an epidemic. Indeed, in biblical days, death by burning was the punishment imposed in certain instances of unchastity (Gen 38:24; Lev 20:14; 21:9), and the burning of the very bones was an added disgrace to a death penalty (Jos 7:25).

For the ancient Hebrew, to die meant "to be gathered to his people," "to rest with his fathers" (Gen 49:29; 47:30), and therefore he longed to be buried with his father and his mother (cf. 2 Kg 19:37). The cave Abraham bought at Sarah's death became the burial ground of the families of the patriarchs. Kings had their sepulchers near the Temple and the wealthy in a garden, as the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea shows, in which the crucified body of Christ was laid to rest. Cemeteries were outside the city, at least seventy-five feet from the wall, but always within easy reach from the gate—a rule implied by the words of the Gospel: "As Jesus drew near the gate of the town, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother" (Lk 7:12). *Bet hayim*, *bet 'olam*, "house of the living," and "house of eternity" or "long home," are among the more ancient terms for a cemetery, while some more recent are "the good place," "the pure place."<sup>3</sup>

Among the early Jews there were no coffins, and the body was not embalmed, Jacob and Joseph, who died in Egypt, being exceptions. Generally the body was carried to its resting place on a bed or bier. When coffins were used, they were of stone or, preferably, of wood, for it was by a tree that death was brought to man. Later, abuses crept in, the wealthy having elaborate and expensive coffins, so simplicity was enforced: a plain unpainted box became the rule. But in modern times, liberal Jews have broken with this tradition. A touching usage is reported, however, in medieval France: it was from the table at which the poor had been served that the coffin was made.

Simple too has been the clothing of the body, though in our day this is no longer the general practice of all Jewish groups. As soon as the dying Jew drew his last breath, the hand of the oldest or most eminent son, or of the nearest of kin, shut his eyes. (At the death of Jacob, for instance, it was Joseph, and not Ruben, the first-born, who performed this work of piety: cf. Gen 46:4.) Then the mouth was closed and the jaw bound; the body was washed, anointed, and wrapped

3. See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, III, 637, "Cemetery."

in linen; the hands and feet were tied with napkins—all of which is seen in the New Testament. For many centuries burial societies, often called "holy companies," have taken over these and other duties, particularly the washing of the body and the preparation of the shroud, for it may not be made beforehand.

The plain shroud, likewise abandoned by liberal Jews, is the result of a long development. At one time, the bodies of persons of high rank were robed in the garments proper to their station. But later, to put an end to excessive display, inexpensive garments became customary, white being the preferred color. "Clothe me in sleeved garments of white," Rabbi Jeremiah asked, "put my stockings on me, and place my staff in my hand and my sandals on my feet, and lay me by a road, so that when [at the resurrection] I am summoned I may stand ready."<sup>4</sup> Another rabbi, however, told his sons to bury him in dun-colored garments, to bury him neither in white nor in black: not in white, for if he should stand in white among the wicked, he would be like a bridegroom among mourners; and not in black, for if he should stand in black among the just, he would be like a mourner among bridegrooms.<sup>5</sup>

It is traditional to bury a man in his prayer shawl, but the fringes, a reminder to keep all the commandments (Num 15:39), are removed, for death ends the duties of the Law. Formerly, the face was covered only if disfigured, and so it often happened that the faces of the rich were visible and the faces of the poor, marked by trials, livid from years of drought, were covered. And the poor were shamed. In deference to them, therefore, it was decided that everyone's face should be covered.<sup>6</sup> Only, out of pity, a young bridegroom's face was left unveiled. And on the bier of one who died while betrothed were placed the *huppah*, the bridal canopy, and pen and ink for the signing of the marriage contract. A teacher of the Law was honored by having a sacred Scroll buried with him. Another custom was to perforate the coffin so that the soil might more easily penetrate and bring the body back sooner to the dust from which it came. Often a clod of earth from

4. Gen. R. 100:2; cf. *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1939), II, 989.

5. Gen. R. 96:5; cf. Soncino ed., *Midrash Rabbah*, II, 890. Also Shab. 114a; cf. *B. Talmud*, Soncino ed., *Shabbath*, p. 559.

6. Mo'ed Katan. 27a; cf. *B. Talmud*, Soncino ed., *Mo'ed Katan*, p. 177.

the Holy Land was placed on the coffin, with the thought that its sacred soil had an atoning power.<sup>7</sup>

In biblical times, even as early as the days of the patriarchs—when Abraham wept and mourned aloud for Sarah (Gen 23:2) and the sons of Jacob sorrowed over their father in a great and heavy sorrow (Gen 50:10)—it was the Jewish way not to suppress the grief of mourning, a freedom seen in the house of Jairus (Mk 5:38) and at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:33). There seem to have been at one time special refrains of lament when a person of rank lay dead. "Alas, my brother!" cried one prophet at the grave of another prophet (3 Kg 13:30). While spices and sweet perfumes burned for King Zedekiah, who died in the peace of the Lord, the people bewailed him: "Alas, [our] lord" (Jer 34:5). But over an unjust king, who had eyes only for oppression, the people would not cry their grief, Jeremiah predicted; no one would do him the love of saying: "Alas, [my] lord! Alas, the noble one!" (Jer 22:18). At times such lamentation broke forth into poetry. In his dirge over Saul and Jonathan, David called on nature to grieve with him, to let the mountains go without dew, without rain, and the fields without fruit. "Thy beauty, O Israel, upon thy high places is slain!" he mourned:

*How are the mighty fallen! . . .  
Saul and Jonathan, beloved and dear,  
neither in life nor in death divided.  
Swifter they were than eagles,  
stronger they were than lions.  
Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul. . . .  
I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan. . . .  
How are the mighty fallen,  
broken the weapons of war!*

(2 Kg 1:19, 23-24, 26-27)

Jews have always thought it a meritorious act to assist at a burial, so that, to the present day, as many persons as can attend: it is a religious duty to accompany the departed to their last resting place. In former days, everyone was expected to walk in the procession, if only for a few steps. And if the procession was small, even those bent over the

7. See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, IV, 143, "Coffin."

Torah were to interrupt their study, rise, and walk with the rest.<sup>8</sup> Walking in the funeral procession is indeed an act of love, since the dead cannot repay the kindness done to them. But God rewards it. Thus an old midrash exalts Abraham in the words of Proverbs: "He who follows after justice and love finds life, prosperity and honor" (21:21). In burying Sarah, the same commentary continues, Abraham followed after love, and was thus given long and abundant life. And great was his honor, according to this midrash, which makes the Holy One, blessed be He, say to him: "It is my work to do love. Thou hast embraced my work; come and don my raiment"<sup>9</sup>—old age being, as it were, the garment of God, who is the Ancient of days (Dan 7:9, 13). To those who do not join a funeral procession, the rabbis apply the saying that who shows contempt for the poor insults his Maker, while to those who do join it, they apply the saying that who takes pity on the poor honors God (Prov 17:5; 14:31).<sup>10</sup>

Then there are the rites of mourning. Holy Scripture records various expressions of sorrow over the loss of a loved one: the mourner throws dust on his head, wears sackcloth, sits in ashes, plucks out the hair of his head and face, removes his headdress and shoes, covers his lips as a guard of silence (cf. Jos 7:6; Jer 16:6; Ez 24:17). But most of these and other like customs have become obsolete. The rabbinical laws of mourning, as observed by orthodox Jews today, require certain observances on the death of one's father and mother, husband or wife, child, brother, and sister. There is first *keri'ah*, a symbolic rending of the garment: the four-inch cut in the lapel is made immediately before the funeral, while, in a spirit of submission, the mourner blesses God: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, the true Judge." Another rite, which begins on returning from the cemetery, is *shivah*. Except for Friday evening's visit to the synagogue, the mourners do not leave their home for seven days, where, unshod, they sit on the floor or on low stools.<sup>11</sup> No work should claim their time, nor any

8. Ket. 17a; cf. B. Talmud, Soncino ed., *Kethuboth*, p. 95.

9. Gen. R. 58:9; cf. Soncino ed., *Midrash Rabbah*, II, 514-515.

10. See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, III, 436, "Burial."

11. Of Nehemiah, then a cupbearer at the Persian court, it is written that when he heard that those of his kinsmen who had been spared captivity were in great distress, that the wall of Jerusalem was broken and its gates burned, he sat down and wept, mourning for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven, the God of greatness, awe, and mercy (2 Esd 1:4-5).

special care for their own bodies; rather should they devote themselves to the reading of the book of Job. All through the seven days a light is kept burning, a symbol of the departed soul, and a similar light is kindled every year on the anniversary of a parent's death.

The mourners' first meal after the funeral, usually bread with eggs or lentils, is prepared by a neighbor and is called the "meal of consolation." Those who come to console must not speak till the mourners break the silence, and when they do speak, it must be to praise the judgment of God. "May the Almighty comfort you among the other mourners for Zion and Jerusalem," should be their parting words, and also their greeting on the mourners' first reappearance in the synagogue. Elaborate though these rites are, the rabbis teach that mourning must not be excessive, for they who overindulge in grief will weep for yet another death. Those who mourn beyond the appointed times are reproached by God: "You are not more compassionate toward the departed than I."<sup>12</sup>

It is against such a background of piety toward the dead that Jesus' deliberately stern demand, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead," must be seen. To Him too, of course, burial was a work of mercy and a dead body a sacred thing, yet these were His very words when one of His disciples begged leave from His company. "Lord, let me first go and bury my father" (Mt 8:21-22), the disciple had asked, which might have meant: Let me go home and stay with my father till he lives out his life, and then I shall follow you; or: Let me go home to attend my father's funeral, and when the days of mourning are over, I shall return and join you again. Whether it meant the one or the other, Jesus replied that following Him admitted of no compromise. The lesser must give way to the greater; human ties, however sacred, to divine ties. Those who have not heard the higher call should indeed bury the dead, but it is the disciple's part to follow Him who is the Life. The Old Testament demanded of the high priest that he not go near any dead person, not even his father or his mother (Lev 21:11). A Nazirite too, being especially dedicated to God and set apart for Him, was commanded not to come near any dead body, not even that of his father, his mother, his brother, or his sister, for he was "sacred to

12. Mo'ed Katan 27b; B. Talmud, Soncino ed., *Mo'ed Katan*, p. 180. On "Mourning" and "Consolation," see *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, IX, 101-103, and IV, 233-234.

the Lord" (Num 6:6-8). Small wonder that Jesus expects His disciple to count divine dedication above filial piety!

## THE PRAYERS

ALL Scripture teaches that "who confesses and forsakes his sins shall obtain mercy" (Prov 28:13), to which an old commentary on the Song of Songs adds: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel, 'My sons, present to me an opening of repentance no bigger than the eye of a needle, and I will widen it into gateways through which wagons and carriages can pass.'"<sup>13</sup> Hence it is the solemn duty of a dying Jew to make confession, and the solemn duty of the rabbi or those about his bed to urge him to do so. A solemn confession which goes back to about A.D. 1200 has the sick man acknowledge that his cure and his death are in the hands of God. And as he prays for "perfect healing," so also he avows: "Yet I will in love accept death at thy hand." He begs that his death may be atonement for all his sins, iniquities, and transgressions, and that God may make known to him the path of life: "In thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand bliss for evermore." Having first confided the care of his loved ones to "the Father of the fatherless and the Judge of the widow," he prays: "Into thy hand I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. Amen, and Amen!" When the end is near, he should say three times: "The Lord is King, the Lord hath been King, the Lord shall be King for ever and ever." Again thrice: "Blessed be His name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever." Seven times, the dying Jew is to exclaim: "The Lord, He is God," and then crown his confession with "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one."<sup>14</sup>

The burial service, according to Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, the late Chief Rabbi of England, revolves around five notes: resignation to the divine will, the immortality of the soul, the Judge and His judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and the everlastingness of Israel. So dominant is the first of these notes—faith in, resignation to, and adoration of, the absolute justice of God's providence—that in Hebrew the whole burial service is called *zidduk ha-din*, "the justification of the judgment." Its

13. Cant. R. 5:2; cf. Soncino ed., *Midrash Rabbah*, IX, 232.

14. See *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book*, trans. and ed. J. H. Hertz (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1952), p. 1065.

opening line, taken from Moses' farewell song, is: "The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, just and right is He" (Deut 32:4). A little later: "The Rock, perfect in every deed, who can say unto Him, What doest thou?" With the binding of Isaac before their mind's eye—the binding of Isaac, which foreshadowed the nailing of Christ to the cross—the mourners turn to God: "O thou who speakest and doest, of thy grace deal kindly with us, and for the sake of him who was bound like a lamb, O hearken and do." The Christian ear cannot but hear this as the beginning of the full plea, "Have mercy on us for the sake of Him who was slain like a lamb, who is, indeed, the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world." The loving embrace of God's decree comes to its climax in the words of Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21).

These prayers hail God as the rock of unchangeableness, as a strong refuge, as the safety of His children in time of storm. On those days of the year when they are not said, their place is taken by Psalm 15, which speaks of the serenity and joy of those whose portion is the Lord: "Guard me, O God, for in thee do I take refuge. I say unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, I have no good but in thee." This same psalm also emphasizes the second note of the burial service, the immortality of the soul: "Therefore my heart rejoiceth and my glory [my soul] is glad; my flesh also dwelleth in safety. For thou wilt not abandon my soul to the grave; neither wilt thou suffer thy loving one to see destruction. Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand bliss for evermore."<sup>15</sup> Even before the burial, if there is a service at the home, words like these may be said: "The dust returneth to the earth as it was, but the spirit returneth unto God who gave it," or: "In thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light." Later, while the coffin is lowered into the grave, these parting words, "May he come to his place in peace," point to the same hope. On it Rabbi Hertz comments: "The body dies, decays, and is no more. But the soul—a spark of the Divine Being—is immortal. God's protection does not cease at the portals of the grave. And the dead do not merely merge into the All, or become absorbed into the Divine

15. For St. Peter and St. Paul (Ac 2:23-32; 13:30-37), and with them for the Church, these and some of the preceding verses of the psalm tell the promise and the triumphant affirmation of Christ's resurrection.

Source of all being. There is continued, separate existence of the soul after death. . . . This world is but the ante-chamber to the Future Life—man's true home; and that is a spiritual universe."<sup>16</sup> Rabbi Hertz then refers to the often-quoted saying of an ancient Jewish teacher: "In the world to come, there is neither eating nor drinking, neither marrying nor bartering, no envy, hatred, or contention; but the just with their crowns sit around God's table, feasting on the brightness of the divine presence, the Shekinah."<sup>17</sup>

That there is a Judge and a judgment day, that man is free and therefore accountable for his acts, that the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished—the third note—underlies all the prayers. Many are the sorrows and pains of those who have followed after false gods. Sinners in their folly wander into night, and "death will be their shepherd" (Ps 48:15). The Shepherd of the just, however, is the living God, the God of the living. Thus the resurrection of the dead—the fourth note—is another wondrous message of the burial service. While the body is carried to the burial ground, those who have not visited the cemetery in the last thirty days pronounce this blessing: "Blessed be the Lord our God, King of the universe. . . . Blessed art thou, O Lord, who revivest the dead." "Thou art mighty to save," they proclaim, "thou sustainest the living with lovingkindness, revivest the dead with great mercy, supportest the falling, healest the sick, loosest the bound, and keepest thy faith to them that sleep in the dust." When the burial is over, all who have been present wash their hands and, as they do, they again rejoice in the God who makes eternity swallow up the dark of death: "He maketh death to vanish in life eternal; and the Lord God wipeth away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it" (Is 25:8).

Before this ritual washing, however, that is, on leaving the cemetery, the mourners and their friends pluck a blade of grass and, throwing it behind them, recall man's frailty: that he flourishes "like the grass of the earth," that he is dust. But no less do they remember, on their return to the hall or funeral chapel, God's marvelous protection. "The Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust," they

16. Hertz, *op. cit.*, pp. 1078-1079. "The soul a spark of the Divine Being" is an unfortunate image, for it gives the impression that the soul is part of the Godhead. But surely any such pantheistic notion was far from the mind of Dr. Hertz.

17. Ber. 17a; cf. *B. Talmud*, Soncino ed., *Berakoth*, p. 102.

recite, indeed the whole ninetyeth psalm. It is not only the individual but the whole people whom God covers with His pinions and guards beneath His wings; it is over the whole people that He has given His angels charge. This is the fifth note of the burial service. For the sacred writers of Scripture and also for the rabbis—though their understanding of this truth is not altogether the same as the Bible's—the salvation of the individual is closely knit to that of the community. Thus the mourners' *kaddish*, a prayer for the sanctification of God's great name in the world, prays for the speedy coming of His kingdom and asks: "May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life for us and for all Israel; and say ye, Amen."

The memorial prayer to be said in the house of mourning, as edited by Dr. Hertz, seems to blend all the five notes of the burial service. "Lord and King," it begins, "who art full of compassion, God of the spirits of all flesh, in whose hand are the souls of the living and the dead, receive, we beseech thee, in thy great lovingkindness, the soul of him who has been gathered unto his people." It pleads with the gracious Judge: "Have mercy upon him; pardon all his transgressions, for there is none righteous upon earth, who doeth only good, and sinneth not. Remember unto him the righteousness which he wrought, and let his reward be with him, and his recompense before him." With intrepid hope of everlasting life, the memorial prayer begs: "Shelter his soul in the shadow of thy wings. Make known to him the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand bliss for evermore. Bestow upon him the abounding happiness that is treasured up for the righteous."

Imploring God, who heals the brokenhearted, to console the mourners, the memorial prayer continues: "Put into their hearts the fear and love of thee, that they may serve thee with a perfect heart; and let their latter end be peace. Amen." And again tying the consolation of the few to that of the many, that of the house of mourning to that of the whole house of Jacob, indeed to that of all the children of men, the prayer closes with this triumphant vision: "Like one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you (saith the Lord), and in Jerusalem shall ye be comforted. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. He maketh death

to vanish in life eternal; and the Lord God wipeth away tears from off all faces. . . ."

The beauty and the strength of the Jewish burial service is the strength and beauty of the Bible. There are few words in it, if any, that a Christian could not pray, though some he would understand in a different spirit. Everything a man can say in the sight of death is in it, no kind of prayer is lacking, for there is confession of sin and pleading for forgiveness; submission to, indeed praise of, God just and loving; desire for His light and peace, for the conquest of death in resurrection, for life with Him forever. But for all this wealth, the Christian misses the Voice which alone can say: "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

#### READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

IT IS an ancient Jewish custom, though no longer observed by all, to make religious study and meditation part of the service in the house of mourning. The meditations are based on holy Scripture and on rabbinical sayings, and the themes are, of course, trust in the Lord, the whence and whither of our existence, the account the majesty of God demands, and the marks of a good life.<sup>18</sup> Among the scriptural texts Rabbi Hertz has chosen for reading and reflection are these: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy willing spirit. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Ps 50:14; 72:25). And this: "As for man, his days are as grass; as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children" (Ps 102:15-17).

Among the rabbinical sayings Dr. Hertz lists are such as stress man the pilgrim. Man enters this world with fists clenched, as if all the world were his to own; he leaves it with hands spread open, as if he wanted to say that he no longer possessed any of the things he once cherished. Yes, life's briefness is no excuse for wasting it. "The day is short," said Rabbi Tarfon, "and the work is great, and the laborers are

18. See Hertz, *op. cit.*, pp. 1100-1105.

sluggish, and the reward is much, and the Master of the house is urgent. It may not be given thee to complete the work, but thou art not at liberty to desist from it." <sup>19</sup> Those who take their hands away from the work commanded them and put them to the work of evil are dead though they still draw breath: "The righteous are called living, even in their death; the wicked are called dead, even while they are alive." <sup>20</sup> Hence the admonition: "This world is like a vestibule to the world to come; prepare thyself in the vestibule, that thou mayest enter into the banqueting hall." <sup>21</sup>

Solemn too is the warning: "They that are born are destined to die; and the dead to be brought to life again; and the living to be judged, to know, to make known, and to be made conscious that He is God, He the Maker, He the Creator, He the Discerner, He the Judge, He the Witness, He the Complainant. He it is that will in future judge, blessed be He, with whom there is no unrighteousness, nor forgetfulness, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes; know also that everything is according to the reckoning. And let not thy [evil] inclination persuade thee that the grave will be a place of refuge for thee; for not of thy will wast thou formed, and not of thy will wast thou born, and not of thy will dost thou live, and not of thy will wilt thou die, and not of thy will wilt thou have to give account and reckoning before the King of the kings, the Holy One, blessed be He." <sup>22</sup>

Thus some of the meditations dwell on the need for, and the beauty of, repentance. In a deliberate paradox, Rabbi Jacob used to say: "Better is one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than the whole life in the world to come; and better is one hour of blissfulness

19. Abot II, 15-16; cf. *B. Talmud*, Soncino ed., *Aboth*, p. 24.

20. Eccl. R. 9:5; cf. Soncino ed., *Midrash Rabbah*, VIII, 229; and elsewhere.

21. Abot IV, 16; cf. Soncino ed., *Aboth*, p. 53. The teaching of the ancient rabbis on the life to come is not definitive. A beautiful talmudic saying reads: "This world is an inn, and the other world the lasting home," but as one continues, it becomes clear that what is meant by the permanent house is the grave (*Mo'ed Kat.* 9b; cf. Soncino ed., *Mo'ed Katan*, p. 50). For, according to one opinion, the dead are sleeping and will sleep till they rise at the resurrection of all flesh. According to another opinion, the just and the repentant, as they die, enter at once into the joy of the blessed world to come; while the wicked, the idolaters, and the foes of the Jewish people go straightway to hell. There are those who say that hell will be forever, and others who say that it will last for a time, short or long. And again, there are those who seem to think that after their punishment in hell has come to an end, the wicked will be annihilated; and others who envisage the annihilation of the sinner at the hour of his death. See C. G. Montefiore, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (London: Macmillan, 1938), p. 581.

22. Abot IV, 22; cf. Soncino ed., *Aboth*, pp. 56-57.

of spirit in the world to come than the whole life in this world.”<sup>23</sup> This may be an attempt to compare what cannot be compared: the joy of change and the joy of changelessness; the exhilaration that is in our striving toward the final goal and the peace that comes with the perfect possession of it. But such is the marvel of change: it can be change for the better, the turning of the heart, repentance. “There are those who gain eternity in a lifetime, others who gain it in one brief hour.”<sup>24</sup>

Repentance is the high way to the world to come. Chastisement too and suffering lead men’s hearts to the Lord, the meditations remind the mourner—chastisement indeed, and suffering, which are precious, beloved, in His sight; “the glory of God rests upon sufferers.”<sup>25</sup> Another mark of a good life to be impressed upon the bereaved is humble respect for God’s creatures: “Despise no man, and hold nothing to be impossible. For there is not a man that has not his hour, and there is not a thing that has not its place.”<sup>26</sup> Finally, Dr. Hertz’s readings in the house of mourning ask those who grieve: “Wouldst thou glorify God? Seek to be like Him—just, loving, compassionate, merciful.” Indeed, bereavement must not lead to bitterness but to greater love: “Do not unto others what thou wouldst not have others do unto thee. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary.”<sup>27</sup>

23. Abot IV, 17; cf. Soncino ed., *Aboth*, p. 53.

24. ‘Abod. Zar. 17a; cf. B. *Talmud*, Soncino ed., ‘*Abodab Zarab*, p. 88.

25. *Sifre Deut.*, Wa’ethanan, 32, fol. 73b; as cited by Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 545.

26. Abot IV, 3; Soncino ed., *Aboth*, pp. 44–45.

27. Shab. 31a; B. *Talmud*, Soncino ed., *Shabbath*, p. 140.

## ABRAHAM HESCHEL AND PRAYER

Our services are conducted with pomp and precision. The rendition of the liturgy is smooth. Everything is present: decorum, voice, ceremony. But one thing is missing: Life. One knows in advance what will ensue. There will be no surprise, no adventure of the soul; there will be no sudden burst of devotion. Nothing is going to happen to the soul. Nothing unpredictable must happen to the person who prays. He will attain no insight into the words he reads; he will attain no new perspective for the life he lives. Our motto is monotony.<sup>1</sup>

SO Abraham Joshua Heschel, associate professor of Jewish Ethics and Mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, addressing the 1953 convention of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, the association of Conservative rabbis, where his remarks caused considerable discussion. What vision of prayer so stirred a convention of twentieth-century American rabbis? Lest we think the question of interest only within the Jewish community, let us hasten to add that Heschel himself thinks otherwise: his address, lightly recast, constitutes a chapter of his *Man's Quest for God*,<sup>2</sup> and the doctrine on prayer he presented to the convention in Atlantic City differs not at all from that of his previously published essay *Man Is Not Alone*,<sup>3</sup> a full-length presentation of his philosophy of religion.

### THE ONTOLOGY OF PRAYER

IT IS primarily "the gift of addressing God"<sup>4</sup> that defines man as Abraham Heschel sees him: an animal certainly, but an animal wielding

1. "The Spirit of Jewish Prayer," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America*, Fifty-Third Annual Convention, Atlantic City, N. J., June 22-27, 1953, Vol. XVII, pp. 151-152.

2. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954.

3. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1951.

4. *Man's Quest for God*, p. 78.

awesome power. This beast can pray, and hence is not trapped within the limits of his own nature. Openness to God is the very being of man. "The possession of knowledge, wealth, or skill does not compose the dignity of man. A person possessing none of these gifts may still lay claim to dignity. Our reverence for man is aroused by something in him beyond his own and our reach, something that no one can deprive him of. It is his right to pray, his ability to worship, to utter the cry that can reach God: 'If . . . they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry' (Ex 22:22)."<sup>5</sup>

Prayer thrusts up from the deep soil of human nature itself, expresses the very being which man is; no accident, no hobby, prayer cannot be explained in categories borrowed from psychology or sociology. "To Judaism," Heschel writes, "the purpose of prayer is not to satisfy an emotional need. Prayer is not a need but an ontological necessity, an act that constitutes the very essence of man. He who has never prayed is not fully human."<sup>6</sup>

Heschel's man must pray in order to be faithful to what he *is*. He will pray in words, in places, at times, yet the merely spatial, the merely temporal, is never enough. More than an animal, not quite an angel, man wavers in uneasy equilibrium between two worlds, makes his prayer of the spirit in the word of the flesh. We live in a world in which we must act as well as pray, where our witness must be given to God, holy ordinances kept, commands fulfilled. Through our prayer we are all creatures' voice, the world finds a tongue to praise God.

All the ambivalence of the human marks prayer. Depths otherwise unsuspected are revealed in human nature through the act of prayer, yet prayer is not primarily an expression of man, as some moderns would have it. To assume so is either short-sighted or vainglorious, says Heschel; "the supreme goal of prayer is to express God . . . is self-attachment to what is greater than the self rather than self-expression."<sup>7</sup>

Prayer is a response to the divine questioning; it is also a response to the wonder provoked by the mystery of being. Where the Greeks constructed a philosophy, Heschel would have us pray. "To pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mystery that ani-

5. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

mates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments. . . . Only one response can maintain us: gratefulness for witnessing the wonder, for the gift of our unearned right to serve, to adore, and to fulfill. It is gratefulness which makes the soul great."<sup>8</sup> But as the philosophy of the Greeks, rising in wonder and for that reason disinterested, is an ontology precisely because it contemplates being, so Heschel sees the prayer of the believer as an ontology in a new dimension, inaccessible to intellect: disinterested, inexpedient, necessary. "It is hard to define religion; it is hard to place its wealth of meaning into the frame of a single sentence. But surely one thing may be said negatively: religion is not expediency. . . . Of all things we do prayer is the least expedient, the least worldly, the least practical. This is why prayer is an act of self-purification. This is why prayer is an ontological necessity."<sup>9</sup>

#### THE POLARITY OF PRAYER

IS THE real a crossroads of apparent contradiction? More than one philosopher has thought so. Thus Heschel has found prayer a nest of paradox: God and man, spontaneity and fidelity to a text, prayer and life. And if the philosophers have littered the world with dialectics intended to restore wounded unity, Heschel binds up all in a doctrine of "polarity."

1. *God—Man*. The human and the divine are the termini of the event which is a prayer: however humble its beginning, this bowshot arches into God. "Neither the lips nor the brain are the limits of the scene in which prayer takes place," Heschel writes. "What goes on in our heart is a humble preliminary to an event in God."<sup>10</sup>

Prayer is a process, ontological; man prays and becomes open to the Presence he could evade, the Presence which will not intrude itself upon him. "Prayer is an invitation to God to intervene in our lives, to let His will prevail in our affairs; it is the opening of a window to Him in our will, an effort to make Him the Lord of our soul."<sup>11</sup> "God is not alone when discarded by man. But man is alone,"<sup>12</sup> suffering a profound malaise because he has blocked Him off. It is in prayer,

8. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

9. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Heschel tells us, that this mischief is undone, that man can unfold before the Lord: "Prayer is confidence, unbosoming oneself to God. For man is incapable of being alone."<sup>13</sup>

Although prayer heals the loneliness of man without God, for Heschel the intention of prayer is always outside man and his needs: if these are incidentally fulfilled, if, when he prays, man profits so to speak in passing, so much the better—but the principle remains unchanged: "the focus of prayer is not the self. . . . It is the momentary disregard of our personal concerns, the absence of self-centered thoughts, which constitute the art of prayer. . . . Thus, in beseeching Him for bread, there is one instant, at least, in which our mind is directed neither to our hunger nor to food, but to His mercy. This instant is prayer. We start with a personal concern and live to feel the utmost."<sup>14</sup>

To Heschel, therefore, prayer is by no means co-terminous with the effort to pray: only the apex of that surge, a point which is experienced as unextended no matter how prolonged—this is the razor's edge of prayer, a kind of Bergsonian intensity—"the yielding of the entire being to one goal, the gathering of the soul into focus."<sup>15</sup> We may ask for bread, God might even grant it, but, for Heschel, neither request nor this mercy—which to him is no answer to prayer, as we shall see—is precisely prayer. Not a cause, not a source, this interplay takes place on the side lines of prayer: in Heschel's terminology, it is a "motive." A man may come to pray because of suffering, "but suffering is not the source of prayer. A motive does not bring about an act as a cause produces an effect; it merely stimulates the potential into becoming an actuality. Peril or want may clear the ground for its growth, stubbing up the weeds of self-assurance, ridding the heart of the hard and obdurate, but it can never raise prayer."<sup>16</sup>

So little utilitarian is prayer that Heschel excludes on principle the possibility of an "answer" to prayer, at least in the natural order. All his mountains are immovable:

When a vessel sails into a typhoon and the maw of the boiling maelstrom opens to engulf the tottering prey, it is not the pious man, en-

13. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

grossed in supplication, but the helmsman who intervenes in the proper sphere with proper means, fighting with physical tools against physical powers. What sense is there in imploring the mercy of God? Words do not stem the flood, nor does meditation banish the storm. Prayer never entwines directly with the chain of physical cause and effect; the spiritual does not interfere with the natural order of things.<sup>17</sup>

Heschel is acutely aware that without faith, prayer would be one more evidence of the absurdity which would associate God and man, trap the transcendent in a net of immanence. If God is the supreme Being, what concern of His whether we be religious or not? What have we to offer a God who is infinite? Certainly we are capable of ignoring God: is it not presumptuous to suggest that God does not ignore us? Faith which implies a concern of God for man is nonsense, the rationalists go on, and there is no prayer without faith. Like King Achaz, they will not be as bold as believers, will not expect signs from the great God; thinking themselves reverent, they will not presume to propose themselves as partners in a work which engages Him. But the believer, for all his holy temerity, is the truly reverent: "When we begin to feel a qualm of diffidence lest we hurt what is holy . . . He answers with love our trembling awe. Repentant of forgetting Him even for a while, we become sharers of gentle joy; we would like to dedicate ourselves forever to the unfoldment of His final order."<sup>18</sup>

The man of prayer knows over what abyss of sanctity he hovers. For Heschel there is no presumption in prayer. The man who prays is not even in quest of a knowledge of God. True enough, it may be that our knowledge will be deepened by the practice of prayer, but this is not its goal.

Prayer is not thinking. To the thinker, God is an object; to the man who prays, He is the subject. Awaking in the presence of God, we strive not to acquire objective knowledge, but to deepen the mutual allegiance of man and God. What we want is not to know Him, but to be known to Him; not to form judgments about Him, but to be judged by Him; not to make the world an object of our mind, but to let the world come to His attention, to augment His, rather than our knowledge. We endeavor to disclose ourselves to the Sustainer of all, rather than to enclose the world in ourselves.<sup>19</sup>

17. *Man Is Not Alone*, p. 239.

18. *Man's Quest for God*, p. 5.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Indeed Heschel goes further yet: not only does he disclaim the possession of a concept adequate to the divine reality, he confesses that he is not really sure whether he serves God at all.

What is God? An empty generality? An alibi? Some kind of an idea that we develop? I have been wrestling with the problem all my life as to whether I really mean God when I pray to Him, whether I have even succeeded in knowing what I am talking about and whom I am talking to. I still don't know whether I serve God or I serve something else. . . . We Jews have no concepts; all we have is faith, faith in His willingness to listen to us. We have no information, but we sense and believe in His being near to us. Israel is not a people of definers of religion but a people of witnesses to His concern for man. . . . He is a reality, in the face of which, when becoming alive to it, all concepts become clichés.<sup>20</sup>

Man's passivity in the very core of prayer is such that he is no longer a thinking subject; delivered into the power of the Ineffable, the more he empties himself the more he is filled with God and the more God carries on the act of prayer in man, so that Heschel can call prayer "the reflection of the Divine intentions in the soul of man. . . . To pray is to dream in league with God, to envision His holy visions."<sup>21</sup>

2. *Spontaneity—Continuity*. The manifestation of the polarity of prayer which most concerns Heschel is that between *kavanah*, "inner participation," "inner devotion," and *keva*, the "fixed text," the "liturgy." It is around this problem that his address to the rabbinical meeting in 1953 revolves, and his treatise on prayer, *Man's Quest for God*, supplies us with a rapid survey of his doctrine: spontaneity—*kavanah*—it is the goal of prayer; continuity—*keva*—it is the way to that goal.<sup>22</sup> Heschel's analysis of this polarity proceeds under the caution that the absolute contrast between *kavanah* and *keva* exists only in abstraction. His problem is not how to understand a basic and objective opposition, rooted in a contradictory order of natures, but rather how to preserve a correct emphasis in worship.

Inner devotion is unquestionably prior in dignity for Heschel; without it there can be no prayer.<sup>23</sup> He underwrites without reservation the Aristotelian conception that what is sought for its own sake is more noble than what is sought for the sake of something else, and holds

20. *Proceedings*, p. 214.

21. *Man's Quest for God*, p. 19.

22. *Ibid.*, p. vi.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 12, 35.

that the liturgy, with its texts and traditions, has no other reason for existence than that it buttresses our human failings, our wandering attention, our limited individual resources in prayer. Hence the tradition of centuries is not to be jettisoned, Heschel stresses, and he takes this decision in the name of inner devotion. Far from destroying that sense of the Ineffable which is prayer, the liturgy directs and fixes the attention of the understanding, kindles the heart: "Ability to express what is hidden in the heart is a rare gift. . . . The words are often the givers, and we the recipients. They inspire our minds and awaken our hearts. . . . It is the liturgy that teaches us what to pray for." <sup>24</sup>

Granted that the polarity of spontaneous inner devotion and the continuity guaranteed by a fixed text are complementary elements in the surge of man to God, is there not an irreducible opposition lurking beneath their reconciliation? The text, after all, is a thing dead and static; the man of prayer a person. To this Heschel replies: "It takes two things to make prayer come to pass: a person and a word. . . . A word detached from the person is numb; a person detached from the word is illiterate. The very essence of prayer is in a blending of the two." <sup>25</sup> Hence Heschel has small sympathy with a merely mechanical or "symbolic" view of languages; "words," he tells us, "are not made of paper." And wherein does the vital power of the word reside? In this, that the word is a commitment. It is in our power to pronounce or to withhold the word; once it has gone forth, "it is a reality . . . something existing for itself." <sup>26</sup>

3. *Prayer—Life*. There runs through Heschel's work an aversion for the view which would so divide life that prayer should become one activity among others: "To [the prophets of Israel] the totality of human activities, social and individual, of all inner and external circumstances, is the divine sphere of interest. The domain of the Torah is therefore all of life, the trite as well as the sacred." <sup>27</sup> How could prayer, then, escape entering into the whole of life? If prayer reflects the very being of man, and if—as Heschel holds, with Judaism—the being of man is what God wants it to be, unmarred by any original sin, then life and worship ought to be co-terminous; the time to pray

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

27. *Man Is Not Alone*, p. 270.

is indeed "all the time."<sup>28</sup> From an ontological point of view, life apart from prayer is inhuman; it will be as little human ethically. Though no substitute for action, prayer must blossom into action and without prayer action will be a rank growth: "Prayer is the essence of spiritual living. . . . On the globe of the microcosm the flow of prayer is like the Gulf Stream, imparting warmth to all that is cold, melting all that is hard in our life."<sup>29</sup>

## QUESTIONS

WHAT estimate of this striking doctrine imposes itself upon a Catholic reader? If words reveal anything about the one who speaks them, Heschel has not merely thought about prayer; he is a man of prayer.

As to the conception that prayer is rooted in the being of man, that the ontological situation of our race demands the response called prayer—it must be insisted that up to this point Heschel is right. Prayer is not an option. It is a privilege, no doubt, but it is also a necessity if man is to be faithful to the hierarchy of being which he knows. How far conceptual knowledge will take man in this direction might be debated; certainly we do not now see God face to face, rather through a mirror, obscurely—when all is said, He is the Incomprehensible. Heschel insists on the negative character of our grasp of the ineffable God so strongly, however, that in principle it would seem that for him no theology remains possible at all. But, inadequate though our concepts of God be, they are true; when Heschel says that in the face of God's reality "all concepts become clichés," he falls into a trap of his own making. Yet, in whatever way we have become aware of God and to whatever point we know Him, no Catholic will deny that the ultimate reason for prayer is that there is a Being whereas we are but beings.

But there is a disturbing theme which recurs in Heschel's reflections on the necessity for prayer. Has some blindness of mine missed in Heschel a just estimate of human weakness, of a nature so wounded that only grace can heal it? We Catholics are wayfarers even while we pray; has Heschel's man already arrived? And are we truly above

28. *Man's Quest for God*, p. 33.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

bringing our need to our worship? Is it really true, as Heschel holds, that when we pray our needs are only incidentally fulfilled, that our petitions are answered only in the sphere of the spirit? I cannot help saying that here he is not faithful to his people's glorious tradition. Was it only incidental when Israel prevailed over Amalek so long as Moses lifted up his hands to implore God's help (Ex 17:8-13)? Did Elijah violate the spirit of prayer when he cast himself on the earth and begged for rain (3 Kg 18:41-45)? In excluding the prayer of petition, I am afraid Heschel shortens the hand of God. It is making an idol of the laws of nature to think of them as if they, and not God, ruled His world. And it is not only unbiblical but also unscientific to allow God no "interference" in the natural order of things, as if the universe were forever closed, as if He had lost the key to the house He had built.

Worse yet, in Heschel's theology, God "needs" us. In some way God is said to benefit by our prayers; His knowledge is "augmented"—He comes to know us, the world enters the orbit of His intention. No "dialogue," prayer is a device for a kind of expansion of God.<sup>30</sup> Difficult to think that here Heschel's pen has not somewhat outrun his intent, that his delight in the freshly minted term has not led him to strike off what may be no coin at all. Are such expressions tolerable? Is there some sense in which they do not diminish the full independence of God? Perhaps; for he says: "God is in need of man for the attainment of His ends. . . . God is a partner and a partisan in man's struggle for justice, peace and holiness, and it is because of His being in need of man that He entered a covenant with him for all time. . . . His need is a self-imposed concern. God is now in need of man, because He freely made him a partner in His enterprise."<sup>31</sup>

Heschel writes and argues with the power of a poet. If he will not object to my pedestrian rhetoric—must he not simply say "yes" to the proposition "God is beyond all need and profit; He has created us

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 12. This suggestion that prayer is not a dialogue with God is accompanied by a note of Heschel's referring to St. Clement of Alexandria. But he is not the only one who has described prayer as a dialogue; many of the Church's Fathers and mystics use like terms. Among others, there is St. Ignatius of Loyola, who in his *Spiritual Exercises* gives a special place to "colloquy . . . speaking [to God] exactly as one friend speaks to another or as a servant speaks to a master" (trans. by Louis J. Puhl, S.J.; Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1951, p. 28). St. Teresa of Avila explains: "Oh! If only I could describe how the soul holds intercourse with this Companion, the Holy of Holies" (*Way of Perfection*, XXIX, 3).

31. *Man Is Not Alone*, pp. 241-243.

freely to share His blessedness"? <sup>32</sup> There is no need to belabor the fact that for a Jewish theologian it is not permissible to say that God has entered our world in *the* Incarnation. Is it too harsh to suggest that the Law and the Prophets have made Heschel aware of God's intention to be in the world of men, and that his terminology is witness to an uneasiness with a world where God must be but where, according to Heschel, He must not walk in flesh, must not even outrage nature by miracles? This is Heschel's world, to be sure; is it the world of Abraham, of the burning bush? Was Isaiah so chary of "signs"?

Not everyone who profits by miracles must first believe in them; the murmuring multitudes were not denied water in the desert. Abraham Heschel is surely a man concerned with prayer; better yet, he is persuaded that in prayer there may be surprises, adventures of the soul, something unpredictable. He is right. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has never hesitated to shatter our preconceptions with blessings we could not foresee. "We live through one of the great hours of history," Heschel himself writes. "The false gods are crumbling, and the hearts are hungry for the voice of God. But the voice has been stifled. To recapture the echo, we must be honest in our willingness to listen, we must be unprejudiced in our readiness to understand." <sup>33</sup>

32. A Catholic too may speak of the divine need for man. But how he does it is shown by Pius XII, who in his encyclical on the Mystical Body, teaches that Christ the Head needs the Church His Body, that He requires His members, not from any poverty or weakness, rather from the infinite fullness of His strength and love (N.C.W.C. edition, section 44, pp. 27-28).

33. *Man's Quest for God*, p. xiii.

Barry Ulanov

## SHYLOCK: THE QUALITY OF JUSTICE

AT THE beginning of Act III of *Twelfth Night*, after a few sharp exchanges with Viola (masquerading as Cesario), Feste the clown says: "Indeed, words are very rascals, since bonds disgraced them." Viola asks: "Thy reason, man?" Feste replies: "Troth, sir, I can yield you none without words; and words are grown so false, I am loath to prove reason with them." In a comedy of disguises, nobody is who or what he is supposed to be: falseness is general. Ultimately, in a conventional recognition scene, the human disguises are penetrated: Cesario is revealed as Viola, the Duke discovers he loves her and not Olivia, Olivia finds she has married Viola's twin brother Sebastian and not Viola-Cesario, Antonio the sea captain learns he has not been betrayed by Sebastian, Malvolio knows he has been gulled by Maria—and so forth and so on. But one betrayal is not allayed: words remain "very rascals." A man's word is no longer his bond: his bond has become his word, and honor has departed the stage even as it has society.

Feste is one of the wisest of Shakespeare's fools; he is, in a sense, the progenitor of the fool in *Lear* and the bondsman of Yorick in *Hamlet*—such wisdom from the mouth of a clown justifies Hamlet's lamentation for a court jester. If Shakespeare's fools speak wisely by profession, then what they say cannot lightly be disregarded. If one clown lends weight to another, from play to play, then what Feste says in *Twelfth Night* may lend weight not only to what Lear's fool says and to the function of clowns and fools in Shakespeare, but also to the meaning of whole plays or at least parts of plays. And so it is with Feste and words grown false by the insistence upon bonds. The distance from Feste to Shylock is no longer than from the Illyria of *Twelfth Night* to the Venice of the Jewish moneylender, and that is short enough: both are on the Adriatic. As the waters of one sea bathe both coastal towns,

so do the words of both characters, clown and moneylender, exchange shores.

#### THE BOND

LET us take Feste's word, then, for the corruption of words; let us lament with him the disrepute into which words have fallen with the introduction of bonds, with the substitution of legal contracts backed by money or property for a man's words backed by his honor. If Antonio, in *The Merchant of Venice*, is unusual in neither lending nor borrowing with interest—"By taking nor by giving of excess"—Shylock is no more unusual in demanding a bond for the 3,000 ducats he lends Antonio's friend Bassanio. Furthermore it is Bassanio himself who proposes a bond: 3,000 ducats for three months, he says, "For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound." It is only the nature of the bond Shylock proposes which is really questionable:

*Go with me to a notary, seal me there  
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,  
If you repay me not on such a day,  
In such a place, such sum or sums as are  
Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit  
Be nominated for an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me.*  
(I, iii, 145)<sup>1</sup>

In spite of Bassanio's fears, Antonio consents readily:

*I'll seal to such a bond,  
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.*

Shylock has asked "no doit Of usance for my moneys," though by trade a usurer, and this Bassanio calls "kindness" and Antonio as much again, even upon the terms of the pound of flesh:

*Hie thee, gentle Jew.  
The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.*

1. All quotations from *The Merchant of Venice* follow the George Lyman Kittredge edition of 1936, the line number referring to the first line given.

There is much provocation of Shylock in this, the concluding scene of Act I. Antonio prefaces his bargaining with Shylock by boasting of his lending out money without interest, "gratis," as Shylock calls it in an aside: the boast is at the very least gratuitous; it lends force if not justice to the hatred of him Shylock expresses:

*I hate him for he is a Christian;  
But more for that in low simplicity  
He lends out money gratis and brings down  
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.*

(I, iii, 43)

When Shylock points to honorable precedent for his practice of thrift in Jacob's use of peeled branches of poplar and almond and plane to increase the strength and quality and number of his share of Laban's flocks (Gen 30:37), Antonio reminds him that

*This was a venture, sir, that Jacob serv'd for;  
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,  
But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven.*

(I, iii, 92)

But Shylock has said as much:

*This was a way to thrive, and he was blest;  
And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.*

(I, iii, 90)

The reminder turns to mockery when Antonio asks:

*Was this inserted to make interest good?  
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?*

(I, iii, 95)

Shylock falls into Antonio's mood in his answer:

*I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast . . .*

(I, iii, 97)

an answer calculated, perhaps, to offend a Christian convinced with Dante that usury was an offense against human art or industry and through it against nature, which is the source of human art, and

through nature against God, who is the source at once of nature and of human industry.<sup>2</sup> Antonio takes full offense and with it the offensive:

*The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.  
An evil soul, producing holy witness,  
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,  
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.  
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!*

(I, iii, 99)

Shylock, as a result, recalls Antonio's use of him in the past: scoldings "About my moneys and my usances" which he has "borne . . . with a patient shrug, For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe," and spittings upon his "Jewish gaberdine" and beard, and kicking, too:

*You that did void your rheum upon my beard  
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur  
Over your threshold . . .*

(I, iii, 118)

*another time  
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies  
I'll lend you thus much moneys?*

(I, iii, 128)

Antonio's reply is forthright:

*I am as like to call thee so again,  
To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too.*

2. These are Dante's words from the *Inferno*, XI, 97-111, in the L. G. White translation of *The Divine Comedy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948), p. 19:

"Philosophy," my master answered me,  
"To him who understands it, demonstrates  
How nature takes her course, not only from  
Wisdom divine, but from its art as well.  
And if you read with care your book of physics,  
After the first few pages, you will find  
That art, as best it can, doth follow nature,  
As pupil follows master; industry  
Or art is, so to speak, grandchild to God.  
From these two sources (if you call to mind  
That passage in the Book of Genesis)  
Mankind must take its sustenance and progress.  
The moneylender takes another course,  
Despising nature and her follower,  
Because he sets his hope for gain elsewhere. . . ."

*If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not  
As to thy friends—for when did friendship take  
A breed for barren metal of his friend?—  
But lend it rather to thine enemy,  
Who if he break, thou mayst with better face  
Exact the penalty.*

(I, iii, 131)

Division is made; the lines are drawn, but more clearly by Antonio than by Shylock who, if he hates him for a Christian and for lending out money "gratis" and for thus bringing down "The rate of usance here with us in Venice," has proposed a bond in the name of friendship, not of enmity, to which Antonio has willingly agreed:

*I would be friends with you and have your love,  
Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,  
Supply your present wants, and take no doit  
Of usance for my moneys . . .*

(I, iii, 139)

Shylock's hypocrisy may be as clear to us as to Bassanio, his terms more of cunning than of amity, but the proposal he makes—and Antonio accepts—is within the bounds of a bondsman who is a respected member of Elizabethan society.<sup>3</sup> Yet it is far outside those bounds, in the realm of fantasy of a moneylender who cannot possibly expect all of Antonio's ships to founder any more than Antonio can. The agreement is made with ill feeling on both sides, but with no apparent likelihood of serious consequences and with a far better show of manners upon the Jew's part than upon the Christians'. Antonio and Bassanio come to Shylock expecting no mercy and little justice, and yet it is equity that they are offered, a fairness Antonio accepts readily.

It may be objected—it is, later in the play—that this justice of Shylock's is severe, beyond mercy, beyond charity. It must be further objected, however, that Shylock has not been approached with mercy

3. The scene is Venice but the people are English and the time is Elizabeth's. This is a necessary translation in all of Shakespeare, whatever exoticism of atmosphere or texture of history may appear on the surface of the plays. As Antony and Cleopatra, Troilus and Cressida, Hamlet, Lear, Othello, and Macbeth must be understood to be Englishmen all, Christians too, and far removed in fact from the fancy of their settings, so must Antonio and Bassanio and Shylock and all those about them be transplanted from Venice to London to make any serious sense of persons and events in *The Merchant*.

or charity, that there is not even any gloss of either in the approach of these Christians to this Jew. Pursued by the needs of the flesh—it is, after all, for his wooing that Bassanio comes to Shylock for his “moneys”—they must needs agree to terms of the flesh. Taunting, tempting, boasting, beating, spitting upon Shylock, these men can hardly invoke their spirit as counter to the flesh he demands; their spirit is, on the contrary, cut from the same corrupt flesh, the flesh tainted by original sin, which is the common inheritance of Gentile and Jew.

## JUSTICE

THE question of justice is the most sorely vexed of the themes of *The Merchant of Venice*. Explicitly or implicitly, it is upon justice that the plots, major and minor, turn in this play. The relationship of Shylock and his daughter Jessica, for example, involves a curious defection from justice on both their parts. Altogether without loyalty to her father, Jessica dispatches the Jew’s clown, who has decided to run away from his master, with more than passing sympathy:

*I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so.  
Our house is hell; and thou, a merry devil,  
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.  
But fare thee well. There is a ducat for thee . . .*  
(II, iii, 1)

She confesses that she is

*asham'd to be my father's child!  
But though I am a daughter to his blood,  
I am not to his manners.*  
(II, iii, 17)

No, her manners are less by the book than her father’s are, and at least as much the prey of appetite, hers of the fleshly sin of lust the counterpart of his of the fleshly sin of avarice. When Shylock entrusts her with his keys, she takes full advantage of keys and father, gives Lorenzo a casket much “worth the pains” and steals “some more ducats” before stealing off with her lover. Her pains and her theft elicit unrestrained approval from Gratiano, who conspires with

Lorenzo in her elopement: "Now, by my hood," he says, "a Gentile, and no Jew." We learn, too, that in absconding with a substantial cache from her father's house, she has made free with jewels not to be valued merely in terms of money. Later in the play, Tubal, Shylock's friend and fellow Jew, reports that one of Antonio's creditors has shown him "a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey." Shylock is tortured, he says, by this knowledge: "Out upon her! . . . It was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys." (III, i, 125)

Jessica jokes with Launcelot Gobbo, her father's clown that was, about her parentage:

*Launcelot* . . . the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children.

Therefore, I promise you, I fear you . . . for truly I think you are damn'd. There is but one hope in it that can do you any good, and that is but a kind of bastard hope neither.

*Jessica* And what hope is that, I pray thee?

*Launcelot* . . . that you are not the Jew's daughter.

*Jessica* . . . so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me.

*Launcelot* Truly then I fear you are damned both by father and mother.

Thus when I shun Scylla, your father, I fall into Charybdis, your mother. Well, you are gone both ways.

*Jessica* I shall be sav'd by my husband. He hath made me a Christian.

*Launcelot* Truly, the more to blame he! We were Christians enow before, e'en as many as could well live one by another. This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs. If we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money. (III, v, 1)

Jessica's is not a conversion to be taken seriously. Her shift of allegiance is all too human, as is made abundantly clear in her last appearance in the play (V, i). She and Lorenzo vie with each other in rhetorical salutations to the voluptuary night. He recalls the nightly affairs of Troilus and Cressida, Dido and Aeneas—and Jessica:

*In such a night*

*Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,  
And with an unbriht love did run from Venice  
As far as Belmont.*

(V, i, 14)

She recalls the stealthy doings, "In such a night," of Thisbe and Medea—and Lorenzo:

*In such a night  
Did young Lorenzo swear he lov'd her well,  
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,  
And ne'er a true one.*

(V, i, 17)

There is just the faintest play on the word "faith" in Jessica's speech: the vows of faith Lorenzo swore had nothing to do with his religion, unless one understand by his religion—by his "many vows of faith"—the religion of the flesh, an impression confirmed by Lorenzo's brief moment of theological speculation in the same scene:

*Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.  
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.*

(V, i, 58)

But the musicians who enter at this point are not asked to capture the music of the spheres, to erase "this muddy vesture of decay"; they are importuned by Lorenzo to a more earthly sound, to a seductive performance:

*Come, ho, and wake Diana with a hymn!  
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear  
And draw her home with music.*

(V, i, 66)

Lorenzo proclaims a man moved by this "concord of sweet sounds" the very opposite of one "fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils"; but the earlier associations of this exchange of sentiments—Troilus and Cressida, Dido, Thisbe, Medea, and his own relationship with Jessica—indicate that there is more of romantic irony in this proclamation than

of religious truth. If there is justice here, it is administered by fleshly desire rather than principle.

There is a similar irony in the caskets story, the central plot that frames all the others in *The Merchant*. While Bassanio shows himself superior to Portia's other suitors, Morocco and Arragon, in his choice of the leaden casket, he hardly lives up to its motto, "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath." In the first place, what he hazards is not what "he hath," but what Antonio has. In the second, while he is not easily persuaded to give up the ring Portia gave him—

*Which when you part from, lose, or give away,  
Let it presage the ruin of your love,*

(III, ii, 172)

—he does part with it to Portia masquerading as Balthazar; in all justice he can no more hold to the letter of his agreement than can Antonio or Shylock. Immediate need—in this case, the desire to make Portia-Balthazar "Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute, Not as a fee"—dissipates sworn fidelity, even as it has Jessica's owed fealty to her father and Launcelot Gobbo's to his master.

## SYMMETRY

IN A play notable for its exact symmetries, proceeding to and away from a mechanical center in scene two of Act III, each of the stories reinforces the others and all make the same point, the persuasive point of the most famous speech in the play. In it Portia insists that the quality of mercy cannot be constrained, forced, imposed by ordinance or edict:

*Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this—  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.*

(IV, i, 197)

Hence it is by justice that Shylock can, if he shed no blood, claim his pound of flesh,

*But just a pound of flesh. If thou tak'st more  
Or less than a just pound—be it but so much  
As makes it light or heavy in the substance  
Or the division of the twentieth part  
Of one poor scruple; nay, if the scale do turn  
But in the estimation of a hair—  
Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.*

(IV, i, 326)

And by justice Shylock stands convicted of an attempt upon the life of Antonio, his wealth as a result to be divided between Antonio and the state.

Quickly, then, as if in sudden remembrance of Portia's eloquent opposition of the principle of mercy to that of justice, mercy is shown Shylock—just twice. The Duke spares his life; Antonio spares half his fortune,

*so he will let me have  
The other half in use, to render it  
Upon his death unto the gentleman  
That lately stole his daughter . . .*

(IV, i, 382)

"For this favour," however, he must not only will all he possesses at his death to Lorenzo and Jessica, he must "presently become a Christian." Conceivably this is Antonio's idea of mercy; it sounds more like a literal-minded justice, administering baptism by desire—but Antonio's desire, not Shylock's, which makes it a most questionable baptism. Few conversions in the world's annals, literary or historical, have a more hollow ring. The justice that triumphs in this proviso is not God's, not the Church's, but vengeful man's. It is a mockery of Christian justice, and though offered within the shadow of mercy altogether without the substance of charity.

Gratiano is not satisfied. We know him, in Bassanio's words, "too wild, too rude and bold of voice"; we know, too, from the same friendly source, that these are

*Parts that become thee happily enough  
And in such eyes as ours appear not faults;*

*But where thou art not known, why, there they show  
Something too liberal.*

(II, ii, 191)

He expresses, then, the view of Antonio's party at its most "liberal," its most unrestrained, but his wildness, rudeness, and boldness, while excessive, are not faults to those who know him. His dissatisfaction makes the last irony of the play before the ring plot is drawn to its circular conclusion. It is an irony that reinforces the note of uncharitable justice upon which Shylock becomes a Christian. To the Jew, Gratiano says:

*In christening thou shalt have two godfathers;  
Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more,  
To bring thee to the gallows, not the font.*

(IV, i, 398)

And thus, apart from some passing mentions of the deed Shylock is to sign, disposing of his fortune at Antonio's direction, the conflict between moneylender and merchant, between Jew and Christian, between justice and mercy, comes to an end. Mercy, on the surface at least, appears to have triumphed over justice even as Antonio the Christian over Shylock the Jew. Has it, in truth? Actually, the triumph is more for the symmetrical balance of the play than for either mercy or justice: in the delicate dramatic equilibrium of *The Merchant of Venice*, the confounding of Shylock is matched by the confusion of those who defeated him; the wisdom of Portia's asseveration of the quality of mercy is tempered by the barbarity of Shylock's forced conversion, the crudeness of Gratiano's pronouncement, and the bold and open sanction given Lorenzo's theft of Shylock's daughter.

From this play of ironies and unresolved conflicts, this "most excellent Historie of the *Merchant of Venice*," as the Quarto title page describes it, what sort of value-judgment does Shakespeare make? Does he, in point of fact, make any at all? Many have been anxious to collaborate with Shakespeare in drawing conclusions from the events depicted in *The Merchant of Venice*. Actors who play Shylock as a deformed creature, elaborately made up to look like the gross caricatures of Jews of Julius Streicher's *Der Angriff*, have wittingly or unwittingly joined those who see in *The Merchant* an anti-Semitic tract.

Critics who turn the play into a masterful defense of the Jews against the assaults of anti-Semites, like those who make *Hamlet* into a Freudian case history, willfully, or at least wishfully, convert a far-seeing, broadly principled Elizabethan playwright into a nearsighted, tendentious contemporary of ours. Both sides err, I think, and considerably reduce the size of the conflict reported so faithfully in this most excellent and accurate history of Englishmen, disguised as Venetians and as Jews, contending for their salvation with the forces of this world and against the doom of a lower one. Sensitively, subtly aware of the magnetic attractions of fleshly justice, Shakespeare sets alongside it the majestic beauty of eternal mercy, and turns his symbols into the things they symbolize with a pound of flesh and Portia's robes of justice (she is "dressed like a doctor of laws"). In the fight between Jew and Christian, which so much of the time looks as if it were a conflict between the Old Law and the New, between the justice of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," and sweet charity, he demonstrates the same depth of insight to be found in his great tragedies: he actually shows neither side properly served and both misrepresented.

The ultimate wisdom of *The Merchant of Venice* is in the final imbalance of the perfectly balanced play. Justice is traduced, mercy unequal. It is not Jew who offends so grievously, not Christian who understands so poorly; it is man who is inadequate to his eternal destiny. When the lovers go off to their several "intergatories" at the end of the play, the high sound and valorous spirit of Portia in the courtroom have become the adolescent banter about the rings and the wild, rude, and bold Gratiano has become the mild husband of Portia's lady-in-waiting, Nerissa, with but one small concern:

*Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing  
So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.*

(V, i, 306)

Meanness, Shakespeare is saying, is of the nature of man; in another context, Lorenzo has made the point of the play:

*There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;*

*But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.*  
(V, i, 60)

# COMPASSION

FORTUNATELY for our sagging spirits, there is more in *The Merchant of Venice* than "this muddy vesture of decay," though that is its chief cargo. There is also, inevitably, compassion. Morocco, "a tawny Moor," suggests a point,

*Mislike me not for my complexion,  
The shadowed livery of the burnish'd sun,  
To whom I am a neighbour and near bred,*  
(II, i, 1)

to which Shylock's speech,

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? (III, i, 62),

is a clear counterpoint. Both speeches show Shakespeare's understanding of what might be called "the other side." It is a side of which he is not a partisan, but for which he expresses more than sympathy or pity: he commends it to our mercy and to God's. At the end of the speech just quoted, Shakespeare demonstrates that Shylock's morality is as deficient as his logic is efficient:

If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction. (III, i, 71)

Shylock stands condemned by his own mouth in this speech—at least to those who would leaven justice with mercy and practice charity in the execution of any judgment. So too do the Christians in

this play, who restrain the quality of mercy and constrain that of justice, stand self-condemned in the words of Bassanio:

*In religion,  
What damned error but some sober brow  
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,  
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?  
There is no vice so simple but assumes  
Some mark of virtue on his outward parts.  
(III, ii, 77)*

The "mark of virtue" at the end of the play is upon Portia and Bassanio, Nerissa and Gratiano, Jessica and Lorenzo; but all have practiced in lesser or greater degree some vice, all have failed in mercy or honesty or charity, and really in justice too, in Christian justice, for Christian justice must take into account mercy withheld, dishonesty practiced, charity not practiced. The "sober brow" of worldly justice may "bless" these practices, these failures, these breaches of charity and mercy; but, as Shylock is forced to learn and the Christians in this play are expected to know and we seeing it or reading it are led to understand, "in the course" of such justice "none of us should see salvation."

# SURVEYS

*William Keller*

## LEDGER OF DEATH

### I

NO HISTORICAL theory has ever received a more crushing refutation than the nineteenth-century view of continual progress. The widely held pre-1914 conviction that "we are too civilized to fight" was shown to be a fallacy in World War I. But who, in the wildest flights of fancy, could have foretold that this century would see a new age of persecution and massacre, on a scale undreamed of in centuries past, and relying on all the latest techniques of modern "civilization"? Yet such have been the facts: a whole people, the Jews, were regarded by the distorted, worse-than-pagan nationalism of the Nazis as alien, uncooperative, inferior, indeed scarcely human, and were marked down for total liquidation. Demented as such a scheme sounds, it was actually put into operation, and in large part succeeded.

To write the full story of this terrifying nadir in human history would require many volumes, volumes which one day may be written. Nevertheless it is essential for all of us even now to realize at least the actual extent of this persecution. Two studies have appeared in the last three years which make a genuine contribution toward answering this need. The first is an article, "Bilanz der Zerstörung des Judentums," in the German Catholic periodical *Herder-Korrespondenz* (February 1952); the second a volume issued in French in 1951, translated into English and published in America in 1954, *Harvest of Hate* by Léon Poliakov (Syracuse University Press). The former is mainly a statistical study of the destruction of German and European Jewry, while the latter, one of the sources on which the Herder article depends, seeks to outline the whole Nazi program for the annihilation of the Jews.

## II

IN 1925 the *Deutsche Statistische Jahrbuch* listed 564,519 Jews of German nationality. By contrast, in East and West Germany together there were in 1952 only 34,000 Jews, including displaced persons. The German Jews in the mid-twenties represented 0.9 per cent of the total population. They were, as their brethren in western Europe and America have always been, a predominantly urban group: some 172,672 lived in Berlin, 29,385 in Frankfort, 23,240 in Breslau, 16,093 in Cologne, and so forth. In the Germany of 1952 there were only 6,702 Jews in Berlin (all sectors), 1,433 in Frankfort, and 700 in Cologne. While approximately 7,600 were still living in camps, the largest number, 19,625, were residing in the American Zone, 5,750 in the British Zone, 570 in the French Zone, and 1,184 in all of East Germany.<sup>1</sup>

The following table sets forth vividly the progressive disappearance of German Jewry between Hitler's advent and the end of the war.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>
1925 (census)	564,379
Jan. 1933 (estimated)	525,000
June 1933 (census)	499,682
Sept. 1937 (estimated)	450,000
May 17, 1939 (unpublished count)	235,000
Sept. 1, 1939 (estimated)	215,000
Nov. 1, 1940	160,000
May 1, 1942	80,000
Oct. 1, 1942	40-50,000
Sept. 1, 1943	20,000
May 8, 1945	15,000

Between the lines of these sharply declining figures can be read the whole tragic story of voluntary emigration, quickly followed by compulsory deportation (mainly to Poland), enforced settlement in ghettos, enslavement for industrial use, massacres, and finally the more "refined" liquidation of the death camps. Poliakov relates the entire

1. Unless otherwise noted the statistics are derived from the *Herder-Korrespondenz* article, which provides the most convenient summary in print.

process, step by step, backing up each statement with telling documentation.<sup>2</sup>

## III

FROM Germany let us turn our attention to Europe as a whole. Prior to World War I there were some 10,000,000 Jews in Europe; even as late as 1939 there were still 9,500,000. Yet by 1945 this figure was reduced to 2,750,000. To make this figure more striking, it must be remembered that it includes about 1,500,000 Jews in unoccupied Russia, in Britain, Spain, and Portugal, all of whom were untouched by Hitler's persecution. Voluntary exile accounts for 300,000 at the most.<sup>3</sup> The disappearance of the rest can only be attributed to suicide (as when 200 took their own lives in Frankfurt on the same day because of impending deportation), starvation,<sup>4</sup> disease induced by the inhuman conditions of the life imposed, massacre, and systematic annihilation. The total number of victims of the Nazi liquidation program thus comes to roughly 6,000,000. Especially terrible was the fate of the Jewish children, of whom there were 1,800,000 (up to fourteen years of age) in Germany and the occupied countries of eastern Europe. Jacob Lestchinsky, expert on Jewish population figures, concludes that only 280,000 of these escaped death.

Before Hitler assumed power, there were in Germany and the countries later seized or controlled by the Nazis 8,295,000 Jews, of whom—to give a more precise figure—6,093,000 or 73.4 per cent were killed between 1939 and 1945. This is the careful estimate of Lestchinsky. The following table, also his work, demonstrates the dreadful extent of the annihilation of European Jewry.<sup>5</sup>

2. To get some idea of the unbelievable brutality on the one hand and the bottomless suffering on the other which are hidden behind the words "deportation," "ghetto," "enslavement," "death camp," one has to read Poliakov's descriptions, particularly in chapters 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

3. Of these 140,000 came to the United States; 65,000 went to Israel; 55,000 to Central and South America; and 30,000 to other European countries. The German Jews, of course, had a five-year head start in the immediate pre-war years.

4. Some 23,000 emaciated bodies were found by the British forces on April 15, 1945, when they liberated the camp of Bergen-Belsen.

5. In the course of this paper, there are three different Jewish population figures given for the Germany of 1939. Even so, they do not necessarily contradict one another, for the first is dated May and the second September (see first tabulation, p. 284), while the third figure (see second tabulation, p. 286) presumably refers to the end of the year.

Country	Former Jewish	Losses	
	Population	No.	%
Poland	3,300,000	2,900,000	87.9
U.S.S.R. (Nazi-occupied)	2,100,000	1,500,000	71.4
Rumania	850,000	425,000	50.0
Hungary	403,000	200,000	49.6
France	300,000	90,000	30.0
Czechoslovakia	315,000	260,000	82.5
Germany (1939)	210,000	170,000 <sup>6</sup>	81.0
Austria	60,000	40,000	66.7
Lithuania	150,000	135,000	90.0
Larvia	95,000	85,000	89.5
Holland	145,000	105,000	72.4
Belgium	90,000	40,000	44.4
Yugoslavia	75,000	55,000	73.3
Greece	75,000	60,000	80.0
Italy	57,000	15,000	26.3
Bulgaria	50,000	7,000	14.0
Other countries	20,000	6,000	30.0
Total	8,295,000	6,093,000	73.4

## IV

THE figure of 6,000,000 has at times been called into question. Yet it is derived from testimony given before the International Tribunal for War Criminals at Nuremberg by leading Nazis concerned in the destruction program. On page 266 of the volume in which the Tribunal substantiates its verdict, there appears this statement: "Adolf Eichmann, to whom Hitler had trusted the program of annihilation, estimated that this policy had caused the deaths of 6,000,000 Jews, of whom 4,000,000 met their deaths in annihilation camps." This figure was confirmed by SS-members Wilhelm Hoettl and Dieter Wisliceny, both of whom took part in the execution of the program.

Another important statistical document is an official government report on what is called the "final solution" of the Jewish question, written at the beginning of 1943 and discovered in the archives of the

6. This figure implies that 40,000 Jews were alive in the Germany of 1945, which does not agree with the figure of 15,000 given in the first tabulation. However, we present the statistics as we find them, for such discrepancies are unavoidable when so many of the population counts had to be but estimates made under difficult circumstances. It must also be borne in mind that the smaller figure is an approximate count of the known survivors while the larger is derived from an estimate of the losses. The figure of 15,000 seems to be the more reliable. See W. Rosenstock, "Hopes and Fears of the German Jews," *The Listener*, Feb. 17, 1955, p. 297.

Third Reich. Veiled as it is in obscure official terminology, it estimates the decrease in the European Jewish population from 1937 through 1942 at 4,500,000. This figure did not include some areas and of course only went up to the end of 1942. From this document together with other government reports (for instance, the record of the sending of more than 400,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz in the spring of 1944), the total of approximately 6,000,000 is reached.<sup>7</sup>

Such is the naked statistical record of the Nazis' effort to rid Germany and all Europe of the Jewish people. Insane and inhuman as their attempt was, it almost completely succeeded—indeed, if the Nazis had not been defeated, European Jewry would surely have been utterly wiped out. Is this madness not the bankruptcy of man's belief that he can propel himself along a path of progress, that he can do without God? Is it not the horrid consequence of our modern assumptions that truth is a variable and justice an expedient? Is it not the logical but grim conclusion of the notion that moral restraint harms the individual and the nation? Is it not the bitter epilogue of the slogan that man is nothing but an animal? Piety, indeed justice, toward the dead demand that we ask these questions. But they demand more. This may have been in the mind of the people of Aschaffenburg in Bavaria when, after the war, they transformed the lot where once the synagogue stood into a little park, setting in the midst of the green a tombstone. Engraved on it are these words: "Here stood the synagogue of the Jewish Community, which, on November 9, 1938, was destroyed by criminal hands." Above this legend, in bolder letters, are two lines by the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin:

*Alas, the dead will not return to us  
Unless our love recalls them.*

# V

WHOLESALE slaughter is something that cannot simply be "forgotten." It demands an answer in the moral realm. Such an answer has been given in a noble and commanding voice by Monsignor Romano

7. It is not surprising that, with the destruction of many records by the Nazis and by war, the estimate of the number of Jewish victims is set by some few at 5,000,000 and by others at as high as 7,000,000. Poliakov (pp. 191-203) furnishes further appalling figures on those annihilated in various death camps, for instance, 2,000,000 (or more) at Auschwitz, 700,000 at Treblinka, 300,000 at Chelmo, 600,000 at Belzec, etc. Between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000 were massacred in occupied Russia in the 1941-42 period (see p. 138).

Guardini. "Responsibility" was the title of a lecture he delivered, in the spring of 1952 to the students at the University of Munich, on the moral issue forced on them by the murder of 6,000,000 Jews.<sup>8</sup> What are the facts? he asked. In violation of their rights as citizens of Germany, or in violation of international law—not to speak of the most elementary rules of right and wrong—innocent millions were dishonored, robbed, ill-treated, and killed. And all this was done not out of passion or pressure; rather was it the result of a theory and a well-contrived plan. True, he said, many Germans knew little or nothing of what was taking place, at least at the time when there was even a slight possibility of altering events; and doubtless, not a few condemned the wrongs they knew of and tried to help the victims. Still, what took place took place within the jurisdiction of the German state and within the life of the German people.

If we were to submit these events to the judgment of the great human tradition, Guardini continued, what would the great men of the past say? They would look at us aghast. Where was conscience in those days, where honor? they would demand. What was it really that happened, and how could it have happened? They themselves might answer that here something had emerged from the dark caves within man: the barbarian, the animal; that, with the powers of chaos still so fearfully strong, their own work of ennobling man is unfinished. A Dante, however, might be so shaken as to lament that a generation which could do such things, after millennia of struggle for the good and noble life, is past saving. But others might take a different view. A Pascal, a Goethe, a Jacob Burckhardt, would sense that what happened in Germany between 1933 and 1945 was in no way like a primitive tribe's lust for destruction, in no way like the devastation of Europe by the Huns. On the contrary, man's lowest instincts combined with the scientific and the technical to produce something that had never existed before: the union of inhumanity and the machine.

Here is the frightful new thing of our age: the State, hitherto curbed by a conscious or unconscious reverence for man or for a sovereignty transcending itself, invades the realm of the inalienable: man's right to exist. To the "invader," man is no longer a person; he is a thing,

8. *Verantwortung* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1952); English trans. by Stanley Godman, "The Jewish Problem: Reflexions on Responsibility," *Dublin Review*, CCXXVII, 459 (First Quarter 1953), pp. 1-14.

a mere object to be dealt with, whose only worth is his usefulness. He has no claim to any right, to honor, convictions, freedom, or life. He can be eliminated just because he went to the wrong school. Truth and justice, a pledge, a claim, conscience and conviction, are not merely violated but done away with as a matter of principle. Unfortunately, there have always been injustice, oppression, brutality, but they were carried out, somehow or other, within the acknowledged norm of the human. For the totalitarian state there is no such norm, no boundaries. It operates in a sphere beyond good and evil, and this is more terrible than evil itself.

To obliterate every human claim, and to combine this obliteration with all the devices of modern management and engineering—this is the new factor in history, a danger more threatening, more destructive, than atom bombs and bacterial warfare, Romano Guardini declared. Today all problems, be they economic, social, technical, or cultural, have become too vast for individuals to solve. On the other hand, it has become increasingly easy to control, to “manipulate,” men and things. The immense growth of communications gives ready opportunity for the exploitation of the individual by governments, and everywhere the power of publicity invades private life. More and more, religion tends to retire from public consciousness to the “inner world.” From all this springs the idea of a State entirely free to mold the whole of life, and no country is immune from this danger. For what happened between 1933 and 1945 in Germany was not a purely German evil and catastrophe; not only has it its counterparts in Russia and China, it threatens all nations.

## VI

BUT let us concentrate on our own country, Guardini urged the students of Munich. Only one word can describe what was done to the Jews: criminal. In their systematic extermination, not only was every law broken, but law, right as such, was abolished, for right is absolute: it exists for every person or not at all. By degrading the Jews, an entire section of the nation, to a mere object, and as if this were not enough, to an object of deliberate extermination, the State declared: Right does not count, it is in no way the State's concern; no matter what wrong the State commits, it remains a State and can commit the same wrong

again, as often as it pleases, to any group it chooses to label "undesirable." Here then is the pattern of the new political attitude, a symbol of the evil of this hour.

The fiendishness of the things that happened is shown by the attitude the German people have taken toward them since the end of the war. It is deeply disquieting, Guardini remarked, to see how little these events engage the minds of the people, how little they have realized what really took place. It is as if the conscience of the community is completely at a loss before such enormities, which sit like a mute, stubborn, and dangerous rock in the soul of the people. But we must not go on being at a loss; we must ask: What was the nature of the evil committed? And how can we stop it from working on like a poison and infecting the future?

These questions must be faced, Guardini stressed, not because of any "collective guilt." There is no such thing. Never can a man be guilty of another man's crime, unless, of course, he cooperates in it or fails to do what he can and should to prevent it. There is no "collective guilt," but there is collective honor, the solidarity of the individual with his people and of all individuals with one another. If a member of my family commits some wrong, I may say, I am not guilty; but I may not say, It is no concern of mine. For I am part and parcel of my family, and its honor is, within certain limits, my honor. Similarly, each one of us must accept a share of responsibility for the wrong done by our people, since this wrong touches each one's honor and demands of him that things be put right. This is our duty, because injustice must not be left standing; it must be dealt with till nothing of it remains, and this for two reasons. First, it violates the sovereignty of the good, and it is man's nobility to know of this and bear its burden. Second, injustice is real; if not conquered, it continues to work in the ideas begotten by it and in the people formed by them. Hence to act as if nothing had happened will never help us; ignoring evil is like ignoring a diseased gland in the body or a trauma in the subconscious. Truly, if a wrong done by the body politic is not realized, condemned, and in some way atoned for, it will return; it will become a pattern; it will destroy the body politic.

All in all, to be human is to be answerable, to bear responsibility. Therefore we must be aware of the monstrous wrong that was done; we must denounce it and try to make amends—those who deny or

belittle it but show how deep the hurt has festered. What was done to the Jews is crime and warning; crime, which requires cleansing, and a warning, which requires that we take heed. It is the first instance in the western world of the frightful possibilities that hang over future history. We must not let it grow into the shape and pattern of things to come. We must not forget, Romano Guardini repeatedly urged his hearers, that history is not an inevitable process; it is entrusted to the freedom of man.

Edward H. Flannery

## THE FINALY CASE

IN MAY 1954 word came from Paris that Antoinette Brun, who had been accused of illegally sending to Spain two Jewish children whom she had saved from the Nazis and baptized as Catholics, was acquitted by the Court of Cassation, the supreme court of France. Legally, the Finaly case was closed.

*L'affaire Finaly*, as the French called it, was, alas, more than a legal problem, and there were many aspects of it that were not likely to be settled by a decision of the courts. A juridic problem it certainly was, but still more it was a human problem, a moral problem, and a theological problem. From the very outset it had all the ingredients of a *cause célèbre*. Happenings and issues on every level, persons from every walk and from many countries, were to become entwined in a web of circumstances that was to challenge the best efforts of jurists, politicians, and theologians for several years.

One could hardly expect that the popular press in France and elsewhere would not see in this imbroglio a journalistic bonanza; here were headlines aplenty for many a month. And it is perhaps to a large extent on the press that we must finally lay the blame for the hard and fast positions taken by both sides so early in the development of the events, and for the dangerous pitch of emotion reached later. Regrettably and ironically, just those issues which were the enduring constituents of the case—the children themselves and the theological involvements—got shortest shrift from the press, whereas the sentimental and purely legal factors were blown up beyond all proportion. This could be easily excused if at the same time all the facts were presented, to let the public make a true appraisal. But this was not done. The presentation of facts followed fairly strictly the particular line of each editorial staff. That is why, now that the tempest is over, a better under-

standing is needed, if we are to salvage any salutary results from the case.

For we cannot close our eyes to the fact that there was bitterness involved. Wounds which had seemed healed during the war and the post-war period in France and elsewhere—anti-clericalism and anti-Semitism—were reopened.<sup>1</sup> Whether these unfortunate results will remain the final legacy of the *affaire Finaly* will depend in large measure on our ability to encompass the total facts and their legitimate implications, and to bring to bear a just judgment. In this way alone will it cease to be a stumbling block; thus alone will wounds be healed and tears dried.

## THE FACTS

THE story begins in 1944 in La Tronche, a suburb of Grenoble in France. In February of that year, Dr. Fritz Finaly and his wife, nee Annie Schwarz, both Jews, were arrested by the Gestapo and deported, never to be heard of again. They left two children behind: Robert, aged two, and Gerald, aged one. Although the Finalys were not observing Jews they had had both boys circumcised; considering the constant danger of exposure which threatened Jews at the time, this seems evidence that the Finalys wished their children to remain Jews.

A short time before their arrest the parents had brought the children to a Catholic orphanage in Meylan, near Grenoble, and had given a

1. Just a few examples of the sharpness and extravagance of statement heard in the early part of 1953: From the man in the street there were murmurings about "a clericalist plot against the Republic," "a Jewish and Masonic affair," "a trick of Franco's to get some political refugees back," and so on. A notice posted in southern France read: "Are we going to let the Jews and their bought press insult and persecute with their hatred the priests and nuns who, in the hour when they were being hunted down, saved them from the Gestapo at the risk of their own lives?" (quoted in "The Affair of the Finaly Children," by Nicholas Baudy, *Commentary*, XV, 6, June 1953, p. 556). Rabbi Jaïs of Paris did not scruple to say: ". . . under the pretext of opposing to certain so-called dispositions of particular laws the rights of God, the Church takes its stand on faith and gives morality a vacation" (*Documentation catholique*, XXXV, 1155, Sept. 6, 1953, col. 1117). The Chief Rabbi of France used the sad affair as an occasion for a smug evaluation of Jewish morality and an implied attack on the Church, surprising in a man of his standing: "For Judaism the end does not justify the means. We have an infallible method which permits us to know whether an action is or is not religious: 'Is it in conformity with ethics?' With us there is no divorce of religion and ethics" (*Alliance Review*, VIII, 27, June 1953, p. 5).

certain Mme. Poupaert power of attorney over them. In order to keep them out of the reach of the Gestapo, they were soon brought to the school of Notre Dame de Sion and shortly after to the municipal crèche, both in Grenoble. There they were received by its director, Mlle. Antoinette Brun, who agreed to hide them among the other children. The heroism of this action cannot be overstated. The laws against harboring Jews were ferocious, and still, in the course of the war, this fearless woman took in some ten Jewish children. Only a sincere love for the persecuted and for these children in particular can explain her valor. The Finaly boys remained at the crèche until the end of the war. When no one came to claim them, Mlle. Brun kept them on, and as the months passed grew attached to them.

Back in February 1945, the first inquiry about the children had come in a letter to the mayor of La Tronche from Mrs. Fischel, Dr. Finaly's sister in New Zealand. Like practically all Jews at that time she was seeking news on the fate of her relatives. The mayor replied that Dr. Finaly and his wife had been deported but that the children were safe with Mlle. Brun. He also conveyed to Mrs. Fischel her brother's "dearest wish" that if anything happened to him, she should take the children. About this time, Mr. Ettinger, a friend of Dr. Finaly, wrote to Mrs. Fischel to the same effect. At once Mrs. Fischel wrote to Mme. Poupaert and to Mlle. Brun, asking that the children be sent to her. Mme. Poupaert, an intimate friend of Mlle. Brun, answered immediately, reporting on the children's health (they were ill) and making known Mlle. Brun's desire to keep the children. Mlle. Brun herself did not reply for several months. Finally she sent Mrs. Fischel a long letter—an important document in the dossier of the case—in which she counselled Mrs. Fischel to wait before taking the boys, dwelt at length on all she had done for them at her peril and the imprudence of sending the boys on so long a voyage in their precarious state of health and tender years. In conclusion she wrote: "These are bonds of affection which one has no right to break just like that. Their money is nothing to me. But they are in a way my own little ones, and I am disgusted to see that people, so-called friends of the family,<sup>2</sup> want to take them away from me in order to share their inheritance. I am

2. The word "family" is used here, as it will be throughout the article, to refer to all the close relatives of Dr. and Mrs. Finaly who took an interest in the case of Robert and Gerald. It is important to understand, moreover, that in Jewish mores this larger family plays a much greater role than it does in most Christian cultures.

French and Catholic; along with these two children I have adopted or received seven children whom I have raised as well as I could, with the fruits of my labor and my own money. The affection of my children is my recompense, I ask no other. Your nephews are Jews, that is to say, they have remained in their religion.”<sup>3</sup> Some interpreters of the case have seen an anti-Semitic strain in this letter and in Mlle. Brun generally.<sup>4</sup> This is hardly plausible when we consider that of the five children she adopted after the war one was a Jewish child, and that her assistance to Jews on other occasions was unstinted. Anti-Semitism may well have been a by-product of the Finaly case; it was not at its origin.

As Mlle. Brun was thus writing to Mrs. Fischel, she was at the same moment taking steps to acquire legal guardianship of the children. She did this in compliance with a law enacted seven months earlier, on April 20, 1945, which set up the legal machinery for handling such cases. Accordingly she convoked a “family council,” of which five of her Jewish friends were named members, while she herself was appointed provisional guardian of the children. She told the members of the council nothing about Mrs. Fischel’s desires and Mrs. Fischel nothing about the family council. This was the first family council of a case that was finally to turn into a battle of family councils. Its chief importance lies in the fact that it gave Mlle. Brun a prior legal claim on the children and showed that she had determined from the outset to hold onto them.

From this point in 1945 to the middle of 1948, the history of the Finaly case is simply an account of the manifold *démarches* taken by, or at the behest of, Mrs. Fischel to gain possession of the children. It is important to have a clear idea of the extent of these efforts, since later on it will be the contention of Mlle. Brun and her attorneys that the family showed little interest until 1950.

There were, as far as I can ascertain, at least fifteen steps of one kind or another taken during this period. We describe them in summary fashion. In 1945: a permit for the children’s entry to New Zealand was procured; two requests were made by the French minister in Wellington to the Foreign Ministry in France; two letters were sent by Mrs. Fischel to the District Attorney of Grenoble, two to the Foreign Min-

3. Quoted by Baudy, *loc. cit.*, p. 549.

4. “. . . Mrs. Fischel received a long letter . . . filled with malicious allusions to Dr. Finaly’s friends and to Jews in general.” See “The Case of the Finaly Orphans,” by M. Keller, *Congress Weekly*, March 23, 1953.

ister, one to the mayor of La Tronche (there had been one before), and one to friends of Dr. Finaly in Grenoble; several appeals were made to the Red Cross and the OSE, the Society for the Protection of Health Among Jews. In 1946: notes were sent from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Veterans' Ministry; Mrs. Fischel received a report from the Red Cross, which stated: "Mlle. Brun refuses categorically to hand over the children. She was named guardian in 1945"; and also a letter from the minister in Wellington much to the same effect. Early in 1948: through the good offices of Cardinal Griffin of Westminster the Bishop of Auckland sought information on the children from the Bishop of Grenoble, who reported Mlle. Brun adamant in her refusal to surrender the children. At this time, the attorney for the French Red Cross advised the family to attack the legality of Mlle. Brun's guardianship.

Thus began, in the middle of 1948, the legal phase of the affair. Mrs. Fischel withdrew in favor of her sister, Mrs. Rosner, who was living in the state of Israel, for it had been decided that someone nearer the scene of events should take up the case and institute legal proceedings. Mrs. Rosner in turn appointed Mr. Keller, an engineer of Grenoble and a member of the World Jewish Congress, to represent her. Calling on Mlle. Brun, he was badly received and was told that the boys had been baptized. He then lodged a complaint with the District Attorney in Grenoble. Maître Garçon, famed member of the French Bar, member of the Academy, and a Catholic, agreed to represent the family.

Some time later Mr. Keller learned that on January 24, 1949, Mlle. Brun had convoked a new, a second, family council on the grounds that Mr. Emmerglick, the deputy guardian, had disappeared. In the new council all the Jewish members were eliminated and replaced by non-Jewish friends of Mlle. Brun. Advised of this, the deposed members, together with Mr. Keller, protested Mlle. Brun's action, and on July 26 were empowered to form a new, and third, council with Mrs. Rosner as guardian. Mlle. Brun, who was retained as a member, was ordered to surrender the children. It was discovered that Mr. Emmerglick had not disappeared at all, but had been in touch with Mlle. Brun within the month. Mlle. Brun then attacked the third council on technical grounds (grounds that would have invalidated her own first two councils), and it was annulled. Taking account of the technicality, Mr.

Keller immediately formed a fourth council on December 5, 1950, identical with the third. Again Mlle. Brun sued for annulment on the basis that Mr. Schwarz,<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Finaly's brother, had been omitted, and it was again granted. On June 11, 1952, Garçon appealed and won, thus causing the fourth family council to be reinstated and Mlle. Brun to be ordered once more to present the children. It was at this session that the children were called to testify; they admitted that they wished to stay with their "maman" (Mlle. Brun), but also that they only saw her about once a year.

On July 15, 1952, Mr. Keller and a bailiff presented themselves at Mlle. Brun's to take the two boys. But the three were nowhere to be found; they were not expected back for a month. A complaint was filed, and Mlle. Brun was summoned to appear before the criminal court to answer charges of violation of the Civil Code for non-presentation of the children.

The trial of Antoinette Brun was held on November 18, 1952, in an atmosphere of tension. The case had taken on religious overtones, since it had become generally known that the children had been baptized as Catholics. At the hearing Mlle. Brun reiterated that she had saved the lives of the children and had reared them like a mother since 1944, whereas the relatives had shown no interest in them until 1950. The decision was set for December 2. In the interim Attorney Garçon prepared a voluminous brief purporting to prove with documentary evidence the falsity of Mlle. Brun's contentions. This he presented on November 28. On that same day, however, four days before the day scheduled for the decision, the brief as yet unread, the decision was rendered: The Court of Appeals was reprimanded for reinstating Mrs. Rosner as guardian, and on a technicality Mlle. Brun was acquitted of violation of the Civil Code.

Things were at a feverish pitch. To many it appeared that the court had manifested partiality and had based its decision on nonjuridical grounds, particularly on the point of the baptism. Jewish and secular groups protested, and some Catholic writers too. The magistrate who had rendered the decision was a Catholic, and it was thought he had used a technicality to have his personal beliefs prevail. The Attorney

5. It should be mentioned here that in 1945, while passing through Grenoble to Austria, Mr. Schwarz had visited Mlle. Brun and the children, and had told her to keep them. He knew nothing at that time of Dr. Finaly's wish or of Mrs. Fischel's efforts, and subsequently reversed his opinion.

General appealed the verdict, while the family brought civil action against Mlle. Brun.

On January 8, 1953, Maître Garçon pleaded the case of the family anew before a jammed and turbulent courtroom. Forcefully he charged that Mlle. Brun had not acted like a mother to the boys after 1944, but had shunted them from place to place.<sup>6</sup> Charging also that she had obstructed justice, he demanded a severe sentence. In this he was joined by the Solicitor General. The verdict was rendered on January 29: Mrs. Rosner became permanent guardian, Mlle. Brun was convicted of kidnaping and was sentenced to jail. She now had but one resort: to surrender the missing children and appeal to the Court of Cassation. The family made known through its attorneys that if the boys were rendered all penal charges would be dropped.

But the Finaly affair was far from over, as also were the travels of Robert and Gerald. Mlle. Brun was now in jail, but apparently there were others who were convinced that the boys belonged to her, or to the Church, and that, the law notwithstanding, they must be kept at any cost.

On February 1, 1953, they were discovered at St. Louis Gonzaga's school in Bayonne, near the Spanish border, where they had been brought under assumed names by a sister of the Mother Superior of Notre Dame de Sion in Grenoble.<sup>7</sup> The director, Canon Silhouette, had recognized them, consulted his ecclesiastical superiors, and informed the district attorney. On February 3, Mr. Keller arrived at Bayonne to call for them, as the press and the curious converged on Bayonne for the final chapter of the famous *affaire*. But all for nought; once more they had been spirited away. A tumult followed; roads were blocked,

6. Since the findings of Maître Garçon with regard to the whereabouts of the boys from 1944 until the trial had a critical effect on the judgment of the court, we summarize them briefly. At the crèche in Grenoble, Robert and Gerald were in the care of a maidservant; next they were taken to a religious boarding school called *L'Aigle*, near Grenoble; then to a day school in Voiron, at which time they lived with a lady in town, under the names of Robert and Gerald Brun. In 1949 they went to a pension in Lugano, Switzerland, for about a year; in the latter part of 1950 they were at school in Voiron for three months under the names of Louis and Marc Brun. Later evidence proved that in September 1952 they were living in Paris, and for part of 1953 in Marseilles, under the surname Quadri; also in 1953, they were at another school in Marseilles under the names of Martella and Olivieri.

7. Though the Grenoble convent of the Religious of Notre Dame de Sion thus became involved in hiding the boys, it should be pointed out that when Mlle. Brun was planning to have them baptized, the convent was opposed to it. See *Echos de Notre-Dame de Sion*, No. 7 (April 1953), p. 178.

trains searched, and arrests begun. Five Basque priests and the Mother Superior were jailed. All of them admitted complicity in the kidnaping, but maintained a "wall of silence" on the location of the boys. It was believed that they had been taken into Spain, a little less than twenty miles away.

The Finaly affair was approaching its high-water mark, and excitement was universal. All around one heard strident declamations about "the rights of man," or "the rights of God," or "the rights of the heart." Anti-clericals went on about "democratic rights" and "medieval practices." Jewish opinion was in the main restrained but indignant. Among Catholics, opinion generally condemned the abduction, and here alone we find an attempt to see the complexities of the matter. Perhaps the most forthright appeal for the return of the boys was that of Cardinal Gerlier and Bishop Caillot.<sup>8</sup> It went unheeded, despite the fact that the boys were then in France and in Catholic hands; obviously there was some divergence of opinion among Catholics.

The actual exodus into Spain did not take place until February 13. Passed from hand to hand and with the aid of a professional smuggler, Gerald and Robert arrived at the border and marched through snow for five hours across the Pyrenees. In Spain they were separated, one going to a fishing village, the other to a village inland.

There has been some question raised about the motivation of the actors in this drama, probably all of whom were Catholics, several of them priests. Some commentators have said in their defense that they removed the boys merely for "safekeeping" pending the final decision of the Court of Cassation. Others believed that they were acting in compliance with Mlle. Brun's wishes, whose cause they, as so many others, had come to identify with the "Catholic side."<sup>9</sup>

8. Dated February 10, the appeal reads: "Monseigneur Caillot, Bishop of Grenoble, in agreement with His Eminence Cardinal Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyons, appeals to any person or group, religious or lay, who are aware of the location of the Finaly children, or who are in a position to furnish information on this subject, and requests them to make themselves known, with or without intermediary, be it to the lawful authorities, or in some other way . . ." (*Documentation catholique*, col. 1102).

9. A closer look at Mlle. Brun might have given cause to question her Catholic standard-bearing. The following items are revealing: (1) In an interview early in the case, when asked about her Catholicism, she replied that she didn't give a fig for the Pope (Baudy, *loc. cit.*, p. 550). (2) On the question of the baptism of the children, she persistently claimed that she had no religious motivation but only the natural desire to have them included in the festivities of First Communion, a high point in school life (Michael de la Bedoyere in *The Catholic World*, Sept. 1953, p. 457).

Others again thought that here was a clear case of proselytism.

There is every reason to believe the priests themselves on the subject of their motives. What they were is clear from a declaration of conscience, published on March 8, 1953, in *L'Homme Nouveau*, by a group of Basque priests, intimates of the jailed priests. Its salient points are these: (1) the Finaly boys were French (by the will of their father), they were Christians, and were attached to Mlle. Brun as to a mother; (2) they had expressed an explicit desire not to be returned to their relatives or taken to Israel; (3) there was irreducible conflict between the civil law and certain incontestable superior rights, which posed an "ultimate of conscience." Without attempting at the moment to adjudge the content of these motives, we cannot doubt that the priests acted sincerely and not from a merely partisan spirit. And it is well to remember that during the war they had been members of the Resistance and more than once had had to oppose the decisions of civil authority.

Days went by, then weeks. The *affaire* was now an international scandal, and leading journals throughout the world commented on the extraordinary doings in southern France. The debate took a decidedly theological turn as serious writers and theologians tried to untangle the issues. On the practical side, various attempts were made to bring the boys back, and once again the effort of Cardinal Gerlier was the most noteworthy. An accord was signed by the Cardinal, the Chief Rabbi of France, and the Rosner-Finaly family. It was agreed, on the one hand, that the Cardinal would do all he could to effect a recovery of the boys; on the other, that on the boys' return the family would keep them in France—in St. Leonard, at the country home of Mr. André Weil, a prominent Jewish attorney—until after the decision of the court; further that the family would drop all penal charges, and

She is reported to have said: "Baptism, that means a godfather, a godmother, security in bad times. It was done quite naturally, as in thousands of families where they hardly practice the faith, and where the children are baptized and taken to Communion, and where they get married and die in the Church" (P. Démann, N.D.S., "L'Affaire Finaly," *Cahiers Sioniens*, VII, 1, March 1953, p. 79). (3) During the last stage of the affair, in late July 1953, Mlle. Brun addressed a moving appeal to the President of the Republic. In it she spoke of her affection, her night-watches, her tears, and then added: "What does it matter to me if they are baptized or circumcised? They are above all 'my children,' little French boys" (*Documentation catholique*, col. 1144). Mlle. Brun may have minimized her faith for tactical reasons. Still it seems that her motives in having the children baptized were far more natural than supernatural.

that they would respect the consciences of the boys. Though the agreement was concluded on March 6, 1953, it was not until June 6 that knowledge of its existence became public. The occasion was an irate outburst on the part of the Chief Rabbi, who complained that no results had been gained by it and expressed doubt about the sincerity of the Catholic party to the agreement. Father Chaillet, representative of the Cardinal, thereupon revealed the steps taken by His Eminence, which included appeals to the Spanish government, also to the Vatican for its intervention, and the sending of a personal representative to Spain in an effort to establish negotiations with the abductors. It was obvious that the Cardinal had done all he could. The Grand Rabbi reinterpreted his remarks and endeavored to shift the blame elsewhere.

On June 23, after long deliberations, the Court of Cassation handed down its decision: permanent guardianship was conceded to Mrs. Rosner. Three days later word arrived that the two boys had been surrendered to the Spanish government for return to France. Handed over by a Spanish mayor to a representative of Cardinal Gerlier, they were sent immediately to Mr. Weil, while Mrs. Rosner flew from Israel to meet them. The boys asked to see Mlle. Brun, but were refused.

The police stepped in to interrogate them. It was thus learned that five other priests, hitherto unmentioned, had aided in the kidnaping. They were arrested and jailed. Public reaction rose again at this renewal of the painful *affaire*; penal charges had been dropped by the family, and it seemed that little was to be gained by this useless prolongation of the prosecution.

The sojourn of Robert and Gerald at St. Leonard was briefer than expected. On July 26, in semi-secrecy, Mr. and Mrs. Rosner boarded a plane with the boys and flew to Israel. On departure Mrs. Rosner said she no longer felt herself bound by the agreement of March 6, since it applied only to the situation extant before the decision of the court. The Catholic daily *La Croix* agreed, but insisted that the spirit, the very essence of the agreement, respect for the children's freedom of conscience, was still binding.<sup>10</sup>

The abrupt departure was applauded by the family attorney, the "Comité Finaly National," and others. The supporters of Mlle. Brun were joined, however, by Mr. Weil, who called the sudden departure

"surprising and saddening. Neither Chief Rabbi Kaplan nor myself were told about it. Moreover, the Chief Rabbi had not authorized their departure on the Sabbath." Several neutral newspapers also reacted unfavorably to it, describing it as "inelegant," "injurious to the psychology of the boys." What many, among them *Le Figaro*, deplored was that Mlle. Brun, though she had accepted every possible condition, was denied a last meeting, a last embrace, with the children.<sup>11</sup>

Reports coming back from Israel after the arrival of the boys did in reality seem to give substance to certain misgivings. Newspaper stories told of the boys' being brought up "in the spirit of Judaism," of their receiving new Jewish names, and of their participating in rites by which they renounced their Christian faith. It was also reported that the boys were acting of their own volition and that they were quite aware of having been the center of a dispute of world-wide interest.<sup>12</sup> There seems little doubt that this awareness has done harm to their personalities.

Some Jews have seen in this final turn of the affair a sort of poetic justice, while to some Christians it seems to be a new "ritual kidnaping" and violation of primary rights. Such reactions are perhaps premature and still filled with the heat of controversy. What the real and final outcome will or could be must be sought on another level and in another realm—on the theological level and in the realm of grace. It is to these that we must now attend.

## THE ISSUES

THERE can be little doubt that what turned the Finaly case from a run-of-the-mill legal tussle and kidnaping, common enough occurrences nowadays, into an *affaire*, into an international scandal, was the baptism of the boys in 1948. Not only did it greatly influence the alignment of opinion of the people and the press, and the behavior of certain actors in the drama, but it also posed grave problems for the theologian. There seems little question that here is the heart of the Finaly affair. But it was exactly here that misconceptions and oversimplifications occurred; it was here too that the positions taken were often struck with an emotional or pragmatic stamp. It is of importance,

11. *Ibid.*, cols. 1141, 1143.

12. *N. Y. Times*, Sept. 19, 1953.

therefore, that we review the case in its full complexity if we are even to approximate what a true Catholic position would be.

In the absence of any episcopal pronouncement—the intervention of Cardinal Gerlier and Bishop Caillot was of a purely practical nature—we turn to the theologians. Fortunately, some of high rank took an interest in the case, and in the final accountings their contribution may well be seen as the finest fruit of the entire affair, turning it, as we hope, from a stumbling block into a new lesson in Christian wisdom and human understanding.

#### STATE OF THE QUESTION

Behind the problem of the baptism—its licitness, its validity, its consequences—lay the larger problem of the relationship of Church and State created by the peculiar circumstances of the baptism. For this was no ordinary baptism; in the minds of many participants and observers of the case it was a baptism “on trial” before the tribunal of the temporal power. And it is in this frame of reference that the theologians must study it.

The problem is thus divided into two major parts: one concerned with the rights and duties of the State, and the other with those of the Church; in other words, the juridical problem and the sacramental problem. However, the Catholic theory of the relationship of Church and State includes not only categories dealing with each power but also a category having to do with the primacy of the spiritual, a category which translates into Church-State terms the recognition of the inherent superiority of the spiritual over the material, of man’s ultimate end over his temporal or proximate ends. That man’s ultimate end transcends his temporal ends, that the spiritual outranks the material, is beyond any doubt. Indeed, in a sense this principle forms the very crux of the Finaly question. Yet it would be an extreme interpretation of this principle if it were used to suppress all natural and juridic considerations of the case on the grounds that the sacramental issue overrules, purely and simply, all other issues. Many of Mlle. Brun’s supporters seemed to suggest this course. Today more than ever, it seems to me, the proper exigencies of the natural and the juridical are to be greatly emphasized, since natural law and natural rights are on the defensive in so many parts of the world. This does not mean that we ought to embrace—God forbid!—the opposite error of those who subscribe

to the conception of an omniscient, laicized State, and who would relegate all spiritual considerations to the "sacristy" or to private devotional life. Too many of the followers of the Finaly family appeared to offend here.

We must avoid both extremes if we would approach what, in my view, could be considered the Catholic position. For it is only thus that the claims of both the natural and the supernatural find their proper place. And only thus can we render "to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and also "to God the things that are God's."

#### THE JURIDIC PROBLEM OR THE RIGHTS OF THE STATE

Catholic thought has always seen the origin, the nature, and the end of the *civitas*, the body politic, and hence of its instrument, the State, in what St. Thomas calls the law of nations. Body politic and State exist by virtue of the social nature of man, and their end is to promote the temporal welfare and the virtuous life of all, that is, the common good. By its nature the body politic is a perfect society, autonomous, complete within its own order, limited solely by its own end and competencies; and its juridic arm falls within the ambit of natural justice.

Philosophically, this doctrine is of Aristotelian-Thomistic provenance, and theologically, it stems from Pope Gelasius I (492-496), whose formulation of it has served as the classic stand of the Church on the subject. It has been reiterated in our own day by Leo XIII in *Immortale Dei* in these terms: "God has apportioned the charge of the human race between two powers, the ecclesiastical and the civil, one set over divine things, the other over human things. Each is supreme in its own order; each has marked out for it by its own nature and immediate origin certain limits within which it is contained. Consequently, each has, as it were, a certain sphere with fixed boundaries; and each in its own sphere acts by native right." So also Pius XI in *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*: "[The State] has duties and rights that are incontestable, as long as they remain within the proper competencies of the State; those competencies in their turn are clearly fixed by the finalities of the State, which are not of course simply material and corporal, but which are of themselves necessarily contained within the limits of the natural, the terrestrial, the temporal."

Applying these doctrines to the case at hand, this much becomes clear: in judging the Finaly case the French court was within its rights

and competence when it evaluated all the facts and handed down a verdict in keeping with its own positive law, in so far as this law is in consonance with natural rights and justice. Did the court err in the performance of its task? Was the transfer of the permanent guardianship of the children to Mrs. Rosner a breach of justice?

This question is above all a matter of getting at the facts. The judiciary as well as the press and the public had considerable difficulty establishing them, as was plainly evidenced by the multiplicity of family councils and annulled decisions. In retrospect, it is possible to see why. At first, Mlle. Brun appeared to have the stronger legal claim, for, as she pleaded, she had saved the children, become their legal guardian in 1945, and mothered them till 1953, whereas the family had not instituted proceedings until 1948; the boys, it was stated, had been taken to Spain of their own volition "for safekeeping" pending the court's final decision. Her case seemed convincing and consistent enough.

But it was incomplete. Thanks to the research of the family attorneys, other findings more closely tied up with natural rights were unearthed: (1) that Dr. Finaly had provably expressed his "dearest wish" in the matter; (2) that from 1945 to 1948 the family had made relentless efforts to fulfill this wish of Dr. Finaly; (3) that Mlle. Brun's "maternal" care of the boys had been exaggerated. As these facts gradually emerged, the responsibility of the court became increasingly clear, for it was precisely these elements, related to natural rights and justice and implicit in the law, that the court was charged to preserve and promote. The court's task, in other words, was simply that of interpreting the positive law in the light of natural law. Seen in this light, the decision rendered gives all indications of accord with Catholic legal theory.

A word here about obedience to civil authority. One of the most extraordinary aspects of the affair was the open resistance to legal authority by some Catholics, priests and laymen. For one of the cardinal tenets of Catholic tradition is that legitimately constituted authority must be obeyed, save in the event of violation of the natural moral law. So certain a trait of Catholic social doctrine is this that the Church has often been accused of ultra-conservatism. However, she has never recognized temporal authority as absolute. Of this, the history of martyrdom is eloquent witness: resistance to the death is sometimes

obligatory. And St. Thomas leaves no doubt about the right of rebellion against the tyrannical, unjust ruler. But the grounds for rebellion must be precise and certain; there must be present a grave violation by the State of its proper rights or duties. Such was not the case in the Finaly affair. A presumably just decision had been rendered in compliance with the precepts of natural law by a legitimately constituted government. Furthermore, the Church had refused to indicate any disagreement with the court; contrariwise, the sole intervention by the hierarchy was to urge all concerned to yield "to lawful authority." How then are we to understand the acts of those who refused to bow to it?

They appealed to conscience and to divine law. But were they justified? The return of a baptized child to a non-Christian family, they reasoned, was inadmissible, for it would endanger his faith. Hence, in the absence of a decree of the Church or in the teeth of a refractory public authority, there was one course left: to supply for both in the name of the rights of God. What has theology to say about this?

#### THE SACRAMENTAL PROBLEM, OR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHURCH

Faced with the fact of the baptism of the Finaly children, the theologian asks himself: Was their baptism licit? What are the consequences of an illicit but valid baptism? In case of conflict of divine and natural law, which takes precedence? Has the Church, custodian of divine law, the right to take a baptized child from non-believing parents? Posing these questions, all the theologians who dealt with the issues of the Finaly case arrived, though by diverse approaches, at identical conclusions. The pages which follow are largely the gist of their findings, in particular those of Monsignor Charles Journet, the illustrious theologian of Fribourg, and of Father Robert Rouquette, S.J., who published a remarkable study on the Finaly case in a leading French Catholic monthly.<sup>13</sup>

1. First the permanent principles. In the mind of the Church, baptism is a sacrament, that is to say, a privileged instant in time in which God's free, creating, and saving act intervenes in a human soul. It is not merely a symbolic gesture, not merely a memorial of Christ's love and redemption of long ago, not merely an outward confirmation of an

13. Journet, "Précisions d'un théologien," *La Liberté* (Fribourg), March 3, 1953; and *Nova et Vetera*, Jan.-March 1953; reprinted in *Documentation catholique*, cols. 1108-1109. Rouquette, "L'Eglise et le baptême des enfants juifs," *Etudes*, April 1953; reprinted in *Documentation catholique*, cols. 1119-1128.

inward experience of God by faith. Rather is it the act by which the risen Christ prolongs the mystery of the Incarnation in His Church: by which He takes hold of a human person, works in him an invisible transformation, re-creating him, converting him from a being marked by original sin into a son of God, capable of sharing in the divine life. Hence baptism is much more than admission to a religious organization, for the Church is much more than a "religious organization"; she is a *mysterium*, Christ's visible body in history, a lasting reality, by which and in which we are brought into communication with the life of the Triune God. It is clear, then, that the initiative which brings us to this marvel must be divine. Baptism works *ex opere operato*; in other words, it is not man who brings about its fruits but God, acting with the sovereign power of His love. It has thus a supernaturally ontological value and a real efficacy.

But baptism is not magic; its efficacy is not blind and automatic. For an adult to receive it validly, his free and intelligent assent is necessary; force or ignorance of the nature and effects of baptism would render it invalid, nonexistent. Benedict XIV, the great canonist-Pope (1740-58), even held that the validity of a baptism conferred on a child who has the use of reason, but not the knowledge of what baptism means and does, is at least doubtful. The Church insists, on the other hand, that children can and should be baptized before they reach the age of reason, since baptism is a sacrament and its action primarily of God. But she looks to the day when children thus baptized do reach the age of reason, and counts on their then giving their assent and personal adherence to the mystery of their baptism. First Communion, for example, provides such an occasion.

2. The Church clearly forbids the baptism of a child against the will of his parents. Benedict XIV, the present Code of Canon Law, and the whole of tradition are at one in this. For the baptism of an infant to be licit, the Code, in canon 750, sect. 2, requires the assent of his parents or lawful guardians, or of at least one of them. And Benedict XIV makes his own the words of St. Thomas: "It has never been the usage of the Church to baptize the children of Jews unless such is the will of the parents."<sup>14</sup>

Summing up their teaching, Monsignor Journet declares that to baptize a child against the will of the parents would be a violation of

14. Denziger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 1481; *Sum. Theol.* II-II, q. 10, a. 12.

natural justice, for "it is by natural and inviolable right that an infant, still deprived of the exercise of his free will, is placed under his parents' providence,"<sup>15</sup> that, in the words of St. Thomas, he "is enfolded in the care of his parents, as in a spiritual womb."<sup>16</sup> And, to quote St. Thomas again, "injustice should be done to no man." In the complementary interpretation of Father Rouquette, who looks to the duty behind the right: It is the family that is charged with making it possible for a child to grow to the full stature of his humanity. The parent of a Christian child has the grave duty of leading him in the ways of faith and the supernatural life, in short, of giving him a Christian education; hence to baptize a child against the will of non-Christian parents places a responsibility on them they cannot meet. For the sole duty of a non-Christian parent is to be faithful to the light given him and to communicate it to his child, in other words, to educate him to social and virtuous living. These are his capacities, and such is God's plan; man cannot demand more.

In the light, then, of these principles, what are we to think of the baptism of the Finaly boys? It was illicit and imprudent, though of course valid; it was a violation of natural justice. In 1948, when she had them baptized, Mlle. Brun had no guarantee whatever of ever becoming their permanent guardian.

3. What now are the consequences of an illicit but valid baptism of a child who remains in, or is returned to, a non-Christian family?

To begin with, the Church is possessed of certain jurisdictions, certain powers, judicial and penal. They are part of the power of the keys given her by Christ, of her responsibility to guide souls to their ultimate end in God. Being a perfect society, then, the Church must be empowered to implement her teaching and sanctifying work with authority that binds. What interests us here, however, is the extent and limits of these rights or powers. Do they include temporal or coercive measures? To be specific: can the Church remove a baptized child from a non-Christian family?

There is no doubt that the past discipline of the Church gives an affirmative answer to the last question. In his letter *Postremo Mense* (1747), Benedict XIV states that, unlawful and immoral as it is to baptize a child against the will of his parents, nevertheless, if a Jewish

15. *Documentation catholique*, col. 1108.

16. *Sum. Theol.* II-II, q. 10, a. 12.

child is validly baptized, he must be removed from his family and be brought up in a Christian milieu. In this he was echoing a view of long standing, to which there are references in the Fourth Council of Toledo and in St. Thomas, and in practice there is more than one precedent to point to. The present Code, without expressly repudiating it, makes no mention of this discipline.

Which brings us to the knot of the difficulty. On the one hand we have the rights of the parents, which are reinforced by the judicial branch of the temporal power; on the other the rights of the Church, as represented by the legislation of Benedict XIV. There appears, in sum, to be a direct conflict between ecclesiastical law and natural law. How is it to be resolved? Should the policy of the past be applied today? All the theologians who wrote on the Finaly case reply negatively to this last question, but in varying ways. We may reduce their answers to three categories: the psychological, the historical, and the sociological.

(a) The psychological aspect. To apply today the policy formulated by Benedict XIV would cause grave scandal among non-Catholics and great uneasiness among Catholics. "To be sure," writes Father Rouquette, "it is not our sensibilities that ought to determine our value-judgments. On quite a few points, the demands of the Christian faith jar against the secularized mentality. One need only remember the law of the indissolubility of marriage or that of conjugal chastity. But we must equally recognize that if a state of affairs is a cause of universal disquiet to the conscience of an epoch, even to that of the most faithful Christians, it is often a sign of progress in moral conscience and of a legitimate expectation of an adjustment of discipline. It is advisable, therefore, to take seriously a disquiet so general."<sup>17</sup>

On this phase of the problem Monsignor Journet's approach differs interestingly from Father Rouquette's. Faithful interpreter of St. Thomas, Journet maintains that today the Church renounces her right in such cases because the natural right is more fundamental, *plus foncier*, than the divine right. This is the way he puts it: "We used to say: the parental right, which is natural, is not suppressed but surpassed by the right of the Church, which is supernatural. We say today: the right of the Church, which is supernatural, is not suppressed but surpassed by the parental right which, being natural, is more funda-

17. *Documentation catholique*, col. 1123.

mental. The same general principle which, even in the past, forbade the baptizing of children against the will of their parents now forbids that children, if they have been baptized without the knowledge of their parents, be withdrawn from their education. 'The divine law, which is the law of grace, does not do away with human law, which is the law of natural reason' (St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* II-II, q. 10, a. 10). If the Church can thus renounce the exercise of her right, it is because she is rapt in an ever deeper vision of the role the secret attentions of divine grace have in the life of every soul."<sup>18</sup> And again: "The Church abandons the exercise of her right to God, whose providence is all-powerful and who knows those who are His own: those children whose baptism will soon be known to none but Him."<sup>19</sup> We might add that the Church surrenders her right with a view the better to fulfill her saving mission to all men. That this would have been better accomplished had the Finaly boys been forcibly kept from their relatives is hardly a plausible hope in this day and age.

(b) The historical aspect. The legislation of Benedict XIV on the Christian education of baptized Jewish children is best understood in its historical perspective. That it is in a way the product of the political and the social conditions of its times can scarcely be doubted. That these conditions do not exist today is equally certain. Hence we must draw a distinction between that which is permanent and immutable in this discipline of the Church and its application, which may change with the needs of a given epoch. Pius XII has spoken of "the vital law of adaptation" and "the providential path of history and circumstance."<sup>20</sup>

When Benedict XIV legislated in favor of the removal of baptized Jewish children from their families, his act presupposed a society in which the religious power and the civil power were largely intertwined. It required that the Church use coercion, which in turn required that the Church have a "secular arm," either by virtue of the closest cooperation of Church and State, or by virtue of temporal possessions, such as the Papal States. Neither situation exists today. So true is this that Jacques Maritain has been led to comment: "As a matter of fact no government is less authoritarian than the government of the Catholic Church. It governs without police force and physical coercion the im-

18. *Ibid.*, col. 1110.

19. *Ibid.*, col. 1109.

20. Allocution to the New Cardinals, Feb. 21, 1946, *passim*.

mense people for whose spiritual common good it is responsible.”<sup>21</sup>

There is no doubt, Father Rouquette writes, that in a historical setting like ours, the duty remains, for the Church as a whole and for each of the faithful, to assure as much as possible that baptized children will be steadfast in their faith and Christian life; on the other hand, we may explicitly renounce not only the claim that the secular arm is an ideal but also any attempt to replace it. And he concludes: “This is what is implied, it seems, by the silence of present-day canon law, which no longer speaks of an obligation to remove the child from his family.”<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps we may say then that the Church has been led to interpret the principle of the primacy of the spiritual in an ever more spiritual sense. Her “indirect power” in temporal things no longer means that her action is spiritual in its end and, whenever necessary, temporal in its means, but rather that its purely spiritual ends *and* means produce indirect temporal effects.

(c) The sociological aspect. Father Rouquette has closely studied the sociological factors which made possible Benedict XIV’s legislation. The Pope’s attitude here was a remnant of medieval policy which had made a special case of Jews—as also of Mussulmans—giving the Jews a status only a little above slaves. Tracing certain practices from medieval times to the day of Benedict XIV, Rouquette shows that he was under the influence of a thinking which deemed it entirely normal to take a baptized Jewish child from its family, but which would never lay claim to a child of Protestant parents, even though the Church considers every real baptism a Catholic baptism. Indeed, “the Church

21. *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) p. 185. If we are to understand the significance of the temporal power of the popes, a historical observation may be helpful. Though reduced today to the merest token, it was once vital. Necessary as it was from the beginning of barbarian times till well into the feudal age, not so much for the Church as for the common good of society, it was always a burden to the Church; with the providential growth of political and social responsibility, this burden has been providentially lifted from her. It may be important to add here what Pius IX had to say on the deposition of kings by the popes: “This right has in fact—in exceptional circumstances—been exercised by the popes; but it has nothing to do with papal infallibility. Its source was not the infallibility, but the authority, of the pope. The latter, according to the public law then in force and by the consent of the Christian nations, who recognized the pope as the supreme judge of Christendom, extended to judging, even in the temporal field, both princes and states. Now the present situation is altogether different.” From *Civiltà cattolica*, VIII, 3 (1871), p. 485; as quoted by Joseph Lecler, S.J., *The Two Sovereignities* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 63.

22. *Documentation catholique*, col. 1126.

did not, when it was politically possible, order the removal of Protestant children from their mothers in order to raise them in a Catholic environment. In the same way, the Church today does not dream of laying claim to children presented for baptism by Communist parents." Yet the issue is the same in all three cases. Today "we cannot think of Jews save as persons, in the most sacred sense of the word"; our consciousness of the dignity, rights, and basic equality of all persons and all families is such that we regard the removing of any children from their families as an "inhuman cruelty."<sup>23</sup>

#### THE WAYS OF GRACE AND THE FINAL OUTLOOK

In the wake of every unresolved conflict there is the sacrifice or defeat, at least partial, of one side. But a conflict is effectively resolved when a higher level of consideration is reached on which the opposites or oppositions are reconciled. In the Finaly case, it seems at first that in the final outcome the ecclesiastical and sacramental rights suffered a setback: the natural common good was given precedence over the supernatural good of the two children. However, there is reason to believe that the conflict has been resolved on another level. For have the "rights of God" really met defeat? Must we despair of the salvation of the Finaly boys?

In his monumental work on the Church Monsignor Journet writes: "The Church of Christ, entrusted to Peter, is at once purer and vaster than we know. Purer, because though not without sinners she is without sin, and because the faults of her members do not soil her. Vaster, because she gathers around her everyone in the world who is saved. She is aware that from the depths of space and time there are tied to her by desire, in an incipient and hidden way, millions who, by an invincible ignorance, are prevented from knowing her, but who have not, in the midst of the errors in which they live, refused the grace of living faith which God offers them in the secrecy of their hearts, God who wills that all men be saved and brought to the knowledge of the truth. She herself does not know them by name, yet she senses their numberless presence about her, and oftentimes, in the silences of her prayer, she hears ascending in the night the confused sounds of their march."<sup>24</sup>

23. *Ibid.*, cols. 1125-1126.

24. *L'Eglise du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951), II, 1114.

All the theologians who treated the Finaly problem ended in one way or another on this truth, and here, it seems, is the final answer to our questions. If grace does its work even in an unbaptized soul in a world which knows nothing of Christ, may it not work also in the baptized souls of boys who have had some training in Christian living? Is it not possible that Christ will triumph in their souls even though they are removed from the Church's motherly care? For the ways of God are inscrutable.

And the Church? She has been injured in the maelstrom. Can we hope that here too, despite all, she will shine forth anew through the mist of our blunders as the "city seated upon a mountain," as the "light of the world"? Must we view her situation in the modern world, bereft of a "secular arm" and temporal power, with pessimism? On the contrary. In these new circumstances, and as her methods become more and more spiritual, she can act more as a "leaven" among souls. Her relationship now is less with states and plenipotentiaries than with persons, her children and her children-to-be. Father Lecler has aptly described this present position of the Church: "Her action, as we have seen, has become more discreet, more intimate, less spectacular. She is no less efficient, however, on that account; and indeed such an attitude corresponds better to her present position and to her title of 'Church Militant.' It is not for the Church a time of glory, but one of humility, of effort, of interior progress. Her rapid growth in early centuries, her external brilliance in the medieval period were doubtless necessary as a first step towards the penetration of the world by the Christian spirit. But the hardest, the most mortifying tasks still remain to be fulfilled. Deep down in human society still lurks, almost as strong as ever, the old pagan spirit: its materialism and its cupidity for enjoyment and its cruelty. . . . For a work of this kind no political hegemony is needful: what is required above all, in all classes and in all milieux, is a living and genuine sanctity."<sup>25</sup>

On this note we conclude. It is a note of hope—the hope that in ways which are not ours and which escape analysis, God will turn injury into blessing.

# BOOKS

## Gregory Dix: JEW AND GREEK

### A STUDY IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH \*

THE first Christians worshiped in the Temple (Ac 2:46). Peter himself and John the beloved of Jesus were frequenters of that Holy Place (Ac 3). When Peter preached Jesus to the crowds of Jerusalem, it was as the "Just One" described by Isaiah the prophet (Chap. 53), and in this he was followed by Stephen and Philip (Ac 3:14; 7:52; 22:14) and, the presumption is warranted, by all the other Jewish disciples of Jesus. James, the cousin of Jesus and the first bishop of Jerusalem, was, we assume from extra-biblical but reliable sources, a priest of the Mosaic Law, and he may have continued as such all his life.<sup>1</sup> The Christians of Jerusalem distinguished themselves from their brothers in the Holy City by a daily "breaking of bread in their houses," but even the ritual prayers that accompanied this earliest of all Mass-types conformed closely to the centuries-old Jewish benedictions which these Jewish followers of Jesus had used all their lives and heard the Master use Himself. But one hundred years later the Temple in Jerusalem was the site of a pagan shrine. Jewish Christians who continued to observe the Mosaic Law were ever diminishing in number, while their Gentile Christian neighbors looked upon their practices as strange inconsistencies. By then the eucharistic prayers were almost identical with those said in the Canon of the Mass today, and Jesus was far better known as the Incarnate Word of God than as the Suffering Servant foretold by Isaiah. What had happened? Was this "astonishing leap from one world to another" (p. 4), as the late Anglican scholar Dom Gregory

\* New York: Harper & Bros., 1953.

1. That James was a priest of the Mosaic Law seems the best interpretation of Hegesippus's account of him, found in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* II, xxiii, 6: there we are told that he was permitted to enter the sanctuary and that he was often found alone in the Temple, praying for the forgiveness of the people. Cf. Tillemont, *Mémoires*, I, 286, note 10; and J. Chaine, *L'Épître de saint Jacques* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1927), pp. xxxiv, xxxv. Catholic exegetes today agree that those priests of the Mosaic Law who were converted to faith in Christ continued to function as priests until the Temple was destroyed. Cf. G. Ricciotti, *Gli Atti degli Apostoli* (Rome: Coletti, 1951), p. 127; J. Renié, *Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Letouzey, 1949), p. 106; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Gabalda, 1952), I, 227.

Dix calls it, the result of an internal revolution within the Church of the first century? And was the continuity within that Church, consequently, no more than formal? Are we, as some have claimed, the dupes of an enthusiast named Paul, whose upbringing amid a Gentile environment led him to transform the face of primitive belief in Jesus the Messiah and make of it a hybrid cult closer to polytheistic paganism than to Jewish monotheism?

Dom Gregory Dix, in this, his last book, undertook to answer these questions honestly and soberly. They are questions that demand applied psychology as much as theology; an understanding, that is, of ethnic histories and thought patterns, and Dom Dix has realized this.

Jesus was born into a world in which the Roman who ruled it was but a parvenu, and the Greek, whom the Roman had supplanted, of but little more cultural antiquity. Since the beginnings of civilization in Mesopotamia some three or four thousand years before His birth, dominion over the known world had been in the hands of one or another Syriac power. Syriac is a misleading word but we must use it for lack of a better. What it implies is the fact that all the ancient monarchies which existed between the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Persia shared certain basic ideas about the ultimate purpose and meaning of human life as a whole. Rise and fall these monarchies did, but the psychology of king and subject changed hardly at all. But when, some three hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Alexander the Great defeated the armies of Darius III at Issus, a new psychology, that of the Greek—later to include the Roman and, still later, that of the Celt and Goth—began to influence world history. The Greek, as Dom Dix is eager to point out, did not think like the Jew, or the Persian, or the Egyptian; and where the elements of Syriac thought attempt to survive in the climate of a Greek mind, a translation must take place.

This is what happened within the Church during the first century of its existence. Happened, indeed, because those circumstances which create history forced the issue. We tend to forget that not everything concerning the future of the Church and the development of its doctrine was clear to the small group that began, so bravely, to preach the Good News of Jesus on the first Pentecost. Men are so largely conditioned by their early environment that what they accept consciously in later life is often rejected by the subconscious, which so influences

practice. To those Jews who embraced Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, the refusal of their brothers of the circumcision to join them must have seemed but a hesitation rather than a rejection. How could a Jew, who was so fully aware of the many bonds which bound him to his fellow Jews, believe that they did not see what he saw? Jesus had prepared His disciples for such a turn of events; He had resigned Himself to this hard fact only with bitter tears as He looked down upon the city and the people His human nature loved with a Jewish heart and His divine nature with the consciousness of choice and covenant.

Is it any surprise then that the Jewish Christians realized only with painful agony that their brethren were not now to join them in welcoming the Good News of the New Covenant? But the realization born of this painful agony was the first step toward the translation of their message for the benefit of others. Their conclusion was that of Paul, that by the nonacceptance of the Jews "salvation has come to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:11); and the significance of Jesus' commission to them to preach "to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk 24:47) was at last understood. They had indeed begun in Jerusalem, but their failure there had eventually forced them to "go forth" unto Jesus "outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb 13:13). The translation of their message—and it was *theirs* for it had been confided to them—was acknowledged as a necessity, not as forced on them by a Jew whose background had influenced him toward paganizing an essentially Jewish theology. James, whose claim to being a Hebrew of the Hebrews was better than Paul's by far, and who lived his whole life in the practice of the Mosaic Law, stated the position of the saddened Jewish Christians when he declared that the process of translation begun by Paul must continue undisturbed (Ac 15:14-21). That Paul himself fully realized the true nature of his task is clear from the way he alludes to it in his Epistle to the Romans. The Gentiles are to be grafted onto the olive tree which belongs, by nature, to the Jews (Rom 11:16-24). The faith of the prophets, consummated in Jesus, is not something to be twisted and turned in order to suit the taste of the Gentile; it is the Gentile who must be made to understand the content of that faith in order to become worthy of receiving it.

For the Jew the Messiah was He who would bring in with a mighty hand the "kingdom of God"—that marvelous order of things "in which God is revealed within human life as the sovereign Lord of all

life" (p. 24). In this the Messiah's action is identifiable with that of God Himself. The function of the Messiah is a divine function. The content of this thoroughly Jewish concept deserves profound meditation, and the riches that it yields surpass all metaphysical speculation. But the Greek mind understood the architecture of reason and not the plummetings of the heart. From the depths of the heart to the heights of reason, then, the idea of Jesus as Messiah had to be brought. St. Paul began the process of translation by identifying Jesus with the creative Wisdom of God, already quasi-hypostasized in the pre-Christian Jewish Wisdom literature. It was an identification that a Jew writing for Jews would probably not have made, not because it was untrue but because it was unnecessary. For the Greek, however, it served as a link to the world of philosophical thought in which he had been trained.

The thesis of Dom Dix that Paul's work was one of translating rather than transforming is borne out by the type of faith which the Christian has in Jesus. It is completely Jewish, not Greek. To the average Greek the gods were very much personalities to be humored for one reason or another. To more subtle minds like Plato's, the idea of God was a cold and distant thing that touched the emotions not one bit. But to the Jew, God was a Person who entered into the whole fabric of daily life, austerely at times but lovingly and pleadingly also. Who can read the book of Jeremiah without being moved by the tenderness of God? God, for the Jew, was a Person to be obeyed, yes, but also to be loved; and this is where the Jew and the Greek part company. Undoubtedly some Greeks and some Romans had an affection for their gods, but it was the affection we all have for eccentric friends. Affection can be detached, love never so. And it is this fundamental relation to God that characterizes the Christian. The translation that Paul began was continued and developed in succeeding centuries, but with it went an ever-increasing intensity of intimate fellowship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The ordinary Christian is quite unaware of metaphysical terminology but he knows, loves, and fears God; and in this he far more closely resembles David and Jeremiah than Plato and Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas could realize that his adaptation of Aristotelian philosophy was "as straw" compared to the reality of God, only because his heart was filled with the rich inheritance of the prophets whose teaching Jesus crowned.

When the body of Jesus' faithful was no longer confined to the

prophesied "remnant" but was growing miraculously with Gentile converts, "the living God" came to be more often called "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus," or just "God the Father"; "the Messiah Yeshua" was called "Jesus Christ the Son of God"; the "Nazarenes" became "the Christians"; "the Scriptures" were known as "the Old Testament"; and "the Israel of God" was usually referred to as "the Holy Church." If, then, strictly Jewish terms gradually gave way to terms more understandable for a wider world, into which the Jewish Christians had faithfully carried the gospel, these new terms were not derived from that world but from the very roots of that same gospel. Far from being a "Hellenization," this process of translation was a "Catholicizing" of the Christian faith (p. 109). Undeniably, the new converts brought into the Church many of the external marks of their pagan environment. But the formality of Roman ceremonial and the sensuousness of Greek appeal to the eyes cannot alter the nature of a chosen people bound together and together bound to God. Nor can these translations of a material order distract from the bald fact that on an altar architecturally pagan the Passover lamb of the New Covenant is sacrificed.

Dom Gregory Dix has given the historical steps upon which the process of translation climbed. I have attempted, in this review, to express—in other words than his for the most part—the basic ideas of his work. He has left us with a valuable contribution to a long-neglected and very elusive period of Church history, and his approach to the problems presented by that first-century span of years is, in every case, mature and resolute. If there is any criticism at all to be leveled against the book, it must be of its brevity. The problems the author poses are not only historical and doctrinal but psychological and ethnic as well, and although he is, as already stated, well aware of this and evidently so in the solutions he gives, nevertheless there is room for the less subtle mind to misinterpret and misunderstand. The Foreword to the book makes it quite clear, however, that the author had every intention of rewriting and expanding the manuscript which he himself "did not consider worthy of publication in the form in which he left it." We can be grateful to his literary executors for disagreeing with that too humble judgment.

J. EDGAR BRUNS

## Martin Buber: TWO TYPES OF FAITH\*

MARTIN BUBER'S book must be welcomed as an invaluable aid to clearer thinking about Jesus and His relation to the faith of those who do or do not recognize in Him the ultimate expression of God's revelation to Israel and the world. As the author says in one place of human nature, that a person has certainty about his nature *as human* only by virtue of the shocks to this certainty, so often we become aware of the true value of our beliefs only through the challenges which they must, inevitably, meet. Not that Buber administers any paralyzing shocks to accepted points of view, but he explores the consciousness of the Jewish and of the Christian faiths so thoroughly that thought patterns are exposed which before had been only vaguely expressed.

Yet before considering the elements of Buber's thesis we must recognize the one defect in his work which colors it with a certain inconsistency. It is his complete reliance on the assumptions of liberal Protestant scholarship in matters of text and interpretation. His acceptance of the arbitrary rejection of whatever does not suit the liberal dogmas is hard to reconcile with the author's otherwise often mature penetration of the Gospel narratives. Liberal scholarship has, in our own day at last, been seen for what it is, an essentially superficial manipulation of what are in themselves elaborately complex problems. Buber speaks of the genuine traditions in St. John's Gospel "which have not yet been adequately investigated, and which only yield their character when translated back into Aramaic or Hebrew" (p. 117), and in this he shows himself aware of the modern respect for the Fourth Gospel. Indeed his frequent use of John implies an apperception of its sincerity which tallies with the view of those scholars who find the personal allusions in John's Gospel so intimate, and the spirit therein so sensitive and delicate, that the pious fiction so often supposed by the higher critics is psychologically unthinkable. But elsewhere he alludes to the "Johannine presuppositions" and prejudices

\* New York: Macmillan Co., 1951.

(pp. 32, 128, etc.). Not that this dependence on liberal criticism is confined to the Fourth Gospel. Quite otherwise. The Synoptics, he thinks, are also overladen with accretions, developments, reinterpretations, and mythical elements. Buber accepts this as a fact; and yet one has the distinct impression, from reading his book, that he accepts these canons of "higher criticism" without building too strongly upon them. With certain obvious exceptions, the Jesus of his book is not the shadowy enigma of the few Gospel fragments left to us by liberal scholars but the very real personality that stands out from an integral reading of all four Gospels. It is almost safe to say that he could not have written this book if the Jesus he had to deal with was the uncertain and undetermined name of the higher critic's fancy.

This much said, we come to a consideration of Buber's thesis and the fabric out of which it is made. The author's wish is to distinguish between two types of faith, the one Jewish and the other Christian, *emunah* and *pistis*. Not, as he is quick to point out, that they are found in their pure state today among either Jews or Christians; the two types are the faith of the Old Testament and the faith of Paul, if both are accurately understood. In this latter sense, then, he presents Jewish faith as something wholly existential: an absolute belief not specified by particular objects, but arising from a personal relationship in which one finds one's self face to face with God primarily by being a member of the community of the people of God, whose faith is based on a collective historical experience. Christian faith, however, is not a state of being but an act: an act by which one believes *this* or *that* to be true. It is of the intellectual order and not a personal relationship. Jesus, the true Jesus of the "authentic" Gospel material, is faithful to the Jewish concept of faith; it is the gnostically minded Paul who introduced the Greek type of *pistis*.

There is, of course, some truth in Buber's thesis, but his lines are drawn too sharply and without much regard for objectivity. He pictures the Jew as one who "feels the nearness of God," who "does not need to be convinced of what he does not see" (pp. 38-39), whereas the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, representing Pauline faith, presents God as "an article of faith" because He belongs to the category of "things not seen" (p. 38). So, in Genesis, Abraham's faith is a "simple face-to-face relationship between God and man," while for Paul, in Romans, it is replaced by "an interpretation which comes about by

faith"; the "dialogical" is replaced by the "mystical" situation (p. 47). In the one case, God simply *receives* Abraham's attitude of faith, whereas in the other, God *imparts* the state of faith.

Here we are at the heart of the problem, for is there any real difference between these two modes of faith? Can there be any relationship between two persons in which "nearness is felt" without mutual giving? The consciousness of being sought inevitably elicits a response. The simple face-to-face relationship cannot exist without interpenetration, and no one receives without thereby giving of himself. Of all the types of faith certainly the mystic's is the most existential, as Bergson has pointed out, and the relationship that existed between God and Jeremiah is not qualitatively different from that which existed between the same God and Teresa of Avila. The morcellation of faith against which Buber reacts so strongly, the fact that this or that should be believed, is not a phenomenon of Pauline origin. The Law of the Old Testament fulfilled the same function for the Jew that dogma fulfills for the Christian. The two are but different manifestations of a divine condescension which recognizes man's need for something to cling to in moments of darkness. Even the mystic has his dark night of the soul when God's presence is felt as anything but near. And Jeremiah is a classic example of the Jewish mystic with precisely such experience. To return to the Law, Buber realizes that the fact of the Law does not harmonize with his thesis, and he tries to evade it by suggesting that the Torah, although it contained laws, was essentially not Law but rather God's instruction in His way (p. 57). No matter! The existence of a particular "way" implies a particularization, a morcellation that cannot be denied.

Buber's selection of Abraham as a type of Jewish faith is a piece of irony. Ironic because Paul, whom Buber resists with such vehemence, chose the same Abraham as an example of simple faith without the Law, the kind of faith that is meant to characterize the Christian. And Paul is correct, for it would be inconceivable for any Jew of biblical times to regard Jewish faith as something divorced from the Law. There is further irony in Buber's consideration of Jewish faith as a "community affair"; not that it is not, but that he implies that Christian faith is not. Perhaps this highlights Buber's lack of familiarity with Catholic doctrine and his too great dependence upon Protestant theology. Catholic teaching, drawing its inspiration in this matter from

the same Paul whom Buber regards as his antithesis, insists upon the community of the baptized in their faith. The doctrine of the Mystical Body is a theology of existential faith *par excellence*. As a distinguished scholar has recently summed it up: "God loves Christ, and Christ loves God; Christ in God loves us, and we in Christ love God" (Victor White in *Love and Violence*, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954, p. 226).

A last word in defense of Paul. To say, as Buber does, that for Paul "one aim of the divine Lawgiver is here set forth as being to make His own law ineffectual" (p. 81) is to do an injustice to the thought of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul says explicitly (Rom 7:12) that the Law is holy, good, and just. Instead of being ineffectual it is most effective, for it forces sin—the drive to deify the ego—to assert itself and thereby to unmask itself. The Law may not be capable of preventing sin, but it presents sin to the conscious self; and what possible relationship—of any degree of sincerity—can exist between God and a man who is not aware of his own tendency to make himself a god?

We can be grateful to Buber for many things, however. Grateful for most of what he says in chapter 7 with its beautiful understanding of the true symbolic value of the Torah; grateful for helping us to grasp the full significance of our Lord's words regarding the fulfillment of the Law (Mt 5:17); grateful for the rich background to the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus which Buber supplies in chapter 11; grateful that he admits to a "fraternally open relationship," growing ever stronger, with Jesus, whose position in history, he acknowledges, is beyond "any of the usual categories" (pp. 12-13). This book is a testimony to the truth of his own statement that Christianity's acceptance of Jesus as God and Saviour is "a fact of the highest importance which, for His sake and my own, I must endeavor to understand" (p. 12).

J. EDGAR BRUNS

## Will Herberg: JUDAISM AND MODERN MAN \*

THIS "interpretation of Jewish religion" is entitled "Judaism and Modern Man," not "Judaism and Modern Jews." It is written, therefore, for all of Mr. Herberg's contemporaries and not merely for his fellow Jews. For what it seeks to establish is the relevance of the Jewish faith for contemporary man as contemporary man and not as Jew or Gentile.

"The whole burden of my 'confession of faith,'" Mr. Herberg tells us in his Foreword, "is that I find the truth of my existence as man and as Jew illumined by historical Judaism in a way that directly compels acceptance—not merely intellectual affirmation but total acceptance as the very foundation of life." This acceptance is one "which involves one's whole being and upon which one stakes one's entire existence. My 'confession of faith' is, therefore, meant as a declaration of total commitment." The "historical Judaism" to which Mr. Herberg thus commits himself is "the religious affirmation embodied in the biblical-rabbinic tradition" (p. ix).

The author confesses his debt to Reinhold Niebuhr, who formed his general theological outlook, and to Solomon Schechter, who made him appreciate how vital, relevant, and contemporary the rabbinic tradition can be. To Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig he owes his basic "existentialist" approach. Evident, too, is the influence of Kierkegaard, Pascal, and, with many reservations, Bertrand Russell. It would be petty to try to count the points in which Herberg's religious convictions stem from post-biblical Judaism and those in which they stem from the Christian tradition. The significance of this book is that a profoundly religious soul has assimilated to his Jewish perspective truth wherever he has recognized it.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part, "Modern Man in Search of the Absolute," is an existential analysis and criticism of contemporary human life. The degradation and depersonalization of man

\* New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951.

implicit in secularism are analyzed, and the inadequacies of the "substitute faiths"—scientism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, nationalism, and racism—are exposed. The author concludes that the "leap of faith" is necessary to give life meaning, "not a leap of despair but rather a leap in triumph over despair" (p. 39). "Through faith," which he calls an "orientation of the whole man," "existence is transposed into a new key" (p. 40). This "postulatory theism," which is an existential necessity—for "we need God in order to be"—is more a decision *for* God than a decision *about* God.

Part Two, "God and Man," points out the relevance of Jewish teaching to individual human life. For God is not a metaphysical principle or an idea in the mind; He is personal, a "Thou." And man is one whose being consists in being-to-another. He is a person whose being consists above all in being-to-the-"Thou" who is the living God. Man is—a Thomist would paraphrase Herberg—a person whose personhood is constituted by a transcendental (not a predicamental) relation to *the* Person. Hence morals are a question of obedience and fidelity, of being established in the face of Another, and not a natural quest for natural self-perfection as in Aristotle. Any such natural ethic is, Herberg holds, one of many instances of idolatry, self-worship.

Part Three, "Religion and Society," discusses the relevance of Jewish teaching to social life. All social relations are grounded on love: the love of God, and of man under God. In the realm we inhabit, the realm of history, the law of love is doomed to merely partial fulfillment. But precisely because one cherishes the whole, one prizes the part that is attainable instead of despairing over the unattainable remnant. Historically, Judaism has been neither a this-worldly naturalism nor an other-worldly idealism but a trans-worldly messianism, an encounter between God and man.

Part Four, "The Mystery of Israel," presents the Jewish faith as redemptive history, or redemption in history, in time. Christianity is seen as "Israel's apostle," as the carrier to the world of the divine truth revealed to Israel. It is through Christianity that Israel brings man to God. "Christianity looks ever *outward* to the Gentiles, who, through it, are brought to the God of Israel. . . . The primary and basic aspects of the vocation [of Israel], the heart of the divine purpose in the calling of Israel—the 'sanctification of the Name'—remains pre-eminently and irreplaceably the responsibility of Israel. To receive and

to cherish the Torah of God, to live a holy life under His ever-present kingship, to stand witness to His word against the idolatries of the world: these are the functions for which Israel is appointed. That this vocation involves suffering and martyrdom all history testifies; how could it be otherwise?" (pp. 272-273).

From the first page to the last *Judaism and Modern Man* is a book of deep faith. In the presence of piety, one is silent. One does not applaud a hymn. But human piety, as Mr. Herberg might phrase it, operates within human limitations. I detect, I think, two such limitations.

The first is failure to do justice to the natural order. Mr. Herberg is no humanist, not even a theocentric humanist. He is so preoccupied with the religious, the supernatural, as to fail to appreciate the natural. God is the author of the book which is revelation, and Mr. Herberg has studied that book painstakingly. But God is also the author of the book of nature, including the powers of human nature, and Mr. Herberg has neglected that.

This anti-natural orientation is evident first in the anti-intellectualism implicit in *Judaism and Modern Man*. Mr. Herberg's piety is a piety of the will—love, obedience, fidelity. One does not discover in him any sheer joy in knowing the truth. He lacks interest in, and sympathy for, the majestic metaphysical and theological tradition of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Maimonides, Aquinas and the medieval schoolmen, Maritain, and the other representatives of classical thought. It is true, and admirable, that Mr. Herberg's sources are, fundamentally, the Old Testament and rabbinical tradition. It is true, also, that a man is free to exclude such sources as he does not wish to use. But every such exclusion is itself a commitment to a position. By selecting the existentialist approach to the Bible and Jewish tradition and excluding all other sources, Mr. Herberg has cut himself off from that uncomplicated love of truth which rejoices in *every* articulation of the truth. His intellectual position is not nearly so inclusive as his ethico-religious position.

Anti-natural orientation is evident, too, in the handling of the difficult problem of self-love. All self-love, we are told, is sinful: specifically, it is the sin of idolatry, of setting oneself up as supreme (pp. 117-121). (Just a little later, on pp. 133-139, we are told that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves—but let that incon-

sistency pass.) Now, many centuries ago, that incorrigible "intellectual," Aristotle, distinguished two kinds of self-love. There is, first, self-love in the sense of loving myself as an individual, loving the *I* as against the *you*: and this, naturally, Aristotle condemned. There is, second, self-love in the sense of loving the nature that is in me: the magnificent light of intellect, the free power of will, the promise of greatness that is human nature—a God-given, God-directed, greatness, the believer would add. This kind of self-love is, as Aristotle pointed out, the very basis of love of others. If I love myself for the sake of the nature that is in me, then for precisely the same reason I must love you, also, who share that nature. Aristotle's analysis here rivals at the very least Martin Buber's much later analysis of the I-Thou relation. For what Aristotle proposes is an I-I relation: that is, the intuition that each man is "I" and that love means that the "I" that is he and the "I" that is I are a "we." The phrase "other I" which is, superficially, a hopeless contradiction is in fact a deep truth once we have understood not the "you-ness" of you as in Buber but the "I-ness" of you. This kind of self-love—the love of the human person as such, and therefore quite as much in myself as in you—is high virtue, not sin.

The natural order is underrated by Mr. Herberg's political philosophy also. He holds the view, which one had thought long since discredited, that government is a consequence of sin (p. 171). It has been shown, by Yves Simon among others, that authority and government proceed precisely from the natural perfection—the intelligence and the freedom—of man, not from his imperfections. It is precisely because each of the people has the mind to see, and the will to execute, the means to the common good as end, that there must exist an agency, government, to determine authoritatively which of the many possible means shall be actually employed.

Like many Christians, Mr. Herberg is disturbed by the blatant secularism of the times: and justly so. Like many Christians, he is tempted to minimize the subordinate autonomy of the natural order as a defense against naturalists or secularists. But it is naturalists, not nature, that have done the damage. Theocentric humanism distinguishes the natural from the supernatural without injury to either. For the natural order is existentially contained in the supernatural even though essentially distinct from it.

Mr. Herberg's second limitation is evident in his view of the relation

of Christianity to Judaism. I do not wish to suggest that his view is false, but it is incomplete on two scores. It is unquestionably correct to say, as Mr. Herberg does, that it is the function of Christianity to bring the world to know, to love, and to live the genuine revelation vouchsafed Israel, without injury to the integrity of that revelation. But Christianity must also bring the world to know, love and live the integrity of revelation as such—from the Law and the Prophets to the Good News. For the Good News, too, is part of the revelation given to the Jews, and is the perfection, the fulfillment of the earlier portion. It is the *whole* of the revelation to the people of Israel that the Church must propagate: ever unspeakably grateful both to the God who gave the revelation and to the people through whom it was given. Mr. Herberg says more than he means to say, speaks more truly than he himself knows, when he says that Christianity is to publish to the world the divine message to Israel.

There is no chapter so haunting as the final one: "The Mystery of Israel." But that mystery is deeper even than Mr. Herberg has seen. In his view, the people of Israel and the Church have different functions: Israel is commissioned, he says, "to sanctify the Name" by its inward life and "to stand witness to the living God amidst the idolatries of the world" (p. 272); while to the Church he accords the mission of converting the Gentiles. But God has been much more lavish in His gifts: He has broken down the division. He is One, and His witness ought to be one.

Whether it is a question of the intellect's love of truth, of the soul's acceptance of revelation, or of man's religious function, it is the same attitude that man must bring to the Lord—openness to all: all truth, all revelation, all functions He may honor us with. In the face of God human selectivity is not permitted.

JAMES V. MULLANEY

## Victor Gollancz: MY DEAR TIMOTHY \*

"I AM desperately anxious that you should understand Christianity, for that, when it comes to it, is what this letter is about; and there are things in Christianity, I feel certain, that can be better understood for a previous understanding of Orthodox Judaism," writes Victor Gollancz on page 111 of this 438-page autobiographical letter to his grandson.

One feels that this letter is addressed to the writer himself as much as to his grandson; that Gollancz's quest is not yet ended, has, indeed, only begun; and that the pages of this volume are like a heap of clothes which the anxious soul is stripping off. For how does one go about the quest for understanding? Perhaps for the modern man there is only one way: to remove, slowly and painstakingly, the cumbersome garments in which he is stifling.

Gollancz's journal, for it is more a journal than a letter, seems at first a rambling series of meditations and observations not just on Orthodox Judaism in relation to Christianity but on everything in the world: on his own birth, childhood, growing up, the opera, music, the love of nature, Oxford, socialism, psychoanalysis, war, poverty, anarchism, vegetarianism, on the atom bomb, on Christ and the Sermon on the Mount.

But if one is patient and waits until he has finished the whole book, one discovers that it has a plan. This plan combines the hard kneeler in the confessional and the soft couch in the analyst's office to expose the naked soul to God. "I have always felt a vast, single, living bliss *behind* everything" (p. 397), Gollancz declares in one place; and in another: "I was on my way to the adoration of Christ" (p. 394).

He was on his way—and this book is the story of such a wayfarer. Beset with painful anxieties, afflicted with inner contradictions, Mr. Gollancz does not spare the reader. Irresolute, at some moments

\* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953.

obdurately self-sufficient, at others crying out with Blake: "O Saviour, pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness and love" (p. 398), the book attains a kind of universal quality as the story not alone of a Jew's pilgrimage toward Christ but of modern man's.

Yet as Mr. Gollancz tells it, one is more exasperated and disquieted than pleased. One wonders: Why is Mr. Gollancz so disquieting? Is it because he is a Laodicean? Terrible words of St. John to the Church of Laodicea: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot" (Apoc 3:15). No—Laodiceans, unfortunately perhaps, are never disquieting. One is usually soothed by the Laodicean—circumspection, moderation, a placidly uncontroversial nature—these all tend to make the Laodicean much praised as an urbane, philosophical, mellow, above all mellow, personality; he is so restful. Mr. Gollancz is not restful.

"Some seed of goodness, mercifully implanted in me as in every other human being, was pushing towards the light through a huge dead tonnage of carnality and unsaintliness: a seed that after another fifty years of struggle and experience is still only an inch or so nearer the goal" (p. 102), writes Mr. Gollancz. He has literally recorded what happens when a "seed of goodness" pushes "towards the light." By documenting all the forward reachings and backward slidings, the cross-purposes of the longing soul and the self-indulgent body, Mr. Gollancz has held a mirror up, not only to himself but to us—and we, fancying ourselves Hyperion, look in and find that a satyr is looking out. Mr. Gollancz is too much *us*. He is too distastefully each one of us who thinks a little, has a slightly sensitive heart, and who somehow through a thick skin has felt the touch of God's index finger. Unable to move, committed to the habits of the world, the torpor of our flesh, those like Gollancz and ourselves are not bound by the great iron bonds of any major vice (these are easier to break sometimes) but by all the small amiable habits, the little silk strings, the thousands of hair-silk strings, of the world in which we live. Yet we are not mindlessly bound, and there is the rub. We think and we feel; we have known the touch of God's index finger on our shoulder and so we twist and turn, groan and weep, cry Yea, cry Nay, and thus exposed in the most pitiful weakness, we are disquieting to others and to ourselves; exasperating to others, disgusting to ourselves.

Victor Gollancz has stripped off his garments and stands naked. And

naked, we do not like ourselves. He does not like himself. Gerard Manley Hopkins movingly describes this condition of the soul:

*I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree  
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me.*

Gall and heartburn is the taste of the natural man to himself *after* he has tasted, perhaps only for a moment, Christ.

"I don't know for how many years now I have been struggling against the conviction that my whole spiritual and intellectual position is false," Gollancz cries out, "and I have been growingly aware of this falseness whenever I have called to mind, for the purpose of this letter, my ideas at various periods of my life. . . . When I come to the final page, shall I find that I have at last been able to conquer whatever it may be in me 'wretched man that I am,' that prevents me from accepting intellectually, and living spiritually, the truths, which . . . I believe I have always known?" (p. 240).

He believes that there is only one answer in a world of atom bombs and starving millions: the answer of the Sermon on the Mount. He demands an absolute living of the Sermon on the Mount: ". . . the absoluteness is everything. I do not believe you can approximate to Christian ethics. . . . You cannot be more or less of a Christian, just as you cannot be more or less of a lover" (p. 239).

He feels that the atom bomb requires absolute pacifism, yet he is not a pacifist; that the hunger of his fellow humans requires the religious "holding of all things in common," but he does not find himself giving up all worldly goods and going to live with the poor. He quotes Bl. Henry Suso picturing the en-Christ-ed soul "as a free and blithesome leader of a choir" of all creatures, of birds, beasts, and fishes (p. 52). And he longs to be a vegetarian, so as not to kill any of God's creatures for food; yet he eats meat.

One is aware that almost from infancy he has struggled with a proud hatred of man's imperfections which has made the Absolute Way seem either *wrong*, or unattainably *dissevered* from man. Thus, in his youth, his father's Orthodoxy gave him "an utter detestation of anything that might fetter the human spirit. Compulsion in all its forms became anathema to me" (p. 106). Because he saw that it was possible to

make religious gestures and yet live unreligiously; that the moneylenders might confess on the Day of Atonement their sin against God and yet "never dream of not going on being moneylenders" (p. 78), he decided that men "would repent more if there was no Day of Atonement" (p. 98). While he sang the *Hallel*, the song of praise to God, "still with its Hebrew words, to the tune of a Christian hymn" (p. 28), he wondered if people would not "thank God more if there was no *Hallel* to sing at stated times on stated occasions" (p. 98).

It is interesting to compare these statements with the writer's remark about his marriage. He describes his marriage as "essentially perfect" (p. 427) although he admits that he was not always a faithful husband.

As the eyes of the body see all objects reversed until the mediating mind corrects the vision, so it is perhaps with the eyes of the spirit, which perceive experience upside-down until grace corrects the vision.

St. Francis de Sales declares in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*: "The proud man who trusts in himself has just reason not to attempt anything. He that is humble is so much the more courageous, the more he acknowledges his own inability." The great saint warns us not to be disturbed at the sight of our imperfections, "for our perfection consists in fighting against them. And how can we fight against them without seeing them, or overcome them without encountering them?"

Perhaps it takes special gifts to be a vegetarian, a pacifist, a conscientious objector. But one can be ignoble, weak, cowardly, full of sin, and still be called to love Christ. As in the "essentially perfect marriage," one who loves Christ may be unfaithful, may commit adultery, and yet be forgiven and in mercy taken back. Perhaps one may not "approximate" to being a vegetarian, one either is or one isn't; one may not "approximate" to being a pacifist—but one may *only* "approximate" to being a lover. One will be "more or less a lover"; one will fall and rise and fall again and Christ will lift one up again, and over and over again all one will be doing will be "approximating" the Lover and through the Lover to Christian ethics. When one has made the absolute choice which puts the Teacher first, then the teaching will no longer be disintegrated in the black currents of conflicting tensions; one will have made the rock.

Victor Gollancz tells his grandson that "Christ, who knew everything, is the safest guide for us here" (p. 281). He loves Him with an

ardent and devoted heart: "He lives and reigns for me eternally; and whether or not I should hesitate to call Him Lord, I can assuredly call Him Master" (p. 402). Yet he wishes to love Christ as *he* wishes to love Him; not as He wills to be loved. And although he declares that "to part with a Christ of our own flesh and blood would be grievous" (p. 401), the Resurrection does not have for him the absoluteness that the "teaching" has; in a sense, he puts the teaching ahead of the Teacher, Christian ethics ahead of Christ.

"In the physical Resurrection I was interested hardly at all," he writes of his experiences at Oxford. And goes on to say: "I feel much the same today, if a little more strongly. . . . I am even readier to admit its possibility; but inclined still more emphatically to deny its occurrence: indeed I am of the opinion, which I hope I shan't be thought offensive for expressing, that no educated man genuinely 'believes in' it now—believes in it (without mental reservations, interpretational gymnastics, or half-conscious self-deception) in the way in which he believes, say, that cruelty is vile. Interest in the matter at all, other than a generalized interest in anything miraculous, derives, it seems to me, from an undutiful repudiation of death—part and parcel, surely, of that very self-centeredness Christ forever rebukes us for: as well as from an overestimation of the body not a bit less lamentable than that underestimation of it so prominent in a lot of Christian sermonising. But the spiritual Resurrection is another matter: this is an undeniable fact, and of supreme importance . . ." (pp. 402-403).

There would have been, there would be, no stumbling block, nothing to overcome in the acceptance of Christ, had it not been necessary to accept fully, completely, with all its *essential* implications, the flesh of Christ. Here, indeed, lies the bone in the throat of all, be they modern skeptics, Buddhists, or medieval Lollards, who believe in a Christ that is spirit but not in the Christ in the flesh—whether they say with the fifteenth-century Lollard: "How can Christ be in the bread on the altar?"; or with Sri Aurobindo and the Buddhists: "What does it matter in the end whether a Jesus . . . was actually born in Nazareth or Bethlehem, lived and taught and was done to death on a real or trumped-up charge of sedition, so long as we can know by spiritual experience the inner Christ, live uplifted in the light of His teaching?" (p. 401); or with Gollancz: "In the physical Resurrection I was interested hardly at all."

Here we have the most exact summation one could possibly find of why Christ is a stumbling block to so many today—their repudiation of the flesh. For no matter how often Gollancz may say that “to part with a Christ of our own flesh and blood would be grievous,” he has nevertheless arrestingly summed up man’s revulsion against the immortality of the body as an “overestimation of the body.” That the *flesh* should be immortal is an offensive thought to many moderns. And yet those who have this revulsion against the immortality of the flesh are the ones most impassioned about the flesh of Mother Nature. Gollancz, who finds the Resurrection an “overestimation of the body,” sings the praises of nature: “All physical things are sacraments, and the world is so beautiful because it is a sacrament of the Supreme Beauty” (p. 22).

But St. John of the Cross says: “Por todo la hermosura nunca yo me perdere—for all the beauty in the world never will I lose myself.”

Immortality in the flowers, the trees, the rich teeming earth—some call this mysticism. People imagine they are glad to die and be born again as flowers. Yet they cannot see how they can rise again in the very flesh. Now, when a radioactive substance is placed in a container, the container itself becomes radioactive. A man will believe that if he has been exposed to atomic energy he will become radioactive and even dangerous to be near; but he will not think God can affect the flesh as much as radium. It seems unbelievable that man so hates, and rebels against, the flesh of his body. This is the rebellion that is at the bottom of all the heresies willing to adore Christ in the spirit but refusing to accept Him in the flesh. Offended by the flesh, Gollancz is, of course, horrified by “institutions”: “I do not believe that the Church—any Church—will ever really be the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is the fellowship, free and almost casual, of all who love Him, and try to follow Him, and would pity and forgive, in His spirit, their fellow human beings” (p. 413).

“To part with a Christ of our own flesh and blood would be grievous.” Victor Gollancz has felt the touch of the Lover. He calls Christ “the Supreme Particular,” and, quoting again from Blake, says that he worships Him not as “a God, afar off” but as “a brother and a friend.” He imagines that Timothy may ask him: “Why Christ? Why not Krishna, or some other Avatar?” And he replies that “on the boy born in Elgin Avenue to his own special heritage . . . Christ’s teaching has

made an impact as of the *utterly* true, Christ's personality has made an impact as of the *utterly* adorable, Christ's living and dying has made an impact as of the *utterly* good" (pp. 398-399).

This is what stands at the heart of the "letter" by a modern grandfather to his modern grandson. All else lies heaped, like worn-out garments, tossed aside. The book closes most appropriately with a quotation from Gerard Manley Hopkins:

*Bad I am, but yet thy child.  
Father, be thou reconciled,  
Spare thou me, since I see  
With thy might that thou art mild.*

*I have life before me still  
And thy purpose to fulfil;  
Yea a debt to pay thee yet:  
Help me, sir, and so I will.*

When one has stripped off the old garments, new are offered, but these are wedding garments meant for a marriage "essentially perfect" in which one will sing the *Hallel* at "stated times on stated occasions" until one wakes to find the stated times and stated occasions have turned into all the time.

CORNELIA JESSEY SÜSSMAN

Robert Graves and Joshua Podro:

## THE NAZARENE GOSPEL RESTORED \*

THE facile and elegant pen of Mr. Robert Graves, which gave us the delightful portrait of the Emperor Claudius in *I Claudius* and *Claudius the God*, has recently been at work, in collaboration with a Mr. Joshua Podro, on a monumental attack upon the historicity of the Gospels. This is not surprising to anyone who has followed Mr. Graves's anti-Christian bias through his other novels. His fictional biography of Christ, entitled *King Jesus*, was but a preparation for this new and professedly serious analysis of the origins of Christianity, and the hostility toward the Christian faith in *Count Belisarius* only foreshadowed the spirit behind the launching of his present broadside.

Briefly, the thesis Mr. Graves has put forth in *The Nazarene Gospel Restored* is that the four Gospels are hopelessly corrupted transformations of an original account of Jesus preserved by oral tradition in the Jewish Christian community at Jerusalem. According to the author, Greek converts to Christianity introduced all sorts of anti-Jewish and purely pagan notions into the canonical Gospels, so that what we have today is a grossly overpainted distortion of the true story of "Jesus the Nazarene." For Mr. Graves, Jesus is, of course, but an ordinary mortal who taught strictly Pharisaical doctrines still recognizable in a few passages of the New Testament. However, the allegedly fictional character of the Gospels has not deterred Mr. Graves from attempting to reconstruct "the authentic" narrative, and after going through the Gospels, as we have them, with his homemade pruning knife, he gives us, at the end of this massive—and expensive—volume, what he claims is the factual story of "Jesus the Nazarene."

In the introduction to his text, the never modest Mr. Graves has warned us in advance that none of the criticisms which will be leveled against his work are valid, chiefly because, to his way of thinking, they can spring only from "orthodoxy," which for him is the same thing as blind prejudice. Yet when the structure so elaborately erected by

\* New York: Doubleday & Co., 1954.

Messrs. Graves and Podro is demolished by someone of the standing of William F. Albright, as it was in the *N. Y. Herald Tribune Book Review* of July 18, 1954, it is not very probable that many people will attribute the demolition to prejudice. Dr. Albright's fame as an unbiased biblical scholar can hardly be called in question, even by the authors of this book. *The Nazarene Gospel Restored* appears to be a work of enormous erudition embracing a variety of sources and painstakingly analyzed Gospel passages in the light of these sources. But here lies its greatest weakness for, as Dr. Albright pointed out, these sources (the Talmud, written 200-400 years after Christ; the apocryphal gospels, clearly legendary; and others) have not been "critically evaluated . . . but are treated as quarries from which to collect speculative building blocks." And once this has been said, no more need be written about the major part of this joint effort. One suspects that Mr. Graves feared this himself when he wrote that "reputable Christian apologists, finding our main theses hard to refute, will either leave them unanswered or else evade the issue by disputing minor points." No doubt the individual Gospel passages which he has submitted to his uncritical dissection constitute "minor points" when taken singly, but as a whole they represent the sum total of all his "main theses"; and just as each one falls short of critical acceptance, so must the whole.

However, for the sake of completeness, it is worth our while to examine some of Mr. Graves's "main theses" and see if they are so "hard to refute." I give here a list of some of the more pertinent ones: (1) The roots of Christianity are to be found in the prophecies of Jeremiah—p. 5. (2) Motives for the extensive distortion of facts by Gospel editors must be looked for in the bitter quarrels that, less than thirty years after the Crucifixion, divorced the Gentile churches from the Nazarene Church headed by James the Just—p. 11. (3) Jesus, an apocalyptic Pharisee whose message was neither unorthodox nor original, came by a series of accidents and misunderstandings to be posthumously worshiped as a heathen god, and was only then rejected by His own nation—p. 14. (4) The four canonical Gospels developed by accretion until about A.D. 130, and their text was not established even then, as is proved by important variants found in the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus—pp. 39-40. (5) Jesus regarded the Mosaic Law as immutable. He did not quarrel with the

Pharisees—pp. 793-794. (6) Jesus neither preached to the Gentiles, nor encouraged His apostles to do so, nor showed any concern for their fate—p. 795. (7) Catholic Christianity combines the Aramaic apostolic tradition with Paul's "heretical teaching" and with extraneous and alien religious theory derived largely from Alexandrian Gnostic philosophy by way of the Gospel according to St. John—p. 794.

We can be very grateful to Mr. Graves and his collaborator for having given such importance to the prophecies of Jeremiah, for it makes the task of those who disagree with them so much easier. The book of Jeremiah is indeed of paramount importance in any study of Jesus and His doctrine. A close study of this great prophet will reveal a remarkable parallel of spirit and career with that of Christ, and it is no coincidence that when He asked His disciples whom men said He was, they answered: "Some say Jeremiah" (Mt 16:14). But it is the very similarity between Jesus and Jeremiah, the evident influence that the latter had upon the former, and the reflection of it in the life and words of Jesus, which make it impossible for Him not to have recognized His call to fulfill the most striking of all Jeremiah's prophecies—the prophecy of the end of the Mosaic Law and the giving of a new Law, one that would be written in the hearts of men (Jer 31:31-34). On Mr. Graves' own admission, Jesus "as the King-Messiah had to follow a rule of conduct laid down by the prophets" (p. 794). This being so, it is strange to hear him asserting the immutability of the Mosaic Law in the eyes of Christ. It is not merely Christian but Jewish theology as well which teaches that with the coming of the Messiah comes also the revelation of a new Law. (See, for instance, Julius Greenstone, *The Messiah Idea in Jewish History*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1906, p. 100.) And Jesus certainly did consider Himself the Messiah, as even Messrs. Graves and Podro will allow. The statement of Jesus to the Samaritan woman that "the hour is coming when neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, will you worship the Father" (Jn 4:21) is in perfect harmony with the prophecy of Jeremiah that "in those days they shall say no more: the ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they make mention of it; neither shall they miss it; neither shall it be made any more" (Jer 3:16). Yet it was precisely this sort of statement that aroused Jewish officialdom against both men and that explains, so very simply, their respective fates. The great lengths to

which our authors go to "prove" that no friction existed between Jesus and the Pharisees could as well be extended to the history of Jeremiah, and with equally distorted results.

Neither is it possible for Jesus, who embraced so completely the words and works of Jeremiah, to have been, as our authors assert, utterly unconcerned about the fate of the Gentiles. Jeremiah predicted the conversion of the Gentiles at the very moment he foretold the disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant and its future unimportance (Jer 3:16-17). And elsewhere he painted a picture of the Gentiles confessing the emptiness of their idols and accepting the satisfying fullness of the true God (Jer 16:19). In agreeing, then, with Messrs. Graves and Podro that the roots of the Christian faith and way are to be found in the prophecies of Jeremiah, indeed more than they realize, we have been able to refute not only their first thesis but also, in principle, two of the others, the fifth and the sixth.

The second and third theses listed above are very closely related to one another and underlying both is the assumption that the doctrine of the "Nazarene" church differed substantially from that of the Gentile churches established by Paul and other Hellenized missionaries. "Bitter quarrels" and a series of "accidents and misunderstandings" changed the primitive "Nazarene" gospel to the speculative Greek theology taught by the Church today. This is what our authors say. Fortunately, this particular period of Church history and the problems it presents have but recently been subjected to the searching scholarship of the late Gregory Dix. There is no need to repeat here what I have recorded elsewhere in this volume about his findings. Suffice it to say that instead of "bitter quarrels" there was but a bitter realization on the part of the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem that their brothers in the flesh were not to follow them in recognizing Jesus as the Messiah; and that once this realization dawned upon them, they freely, if reluctantly, acknowledged the lead of the Gentile churches. "Accidents and misunderstandings" there must have been, but they were not, as our authors assert, relative to Christian belief in the person of Jesus. The true content of Jewish doctrine about the Messiah awaited translation into Greek forms of thought, but the Jew who recognized in the Messiah the awaited manifestation of God's personal activity in a world to be renewed did not believe a different article of faith from the Greek who recognized in Jesus the Messiah the only and truly begotten

Son of God. As Dom Dix so wisely points out, the Jewish mind was interested in the deeds of God, His action in history; it did not ask metaphysical questions. The Greek mind did. But this certainly gives no excuse for calling the precise metaphysical formulation of the nature of the Messiah, corresponding to the Greek mentality, a distortion.

The fourth and seventh theses listed above also belong together, since they concern themselves with textual criticism. Unfortunately for our authors, the statement that the canonical Gospels did not reach their present form until the middle of the second century must be greeted with a sad sigh. Such wishful thinking was part and parcel of the mental baggage of "higher critics" fifty or seventy-five years ago, but today it is not well received by anyone with standing. In *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1946, p. 297), Dr. Albright concludes, after a careful evaluation of all the available evidence and the critical theories based upon it, that the Gospels reached their present form "not later than about 80 A.D." The recently discovered Egerton Papyrus and The Rylands Papyrus 457, both dating from the middle of the second century, solidly confirm—small as they are—such a date. What Messrs. Graves and Podro call "the important variants" in the Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus can be seen in any critical edition of the Greek text, and it can safely be said that no one who comes to them fresh, with an unprejudiced mind, will consider them sufficient to warrant even the suspicion of a justification for this thesis. For these variant readings consist chiefly in unimportant omissions; they are not—as the wording of our authors would lead the general reader to believe—positive details which lack support elsewhere among the early manuscripts. In fact, it is real irony to hear these two codices, so universally acknowledged as witnesses to the integrity of the present text of the New Testament, called forth as witnesses to its corruption!

The further assumption that what we have in the Fourth Gospel is "Greek" and "Gnostic" is also contradicted by the most recent views and finds. Even if Goodenough is not correct in thinking that John is the most primitive of the Gospels, certainly all agree today that John is clearly Aramaic in thought and expression; and Dom Dupont has lately demonstrated in his *Essais sur la christologie de saint Jean* (Bruges: Abbaye de St. André, 1951) that the basic ideas in John,

such as Word, Life, Light, far from being "piracies" from Greek philosophy or Gnostic mysticism, are rooted developments of Old Testament themes entirely independent of extraneous influence.

And then there is what Messrs. Graves and Podro like to call the "heretical teaching of Paul." Nothing whatever in the portrait they painted of the Apostle even resembles history; it is simply a caricature. But for a moment we must turn our attention to the most novel of all their conjectures about him. It is the assertion that Paul was really a Greek named Solon who had adopted Judaism and was subsequently, on the road to Damascus, *frightened* into becoming a Christian by his meeting with a Jesus who had not really died on the cross. If Paul's Jewish faith had been the choice of an opportunist, as Messrs. Graves and Podro would have it, then it would have shown up where the subconscious reveals itself. Yet in his letters, the man who writes about the flesh and its role in life is a Jew through and through, not a Greek. A Greek, even when a convert to Christian belief, would subconsciously play down the lower tendencies of the body. The Greek regarded the body as a beautiful instrument of pleasure. Once baptized, he ceased to treat his body as an instrument of *uncontrolled* pleasure, but he never ceased to praise its merits. Paul, however, brought up under the Law which—quite unlike Greek practice—never stops surrounding the body with regulations, limitations, and punishments for their violations; brought up further to regard the display of the naked body as something shameful rather than beautiful, constantly reflects this state of mind throughout his writings. It is not that the Jew dishonored his body, or despised it, for, if a Pharisee, he believed in its eventual resurrection, but he realized its potency for self-destruction. The Greek looked outside of fallen nature, to evil Fates, for the causes of destruction. This was an important psychological difference and one, among others, that distinctly characterizes Paul as a Jew.

That there are problems in the New Testament no one denies, but they are, with very few exceptions, not the ones Messrs. Graves and Podro have imagined. True, the book evidences a great deal of hard work on the part of this unusual team of a clever historical novelist and a scholarly Jew. But we feel that the publishers have shown considerable wisdom in their flyleaf description of it as a piece of "historical imagination." And we can only agree with H. John McLachlan, writing in the *Hibbert Journal* of April 1954, who called it, in the

words of Stuart Piggott, "a mixture of real fact, misunderstood fact, pure supposition, and a reckless jumping to exciting conclusions." Yet a question remains. What made Mr. Graves write this book? Could it be that he wished to change the story of Jesus because he finds the story as it is too demanding? Why was he so eager to play the "restorer"? Could it be that he is afraid to meet the true Restorer?

J. EDGAR BRUNS

## NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HOLY SCRIPTURE is generally quoted, in this volume, according to the Confraternity version of the Bible, or, in the case of the books not yet published in that version, according to the Douay. Yet there are a number of exceptions. When the context seems to require it—as, for instance, in the article on “The Jewish Burial Service,” in order to bring out the poetic qualities of David’s dirge over Saul and Jonathan—a special rendering is essayed. When the version used by an author writing in a foreign tongue conveys a nuance that would otherwise be lost, the text that served him is rendered into English. This is particularly true of Father Bertram Hessler’s “Kōhelet: The Veiled God”; the passages from the book Kōhelet are translated from the German original of his article, with an eye, however, on the original Hebrew. Abbot Butler, in his “According to Matthew,” usually follows the Knox translation, but often, in order to make clearer the individual character of St. Matthew’s Gospel, offers his own rendering. The prophet Isaiah is almost always quoted according to Dr. Kissane’s translation. In quotations from Jewish authors, from the Talmud, or the Jewish prayerbook, their wording is retained.

No matter which translation of Scripture is used, chapter and verse are cited in accordance with the Confraternity version or, in lieu of it, in accordance with the Douay. In transliterations of Hebrew and Greek, no attempt has been made to render all the complexities of the original. The system followed for Hebrew is, in general, that of *The Jewish Encyclopedia*; the system followed for Greek is, with minor modifications, that used by Webster’s *New International Dictionary*, second edition. Biblical names are given in that English form most closely approximating the Hebrew. The abbreviations of books of the Bible are those used by *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, edited by Dom Bernard Orchard and published by Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. (London, 1953).

Raïssa Maritain’s “Abraham and the Ascent of Conscience” is a slight revision of her *Histoire d’Abraham*, published in Paris in 1947, translated by Father William L. Rossner, S.J. “The Learned Elders of Zion” by the late Father Pierre Charles, S.J., originally appeared in the January 1938

issue of *La Nouvelle revue théologique*, which is under the direction of several professors of theology of the Society of Jesus at Louvain. It has been translated and footnoted by the Editor and is introduced by Father William Granger Ryan. Father Bertram Hessler, O.F.M., first published his "Koheler: The Veiled God" in *Theologie und Glaube* (XLIII, 5), edited by the Faculty of the Archdiocesan Philosophical and Theological Academy of Paderborn; it has been translated for this volume by the Editor. "The Trial of the Messiah" by Dom Hilaire Duesburg, O.S.B., was published in the March-May 1954 issue of *Bible et vie chrétienne* (Editions Casterman, Paris) and, in a slightly altered form, in *Les Grands procès de l'histoire* (*Vérité et Vie*, Strasbourg, XXIII, 215). The present translation by Father Edward A. Synan is a composite of both versions.

We acknowledge with thanks the graciousness of the publishers who have permitted us to quote from copyrighted works: Librairie Gallimard, Paris, *La Connaissance surnaturelle* (1950) by Simone Weil; Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, *The World of Sholom Aleichem* (1943) by Maurice Samuel; The Noonday Press, Inc., New York, *Burning Lights* (1946) by Bella Chagall; Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, and G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, *Waiting for God* (1951) and *Gravity and Grace* (1952) by Simone Weil; and Sheed and Ward, Inc., New York, *Aspects of Buddhism* (1954) by Henri de Lubac, S.J. We are grateful also to those who have kindly permitted us to reproduce the four plates of Marc Chagall's paintings.

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