MARTIN BUBER AS INTERPRETER OF THE BIBLE

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AS

INTERPRETER OF THE BIBLE

By

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To the memory of my

beloved mother

Betty Toni Egert Landesman

of blessed memory

ביילא טובה

בת אברהם אריה וצירל דבורה

March 9, 1909 - April 5, 1982

Her religious ideals and intellectual

searchings are a constant inspiration.

תהא נפשה צרורה בצרור החיים

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ABSTRACT

The writings of Martin Buber have had an impact in many areas. Theology, philosophy, educational theory, psychotherapy and biblical studies have each culled insights from his wide-ranging works. While Buber's interests have been diverse, however, a major part of his efforts has been expended in explicating, exegeting, translating and philosophizing about the Hebrew Bible.

This thesis describes and analyzes Buber as an interpreter of the Hebrew Bible. It is not a sustained critique of his theology and philosophy and their effect on biblical interpretation, but rather a discussion of his use of theological and philosophical concepts in interpretation and the problems arising therein.

Buber has often been understood as being antinomian in respect to the biblical tradition and the concepts of Judaism which grew out of that tradition. This thesis focuses upon and calls attention to the traditional elements as they appear within the methodology and content of Buber's interpretations, especially in regard to prophecy, the election, nationhood and land of Israel, and kingship and messianism. In so doing, it evidences a perception of Buber as a tradi-

tional Jewish thinker. Buber as biblical interpreter is set against Maimonides and Nahmanides as a means of ascertaining the traditional components. The antinomian aspects and their implications are also analyzed.

The thesis demonstrates the strong presence of traditional elements in Buber's biblical interpretations, elements, however, which are often distorted because of Buber's rejection of the rabbinic tradition. The thesis concludes that the antinomian aspects are not overcome by the traditional components, and so remain effective in Buber's writings.

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My husband and life-partner, Henoch, together with our children, Sara Chana, Naomi Ora and Eliyahu Mayer, have formed the matrix out of which this work was able to be realized. Their love took on many aspects: enthusiasm, encouragement, empathy, patience and understanding. To them, my gratitude and love are deep, intense and ever-increasing.

Parents, the Talmud states, join with God in the creation of each child. My mother, of blessed memory, an immigrant from Poland to the United States in 1930, possessed a love of knowledge, an intellectual curiosity, a commitment to Jewish tradition and an appreciation of culture which she transmitted to all her children. In a very real sense, this thesis represents her legacy to me. The sorrow at her death two years ago is diminished only by the knowledge of the palpable pleasure this accomplishment would have brought her.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis demonstrates that antinomian aspects remain operative in Buber's thinking on the Bible because they are not surmounted by the traditional components. The scholarly literature on Martin Buber is replete with assertions that Buber is antinomian in respect to biblical tradition and the concepts of Judaism which grew out of that tradition.[1] While scholars acknowledge that he is genuinely inspired by traditional elements, they argue that Buber stands outside the tradition itself. This thesis focuses upon and describes both the traditional and antinomian aspects of Buber's thinking as they appear in the context of his formulations in respect to prophecy, election, kingship and

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[1]See, for instance, G. Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism," On Jews & Judaism in Crisis (New York: Schocken Books, 1976); Eliezer Berkovits, Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism (New York: Ktav Pub.), p. 104f., p. 114f.; Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Buber and Post-Traditional Judaism: Reflections on the Occasion of the Centenary of Buber's Birth," European Judaism, XII (1978), 2; Shemaryahu Talmon, "Martin Buber's Ways of Interpreting the Bible," Journal of Jewish Studies, XXVII (1976), 2; Nahum N. Glatzer, "Buber as an Interpreter of the Bible," The Philosophy of Martin Buber, ed. Paul A. Schlipp and Maurice Friedman (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Emil L. Fackeheim, Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 96.

messianism.

Buber unequivocally rejects rabbinic authority. He is definitely at odds with Jewish tradition. Yet he presents a hermeneutic for reading the Bible that is often a valuable tool and yields good insight. This hermeneutic is the I-Thou. Despite his best efforts, however, it seems to lead to an aberrant Judaism. In examining in what ways Buber is traditional or antinomian in respect to the biblical tradition, what is at stake is the I-Thou relation: does a definite religious tradition with definite content and communal structure come out of that which the I-Thou entails?

The concept of tradition in Judaism is a wide one, delimited, nonetheless, by specific parameters. The tradition stresses God's leadership of His people, His dialogue with them, and His demand for decision and action as response. Jacob Katz begins his study of Jewish life at the end of the Middle Ages by stating:

> The concept 'traditional society' is employed in this book to denote a type of society which regards its existence as based upon a common body of knowledge and values handed down from the past.[2]

Tradition, according to this broad definition, consists of values and a common literature which are transmitted

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[2]Jacob Katz, Tradition and Crisis (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1976), p. 3.

from generation to generation. The original source of the literature is revelation, which acts both as a basis and a link in the chain of tradition. The act of revelation remains the transcendent foundation, while the content of revelation becomes part of the continuity of the tradition itself. Tradition is the funnel through which the Absolute Presence becomes known to a people. It is the reflection upon and interpretation of the Absolute Word. The very concept of tradition implies historical consciousness, and the content of revelation becomes part of the content of the traditional consciousness as it moves through history.[3] The act of revelation, in establishing a Divine-human relation, necessarily entails a "speaking" and a "hearing," a dialogue in which God is Commanding Presence.

> A Divine-human relation unstructured by commandment would alternate between times of inexpressible meaning and times of sheer waiting for such meaning.[4]

In Judaism, the "inexpressible confirmation of meaning," which is the Presence of God,[5] does assume expression.

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[3]See Nathan Rotenstreich, Tradition and Reality (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 13. Also Gershom Scholem, "Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism," The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 284.

[4]Emil L. Fackenheim, "Judaism and the Meaning of Life," Quest for Past and Future (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 248f.

[5]Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 158.

The Divine-human encounter has both structure and content. God's confirmation and acceptance of man is manifested in His commanding finite man and calling for the response of appropriation and obedience. God thus makes man responsible; in his freedom, the human creature is responsible before God. Thus the mystical or ecstatic experience is rejected in the tradition. Although there is no rigid consensus on what constitutes the tradition, the following are sine qua non: revelation assumes structure and content; structure and content are transmitted from generation to generation, through individual appropriation; all human actions make reference to Jewish law. Tradition demands a concept of revelation in which consciousness and content pervade one another. Mystical views of tradition tend to submerge consciousness in God rather than place it facing the word of God. Rabbinic Judaism maintains the necessity of mediation in man's relationship to God; the tradition itself is the mediator.[6]

Antinomianism, in its strict sense, is a term generally used to denote the opposition of certain Christian sects to the Law, that is the revelation of the Hebrew Bible. Such sects held that faith alone was necessary for salvation. The wider meaning of antinomianism is opposi-

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[6]Gershom Scholem, op. cit., p. 292.

tion to law in general, "especially a religiously inspired rejection and abolition of moral, ritual and other traditionally accepted rules and standards."[7] Although originating in early Christianity, Christian theological antinomianism found its strongest advocate during the Reformation in the person of Johannes Agricola, an adjutant to Luther. Luther characterized Agricola's writings as antinomian, identifying them with the political anarchism of the Anabaptists. In the Jewish theological tradition, latent antinomianism is to be found in the mystical writings of the Kabbalah.[8] These writings aimed at strengthening Jewish religious tradition by focusing upon the symbolic value of the precepts. Actual antinomianism manifested itself only in the radical groups of the Shabbatean movement, especially the Frankists. As it took form in these fringe groups in Judaism, antinomianism was associated with those who sought to break the tradition. The rejection of the ceremonial law by the modern Reform movement in Judaism can be regarded as a form of antinomianism.[9] In respect

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[7]Gershom Scholem, "Antinomianism," Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1972), Vol. 1, p. 67.

[8]Ibid., p. 70.

[9]Ibid.

to Jewish law, antinomianism is non- (if not anti-) traditional. There can, however, be a strongly developed, philosophically supported concept of autonomous law, such as in Kant or Hermann Cohen. This would indicate that the non-traditional is not necessarily antinomian. In the writings of Martin Buber, a propensity towards antinomianism[10] has caused rejection of the rabbinic tradition. Buber is antinomian in the sense of rejecting the legal theory of the authority of God and the recorded rabbinic tradition. Antinomian here has the connotation of anti-authoritarian (even anti-heteronomous), i.e., someone else having authority over the individual. The I-Thou enables Buber to see some rich aspects of the Bible, but at the same time blinds him to others. This becomes a problem for Buber, because a careful analysis of the I-Thou demonstrates that, in the end, for Buber, law is generated from oneself. Still, Buber is able to penetrate and see clearly certain traditional concepts as presented in the Bible. He revitalizes aspects of the Jewish tradition. His penetration and insights, however, while illuminating in some areas, twist other elements of the tradition out of their proper relation. The same antinomian bias which caused

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[10]Such proclivity is also in evidence in his writings in areas other than biblical studies and Judaism. See, for instance, "Education," in Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 83-104.

Buber to reject the rabbinic tradition leads to a distortion of traditional concepts. The sense of public meaning which is the essence of community continuity is undermined. To Buber, God can never be a lawgiver. Buber's concept of God and of the Divine-human meeting are at the center of the problem of his relation to the Jewish tradition.

In speaking of antinomianism as the opposition to law in general, law is conceived of insofar as law is Torah, i.e. the communication of God to the Jewish people. This includes, but is not restricted to, the promulgation of set ethical and ritual practices. It is also characterized by the setting forth of a mission and a promise, as in the concepts of the land of Israel and the ultimate redemption.

The argument of this thesis is developed in the following way. Chapter I describes the I-Thou, I-It dynamic, which is the essential analytic tool Buber uses in approaching the biblical text and some of the concepts derived from the text. Three areas in which problems arise in regard to the working out of the I-Thou are then discussed. These are: does Buber succeed in overcoming the subjective-objective dichotomy; is the concept of community, especially a faith community, a legitimate child of the parents, I-Thou; and did Buber really reject and put aside the mystical ideas of his early years, as he claimed. This chapter indicates some of the difficulties implicit in the I-Thou

hermeneutic in order to make clearer the problems that will be shown to exist when Buber's I-Thou becomes a method of exegesis in his biblical studies. Prophecy, the election, nationhood and land of Israel, and kingship and messianism are the seminal aspects of the Bible and its derivative concepts Buber chooses to probe.

Chapter II begins by stating Buber's concept of prophecy. The description proceeds chronologically, beginning with the early essay, "Jewish Religiosity," first published in 1916. It examines "Biblical Leadership" (1928), "Abraham the Seer" (1939), The Prophetic Faith (1942), Moses (1945), and "Prophecy, Apocalyptic and Historical Hour" (1954). In this detailed overview of Buber's writings on prophecy, the traditional and anti-authoritarian elements begin to make themselves apparent.

The traditional components are God's accompanying leadership, the people's loving devotion, and the zealous demand for decision. God is He who addresses man in the immediacy of dialogue, calling forth a response and a resolve to actualize His Presence through human action. Buber opens himself to the charge of antinomianism because he does not believe authentic inwardness can exist within the boundaries of heteronomous law. This change may or may not be true depending upon whether revelation, as

Buber conceives it, has any content. The strong propensity for human decisions and divine commandment to intersect[11] is one way Buber attempts to resolve this difficulty. The attempt at resolution is not successful, however; it is rather a circumvention. The dialogue between man and God, Buber insists, remains free from "dogmatic encystment."[12] The prophetic encounter, then, as the example par excellence of dialogue and as an essential form of revelation, is completely non-prescriptive. For Buber, the results of a prophetic man-God encounter are a sense of presence and direction. In the traditional viewpoint, however, instruction and prescriptive content are equally essential elements. The antinomian aspects of Buber's conception of prophecy derive from an underlying notion of revelation which must accord with an understanding of law as autonomous. The concept of revelation, as delineated by Buber, is then submitted to rigorous analysis.

In distinguishing the traditional from the antinomian in Buber's formulations, it is important to be cognizant of the very wide latitude entailed by "the traditional"

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[11]This is implicit in Martin Buber, Moses (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. 170.

[12]Buber, "Prophecy, Apocalyptic, and the Historical Hour," On the Bible: Eighteen Studies, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 177.

within Judaism, and to view Buber within its parameters. For that reason, Chapter II continues with a discussion of and comparison with Maimonides' conception of prophecy, and an exposition of prophecy as formulated by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Both are considered to fall within the category of traditional thinkers, as "traditional" was defined earlier in this thesis. Given their treatment of prophecy within the tradition, Buber is seen to have retained some traditional elements, while remaining antinomian in regard to others.

Chapter III sets forth Buber's concepts of the election, nationhood and land of Israel. It examines the I-Eternal Thou encounter relevant to the faith community. An examination of Buber's writings on Zionism and of various related essays show him to adhere to the traditional conceptions. Such adherence is surprising, considering the strong individualism built into his philosophical premises. The particularism of his Zionist stance does not fit well with the theoretical structures of dialogue. Structure, particularity, and specific goals seem antithetical to open-endedness and spontaneity as authenticity. One might have expected Buber to concur with Hermann Cohen's view of the need for Jews to be spread throughout the world to make universal the ethics of the Bible. In fact, however, Buber argued strongly against this proposal.

After stating Buber's understanding of the election, nationhood and land of Israel, these concepts as set forth by Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (known by the acronym, Nahmanides) noted medieval philosopher and exegete, are described. Like Maimonides and Soloveitchik, Nahmanides is a thinker fully within the tradition. Seen side by side, the traditionalism of Buber's notions becomes clear. At the same time, however, the differences between Buber and Nahmanides disclose an undercurrent of antinomianism in Buber that is retained. This undercurrent is most obvious in the meaning of terms such as "covenant," "normative," and "command of God." The difficulties stem, as in Chapter I, from Buber's understanding of revelation.

Chapter III concludes with an analysis of the two-fold problem posed by Buber's dispute with Hermann Cohen. First, why does Buber reject an individualistic interpretation of Judaism, stressing, instead, nationhood and land? Second, does this Jewish nationalism signify an inconsistency in his philosophical premises? The discussion begins by setting forth Cohen's position, and Buber's objections to it. The grounds of Buber's argument are then examined by analyzing the premises upon which Buber's concept of the individual is based. The discussion of the individual includes and encompasses the problems of revelation and of moral autonomy/anarchy and heteronomous moral law. Then

the notion of community is explored, and finally, that of a specific land for a specific people.

It is demonstrated that the traditionalism of Buber's concepts of the election, nationhood and land of Israel can only be justified if the antinomianism of his philosophical premises is limited by a reading of the Bible that assumes the transmission of a specific content. Carried to its logical conclusion, Buber's anti-authoritarianism does become an extreme individualism. Yet Buber remains traditional in regard to these concepts. This traditionalism, however, is weakened by an antinomianism that, despite significant, if unsystematic, modifications, remains functional.

The traditional and antinomian aspects of Buber's understanding of kingship and messianism are the focus of discussion in Chapter IV. The chapter argues that Buber stays within the parameters of the tradition except for the issue of law, which is seen to relate back to the concept of revelation. It is in this area that Buber's anti-authoritarianism continues to make itself apparent. The outlines of the talmudic notion of messianism are set forth, as are the views of Maimonides and Nahmanides, and those of Gershom Scholem. Then Buber's discussions of messianism in Kingship of God (1932), The Prophetic Faith

(1942), the later essays, and Two Types of Faith (1951) are analyzed. It is seen that Buber's notion accords with that of Maimonides in terms of its strong anti-apocalypticism. A significant difference emerges, however, in regard to the understanding and function of law. Both traditionalism and antinomianism, therefore, remain functional in Buber's thinking.

In the significant biblical concepts as they appear in his writings, Martin Buber manifests a traditionalism that has led him to be called "The greatest Jewish thinker of our generation."[13] He has a profound grasp of the Bible as spoken word, discerning nuance and accent with subtlety. But it is this very emphasis on the Bible as a document of dialogue that brings about the antinomianism which is palpably present in all his discussions. One might dispute the strongly-put statement of Gershom Scholem, that ". . . Buber is a religious anarchist and his teaching is religious anarchism."[14] It is clear, however, that the traditional

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[13]James Mulenberg, "Buber as Interpreter of the Bible," The Philosophy of Martin Buber, ed. Schilpp and Friedman (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), p. 382.

[14]Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Interpretation of Hasidism," The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 245.

elements of his biblical interpretations are weakened by an antinomianism that remains constant and strong. Tracing the traditional and antinomian aspects of his thinking in regard to three areas of biblical concepts is the task at hand.

Chapter I

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DIALOGUE

Martin Buber's distinctive teaching lies in the concept of the I-Thou relation. The I-Thou is the fulcrum which supports all other aspects of Buber's thinking. Before discussing the use of Buber's theological and philosophical concepts in his biblical interpretation, it is important to state and describe the teaching in I-Thou and to explore some of its implications.

The book I and Thou, published in 1923, testifies to the preceding stages of Buber's development, especially Christian mysticism and Hasidism, and furnishes insights that were developed in his later works. At a time when religious faith was in disrepute, philosophical idealism was dead, and the only certainty seemed to be that of science. Buber pursued in the book an original vision that he hoped would overcome the disastrous and unfruitful dichotomy of the categories of subjective and objective. Edmund Husserl, for instance, had also attempted to deal with the problem. In contrast to Husserl and others, however, Buber brought to this impasse in the history of philosophy the perspective of religious faith. Buber's attempt to transcend the oppositions of subjec-

tive-objective, immediate-mediated, direct-inferential has as its goal the demonstration of the legitimacy of the religious experience. By positing a realm of Being that is neither subject nor object, the sphere of "the Between," Buber initiated a second Copernican revolution. He endeavored to go beyond the Kantian categories which had deeply influenced his thinking.[1]

Buber teaches that there are two types of relation one may establish with another, namely, an I-it and an I-Thou. Indeed, "The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude."[2] This opening sentence of Buber's slim volume indicates immediately that the starting point is neither theology nor metaphysics, but philosophical anthropology. The world is considered as it appears to the human being. An I-It relation occurs when I use the other or know the other in an attitude of objective detachment. Even if the other is a person, I am not open to him as a person, but treat him as an object. When using the other in this way, I remain unengaged. In the I-it relation, abstraction prevails. Use of an object entails not its unique

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[1]See Robert E. Wood, Martin Buber's Ontology: An Analysis of I and Thou (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. xii, 35f., 92.

[2]Martin Buber, I and Thou, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Chrles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 53.

aspect but merely its kind. The unique individuality of the object or of the I that relates to it is not part of the I-It category. "The world as experience," Buber states, "belongs to the basic word I-It."[3] Buber's term for "experience," Erfahrung, is a play on fahren, meaning "to travel." To travel is to experience the surface of life. This is in contrast to Buber's term for the I-Thou, which also means "experience:" Erlebnis, from leben, "to live," which connotes genuine living.[4]

The I-Thou relation stands in stark contrast to the I-It. It is characterized, above all, by mutuality. The other is for me, but I am also for the other. This being-for-the-other occurs within the relation of dialogue, which is a relation of address and response-to-address. The other addresses me and responds to my address. According to Buber, the other, while usually a person, can be an inanimate object or even the Absolute Person, the Eternal Thou, God. Indeed, the Eternal Thou is glimpsed in every I-Thou relation.

> In every sphere, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it; in every You we

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[3]Ibid., p. 56.

[4]See Robert E. Wood, op. cit., p. 40.

> address the eternal You, in every sphere according to its manner.[5]

Abstraction, which necessarily characterizes the I-It relation, is not part of the I-Thou relation. The partners must be in the communication. In addition, the immediacy of the encounter engages the entire person. And since the relation of dialogue is mutual, both persons involved must be in a state of complete openness. The I and the Thou of every genuine dialogue are unique.

This genuine dialogue can occur only because the I is not a self-sufficient substance. That which the I becomes is always dependent upon the relationship into which it enters. In the I-Thou, one becomes an I by virtue of the relationship to a Thou. Since it is not possible to constantly remain in the I-Thou state, one naturally falls back into the I-It, in which observation and manipulation prevail. Both the I and the Thou, however, are constituted and attain self-sufficiency within the total, immediate, mutual engagement that is authentic dialogue. At the same time, it is that which exists in relation, the "Between," that is the essential component in the I-Thou relation. Buber attempts to describe the

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[5]Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 57. Kaufmann translates "Thou" as "You." See his "Prologue" to I and Thou, pp. 14-15.

"Between" in the following:

> The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination; and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness. No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation . . . Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounters occur.[6]

The "Between" is the arena of presentness. It is a dimension which has increasingly diminished in the life of Western man. While Buber recognizes the important role objectification plays, its categories have become so overextended that the ability to move from the realm of It to that of Thou has been calcified. Buber's prescription for man is to recover this capacity for wonder, presence and real living. With such an enlarged capacity, true religious faith becomes possible.

Three questions arise from confronting this basic outline of Buber's most essential concept. These specific inquiries are necessitated by the topic under investigation: Buber as interpreter of the Bible and the biblical tradition. First, did Buber succeed in overcoming the subjective-objective, immediate-mediated, classifications of human experience in philosophical thinking and vali-

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[6]Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 62f.

dating the existence of a significant third realm, the "Between"? Second, can Buber's I-Thou serve as a firm foundation for the concept of community he puts forth? This question is of particular significance since community (as contrasted with collectivity in Buber's writings) is a fundamental component in the development of religion. Third, did Buber repudiate the tendency toward mysticism he manifested in early adulthood, or does it still remain a subterranean but powerful force in his philosophical formulations. He was drawn to the writings of the German mystics, especially those of Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme, and his doctoral dissertation for the University of Vienna (1904) was entitled The History of the Problem of Individuation: Nicholas of Cusa and Jacob Boehme. He immersed himself for five years, between 1903-1908, in an intense study of the writings of Hasidism. The theoretical underpinnings of the Hasidic movement are to be found in the Kabalah, Jewish mystical texts. His mystical proclivity culminated in the publication of Daniel in 1913. Influenced also by the Eastern religions, particularly Taoism, Buddhism and the Hindu Vedanta, each of Daniel's five "Dialogues on Realization" deals with a particular philosophical problem: direction, reality, meaning, polarity and unity. Much in Daniel may be

viewed as an immature formation of the I-Thou, which was to be clarified by Buber in 1923. On its own, however, Daniel conveys a subjective, mystical emotional tone. In I and Thou and later essays, Buber specifically rejected the mysticism he had earlier embraced. That God's immanence is fulfilled, His glory realized, when man responds to His address; that the I-Thou relation cannot be articulated but merely pointed to, leaving man to find within himself the act that fits the Presence he encountered: these have philosophical implications that cannot be ignored.[7]

While each of these three questions stands independently, there is nonetheless a close correlation among them. The ramifications of each will be explored. First, I-Thou relation is not subject to time-space coordinates, which dominate the world of It. This means that it is exclusive: "No thing is a component of experience or reveals itself except through the reciprocal

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[7]For some critical discussion see Robert E. Wood, op. cit., pp. 92, 105; Eliezer Berkovits, Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism (New York: Ktav, 1974), pp. 86-100; Maurice Friedman, "Introduction" to Martin Buber, Daniel (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), pp. 3-44.

force of confrontation."[8] All else is colored by the actuality of the relation. The I-Thou relation cannot be explained, articulated or described by invoking "the world of ideas,"[9] or rational discourse. Similarly, it is not reducible to feelings: "The essential act that here establishes directness is usually understood as a feeling, and thus misunderstood."[10] Rather, within the encounter both partners retain their own subjectivity, which is illuminated and clarified by the spontaneity, openness and mutuality of the relation. The "Between" encompasses both subject and object. Thus Buber uses I-It language to describe both what the I-Thou is and what it is not. Buber here posits a new dimension of reality.

Whether or not the theoretical outlines of this dimension can be validated, however, is subject to dispute. Based on Buber's own premises, communication between the I and Thou occurs in utter presentness: "It is not in the law that is afterward derived from the appearance, but in the appearance itself that the

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[8]Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 77.

[9]Ibid., p. 65.

[10]Ibid., p. 66.

being communicates itself."[11] But does the presentness of the "Between" overcome the dichotomy of subject-object? True encounter has no "law" and no "contents."[12] It reveals a Presence that assures meaning. The meaning, however, is not directly conveyed; that would be "contents." Rather, it is decided by man when he responds to the address of dialogue in the freedom of his choice. Meaning emerges from man's chosen course of action as the concrete outcome of genuine dialogue. In an I- Thou encounter with the Eternal God, verification of meaning is realized by confronting the Absolute Presence. But in the freedom, autonomy and mutuality characteristic of the encounter, it is man himself who chooses that to which he commits himself in response to the guarantee of meaning.

Second, the knowledge gained through the I-Eternal Thou encounter, or revelation, is dialectical. It demands a place for the reality of the Absolute Thou, yet insists that this encounter provides the agency through which man turns back on himself. The significance of the self-discovery that occurs is guaranteed by the I-Thou rela-

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[11] Ibid., p. 90.

[12] Ibid., pp. 63, 90.

tion itself. Self-discovery is the foundation of the anthropological character of the I-Thou relation, and is the source of the problem regarding subjectivity. If the I-Absolute Thou relation is taken as paradigmatic of the epistemological model Buber is putting forth, it is seen that God is the guarantor of human authenticity, but once this authenticity is established, the issue remains completely within the anthropological dimension. As Buber says in Eclipse of God, "We are revealed to ourselves, and cannot express it otherwise than as something revealed."[13] Knowledge of self and cognizance of God coalesce, so that man's freely chosen actions become the discovery of a Divine truth.

The act one chooses, in full freedom and responsibility thus poses certain difficulties. For how does one ascertain that one's response, or responsible action, is valid; that the meaning one has received and acted upon is authentic? Man's intuition (reason being part of the I-It) becomes the source of his own approbation. Put another way, Buber posits a connection between fate and freedom.

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[13]Martin Buber, Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), p.99 .

> Fate is encountered only by him that actualizes freedom. That I discovered the deed that intends me, that, this movement of my freedom, reveals the mystery to me.[14]

That is, there is a deed, hidden somewhere is the concrete world, waiting to be done by me and destined for me. Yet I am completely free to choose it from among the unlimited range of possible deeds. I must choose, act, and discover meaning. But how do I know I have chosen correctly? Man's response to encounter is invited, indeed demanded. But when it occurs, how is it validated? Man is left with his own experience of the meaningfulness of the course of action he has chosen. Thus the objective dimension in the subjective-objective dichotomy Buber is attempting to overcome is considerably weakened, for the process of authenticating God's meaning becomes completely self-validating.[15] Indeed, when Buber writes, "Genuine subjectivity can be understood only dynamically, as the vibration of the I

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[14]Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 102.

[15]See also Eugene B. Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 139-141; Eliezer Berkovits, Major Themes in the Modern Philosophies of Judaism, op. cit., pp. 76-89; Robert E. Wood, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

in its lonely truth,"[16] he is not merely stating the existentialist axiom of man's utter inner solitude. He is, rather, indicating that the I that discovers meaning subsequent to an I-Thou encounter is both the source and the validating authority for that meaningful action. Its "truth" can be affirmed neither by another person, the community, nor the Eternal Thou. The "holy insecurity" is man's alone. Personal authority is paramount.

While this brief description of a particular problem inherent in the I-Thou relation does not suggest a resolution, it does make more clear that Buber did not completely succeed in overcoming the various dichotomies he sought to unify by positing the realm of the "Between." The connections and interplay between subjective-objective, immediate-mediate and direct-inferential remain problematic. The Bible itself holds a tension between man as solitary and as communal, but does not collapse the tension. Buber, however, allows one side--the solitary--to take over.

The notion of community constitutes a second area in which the ramifications of the I-Thou require clarification. In the "Second Part" of I and Thou, Buber is concerned to apply the concept of dialogue to institutions.

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[16]Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 113.

The I-Thou may be seen as a defense of the person, the singular self, in a world in which collectivity, technology and large institutions have diminished, if not denigrated, the significance of the individual. What is needed, Buber teaches, is the formation of "true community." This comes about in two ways:

1) People "have to stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to one another."
2) "A community is built upon a living, reciprocal relationship, but the builder is the living, active center."[17]

In a faith community--indeed Buber would say in any true community--the "living, active center" is the Eternal Thou, God. Buber recognizes that communal life, like that of the individual, must involve the I-It dimension.

> Man's will to profit and will to power are natural and legitimate as long as they are tied to the will to human relations and carried by it.[18]

But the primary characteristic of communal life is that each member is bound to the community in the same way that each person is bound to another and to the Eternal Thou.

Buber designed an epistemology in which self-discovery coalesces with discovery of God. Similarly,

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[17]Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 94.

[18]Ibid., p. 97.

he created a concept of community in which the I-Thou encounter, an occurrence of singular solitude, is also the source for the individual's membership within a group ("singular" meaning a unique relational occurrence without the pressure or active presence of other people). It may be asked: is the fact that others have also had I-Thou encounters sufficient to bind a group and form a community? Community, Buber states, exists only where "the spirit that says You" is dominant.[19] But can the transition be made from the pronouncement that "Spirit in its human manifestation is man's response to his You"?[20] For the I-Thou is an encounter in isolation from other people. No one else can understand it, or validate the action that derives from it. Indeed, when personal authority always takes priority over the authority of the group, can "true community" or religious tradition be said to exist? Buber's own statements emphasize the religious faith of the solitary self rather than the individual as member of a community. The parameters of the I-Thou relation with God draw the person out of the context of community to that state in which the ego in its

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[19] Ibid., p. 93.

[20] Ibid., p. 89.

wholeness and aloneness confronts the subject of total otherness in God. Buber's notion of community, because it derives from the I-Thou, contains a powerful personal component that does not fit well with the corporate dimension that is necessarily part of community structure. While a genuinely inspiring concept, it is not readily assimilated into the notion of a faith community or even of an ethical secular community.[21] Solitary man overshadows communal man. Robert E. Wood points out, for instance, that according to the dynamics of the I-Thou "morality has to be grounded ever anew in presence,"[22] and that this creates the rather odd circumstance of finding in Buber situation ethics with an absolute principle.[23]

In Between Man and Man, Buber states:

> . . . as we have seen, the depths of the question about man's being are revealed only to the man who has become solitary, the way to the answer lies through the man who overcomes his solitude without forfeiting its questioning power.[24]

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[21]For further discussion see Eugene Borowitz, op. cit., pp. 143-146; Eliezer Berkovits, op. cit., pp. 94-100.

[22]Wood, op. cit., p. 104.

[23]This specific problem, as well as that of the more general notion of community, will be discussed further in Chapter III.

[24]M. Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 199. See also pp. 30-33.

The emphasis on the solitary individual is obvious. Buber's desire is for the person to retain the benefits accrued to the I from within the I-Thou, and incorporate them within the larger social structure. Perhaps in accord with his disdain for prescriptions,[25] Buber offers few guidelines as to how this transition ought to occur.

A third aspect of the I-Thou to be dealt with here is that of mysticism. Buber's explanations and protests nothwithstanding, is there a residual or more direct undercurrent of mysticism in his central notions? In the "Third Part" of I and Thou, Buber posits the unconditional exclusiveness and inclusiveness of the I-Eternal Thou relation. God is both wholly other and wholly present.[26] Not only does man need God as the ground of his discovery of self, but God also needs man "in the fullness of his eternity."[27] Buber wants to say that God needs man, but does not want to indicate a lack in God, the usual corollary of need. So he writes ". . . God needs you--for that which

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[25]Examples of this disdain are: "Duties and obligations one has only toward the stranger; toward one's intimates one is kind and loving," I and Thou, op. cit., p. 157. "No prescription can lead us to the encounter, and none leads from it," I and Thou, op. cit., p. 159. See also On Jewish Learning, ed. N. N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books), p. 111.

[26]Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 127.

[27]Ibid., p. 130.

is the meaning of your life."[28] He thus leaves the issue unclear and unresolved. Buber argues against man's relationship with God as one of dependence or creature-feeling, insisting that either of these options "deactualizes"[29] one partner of the relationship, i.e. the I, and thus the encounter itself. Dependence or creature-feeling would limit the autonomy, freedom, and wholeness of man as subject confronting God as subject. A similar situation occurs if immersion or descent into the self are considered the primary elements of the religious act. Immersion assumes that the human I loses its I-hood, so to speak, and merges into God. The duality of the I-Thou is dissolved in a kind of ecstasy. The descent into self asserts the human being as the Divine, also dissipating the reciprocity of duality. Each propounds a coming together of universe or Divine and self. Buber explains this mystical doctrine as an attempt to describe how unity within duality feels, but he maintains that in neither case is unity actually attained.

> What the ecstatic calls unification is the rapturous dynamics of the relationship; not a unity that has come into being at this moment in world time,

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., p. 131.

> fusing I and You, but the dynamics of the relationship, itself . . .[30]

If he who gives a verbal account of the mystical experience, however, describes it as unity in duality, can Buber legitimately affirm that it is otherwise? Buber wants to assert the universality of the I-Thou category, and demonstrate its applicability even within classical mysticism. He does not demonstrate, however; he merely posits. He does explain that one cannot adduce evidence to prove or disprove the doctrine of the identity of the self and the universe, but that it either conceals the kernal of the notion of I-Thou or indeed obliterates altogether the possibility of lived actuality.[31]

The difficulty of Buber and mysticism, however, does not revolve around the problem of whether or not he sufficiently engaged and argued against classical doctrines of mysticism as a means of defending the actuality of the dimension of "Between." Rather, what must be asked is: what are the epistemological implications of terming the Absolute Thou "Presence"; and what is implied by the notion that God needs man, His immanence being fulfilled when man responds to His address.

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[30]Ibid., p. 135.

[31]Ibid., p. 136. See Robert E. Wood, op. cit., pp. 93-100.

Stating that the Absolute Thou in an encounter is "Presence," that dialogue means an "event" has taken place and not the transmitting of content, is also to affirm that all I-It language, all talk of logic and criteria, is out of place. But an "event" also has to be made sense of. Also, any valid account of the Absolute Thou must include some objectivity concepts, some identifying predicates which are appropriate to God's ontological status. Even in a dialogical framework this issue is important, for how else can one deal with philosophical considerations of identification and re-identification, continuity and discontinuity, permanence and impermanence? The consequences of the God language that comes out of the I-Absolute Thou relation are significant.

In addition, the very statement that "I encounter Thou," the claim that dialogue is true meeting with the Other, is hard to maintain when this meeting is described as a-spatial, a-temporal, and non-experiential in all the ordinary senses. The notions of "Thou," "relation" and "encounter" cannot have substantive meaning to them if they are denied all empirical content. The very language of I and Thou is reminiscent of poetry: evocative, associative, metaphorical and analogical. But Buber tells us

that I-Thou "establishes a mode of existence;"[32] it does not point or allude to another reality. Given the unclear, intuitive notion that I-Thou thus appears to be, it is not unfair to Buber to claim that in true dialogue man is left at a mystical peak. He attains a zenith he cannot share with anyone, since no predicates apply to it. The action growing out of dialogue cannot be justified in any terms but his own.

The allusiveness, inarticulateness, and intuition of the I-Thou are characteristic of classical mysticism. The notion that God needs man is derived from the Kabalah, the body of Jewish medieval mystical writings that formed the theoretical foundation for Hasidism in the eighteenth century. Hasidism placed a strong emphasis on the immanence of God as a task. Through man's actions, the divine in the world must be made stronger and more pure. Man becomes a partner with God in the perfection of the world, leading toward redemption. Thus the stress in Hasidism is on strengthening the internal meaning through devotion to the eternal act. This emphasis becomes a concept that finds expression in many of Buber's writings.

Two difficulties emerge from this concept. First, the external act viewed as strengthening God's presence

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[32]Ibid., p. 53.

in the world in Hasidism was never only an act chosen by the individual. It was a ceremonial act, like celebrating Passover, which was commanded and then imbued with greater meaning through special preparations or study on the part of each person. Or it was an ethical act, like giving charity, which acquired particular import by the same means. For Buber, however, God's immanence in the world is increased and verified by the act freely chosen by man subsequent to an I-Thou encounter. The context is much altered in Buber. Hasidism places individual religious acts in the framework of an on-going transmitted religious tradition, while Buber calls on each person to act alone based on his intuitive choice. A second problem arises from the concept of God's need and immanence coupled with Buber's axiom that the I-Eternal Thou encounter is both exclusive and inclusive. Eliezer Berkovits criticizes Buber, maintaining that this combination leads to a pantheism.[33] Berkovits claims that the difficulty described earlier, that man's chosen action coalesces with his knowledge of God, follows logically from the pantheistic notion that all I-Thou encounters with people or objects in some way partake of the I-Eternal Thou meeting.

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[33]Berkovits, op. cit., pp. 96-97, 126-127, 133-136.

Since the same Presence is everywhere, discovering one's true self becomes the same as acting upon divine law. What man wants to do and God wants man to do are the same. Therefore, the heteronomy-autonomy issue in ethics is avoided. Berkovits argues strongly that the Otherness of God cannot be maintained given the premises Buber puts forth. He is correct in that a strong pantheistic element is present in Buber's under-developed ontology and metaphysics. While his criticisms are not all successfully argued, they are important for highlighting the pantheistic tendencies in Buber's basic concepts.

In Between Man and Man Buber writes:

> Since 1900 I had first been under the influence of German mysticism from Meister Eckhart to Angelus Silesius, according to which the primal ground (Urgrund) of being, the nameless, impersonal godhead, comes to "birth" in the human soul; then I had been under the influence of the later Kabbala and of Hasidism, according to which man has the power to unite the God who is over the world with his shekinah dwelling in the world. In this way there arose in me the thought of a realization of God through man . . .[34]

These influences are present and still to be felt in Buber's writings.

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[34]Buber, Between Man and Man, op. cit., pp. 184-185.

In positing the I-Thou and I-It, Buber's thought bears witness to the fact that there are essential distinctions in reality and that we have access to them. The notions that distinguish the strata of reality are tools of analysis used by Buber throughout his many works. The I-Thou serves as a hermeneutic in Buber's reading of the Bible. It is a methodological incisor which serves to collapse the very carefully worked out tension the Bible maintains between the solitary and the communal aspects of human experience. The I-Thou causes a letting down of the tension, with the individualistic, subjective side gaining the upper hand. It is for this reason that a brief description, as well as an indication as to some difficulties implicit within it, are required prior to dealing with the specific task of this study, which is concerned with the use of Buber's concepts in his biblical interpretations.

Chapter II

PROPHECY

Introduction

As Gershom Scholem has pointed out,[1] the dictum formulated by the young Buber in an early essay, "Not the forms but the forces,"[2] remained a fundamentally unchanged stratum upon which the various themes of Buber's thought were ultimately rooted. Creation, formation and renewal later became, for Buber, the concepts of realization[3] and dialogue. Throughout his life, Buber remained an advocate of those transforming moments when creative energies surge forth and new forms are born; only in rare moments did he express interest in the established forms which, worthy of awe yet subject to decay, bind the human community in

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[1]Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism," On Jews and Judaism in Crisis (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 133.

[2]Martin Buber, "Jewish Religiosity," On Judaism, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 93.

[3]As developed in the "Early Addresses" in On Judaism and formulated in Daniel: Dialogues on Realization (1913). The concept of realization was later disavowed by Buber for various reasons. But its fundamental core was absorbed into the conception of dialogue as put forth in I and Thou (1923).

the long intervals between creative explosions.[4] Buber's attraction to the "forces" and his difficulty in accepting the established "forms" is analogous to the dual underlying concepts of antinomianism and traditionalism which characterize his exploration of biblical prophecy. While the traditional elements manifested are strong, they are weakened by antinomian aspects that are equally powerful. This chapter will demonstrate the presence of these strains in Buber's understanding of prophecy.

The biblical figure who, perhaps more than any other, encapsulates the revolutionary message of the Bible is the prophet. The prophet, for Buber, is a paradigm of "the primal Jewish religiosity." Prophecy and the prophets represent the historical aspect in which this primal religiosity is most distinctly manifested. It is therefore worthwhile, before examining Buber's notion of prophecy, to describe, albeit rather briefly, the conception of religiosity.

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[4]An early expression of such interest occurs somewhat parenthetically in the essay "Jewish Religiosity," part of the "Early Addresses, 1909-1918" in On Judaism, op. cit., p. 91. Buber writes: "To be sure, to manifest itself in a community of men, to establish and maintain a community, indeed, to exist as a religion, religiosity needs forms; for a continuous religious community, perpetuated from generation to generation, is possible only where a common way of life is maintained."

In the same essay in which Buber formulated the slogan cited above, religion and religiosity are defined and contrasted. Buber's delineations express in but another form the underlying attitudes of advocacy of the forces of renewal and cautious disparagement of the forms which eventually structure and contain those forces.

> Religiosity is man's sense of wonder and adoration, an ever anew becoming, an ever anew articulation and formulation of his feeling that, trandescending his conditioned being yet bursting from its very core, there is something that is unconditioned. Religiosity is his longing to establish a living communion with the unconditioned through his action, transposing it into the world of man. Religion is the sum total of the customs and teachings articulated and formulated by the religiosity of a certain epoch in a people's life; its prescriptions and dogmas are rigidly determined and handed down as unalterably binding to all future generations, without regard for their newly developed religiosity, which seeks new forms . . . religiosity is the creative, religion the organizing, principle.[5]

Judaism, according to Buber, is founded on the fundamental perception of unconditionality as the a priori condition for all action. Demand and struggle, and their concommitant uncertainty, are the hallmarks of the specific religious content of Judaism. Moses, as the founding

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[5]Martin Buber, "Jewish Religiosity," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 80.

leader and first prophet, is "the man of demand" who "acknowledges only the deed;"[6] through his efforts Jewish religiosity comes to challenge both the individual and the newly-liberated community. What is unique and "specifically Jewish" in the prophetic message, according to Buber, is "the postulate of decision," the "unconditioned deed" which "reveals the hidden divine countenance."[7]

It is interesting to note that all of Buber's writings on prophecy (and on most other biblical themes as well), with the exception of the essay discussed above, occur after the beginning of his association with Franz Rosenzweig and their subsequent collaboration on the translation of the Bible into German. The essay is significant, therefore, for its adumbration of notions that are more fully developed in Buber's later writings.

Prophecy in Buber's Early Writings

In "Biblical Leadership," a lecture given in 1928 and published in German in 1933, the discussion of prophecy is continued. Both introducing it and intertwined with it are delineations of Buber's notion of history and of how this notion influences his understanding of the biblical

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[6]Ibid., p. 88.

[7]Ibid., p. 89.

text. Whereas nineteenth-century biblical scholars, Buber states, were "concerned with proving that the Bible did not contain history, the coming era will succeed in demonstrating its historicity."[8] By this is meant that the descriptions and narratives of the Bible "are the organic, legitimate ways of giving an account of what existed and what happened."[9] Biblical narratives, often called sagas or myths, consist essentially of memories which are actually transmitted from person to person. Buber's contention is that the Bible is the mythical or literary product of a great oral tradition. The memory which shapes the biblical content, however, operates under a "law,"[10] one which structures a unique, living conception of history.[11]

This law, first of all, selects biblical leaders who are elected and appointed by God; such men are

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[8]Martin Buber, "Biblical Leadership," On the Bible, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 137.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., p. 139.

[11]Although in this essay (ibid., p. 138f) Buber claims that "it is quite impossible to extract any so-called historical matter from the Bible" based upon the usual criteria of what constitutes the historical, he does, in fact, in both The Prophetic Faith and Moses (see Introductions) attempt to go back to "the historical core."

innovators, beginners. Secondly, it states that both nature and human history are of God. It is Buber's perceptive (although not unique) insight that while chapter one of Genesis describes the coming into being of the natural universe, chapter two, which portrays the same creation, describes the coming into being of the historical world. A third characteristic of the law under which the biblical memory which constitutes the biblical narratives functions is the criterion of selection. While in world history it is the strong and successful who are elected, attain power and exert influence, in the biblical sphere precisely the opposite obtains. It is the weak and humble, those who struggle and often fail, who become biblical leaders.

The Bible, as Buber repeatedly asserts, describes stages in a dialogue between God and the people. It is not only the document of a dialogue, but indeed of the dialogue, the foremost conversation, so to speak, that ever occurred between the transcendent Creator and a people. The leaders in the Bible fall into five basic types, each according to the differences inherent in the successive concrete situations encountered during the various stages of this dialogue. The five are: patriarch, leader (in the original sense of one who leads the wandering), judge, king,

and finally, prophet.[12]

Biblical leaders foreshadow the dialogical man, the man who commits his entire being to God's dialogue with the world. The outstanding characteristic of these leaders is their acceptance of "responsibility for that which is entrusted to them;" their attempt to realize the command and the request "in the autonomy of their person."[13] It is because of this very task that biblical leaders are usually cut off from or drawn out of their natural communities.[14] Isolated from their natural environs, battling against it in some manner, "they experience the inner contradiction of human existence."[15] This alienation is felt most intensely by the prophet. Appointed to oppose the king, summoned to speak against the will of the people, the prophet suffers and is viewed as an enemy. It is this role of the prophet--and his consequent hardship--which "join together to form that image of the servant of the Lord, of his suffering and dying for the sake of God's purpose."[16]

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[12]Ibid., pp. 144-150.

[13]Ibid., p. 149.

[14]Buber gives the examples of Abraham and Jeremiah, ibid. Moses, however, is equally paradigmatic.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., p. 148. The theme of the prophet as suffering servant is more fully developed by Buber in The Prophetic Faith, Chapter VIII.

The biblical understanding of history is that it consists of a dialogue in which man or the people is addressed, but fails to answer. Nonetheless, the people, in the midst of its failure, continually rises up and attempts to respond. Biblical history is the record, often unwritten or merely alluded to, of God's disappointments, of His way through mankind until the eventual overcoming of history. The prophet is one of His agents in this long struggle.

It is upon the foundation established in these two essays that Buber's later studies of the Bible are based. They illustrate his early concern with dialogue, unity and prophecy (in "Jewish Religiosity"), and the further amplification of these concepts following the publication of I and Thou in 1923, and the beginning of the Buber-Rosenzweig collaboration in 1925 (in "Biblical Leadership").

In the early thirties, Buber planned a three volume work on the subject of messianism, to be entitled Das Kommende. The first volume, Konigtum Gottes, appeared in 1932. The second volume, called Der Gesalbte, was half finished in 1938 and had already been set in type when the publisher, Schocken Press of Berlin, was officially dissolved; Buber, in that year, fled to Palestine. Sections from the uncompleted second volume have been published in

several journals. The fundamental ideas of the projected third volume are contained in The Prophetic Faith, first published in Hebrew in 1942. Buber's next writing that bears directly on the notion of prophecy, however, was written soon after his arrival in Palestine. Fundamentally an essay of biblical exposition, "Abraham the Seer"[17] discusses the historic origin of prophecy as manifested in the man Abraham and his mission. In a manner similar to that evidenced in the 1928 lecture/essay, "Biblical Leadership," there is an implied polemic in this essay. Buber is concerned, once again, to counteract the prevailing view of nineteenth century biblical scholarship, which denied the historicity of the man, Abraham. The story of Abraham, it was held, could not be based on a family tradition about a tribal patriarch, since it was believed a priori that "no people preserved such stories." In addition, it was asserted that the account of the fathers had originated in much later times because of the dearth of literary documents of the earlier periods in Palestine.[18] Buber once again offers

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[17]Originally published in Hebrew as "Shelihut Avraham," in Haaretz, Tel-Aviv, 1939. Published in German in 1955, and translated into English from the German by Sophie Meyer in Judaism, V (1956), 4. Reprinted in On the Bible, ed. N. Glatzer, pp. 22-44. Transliteration of Hebrew throughout the text will follow the general format of the Encyclopaedia Judaica, Index, p. 90.

[18]Buber, "Abraham the Seer," Judaism, op. cit., p. 291.

his thesis that the Bible is a record of an oral tradition that maintained itself for hundreds of years.

The story of Abraham can be correctly understood only in relation to its place in biblical history. It stands between the story of the failure of the first human race and the story of the growth of the people of Israel in response to a specific call and a unique promise. The place of the Abrahamic tales within the sequence of biblical history requires of them, according to Buber, a threefold task. First, they must make manifest the relation of Abraham as a new beginning to the "fallen nationless humanity." Second, they must show the road taken by Abraham as he follows the divine call and lives out the divine promise. And third, they must present, through the various events in the life of Abraham, the symbolic history of Israel. For Abraham's personal mission and biography adumbrate that of his people.

Buber's exegesis of the various Abraham episodes shows a feeling for the nuance of biblical text that is a mark of excellence in a commentator. Abraham is called a "seer" because the Hebrew root r'h, meaning "to see" repeatedly appears in all the events and encounters of

his life. The seven revelations to Abraham,[19] incorporating both trial and blessing, are shot through with the sight of He who sees, of Abraham who sees and of that which is seen.

Abraham is first called a navi, a prophet, in Genesis 20:7. When God is speaking to Abimelech regarding the restoring to Abraham of Sarah, his wife, He states, "because he (i.e., Abraham) is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee." The episode with Abimelech occurs immediately following Abraham's intercession on behalf of Sodom. It is because of the compassion manifested by Abraham in the confrontation with God over Sodom that he has taken on the stature of a prophet. Although the story of Abraham and Sodom and that of Abraham and Abimelech are, Buber states, attributed to two different sources,[20] such a theory fails entirely to grasp the meaning of the text. The sequence of the text is clearly intended to state "that it is by virtue of a man's compassion, and his fearless intercession in the face of God for the object of his compassion,

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[19]Genesis 12:1-3; 12:7; 12:14; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1; 22:1 (Even though the third revelation is printed in both Judaism and On The Bible as 12:14, it is clear from Buber's description that it must be 13:15-16.

[20]Buber, "Abraham The Seer," op. cit., p. 300.

that prophecy came to be."[21] The tradition itself, Buber insists, offered the Abrahamic material in such a way as to cause this meaning to be present in the biblical text. Source theory cannot adequately account for Abraham's elevation, nor for the intricate, exact pattern manifested in the structure of the seven revelations.

In I Samuel, 9:9 we are told, "The prophet of our day was formerly called a seer." Although Abraham becomes the first prophet, from the first moment he "saw" God, he was a "seer." The story of Abraham merges three traditions: the first, the origin of the people; the second, the mission of this people; and the third, the birth of prophecy. Through biblical exegesis then, Buber has shown the Abrahamic tales to be a literary document intimately unified by theme, structure and language, and has explained the first manifestation of prophecy in the Western tradition.

A Discussion of The Prophetic Faith

The Prophetic Faith continues the explication of prophecy, the origin of which was described in "Abraham the Seer." Buber attempts two tasks in this work. The writing prophets convey a unique teaching, that of the relation between the God of Israel and the people Israel. This teaching, however, is not new. Tracing the formation of

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[21] Ibid., p. 301.

this teaching, its historical manifestations, is the first task. To do this, Buber proposes to go back to a "safe starting point,"[22] one against which literary criticism cannot find convincing evidence, in order to locate in time the beginning of this faith. The second task works in the opposite direction. It commences at the beginning of the history of Israel's faith, and investigates how the starting point of faith became a complete teaching. Historical descriptions of the actual teachings of the prophets are given, showing how the teachings developed and broadened as the practical conditions of the people changed. It is in this connection that prophecy becomes, at some point, associated with the future. When the prophet promises deliverance, however, he does so with the presupposition that the nation will enact teshuvah, "returning." That is, prophecy does not foretell a fixed, future event, but assumes the power of the people to decide its own fate and act accordingly. The first task analyzes the manifestations of prophecy until arriving at the beginning; the second synthesizes them, making clear the various ramifications and nuances which constitute the working concept of the prophetic faith of Israel.

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[22]Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, trans. Carlyle Witton-Davies (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 1.

The methodological questions arising from this dual procedure are several, and Buber is quick to discuss them at the outset. He believes that the Bible has several authors, or groups of authors, who wrote during different historical periods. But it is clear, he asserts, that due to the problems of fixing the dates of great sections of the Bible, it is not possible, even using accepted principles of linguistics and literary history, to clearly distinguish literary development from religious development. That is, the description of an event of an early religious stage may seem to have been composed later. This may mean that the earlier concept was put in literary form later, not necessarily that the concept is a later one. Religious ideas, Buber is saying, do not parallel literary and religious development. The problem of this development becomes that of the tradition itself.

The history of Israel's faith, it is clear, begins with the recorded events of the patriarchs, the early chapters of Genesis indicating the Hebrew conception of universal themes. The records of the tradition as contained in the Bible represent "a vital kind of history memorizing."[23] Buber asks whether or not it is possible

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[23]Ibid., p. 5.

given the lack of what we would call "objective" accounts, to separate out the historical content from the various forms this memorizing took. It can be done, he states, on the basis of one or more of four criteria. First and most simply, indications of the social-cultural background point to a specific historical core: politics, economics and geography are usually history-specific. The second criterion does not concern external events as they relate to other cultures or geographical area. Rather, it emphasizes the religious act or relationship under examination, and inquires "whether in the period under discussion there exists the religious act or position."[24] This standard of evaluation is internal, necessitating comparison of earlier and later stages of religious development. But it also requires external criteria: what is the usual, normal, standard or even possible religious acts, ceremonies or positions that could co-exist during a specific period; do they (or does it) relate in a logical manner to earlier and/or later manifestations of the religious consciousness? This criterion, which is important for Buber's exposition, is not explicated in a sufficiently rigorous manner. The "inner media of the history of religion"[25] remains too

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[24] Ibid., p. 6.

[25] Ibid.

vague a criterion by which to assess adequately the question of historical content.

Buber terms the third standard "uniqueness of the fact."[26] To be used only in cases of unusual significance, this criterion requires "scientific intuition" for its correct application. It is Buber's contention that various events or deeds in the history of religion are of such uniqueness that they must be regarded as fact even if not amenable to rational formulation, theories of folklore, etc. It is thus "intuition," not cognition, that recognizes and accepts the concreteness of certain facts and relationships. Buber is here formulating a methodological procedure for dealing with the brute fact of religious belief. A tradition bases itself on an event in its early history. Scientific intuition compels us to recognize as fact the consequences and workings-out of that event, and thereby to deduce the concreteness of the original occurrence. Although not historical proof in its strict sense, this intuitive criterion is necessary, according to Buber, for dealing with manifestations of a tradition in the history of religions.

Although not specified as a fourth criterion, Buber's conception of the "Biblical spirit," does consti-

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[26] Ibid.

tute a separate means of evaluation. The "Biblical spirit" is a "composition tendency, a unity tendency"[27] that pervades the entire compendium of biblical books. The earliest, as well as the latest sections of the biblical text manifest the unity of one spirit and one idea, that of the prophetic faith of Israel. In examining the various editorial tendencies of the text and approaching the components of the tradition, "we must ascertain its content from the point of view of faith."[28] The underlying presupposition is not that of modern biblical science,which purports to be a purely descriptive discipline. Rather, the fundamental assumption upon which Buber's study rests is that the Bible is pervaded by a unity, a unity of spirit and purpose. Modern biblical research, despite its avowed methodological tenet of description, often manifests the various assumptions of literary analysis and cultural understanding that preclude the proper understanding of the text. Scientific detachment is often the guise under which modern concepts are applied to ancient texts. Buber is firm in his belief that those who wrote down the biblical text, who were immersed in the tradition, did so with rationality, intuition and fine grasp

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[27] Ibid., p. 7.

[28] Ibid.

of literary technique. While the detachment of biblical science often assumes fragmentation, Buber presupposes wholeness and integrity. Although some of his methods may be disputed or some of his conclusions moot, Buber is a listener of uncommon keenness. By assuming the unity of the text, he is able to apply the interpretive principles of biblical religion in an effective and unique manner.[29]

In arriving at a conception of prophecy, Buber begins the first, deductive task with an analysis of the Song of Deborah, which "is almost universally regarded as a genuine historical song."[30] He shows that "it was

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[29]It is interesting in this regard to contrast two approaches of biblical interpretation and to evaluate Buber in their light. One is that of Professor Moshe Greenberg, who writes in Understanding Exodus, II, Part I of The Melton Research Center Series (New York: Behrman House, 1969): "Modern scholars tend to view inconsequence as a normal result of the redactor's limitations. They are thus prone to interpret as flaws what are in fact the workings of an established principle of ancient composition: linkage through associational rather than chronological or topical considerations" (pp. 5-6). The second is that of Brevard Childs in Exodus: A Critical and Theological Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974). Childs is ambivalent in that although he advocates a "rigid separation" (Introduction, p. xiii) between the methods of descriptive biblical science and theology, he nonetheless utilizes the former to help formulate latter. Buber clearly leans toward the Greenberg type of approach, attempting to understand the text from within.

[30]Buber, The Prophetic Faith, op. cit., p. 8.

born of religion"[31] and expresses clearly the idea that the God YHVH and the People of Israel are inextricably connected. The connection may be analyzed into four propositions:

1. YHVH is the God of Israel; Israel is YHVH's people.
2. If Israel accomplishes its mission, God himself will be blessed.
3. YHVH leads Israel, who must willingly follow him.
4. YHVH requires the love of the people.[32]

From these propositions Buber deduces two principles: that Israel is an active, national entity; that YHVH possesses exclusive power.

From the Song of Deborah, Buber continues to trace the early prophetic conceptions back. The Shechem assembly, recorded in the Book of Joshua (24:1-28) is the first of several covenant renewals. In both the content and form of the message given at the assembly, no distinction is made between religion and politics. The tribes band together around YHVH's sanctuary and assemble around His festivals.

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[31] Ibid., p. 9.

[32] Ibid., p. 10.

The relationship[33] between YHVH and Israel is revitalized, but the original vitality belongs to an even earlier episode in Israel's history.

The original form of the covenant, which denotes leading and following, is expressed in the basic tenet of the Decalogue, "I am YHVH thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of bondage." God's assertion of His role as guardian and leader of the people during the exodus is a beginning, the start of a covenant between God and the people. This historical act, however, is but a re-enactment on a collective level of a commitment already pledged and carried out on the personal level.

The primary components of the faith which Buber is attempting to trace are: God's accompanying leadership, the people's loving devotion, and the zealous demand for decision. While these principles are manifested in the three events discussed above, viz., the Decalogue, the Shechem assembly and the Song of Deborah, they originate in the personal histories of the patriarchs, histories which prefigure and adumbrate that of the nation Israel. Using what he terms "a groping kind of investigation,"[34]

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[33]Buber describes The Shechem assembly as "dialogical" on p. 14, ibid.

[34]Ibid., p. 34.

Buber attempts to ascertain the historical content of the patriarchal tales. Their fundamental intent is epitomized by the "singular phenomenon in the history of religion,"[35] the departure of Abram from his people, and his subsequent faith in a God who not only rules the natural world, but also leads and looks after men. This Deity makes Abram a "nomad of faith,"[36] a wanderer whose personal spiritual journey eventually becomes a universal quest. In arriving at this starting point of the faith of Israel, Buber disputes various theories of biblical critics which question either the legitimacy of the texts in question or their meaning. He elaborates, for instance, upon the various names of God,[37] upon the incident of the burning bush,[38] and upon the Kenite Thesis.[39] The central theme, however, remains the source and inception of biblical faith.

Following his discussion of the patriarchs, Buber returns to explication of "The Holy Event," the events

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[35]Ibid., p. 35.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid., pp. 29, 32, 37.

[38]Ibid., p. 26.

[39]Ibid., pp. 24-26. Also discussed in Kingship of God, trans. Richard Scheimann (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), pp. 42, 48, 94f. and 104.

at Sinai, beginning his second, inductive task. It is his contention that:

> . . . no age in the history of early Israelite faith can be understood historically, without considering as active therein this species of man (the navi) with his mission and function, his declaration and mediation.[40]

The chapter entitled "The Great Tensions" discusses in some detail the concrete working-out of the power and influence of YHVH proclaimed at the time of the covenant. Fundamentally an overview of Samuel I, II, and Kings I, II within the context of Buber's thesis, this chapter shows the retreats and advances made by the nation until the authority of the living God is accepted.

As Joshua was "minister" in the tent (Ex. 33:11), Samuel became "minister" of the ark (3:1, 3).[41] The ark, however, was destined to be desecrated and captured,[42] and not restored to the people until the time of David's reign. Samuel, as a navi, replaces the priesthood which nurtured him at Shiloh. It is his duty to proclaim God's leadership without the ark. Samuel becomes a wanderer, proclaiming God's will and His mission. As Buber shows by an analysis

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[40]Buber, The Prophetic Faith, op. cit., p. 57.

[41]Ibid., p. 61.

[42]At Ebenezer, I Samuel, 4:11.

of the text,[43] Samuel's function is to show that the true navi is also the true priest. It also becomes his duty, at the request of the people, to establish monarchy as the political structure governing the people. The original monarchy, that by which the people had in the covenant accepted the kingship of God, had failed, because "Israel was not in truth YHVH's people."[44] Once again a kingship is established. This time it is one which is representative of God's rule, and is set up by holy anointing. The goals of the two kingships are the same, although the legitimacy of the different means is acknowledge. The later relationship between prophet and king can only be clearly understood if the theopolitical supposition of the prophetic standpoint[45] is recongized. This supposition acknowledges the prophet as YHVH's representative, one who is commissioned, so to speak, to be the conscience of the king in all matters. As Buber points out,[46] the community sacrifice offered by Samuel before the anointing of David (Sanuel 16:5) is the last independent religio-political act of the prophet.

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[43]Buber, The Prophetic Faith, op. cit., p. 62. Samuel is both ne'eman l'navi, 3:20, and kohen ne'eman, 2:35.

[44]Ibid., p. 66.

[45]Ibid., p. 67.

[46]Ibid., p. 81.

After that, with the exception of Elijah, the priests, who adapt themselves to the monarchical system, arrange the sacrifices. Once the people cease being nomads, the concept of God as guardian Deity, as leader of the wanderers, although extended cosmically, loses much of its authority. When the ark is joyfully returned to Jerusalem by David (Samuel 6:12), it is an ark that no more leads in battle. In the period of the kings, it is the prophet, although lacking political power, who continues to assert YHVH's "right to leadership in the common life."[47]

Within this chapter Buber discusses, almost incidentally, the manner in which prophetic insight usually occurs. It is interesting to note that no biblical sources are given for the view presented, merely the prior acknowledgement "According to the Biblical view . . ." This is Buber's version of what occurs. With the priest, movement is from the person toward God. With the navi, however, something from the divine sphere descends upon man. These are, according to Buber, davar or ruah, in their Latin equivalents known as logos or pneuma, word or spirit. In Buber's understanding of the prophetic experience, davar and ruah are conjoined.

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[47]Ibid., p. 83.

> According to the Biblical view he to whom full power is given first experiences the ruah, and afterwards receives the davar. In the one case one receives the stimulus, in the other the content.[48]

The prophet, that is, is subject to a power which precedes the word. Aside from one other reference to the "word"[49] as that which makes its way from heaven and seeks abode within man, and one to the prophet and imagination, Buber does not, in The Prophetic Faith, further analyze what constitutes the gift of prophecy. In the latter reference he states:

> The pure prophet is not imaginative or, more precisely, he has no other imagination than the full grasping of the present, actual and potential.[50]

The problems with this are several. What is meant by the "pure prophet," aside from he who lives fully in the present, and what is the precise understanding of "imagination?" Buber offers no further analysis.

The remainder of The Prophetic Faith is devoted to an examination of the prophetic writings in order to ascertain that which constitutes the prophetic faith. Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job and Isaiah (both Isaiah and what

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[48] Ibid., p. 64.

[49] Ibid., p. 164.

[50] Ibid., p. 175.

Buber terms Deutero - Isaiah) are discussed: their imagery, use of language, theopolitical backgrounds, conceptions of the people Israel and of their own functions. Through his expositions, Buber further enlarges the conceptions of prophecy already put forth.

The prophecy of Jeremiah was delivered during a time of historical change. During the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.E.), a book was discovered (in 622 B.C.E.) which seems to have been composed of parts of Deuteronomy. Apparently hidden during the rule of Manasseh (698-643 B.C.E.),[51] it brought before the people once again the Deuteronomic statutes, held together by the principle (Buber calls it "the ancient formula")[52] that YHVH is the God of Israel. The "great preaching"[53] of this document was the love of God for the people Israel, and the demand from them of love and of expressing their love "in the ways of life." Jeremiah as prophet is a paradigm of a mediator between heaven and earth; he is both messenger of God and intercessor. In his words the contrast between priest/rite and prophet/word becomes clear. The word (davar) of the prophet "breaks into the whole order of the word world

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[51]These dates are according to The Encyclopaedia Judaica.

[52]Ibid., p. 160.

[53]Ibid., p. 161.

and breaks through." And the man who speaks this word so that others may hear "is over and over again subdued by the word before He lets it be put in his mouth (Jeremiah 1:9; 20:7)."[54] The word is passed between two persons. Buber insists that God too becomes a person.

> He to whom and by whom the word is spoken, is in the full sense of the word a person. Before the word is spoken by him in human language it is spoken to him in another language, from which he has to translate it into human language, to him this word is spoken as between person and person. In order to speak to man, God must become a person; but in order to speak to him, He must make him too a person.[55]

It is only Jeremiah, according to Buber, among all the prophets, who "has dared" to take cognizance of the "bold and devout life conversation"[56] between man and God, a dialogue predicated, according to Buber, on man's having become a person.

The Book of Jeremiah is a paragon of "pure prophecy." Man becomes person; man reaches out to God in a manner in which the dialogue of faith attains "pure form;"[57] the

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[54]Ibid., p. 164.

[55]Ibid., pp. 164-165. For another significant reference to God as a person see I and Thou, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970) pp. 180-182. Also the discussion in "Martin Buber's 'Absolute Personality'" by Meir Ben-Horin, Judaism, VI, (1957), pp. 22-30.

[56]Buber, The Prophetic Faith, op. cit., p. 165.

[57]Ibid.

prophet speaks to the needs of the historical present; and the prophet inveighs against the structures and strictures of religion. According to Buber, Jeremiah sees himself as sent to the temple gate to combat the illusion of the involability of God's house and city. While other deities are dependent upon a specific geographic location, a house and an altar, the living God of Israel desires only that men live justly with other men.

> He desires no religion, He desires a human people, men living together, the makers of decision vindicating their right to those thirsting for justice, the strong having pity on the weak, men associating with men.[58]

The prophet's message, then, is "that God seeks something other than religion."[59]

Buber's consistent avowal of religiosity over religion is once again made clear. It is perhaps best summarized in his own words: "When God puts His word in the heart of the people, there is no longer need of any external support."[60] Buber is not unaware of the need in human life for structure. It is simply that in a situation of conflict between form and open spontaneity, Buber will choose the latter. He prefers the risks of open-ended sub-

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[58]Ibid., p. 172.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid., p. 173.

jectivity to the dangers of stagnation necessarily part of a normative system. At times, Buber sees form and forces as capable of coexisting.

> Centralization and codification, undertaken in the interests of religion, are a danger to the core of religion, unless there is the strongest life of faith embodied in the whole existence of the community, and not relaxing in its renewing activity.[61]

"Life of faith," it is clear, means to Buber the prophetic message: openness to decision and dialogue, constant struggle and risk, one's present relationship to God and other men. This is perhaps best summed up by the phrase, "holy insecurity."

There are several implications of the "unless" in the above quotation. First, the "life of faith" as Buber delineates it must not only be an individual venture, but a community effort as well. Second, it requires constant vigilance; in the true "life of faith" one can never relax in the comfort of codes and routine. And third, if the mandate of the "life of faith" cannot be attained on the level described, it is best not to expose oneself or the community to the dangers inherent in centralization and codification. The flame of faith must continue to flicker,

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[61] Ibid., p. 170.

however faintly, in order for true religion, i.e. religiosity, to come to be; to fall victim to the empty securities of a religious system would eliminate--or at the very least seriously weaken--this hope.

The problems with this view of Buber are many and complex, and can be but touched upon here.[62] The primary question to be asked is whether or not the risk is worthwhile. Buber clearly feels it is not only valuable but necessary. But the danger is that it is impossible to forge a community on such a tenuous foundation. The religious individual needs externally imposed parameters. Buber, however, could not envisage spontaneity within structure. For him, despite his oftimes hedging and ambivalences, radical choice was required, a blatant "either-or" alterna-

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[62]The issue is discussed in Chapter II, "A Philosophical Problem in Buber." For other analyses see Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism" in On Jews and Judaism in Crisis, op. cit.; Jonathan Sacks, "Buber's Jewishness and Buber's Judaism," and Norman Solomon, "Martin Buber and Orthodox Judaism - Some Reflections," in European Judaism, XII (1978), 2, 14-23; Pamela Vermes, "Man's Prime Peril: Buber On Religion," Journal of Jewish Studies, XXVIII (1977), 72-78. For a more indirect, yet substantive discussion of this problem see also Marvin Fox, "Some Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy" and Emil Fackenheim, "Martin Buber's Concept of Revelation" in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967).

tive. Authentic inwardness, for Buber, could not exist within the framework of heteronomous law. It is primarily for this reason that the faith of the prophets, for Buber, is paradigmatic of all religious faith, and that Jeremiah represents that faith in a pure, unadulterated form.

True prophecy, then, is rooted in the historical present; it stands "in opposition to all assertion of prediction in the apodictic sense."[63] The faith it expresses is that recognized by the navi Abraham, that of the God of the way; "YHVH goes before them," Isaiah affirms (52:12). It is this constant accompaniment, both representing and leaving open the possibility of dialogue that for Buber is the core of the prophetic faith.

In assessing The Prophetic Faith, it may be said that Buber realizes the tasks he set out to accomplish.[64] Analytically, he has shown how the faith he calls prophetic begins with the actual and spiritual journeyings of Abraham. Synthetically, he has described the various manifestations of that faith until the time of the writing of the latter

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[63]Buber, The Prophetic Faith, op. cit., p. 178.

[64]"The task of this book is to describe a teaching which reached its completion in some of the writing prophets . . . and to describe it both as regards its historical process and as regards its antecedents. This is the teaching about the relation between the God of Israel and Israel." Ibid., Introduction, p. 1.

part of the Book of Isaiah. In so doing, he has put forth, albeit not in a detailed, systematic manner, and certainly not in theological form, a conception of the prophet and of prophecy. Moses, published three years after The Prophetic Faith, in 1945, will now be examined in an attempt to both enlarge and fill-in the conception Buber has thus far propounded.

An Analysis of Moses

Subtitled The Revelation and the Covenant, Moses does not deal specifically with the nature of prophecy. However, from Buber's discussions of Moses and analyses of the biblical text, it is possible to distill and even to systematize somewhat those components that constitute the prophetic experience. It will be seen, however, that Buber's conception of prophecy as presaged in the early essays and discussed in The Prophetic Faith is but minimally amplified in Moses; the fundamental notions remain the same.

The polemical undertone that characterized "Abraham The Seer"[65] is evident in Moses. Buber sets out to establish both the historicity of Moses and the integrity of the biblical text that relates the events of his life.

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[65]See p. 21.

His first chapter, therefore, discusses "Saga and History." The saga is defined as "the predominant method of preserving the memory of what happens"[66] within a strong tribal organization. Saga undergoes a continuous process of crystallisation which, Buber maintains, is totally different from the compilation of sources put forth by various critics of the text. Buber sees the subject matter of this study to be how "the faith dealt with here undertook to become flesh in a people."[67] As the primary figure in the forging of this faith community in its social, political and spiritual ramifications, Moses' life and pronouncements are meticulously scrutinized. Moses is prophet, but he is also more than prophet. As prophet, Moses "penetrates into history again and again and operates therein."[68]

The "great refrain in Israel's history"[69] from the time of Samuel until Jeremiah is that of prophet versus king. Moses, however, does not confront a mortal king. His task in history is more than the prophetic one because he func-

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[66]Martin Buber, Moses (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. 15.

[67]Ibid., p. 9.

[68]Ibid., p. 63. Note that the navi, as working within history, not only reiterates Buber's earlier conception, but also strengthens his argument regarding the historicity of Moses.

[69]Ibid.

tions as leader of the people, as legislator. The goal of his task is

> the realization of the unity of religious and social life in the community of Israel, the substantiation of a ruling by God that . . . shall comprehend the entire existence of the nation, the theo-political principle.[70]

Prophetic revelation is one means of working toward this objective, although, as Buber notes, the way he receives the revelation is "largely"[71] but not completely prophetical. That is, the institution of the tent "does make a considerable difference." Buber does not specify what that difference is nor how he would separate out the prophetic components of revelation from any others.

The means by which Moses communicates with God in his prophetic encounters also differs not only from that of the other prophets but also from that of the elders. The other prophets "have visions which must first be interpreted," while Moses "is shown God's purpose in the visible reality itself."[72] While Buber unfortunately does not explain how or on what grounds the interpretation subsequent to the vision of the other prophets takes place, it seems clear that Moses has more direct access to the

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[70]Ibid., p. 186.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid., p. 168.

axiological nexus called "God's purpose." In addition, while to the other prophets God speaks "in dream," with Moses He communicates "mouth to mouth," thus conveying the words being blown into the man as from a breath.[73]

In the case of the elders,[74] what occurs is that a ruah takes possession of them, this ruah being "an impersonal, wordless force" which does not transmit "a meaning, a message or a command."[75] This seems to be an experience of God's Presence devoid of cognitive content. With Moses, the case is clearly otherwise. He does not require exposure to an impersonal ruah since to him "the Voice has spoken as one person to another;" he carries the spirit "which is nothing other than an assumption into a dialogic relationship with the Divinity, into the colloquy."[76] Moses, that is, dialogues with God as person to Person, entering His Presence and communicating both affectively and cognitively.

Taking into account the uniqueness of Moses' position, his kind of communication with God is nonetheless paradigmatic of the prophetic experience. Being a prophet is "not a transitory state" (as in the case of the elders),

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[73]Ibid.

[74]Referring, according to Buber's footnote, to Ex. 24:1, 9.

[75]Buber, Moses, op. cit., p. 165.

[76]Ibid.

but "the summons in virtue of which a man has immediate contact with Godhead and receives its behest directly.[77] All prophecy, Buber is implying, is both affective and cognitive.

What is gleaned from Moses in terms of further understanding Buber's conception of prophecy may be summarized thus. The prophet, having communicated with God in the manner described above, bears God's words to the community and the words of the community to God.[78] He speaks against the comfort and security a tangible god would offer, and admonishes the people to seek the "consecration of men and things, of times and places, to the One who vouchsafes His presence."[79] The true navi does not foretell a fixed, unchangeable future. Rather, in accordance with his function of leading the people away from spiritual complacency toward spiritual growth, "he announces a present that requires human choice and decision, as a present in which the future is being prepared."[80] Human decisions and divine commandement are intersecting,

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[77]Ibid., p. 167.

[78]This is said of Miriam as prophetess and proclaimer in Ex. 15:21, ibid., p. 74.

[79]Ibid., pp. 128-129.

[80]Ibid., p. 170.

if not coinciding spheres.[81] The prophet, as Buber restates at the conclusion of Moses, "is that undivided, entire person who as such receives the message and as such endeavors to establish that message in life."[82]

A Summary of Buber's Views

In the later essay "Prophecy, Apocalyptic and Historical Hour," published in 1954,[83] these themes are reiterated. The nature of the prophetic calling is based on a view of God

> that preserves the mystery of the dialogical intercourse between God and man from all desire for dogmatic encystment. The mystery is that of man's creation as being with the power of actually choosing between the ways . . .[84]

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[81] Ibid. The problem of autonomous versus heteronomous law in Buber's concept of revelation and ethical theory is here made clear.

[82] Ibid., p. 200. As in other descriptions of the prophet and prophecy, Buber is here unclear. Is the "message" awareness of God's accompanying Presence, or does it have cognitive content? Only in the case of Moses, who is legislator as well as prophet, does Buber clearly indicate that specific content is part of the prophetic experience. The "ordinary" prophet remains open to God's Presence and admonishes the people to do the same.

[83] To be found in Pointing The Way: Collected Essays, trans. Maurice S. Friedman (New York: Schocken Books, 1974) as well as On The Bible: Eighteen Studies, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

[84] Buber, "Prophecy, Apocalyptic, and the Historical Hour," On The Bible: Eighteen Studies, ibid., p. 177.

Clearly, Buber's understanding of prophecy remained unchanged.

From the turn of the century until 1963, when he terminated the collection of his writings, Buber's conception of Judaism and its principal notions changed. But an understanding of his conception is to be grasped by way of a central principle. This principle is Buber's articulation of the living and creative forces, as he saw them, of Judaism.[85] It is clear that the prophetic experience, for Buber, is the seminal force of Judaism. Prophetic revelation is at once a mission (ruah) and a summons to decision (davar). It is immersed in the historical present, reaching toward heaven from the nexus of human struggle and conflict. Always more concerned with the "how" than with the "what," Buber never clearly indicates that the prophetic experience may result in cognitive content (except in the case of Moses as mentioned previously). Rather, despite the fact that Buber wrote about prophecy after his avowed move away from the mysticism implicit in Daniel and other early writings, his conception of prophetic revelation remains essentially mystical. Revelation, the word of God, is entirely of the present; it is the encounter between the eternal Thou and

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[85]Gershom Scholem, op. cit., pp. 129-30.

the subject I and the concommitant responses. What is received by the I is not content, but what Buber calls "presence as power." The I does not receive the fullness of meaning (i.e. specific guidelines) but rather the guarantee that there is meaning. Thus prophetic revelation (and indeed all revelation) is the pure encounter in which and from which nothing can be formulated. Its meaning can find expression, according to Buber, only in the deeds of man, deeds acted out with a cognizance of the Divine Presence. True prophecy, then, is mystical. Inspired by awareness of God's sustaining Presence, man is summoned to act and make decisions in the concrete world. The future offers no guarantee of ultimate security; man's only comfort is the immediacy of God's Presence in the performance of human deeds.

It is clear that Buber's treatment of prophecy is not problem-free. The metaphoric use of language and lack of systemization make it difficult to ascertain the precise formulation of the concepts involved. Despite this lack of structure and rigorous analysis, however, Buber has succeeded in articulating what is surely the central notion in traditional expositions of Judaism. Given the many philosophical ramifications of how one understands prophecy, it may be said that Buber has recovered and recaptured the central Jewish affirmation that God has in the past, and can yet, in the present and future, address man; that such

an address calls forth a response; that the resulting dialogue is characterized by an acute sense of immediacy; that the outcome is a renewal of man's resolve to further realize the human and Godly tasks in one's relationships within the concrete world. Buber is a representative of pneumatic exegesis, but this type of exegesis has a place within the Judaic tradition.[87]

Revelation: A Problem in Buber's Account of Prophecy

It can be legitimately questioned, however, whether or not Buber's pneumatic exegesis at times loosens the text in a manner that moves the focus too distant from traditional conceptions. The issue under consideration here is the very large one of the nature of revelation within the tradition. While the exegetical and philosophical formulations of what occurred at Sinai are varied, there is the question of how far one may move from the core yet remain within parameters acceptable to the tradition. The problem centers on the issue of historicity. If it is to be asserted that prophetic revelation actually occurred, i.e. took place in space and time, it must at the same time be asked: what does this mean and how can it be understood? According to Buber's formulation

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[87]Much of the biblical commentary of Moses ben Nahman, or Nahmanides, is written on the level of sod. Meaning that which is hidden or esoteric, the exegesis characterized by sod is far removed from the simple understanding of the text and from the homiletical. Often mystical in tone and content, such commentary is included in the category of pneumatic exegesis.

in an early essay,[88] three interpretations are possible.

That God came down in fire to the mountain and spoke to His people may mean:

a) That figurative language is being used to express a "spiritual" process. Buber maintains, however, that to assert biblical history is not the recall of actual events, but rather allegory and metaphor, is to say "it is no longer biblical." That which is uniquely biblical, that is, becomes merely another "modern" category of thinking.

b) That the biblical account is the report of a "supernatural" event. If this were the case, Buber insists, man would have to sacrifice his intellect in order to accept the Bible and the biblical world-view. Religion would require acceptance of the unintelligible, thereby abstracting itself from the totality of man's life experiences.

c) The third possibility is that it could be:

> the verbal trace of a natural event, i.e., of an event that took place in the world of the senses common to all men, and fitted into connections that the senses can perceive. But the assemblage that experienced this event experienced it as revelation vouchsafed to them by God, and preserved it as such in the

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[88]"The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible," On The Bible: Eighteen Studies, op. cit., pp. 8-9. This essay is from a series of lectures delivered in 1926.

> memory of generations . . . for natural events are the carriers of revelation, and revelation occurs when he who witnesses the event and sustains it experiences the revelation it contains.[89]

What is Buber saying here? Clearly, the language of the Bible is figurative. Its being so, however, does not preclude the actuality or historicity of the events. Rather, metaphoric language points to human limitations. Buber argues that such an interpretation removes the events of revelation to a spiritual realm which humans can neither relate to nor comprehend. The second possibility is similar, emphasizing the supernatural rather than a spiritual process. Buber's argument follows the same line: if the text is conveying that which is unintelligible, how can it be assimilated by the rational understanding? The third possibility combines the first two, thereby overcoming their limitations. The biblical account of revelation, that is, is not mere metaphor[90] trying to convey that which is beyond rational comprehension; clearly, the very use of figurative language indicates a human formulation of that which appears to be beyond human understanding. But to say this is neither to

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[89]Ibid., p. 9.

[90]It is interesting to note the implicit criticism given to figurative language when Buber himself is a master both of metaphor and of ambiguity.

reduce biblical history to imaginative events nor to sacrifice intelligibility. The third option puts forth the notion of the revelation at Sinai as a natural event, one perceived by sensible and rational persons as a unique communication "vouchsafed them by God." The revelation occurred within the discernible realm of experience of the people, was preserved in writing, thereby transmitted in the memory of generations. Although the revelation itself retains a mystical aura, Buber is nonetheless concerned here to establish the historicity of the events under scrutiny. Buber is not saying here that the experience of revelation can be reduced to a kind of subjectivity; in the case of the revelation at Sinai, there was public confirmation of the events. While Buber's pneumatic exegesis does loosen the text, he nonetheless remains on firm, historical ground.

The problem of revelation in Buber is complex and multi-faceted; it cannot be examined here in great detail.[91] But in dealing with the closely-related notion of prophecy, certain aspects of the difficulties inherent in Buber's

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[91]For an excellent account of the philosophical problems involved see Emil L. Fackenheim, "Buber's Concept of Revelation," op. cit., pp. 273-296. A thorough analysis of the epistemological problems implicit in Buber's notion is given by Steven T. Katz in "A Critical Review of Martin Buber's Epistemology of I-Thou." Although as yet unpublished, this paper will be part of the Proceedings of the Buber Centenary Conference at Ben-Gurion University, January, 1978.

concept come to the fore. It has been asserted that Buber maintains revelation--Sinaitic and prophetic--as an actual event that took place in space and time. As the following quotation from I and Thou shows, however, the historicity of various revelations--and their uniqueness--is diminished by Buber's qualifying notion of continuous revelation.

> The powerful revelations invoked by the religions are essentially the same as the quiet one that occurs everywhere and at all times. The powerful revelations that stand at the beginning of great communities, at the turning-points of human time, are nothing else than the eternal revelation. But revelation does not pour into the world through its recipient as if he were a funnel: it confers itself upon him . . .[92]

Gershom Scholem, in commenting upon this passage,[93] insists that historical revelations do precisely "pour into the world by using its recipient like a funnel." Buber's view, however, is that that which is poured passes through a human being ("organ" is Buber's word) and is thereby, in greater or lesser degree, translated into the human idiom.

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[92]Martin Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., pp. 165-66. Continuous revelation is implied in the passage cited in note 89: ". . . for natural events are the carriers of revelation. . ."

[93]Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism," op. cit., p. 159. Cf. Buber, "The Word That is Spoken" in The Knowledge of Man," ed. Maurice Friedman, trans. Maurice Friedman and Ronald G. Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 120.

The prophet is not a passive instrument. Rather, as one who has encountered the Eternal Thou and stands in relationship to Him, his prophecy is the word of God filtered through man. As Emil Fackenheim clearly shows,[94] Buber's conclusion is that the relation between divine address and human response is an antinomy which thought cannot resolve.

> It is not man's own power that is at work here, neither is it merely God passing through; it is a mixture of the divine and the human.[95]

Prophecy, then, took place at specific historic junctures. What occurred was an admixture of the divine and the human. The manifestations of the prophetic encounter are intense, powerful instances of the revelation that is eternal. Clearly, at Sinai, the encounter was initiated by God. That such was always the case in the various accounts of prophecy recorded in the Hebrew Bible cannot be ascertained from Buber's account.

The premise of the eternality and continuousness of divine revelation, coupled with the dynamic of the I-Thou, leave Buber open to the charge of subjectivity. The problems arising out of his conception of prophecy, traditional though it may be in several important respects, derive from

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[94]Fackenheim, "Buber's Concept of Revelation," op. cit., esp. pp. 287-291.

[95]Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 166.

the lack of philosophic rigor with which his religious thinking in general--and this notion in particular--are constructed. The notion of revelation is characterized primarily by dialogue. Its strengths and weaknesses, therefore, depend upon whether or not the central concept of I-Thou can stand up to philosophic analysis.[96]

Following is a summary of the essential components of Buber's account of revelation. Then some of the philosophic difficulties are discussed.

1. God does not reveal propositions.

2. Revelation is not about God or His nature, but about God's acting on man.

3. Revelation, therefore, is necessarily expressed in human terms and takes on human meaning.

4. Nonetheless, that which issues forth in revelation always retains elements of the original dialogic experience.

5. The aim of revelation is the improvement of

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[96]For philosophic analysis of the I-Thou see the various articles in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, ed. Paul A. Schilpp and M. Friedman, op. cit. Also, the paper by Steven T. Katz cited in note 91. Katz analyzes the latent and blatant Kantianism in Buber, concentrating especially on its implications for the concept of revelation. The summary following is based on that given in his paper, pp. 8-9.

man's understanding of himself. The insights resulting from revelation are anthropological rather than metaphysical.

6. The anthropological character of revelation leads to the following implications:

(a) Revelation can never be a definitive "once and for all truth;" it is not perfect. As human truth, it is always partial, limited, and liable to error.

(b) It can never be tested by any criteria, except the knowledge that one acts with the personal certainty that what one does has been given meaning by a revealed presence.

(c) Only those actions/situations which man feels are addressed to him have obligatory force; this implies that man himself decides what calls to him as revelation.

(d) Acting in accordance with revelation means acting "authentically," i.e. with kavanah.

(e) Revelation can never be the basis of universal prescriptions.

(f) This being so, one can never know the meaning of revelation for a specific act in advance of

the event.[97]

The most significant principle to be derived from the above is "Buber's insistence that man is incapable of understanding himself in isolation from God and that man's universe finds its direction and its grounds only there."[98] The revelation of God's Presence, while not extending to man the security of risk-free directives, provides an existential certainty that takes form as the security of self. God functions as the guarantor of human authenticity. Having guaranteed that man's existence is replete with meaning, however, man is turned back upon himself; thus the centrality of the anthropological dimension.[99]

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[97]Katz draws this summary from various sources. See I and Thou, op. cit., p. 159f.; Moses, op. cit., p. 188; Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crises (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), pp. 87f, 114, 162-63, 216; Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 12, 16-18, 67-71, 114; Eclipse of God (New York: Harper Torchbooks), pp. 36, 43, 70; On Jewish Learning (New York: Schocken Books, 1955), p. 115.

[98]Steven T. Katz, op. cit., p. 9.

[99]Professor Katz, using the statement in Eclipse of God that "We are revealed to ourselves . . .," concludes that "Knowledge of self and knowledge of God's mighty acts of revelation conveniently coalesce to allow us to attend to man's own nature, while yet treating this activity as holy and its discoveries as Divine Truths." Katz, op. cit., p. 10. This is to render Buber's concept of revelation completely subjective. While many of the references given in note 97, as well as an epistemological analysis of the I-Thou, do lead to this conclusion, Buber would not agree that this is his sole meaning. See, for instance, "Replies to My Critics" in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, ed. Schlipp and Friedman, op. cit., p. 699f.

The Buberian epistemology is clearly a species of Kantian idealism. Many Kantian elements are directly incorporated into Buber's discussions, such as the division of the world into I-Thou and I-It (suggesting the noumenal and phenomenal), and Buber's insistence upon the autonomy of the individual within the I-Thou dialogue. Analysis of Buber's notion of revelation entails analysis of his epistemology. What are the implications, then, of revelation as summarized above?

That which is revealed by God, being neither proposition nor universal truth, is rather what Buber calls "Presence." What occurs in an I-Eternal Thou encounter seems to be akin to the momentary coalescence of two empty sets. When the moment of encounter terminates, the human set "fills in" the content, so to speak, with actions deriving from the human will, a will whose meaning has been authenticated by I-Eternal Thou encounter. Human autonomous activity becomes holy activity because human autonomy "is vouchsafed by God's act of self-limitation in the revealing of 'Presence' alone."[100] The contentless

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[100]Katz, op. cit., II, p. 17.

set of the human person, permits, indeed obligates[101] that person to create, through his own will, actions the meanings of which are guaranteed by God. No Divine coercion will impose itself upon man's freedom. Buber has attempted in several places to limit the anarchism toward which this concept necessarily leads,[102] but is not entirely successful. What has occurred here is that ontological truth, the "truth" of God's Presence, and anthropological truth, that of man as a creature of will within the concrete world, have merged in the existential situation of the existing individual. Buber thus tries to hold together two seemingly

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[101]This is perhaps the only understanding of obligation in terms of human action that one may derive from Buber's epistemology, i.e. that man is obligated to act upon the meaning received during the I-Thou encounter. It may legitimately be asked, however, how, epistemically speaking, any meaning can be received or transmitted in the absence of cognitive content. This inquiry causes one to revert to Scholem's assessment of Buber as having maintained, despite his protestations to the contrary, a strong conception of mysticism. See Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism," On Jews and Judaism in Crisis, op. cit., pp. 145, 157.

[102]See, for instance, Moses, op. cit., p. 188, "Images of Good and Evil," Part One, in Good and Evil (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons). It is interesting to compare the latter with the much more rigorous, but similar essay, "On the Radical Evil in Human Nature," by Kant. See also Buber's replies to Marvin Fox's essay in "Replies to My Critics," The Philosophy of Martin Buber, op. cit., pp. 718-721. The central philosophical question may be thus formulated: can any idealism succeed in adequately resolving the question of heteronomous vs. autonomous law?

disparate concepts: that of a God who reveals Himself to man; and that of man as completely autonomous. Two problems[103] in particular are manifest as consequences of Buber's attempt.

First, it may be asked: what is the relation between those human acts which Buber claims are free but guaranteed by the act of meeting with the Eternal Thou, and the Eternal Thou? In other words, how does the Eternal Thou guarantee the freedom of man's actions?[104] If revelation is to retain any meaning whatsoever, there must be a necessary relation between the act of revelation and that which emanates from it, i.e. free human actions. It is at this juncture, however, that the dilemma arises. For if presumed free-willed action is causally determined by revelation, it becomes heteronomous. Yet if human action and revelation remain disparate entities, revelation becomes

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[103]These are taken from Steven T. Katz's paper, op. cit., II, pp. 17-19.

[104]The paradox that arises in answering this question is strikingly similar to the dilemma posed by Emil Fackenheim in analyzing the relationship between Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and "On the Radical Evil in Human Nature." See "Kant and Radical Evil," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXIII (1953-54), pp. 339-353. Perhaps the problem is one which arises from the very nature of idealism. An excellent account of this problem is to be found in E. Fackenheim, "The Revealed Morality of Judaism and Modern Thought," Quest for Past and Future: Essays in Jewish Theology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 204-228.

merely a formal notion. The experience of God's Presence must make a difference in human behavior, i.e. it must have existential import. Can it remain a material notion without obliterating the human freedom it purports to guarantee? How revelation affects human action remains ambiguous and problematic.

The second difficulty concerns the nature of the Eternal Thou. A description of Him is given in Between Man and Man.

> When we rise out of it (revelationary dialogue) into the new life and there begin to receive the signs, what can we know of that which--of him who gives them to us? Only what we experience from time to time from the signs themselves. If we name the speaker of this speech God, then it is always the God of a moment, a moment God.[105]

Since this "moment God" is only identifiable by His Presence during the dialogic encounter, what, it may be asked, are His identifying characteristics? How does one know when one has encountered the Eternal Thou? And if one knows such for situation A, with what certainty can one know that the Thou in situation B is the same Being? How do many "moment Gods" become God?

The very limits set by Buber in explicating the I-Thou do not allow verifiable criteria to be utilized.

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[105]Between Man and Man, op. cit., p. 15.

Space and time are of the realm of "It" knowledge; psychological states may be deemed too subjective,[106] in addition to their having content which may be articulated and communicated, i.e. feelings. "Moment Gods" by their very nature deny both constancy and internal coherence, thus precluding any means for identification. The most significant consequence of this epistemological limitation in Buber's thought is that it makes religious history, the God of history, and the notion of a tradition enduring through space and time impossible concepts.[107] Since precisely the opposite is Buber's view, i.e. the God of the Hebrew Bible is no other than a God who acts in history, it is readily seen that Buber's epistemology--or lack of it--has pushed him into an uncomfortable--and untenable--corner.

It can be said, therefore, that Buber's concept of prophecy is philosophically insufficient. While the unsystematic epistemology of the I-Thou leads to the core problem of lack of content and law, it is equally clear that the central thrust of Buber's thinking[108] is one which

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[106]I and Thou, op. cit., pp. 129-135.

[107]See Arthur A. Cohen, The Natural and the Supernatural Jew (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), pp. 170-173.

[108]That is, aside from the lack of an ontology upon which an epistemology should be firmly grounded.

circumvents the issue of normative law (both religious and civil) and treats it ambiguously. Indeed, these two are closely intertwined, and are related to what Scholem terms "a purely mystical definition of revelation."[109] Nevertheless, despite this serious lacuna in his formulations, Buber has succeeded in articulating significant aspects of the meaning of prophecy within the Judaic tradition. To reiterate, he has affirmed that God has, in the past, and can yet, in the present and future, address man; that such an address calls forth a response; that the resulting dialogue is characterized by an acute sense of immediacy; and that the outcome is a renewal of man's resolve to further realize the human and Godly tasks in one's relationships within the concrete world.

Prophecy in Maimonides: A Brief Overview

In order to corroborate these aspects of Buber's understanding of prophecy, prophecy will be examined from an entirely different perspective. Maimonides, a rationalist and legalist,[110] is a representative par excellence

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[109]Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism," op. cit., p. 157.

[110]Moses ben Maimon, or Maimonides (also known by the acronym Rambam) lived from 1135-1204. Born in Cordoba, Spain, he was rabbinic authority, codifier, philosopher and royal physician. He was the most illustrious figure in Judaism in post-talmudic times. His two greatest works are the Mishneh Torah and The Guide of the Perplexed.

of the Judaic tradition. It is indisputable that his philosophy of Judaism in general, as well as his concept of prophecy in particular, differ in significant and even radical ways from the post-Kantian, post-Kierkegaardian frame of reference from which Buber writes. Maimonides adopted an Aristotelian framework, and was a master of rabbinic works with which Buber was only superficially, if at all, familiar. Nevertheless, despite the obvious disparities, the common points between Buber and Maimonides serve to support an understanding of Buber as traditional.

Three features characterize Maimonides theory of ordinary prophecy.[111] First, prophecy does not come directly from God, but through an emanation from the Active Intellect, whose ultimate ground is God. Second, prophecy is a natural event and never arises miraculously. And third, the agents that directly produce prophecy are human reason and the imagination. Prophecy comes upon the prophet suddenly, when he falls into an unpremeditated non-conscious state.[112] The prophet, possessing nearly perfect rational and imaginative faculties, serves the

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[111]Maimonides discusses prophecy in The Guide of the Perplexed, II, Chapters 32-48. In addition to the numerous other references throughout the Guide, prophecy is also analyzed in Introduction to the Talmud, Chapter II. A good summary is given in, among other sources, A. J. Reines, Maimonides and Abrabanel on Prophecy (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1970).

[112]Maimonides delineates eleven degrees of prophecy in the Guide, II, Chapter 45.

function of providing for the community three kinds of knowledge: metaphysical scientific speculation, the highest kind of intellectual knowledge; moral judgments; and predictions of events, usually dire, that are to occur in the future. Providential knowledge, however, cannot be communicated in a uniform manner, according to Maimonides. Because of the nature of the knowledge which the prophet possesses and the diverse intellectual and moral capacities in any given community, providential knowledge must be transmitted so that it provides spiritual instruction to each according to his ability and need. To accomplish this task, prophetic genius created the parable. The imagerial ambiguity and verbal equivocality of the parable serves each according to his individual qualifications. Imagination is employed by the intellect to portray in symbolic form the rational and scientific truths at which it has arrived. The literal meaning of the parables is intended for the uninformed masses, while the concealed, esoteric meaning is intended for the intellectually elite. This is not to say that the literal sense is simply a device for concealment; rather, all levels of meaning of the parable have intrinsic value. The nature of the parable enables prophecy to fulfill its cosmic purpose as an extension of the emanation process that creates the universe and provides for its existence.

Prophecy, then, involves both intellect and imagination, and contains both cognitive and symbolic elements. True to his Aristotelian roots, Maimonides declares the highest form of prophecy--the Mosaic--to be that in which imagination plays no part and pure intellect reigns supreme.

That prophecy, according to Maimonides, "is an effluence that flows from the Active Intellect upon the rational faculty and the imaginative faculty"[113] indicates, based upon the Maimonidean cosmology, that it is a natural event. That is, God, through His general will, which emanates and sustains the first Intelligence, is the ultimate ground of being; He creates and preserves the entire universe. Prophecy is created and emanated by the Active Intellect, together with the influence of the spheres, which affect the physical world, constitute the mode of causation referred to as "nature,"[114] prophecy is characterized as a natural event.

Prophecy is a human gift and requires natural aptitude as well as intense preparation and study. But in the same way as prophecy is produced by the general divine will, can it be withheld by the divine will. This withholding, a

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[113]Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed, trans. S. Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), II, 36, p. 369.

[114]Ibid., II, 6; II, 10, p. 271f.

"miraculous" intervention in an otherwise naturalistic process, has created difficulties for commentators on the Guide.[115] Nonetheless, it was necessary to maintain such interference from God in an otherwise natural process in order to explain the means of selection. Prophecy, Maimonides is indicating, depends not only upon one's preparation, moral rectitude and efforts, but also upon the grace of the Divine. Despite its natural elements, it remains ultimately a Divine gift. It is to be noted that the system espoused by Maimonides in the Guide emphasizes a kind of religious naturalism which may or may not be in accord with the Weltanschauung of certain interpretations of rabbinic Judaism.[116] Supernaturalism, or dependence upon miracles is shown to be at odds with the philosophical and theological foundations of the tradition.

Buber, Maimonides and Soloveitchik

Buber's conceptions and those of Maimonides span centuries, not only in years but also in perspectives and world-views. The philosophic roots of one are in Kant and Kierkegaard; those of the other in Aristotle, Avicenna and

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[115]A. J. Reines, op. cit., pp. xxxi-ii, notes 72, 73, 74.

[116]Ibid., p. xx. See also David Hartman, Maimonides: Torah and Philosophic Quest. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1976), especially Chapter Three.

Al-Farabi. The religious roots of one are primarily biblical; those of the other are biblical and talmudic. Yet, despite the very wide and apparent divergencies, there is a common thread that binds them. Each recognizes the primary of prophecy for an understanding of the rest of the tradition. Each insists that prophecy is an historical fact, having taken place in space and time. God, that is, addresses man and engages him in a dialogue, a dialogue bearing not only upon himself but affecting the community as well. The outcome of the prophetic encounter, both individually and on a communal level, is to further actualize human and Godly tasks through one's actions. For Maimonides, this involves increasing one's knowledge, for through reason man may control and guide nature to his own soterial purpose. For Buber, the awareness of God's presence is sufficient to cause man to reinvigorate and renew his relationships and actions.

A more accurate assessment of Buber and tradition can be gained by evaluating him in relation to an outstanding contemporary religious thinker, one who is heir both to Maimonidean philosophy and existential thought. Rabbi

Joseph B. Soloveitchik,[117] a master talmudist and specialist in Maimonides' legal works, is an expert in the field of Western philosophy. Indeed, many of his expositions of the dilemmas facing modern religious man draw heavily from existential thinking. It is extremely valuable, in order to put Buber's formulations in perspective, to examine how Soloveitchik, combining talmudic and existential dimensions, understands the phenomenon of prophecy.

Soloveitchik's analysis of prophecy takes place within the context of a discussion of what he calls Adam the First and Adam the Second, corresponding to the two versions of the creation of man and woman given in Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:7-25. Adam the Second is able to transcend

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[117]Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, born in Poland, studied talmud privately with his father and other tutors, mastering his grandfather's unique method of talmudic study, with its insistence on incisive analysis, exact classification, critical independence and emphasis on Maimonides Mishneh Torah. In 1931, he received his doctorate from the University of Berlin for his dissertation on Hermann Cohen's epistemology and metaphysics. Emigrating to the U.S. in 1932, Soloveitchik settled in Boston, but eventually became professor of Talmud at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University. An acclaimed lecturer and writer, Soloveitchik has published little, in keeping with a family tradition. His works include: "Ish ha-Halakhah," Talpiot (1944); "The Lonely Man of Faith," Tradition, VII (1965), "Confrontation," Tradition, VI (1964), Hamesh Derishot (Jerusalem: Machon Tal Orot, 1974); Al Hateshuvah, ed. Pinchus Peli (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1975); Besod Hayahid Vehayahad, ed. Pinchus Peli (Jerusalem: Orot, 1976); "The Community," "Majesty and Humility," "Catharsis," "Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah," "A Tribute to the Rebbitzen of Talne," Tradition, XVII (1978).

a technical, utilitarian relationship and, within the covenantal community, participate with Eve in the existential experience of being, not merely working, together.[118] The covenantal, existential community are one, and they are integral parts of Soloveitchik's understanding of prophecy. This community is established when God joins together with man. At that moment, the miracle of revelation takes place in two dimensions: the transcendental God reveals Himself to man, and, conversely, man "sheds his mask" and opens himself to God.[119] Man discovers God as being close to him; His transcendence is overcome, so to speak, by realization of His nearness. When God initiates the meeting, the covenantal prophetic community is established; when man calls out to and addresses God, "the same miracle happens . . . and a new covenantal community is born--the prayer community.[120]

The prophetic community, then, is begun by God, while the prayer community derives from man's efforts.

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[118]J. B. Soloveitchik, "The Lonely Man of Faith," op. cit., p. 33.

[119]Ibid., p. 34.

[120]Ibid., It is to be noted that Soloveitchik describes man calling out to God "in the informal, friendly tones of Thou."

Both, however, share the common element of "covenant." This, Soloveitchik goes on to explain, is for three reasons.[121] It is in describing the relation between prophecy, prayer and covenant that prophecy is analyzed.

First, in both the prophetic and prayer communities, a confrontation of God and man takes place. The prophecy awareness, Soloveitchik insists, is "toto genere different from the mystical experience,"[122] and "can only be interpreted in the unique categories of the covenant event."[123] This is so because the covenant community is defined as that formed by God's initiative, when He descends upon the mount, so to speak, in response to which man ascends to meet Him. Thus a direct, personal relationship is established and expressed. Similarly,

> . . . prayer is basically an awareness of man finding himself in the presence of and addressing himself to His Maker . . . the very essence of prayer is the covenantal experience of being together with and talking to God and . . . the concrete per-

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[121]These three explanations are discussed in Ibid., pp. 34-43.

[122]Ibid., p. 34. This will be explicated further on.

[123]For an excellent discussion of the covenant idea see Daniel J. Elazar, "Covenant as the Basis of the Jewish Political Tradition," Jewish Journal of Sociology, XX (1978), 5-37.

> formance such as the recitation of texts represents the technique of implementation of prayer and not prayer itself.[124]

The close parallel Soloveitchik draws between the prophetic and prayer experiences--he calls them "synonymous designations of the covenantal God-man colloquy"[125]--is related to the role of prophecy in history and the origin of prayer. The Talmud in Berakhot 26b, 33a and Megillah 18a traces the origin of prayer back to Abraham and the other patriarchs and the authorship of statutory prayer to the men of the Great Assembly. Both prayer and prophecy--man's reaching out to God and God's initiating encounters--began with Abraham, and God's role in calling out to man remained an active one until the time of Malachi(aprx. 500 B.C.E.). From that time, for reasons undiscernible, the heavens remained silent. But the men of the Great Assembly, according to Soloveitchik, "refused to acquiesce in this cruel historical reality and would not let the ancient dialogue between God and men come to an end."[126] Were the intimate relationship with God to be lost, the community would forego its covenantal status. Therefore, they instituted prayer. "Prayer is the continuation of prophecy and

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[124]Ibid., p. 35.

[125]Ibid., p. 36.

[126]Ibid., p. 37.

the fellowship of prayerful men is ipso facto the fellowship of prophets."[127]

That both the prophetic and prayer communities are three-fold structures, consisting of I, thou, and He, is the second reason they are designated as covenantal. The prophet acts not as a private person, but as the representative of the many for whom his message is meant. Similarly, prayer is not only an individual experience. The man-God encounter epitomized by prayer is supported by "the covenantal awareness of existential togetherness,"[128] of sharing the suffering of others. That is the primary reason, according to Soloveitchik, that nearly all Jewish liturgy is phrased in the plural. In the same way as God abandons His unique solitude to reach out to man, must man overcome his isolation and pray as part of the community.

Third, both prophecy and prayer are covenantal because of the normative elements contained in their singular experience of having encountered God. The very semantics of the term covenant implies freely assumed obligations and

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[127] Ibid., p. 36.

[128] Ibid., p. 38.

commitments.[129] Prophecy, Soloveitchik stated previously, has little in common with the mystical experience. This is because prophecy is inseparable from its normative content.

> The prophetic pilgrimage to God pursues a practical goal in whose realization the whole covenantal community shares. When confronted with God, the prophet receives an ethico-moral message to be handed down to and realized by the members of the covenantal community which is mainly a community in action . . .[130]

The prime purpose of prophetic revelation is related to the giving of the Law. What is transmitted during the man-God encounter is not only Divine Presence, not only the feeling of accompaniment and the giving of direction, but also, and most significantly, a specific content: the Law. The God-Man confrontation, according to Soloveitchik, has a didactic aim. In encountering man, God intends to instruct and guide him. He to whom God's words of instruction are revealed, the prophet, is entrusted with the task of teaching the covenantal community: ". . . God's word is ipso facto God's law and norm."[131]

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[129]See Daniel J. Elazar, op. cit., as well as Elazar, "Some Preliminary Observations on the Jewish Political Tradition," Tradition, XVIII (1980), esp. pp. 258-62.

[130]Soloveitchik, op. cit., p. 39. See also footnote on that page for discussion of the meaning of "normative."

[131]Ibid., p. 40.

To construe prophecy as non-normative, Soloveitchik insists, would be, in the Judaic tradition, immoral. Without the normative element of the prophetic man-God encounter, the latter would become an apocalyptic event, an "esoteric-egotistic affair," limited to a small elite. Judaism, however, is "exoterically-minded and democratic to its very core."[132] The democratization of the man-God encounter is made possible by the primacy of the normative element in prophecy.

For Soloveitchik, the prophet is primarily teacher. Communing with God and communicating to the covenantal community, his davar and his ruah (to use Buber's terms) unite in the didactic mission. The result of his meeting with God is not only cognitive content, but also and specifically prescriptive law. The prophetic encounter is not an event characterized by intuition or wordless illumination; it is definitely a-mystical.

Both Buber and Soloveitchik regard Abraham as the "knight of faith."[133] Clearly, Abraham represents what in modern terms may be termed an existential figure. For it is he who showed man how to encounter God, how to be near Him and feel His presence. In the essay "The Two Foci of

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[132] Ibid.

[133] Soloveitchik uses Kierkegaard's phrase in op. cit., p. 32.

the Jewish Soul,"[134] Buber writes about the soul of Judaism as pre-Sinaitic, as stemming from Abraham. The Jewish soul, he states, is dual. It acknowledges God's utter transcendence, His infinite distance from man; yet simultaneously it recognizes that God is present in a relationship with the human creatures who inhabit His earth. Soloveitchik differs from Buber by including the concept of covenant as a necessary component in the man-God meeting. "The man of faith," he states, "in order to redeem himself from his loneliness and misery, must meet God at a personal covenantal level, where he can be near Him and feel free in His presence (emphasis mine)."[135] Covenant implies structure, limit, and law; it demands clarification of mutual rights and obligations. Through Abraham, Soloveitchik and Buber agree, the unreachable, transcendent God of the cosmos became the God of earth, i.e. of its people. Their difference, however, based on divergent conceptions of revelation and prophecy, is how the relationship between man and God operates. Man can feel "free," Soloveitchik states, when he is in the

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[134]Originally an address delivered in 1930, it is found in Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), pp. 28-40.

[135]Soloveitchik, op. cit., p. 32.

presence of the personal God who has established a covenant with him; Buberian man, it is clear, would be encumbered.

Judaism, however, encompasses both Abraham and Moses, both the covenant with Abraham and the revelation at Sinai. Buber is clearly more a son of Abraham than of Moses. He favors the search, the sudden discovery, the intense illumination, the intimate experience, rather than the on-going discipline that halakhah provides. Soloveitchik states:

> The total faith commitment tends always to transcend the frontiers of fleeting, amorphous subjectivity and to venture into the outside world of the well-formed, objective gesture . . . this tendency . . . is of enormous significance in the Halakhah which constantly demands from man that he translate his inner life into external facticity . . .[136]

Buber insists man's translating his inner life into external facticity be dependent totally upon himself as an autonomous being. According to the interpretation of tradition Soloveitchik represents, however, man requires Divinely-ordained guidelines.

Buber has written, at times, as if the Law occupies a significant place for him.

> My point of view with regard to this subject (i.e. the Law) diverges from the traditional one; it is not a-nomistic, but neither is it entirely nomistic . . . For the teaching of Judaism comes from Sinai; it is Moses' teaching. But

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[136]Soloveitchik, op. cit., p. 35.

> the soul of Judaism is pre-Sinaitic . . . it is patriarchal . . . The Law put on the soul and the soul can never again be understood outside of the Law; yet the soul itself is not of the Law.[137]

The last sentence is particularly important, emphasizing as it does the need for the soul to be clothed in the body of the Law. But it has been shown previously that the garment of the Law is not fashionable in Buber's clime. Whence, then, this statement? As stated earlier, the essay from which these words are taken was originally an address delivered by Buber in Germany in 1930. It has been pointed out[138] to me that Buber gained a greater appreciation for--and made more explicit references to--the Law during and subsequent to his work on the Bible translation in collaboration with Franz Rosenzweig. While Buber may have stated "the soul can never again be understood outside of the Law," he nevertheless attempted to

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[137]Buber, "The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul," op. cit., p. 28.

[138]During the early months of 1979, while living in Jerusalem, I met several times with Dr. Rivka Horowitz, author of Buber's Way to I and Thou: An Historical Analysis (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1978). During one of our conversations, this point was made.

isolate it and understood it in a manner which failed to comprehend the protection and illumination the Law offers.[139] It is clear from the prior expositions of the concept of prophecy as found in Buber's writings, as well as the examination of the epistemology of I and Thou, that in Buber's thinking, law--and a fundamental means of transmitting law, prophecy--are problem-laden concepts.

For Soloveitchik, prophecy, by definition, must convey prescriptive content. For Buber, on the contrary, the prophetic encounter reveals Divine Presence and direction; after that, man is on his own, though continually open to further encounters. Soloveitchik's philosophy binds the man-God meeting of Abraham with that of Moses. It insists that the freedom and power granted man at creation is but a necessary prolegomena to the guidelines of Sinai; God the creator of man necessarily precedes God the teacher of man. God's instruction, that is, does not negate man's

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[139]Further discussion on Buber and the Law is given in A. Daniel Breslauer, The Chrysalis of Religion: A Guide to the Jewishness of Buber's I and Thou (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1980), esp. Chapter Four. Breslauer tries to counter, not very successfully, the criticisms of Buber given by M. Z. Sole, Philosophy and Religion (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Augden, 1967), pp. 92-100 and Eliezer Berkovits, Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism (New York: Ktav, 1974), pp. 68-137. See also Arthur A. Cohen, "Revelation and Law: Reflections on Martin Buber's Views on Halakhah," Judaism, I, (1952), 250-256.

autonomy.[140] Buber, despite his long exposition of problems relating to the text of Exodus in Moses,[141] circumvents the question of the normative laws given in the Torah.

Soloveitchik was quoted earlier (footnote 126) as stating that when prophecy ceased, the men of the Great Assembly "refused to acquiesce" in God's silence; they therefore instituted prayer. When God was no longer ostensibly present in history, man insisted on continuing the dialogue. But what is the meaning of "refusing to acquiesce" and how was it known if God was listening to the prayers so earnestly formulated? As is pointed out by

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[140]Once again the Kantian roots in Buber, manifested in the heteronomy vs. autonomy issue, are evident.

[141]It is worthwhile to compare these statements of Buber's taken from Moses (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964).

> . . . we must ascertain how far it is still possible for us to examine the texts available to us with regard to a common concrete content of that revelation; (p. 174)
>
> . . . for without the law, that is, without any clear-cut and transmissible line of demarcation between that which is pleasing to God and that which is displeasing to Him, there can be no historical continuity of divine rule upon earth. (p. 188)
>
> . . . the false argument of the rebels (Korach and cohorts) that the law as such displaces the spirit and the freedom . . . (p. 188) Moses as "legislator," pp. 174, 176, 186.

David Hartman,[142] this statement provides a basic insight into the differences between Buber and Soloveitchik, religious existentialist and halakhic existentialist (if one may so label them).

Buber, according to Hartman's analysis, focused on an event-based theology and insisted on being responsive to history. Accordingly, Jewish spiritual life centers on the unique, historical encounter between Israel and God; Sinai is seen as the collective version of Abraham's individual experience. Both on a communal level and for the individual, the direct unmediated experience of God's presence is crucial. Therefore, revelation is a continuous process. God is a God of history; sometimes He is in eclipse, sometimes He is present.

To the halakhist, however, God's presence is mediated by the law. The obligatory force of the commandments brings God into man's frame of reference. "The halakhist's meeting with God is not dependent upon fleeting moments of history, but upon fixed patterns of behavior."[143] If the

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[142]David Hartman, "Soloveitchik's Response to Modernity: Reflections on 'The Lonely Man of Faith,'" Joy and Responsibility: Israel, Modernity and the Renewal of Judaism (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Posner, 1978), p. 226.

[143]Ibid., p. 227.

commandments given at Sinai were to obligate Jews now, then God, who was present at Sinai, would also be present at this moment in Jewish history.

It is this view, Hartman maintains, that underlies Soloveitchik's statement that the men of the Great Assembly "refused to acquiesce" in the heavenly silence. As long as the community was committed to the fulfillment of the prophetic message,[144] it could share in the prophetic dialogue as formulated within prayer. No event in history could undermine "the fellowship of prayerful men" that is "ipso facto the fellowship of prophets." For the halakhic-existentialist, it is the normative force of Jewish law that made and makes possible the lived encounter with God. For the non-halakhic, religious existentialist, encounter takes place when openness and grace coincide; legal strictures are an obstacle, weakening human readiness.[145]

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[144]This assumes, in contradistinction to Buber, that prophecy has not only cognitive but also prescriptive content.

[145]"I do not believe that revelation is ever a formulation of law. It is only through man in his self-contradiction that revelation becomes legislation. This is the fact of man. I cannot admit the law transformed by man into the realm of my will, if I am to hold myself ready as well for the unmediated word of God directed to a specific hour of life (latter emphasis mine)." Letter from Buber to Rosenzweig, June 24, 1924. Found in On Jewish Learning, N. Glatzer, ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1955), p. 111.

Conclusion

Having carefully examined Buber's conception of prophecy, briefly analyzed that of Maimonides, and noted the fundamental difference between Buber and Soloveitchik, wherein, it may be asked, lies Buber's traditionalism? In regarding the prophetic experience as seminal, the Bible as a record par excellence of dialogue, and the prophet as a primal historical manifestation of Jewish religiosity, Buber has unquestionably captured and reaffirmed the Jewish soul. He has succeeded in bringing into sharp focus the nuances of this soul as formed by the patriarchs. The God of encounter, of human history, of relationship; the God of creation who grants man autonomy: these are the traditional notions Buber extricates from the biblical text. He has difficulty, however, identifying God the teacher, the Divine instructor, the nurturer of human history through law; it is in this crucial area that Buber departs from tradition, which has always been law-oriented. He leaves man at a mystical peak, supported by the experience of God's presence, but dependent upon his own resources. Tradition has always construed the God of history as He whose involvement creates a frame of reference for man's behavior; God's caring is expressed by His putting forth directives and setting limitations.

Gershom Scholem has stated that:

> the only social theory that makes sense--religious sense, too--is anarchism, but it is also--practically speaking--the least possible theory. It doesn't stand a chance because it doesn't take the human being into consideration; it is based on an extremely optimistic assessment of the human spirit; it has a messianic dimension, a transhistorical one.[145]

Buber's thought, while not anarchistic, is surely based on a highly optimistic assessment of the human spirit.[146] Kant thought reason would be a sufficient guide for man in his utter autonomy. For Buber, constant openness to the possibility of dialogue is that which is required. The Judaic tradition, however, insists the soul housed in human flesh needs more: specific behavioral directives. By failing to detect and come to grips with this significant aspect of the tradition--he seems at times to wish it away--Buber has considerably weakened the possibility of being construed a traditionalist.

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[145]"With Gershom Scholem: An Interview," in On Jews and Judaism in Crisis, op. cit., p. 33.

[146]This is readily seen in "Images of Good and Evil," Good and Evil: Two Interpretations (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1952), in which evil action is said to be a result of indecision, a kind of mistake by negligence, and not a conscious choice. Evil, for Buber, is the absence of direction and the absence of relation.

Chapter III

ELECTION, NATIONHOOD AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Introduction

In relation to the concepts of the election, nationhood and the land of Israel, Buber's viewpoint is, in the main, traditional. A specific people is chosen to realize specific goals as a polity on a specifically designated geographical tract. Although Buber maintains an emphasis on "the between," on relationship and on community, there is a strong individualism built into his philosophical premises. It is therefore surprising that in regard to the above concepts Buber's antinomianism remains subservient to his traditionalism. One might expect him to be much closer to Hermann Cohen's view, against which, in fact, he argued vehemently.

This chapter will state Buber's understanding of the election, nationhood and land of Israel through an examination of various essays. It will then explore these notions as expounded by Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (1194-1270), better known as Nahmanides. Noted medieval philosopher and kabbalist, poet and physician, biblical and talmudic exegete, Nahmanides' acceptance within the

tradition is undisputed. Set within the context of Nahmanides premises, the traditionalism of Buber's concepts becomes clear. At the same time, however, the differences between Nahmanides and Buber manifest the undercurrent of antinomianism that nonetheless remains operative. Finally, the chapter will discuss why Buber rejects an individualistic interpretation of Judaism in favor of the emphasis on peoplehood and land, and whether or not this propensity toward Zionism and Jewish nationalism indicates an inconsistency in his philosophical premises.

An Exposition of Buber's Position

In 1916 Buber founded the journal Der Jude, of which he was to remain editor until it ceased publication in 1928. Noting in his initial essay that Gabriel Riesser, the early advocate of German-Jewish emancipation, had in 1832 founded a periodical of the same title, Buber explained the difference in purpose between them. Riesser had intended his periodical for individual Jews struggling with the issue of equal civic status before the law. "We give our organ the same name," Buber stated, "but we are not concerned with the individual, but with the Jew as the bearer and beginning of nationhood."[1]

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[1]Arthur A. Cohen, editor, The Jew: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal, Der Jude, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1980), "Introduction," p. 10.

The 1916-1917 issues of Der Jude saw a long and rather ferocious controversy between Buber and Hermann Cohen. Their areas of disagreement were primarily two: the implications of Cohen's patriotic attachment to German culture and the German state; and Cohen's philosophic interpretation of Jewish history, which states that according to prophetic teaching, the realization of Judaism is bound up with dispersion among the nations of the earth. Responding to the latter claim, Buber insisted:

> In order for Judaism to be realized, it has to gather its strength in Palestine and make it fruitful there. Mankind needs Judaism; but Jews living scattered and apart and precariously cannot give mankind what it needs from Judaism. They must first be regenerated in their own land.[2]

Here is the early Buber, the Buber of Daniel, published in 1913, emphasizing the theme of realization and actualization. But the Zionism expressed in the above passage consists of much more than a mere application to Jewish history of the philosophic theme of Daniel. Buber's meeting with Herzl in Berlin, in 1898, one year after the first Zionist Congress, seems to have caused

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[2]Martin Buber, "Zion, the State and Humanity: Remarks on Hermann Cohen's Answer," ibid., p. 88. The Cohen-Buber interchange will be analyzed in the third part of this chapter.

a crystallization of ideas. His very deep commitment to Judaism, due to lack of observance, did not have a center of activity or interest. Zionism became the focus of Buber's concern.

In articulating his Zionist stance, Buber gave form to fundamental and closely interrelated concepts in the Judaic tradition. The Jewish people requires a land, the specific geographic entity promised it by God. The people of Israel can be properly regenerated as a nation and as a community only on its own soil. Thus reconstituted and strengthened, Israel becomes a "bearer," fulfilling a mission from which all mankind will benefit. The election, nationhood and land of Israel are thereby intertwined.

Although his understanding of these concepts is not problem-free, Buber's exploration and analysis of them remains within Jewish tradition. The primary difficulty encountered is the meaning of "covenant" and "normative" when used by Buber. While the terms are used as if their definitions were clearly understood, it is known, as discussed in the previous chapter, that for Buber these words have meanings different from the way in which they are ordinarily construed. Buber's various discussions of the election, nationhood and land of Israel, however, are strongly rooted in and supported by both biblical and

rabbinic sources.

In an address delivered during the Twelfth Zionist Congress in 1921,[3] Buber developed more fully the themes touched upon in Der Jude. Writing during the time of the growth of modern nationalistic movements, he disclaimed kinship or blood relationship as the fundamental requirement for peoplehood. "The concept 'people,'" he insisted, "always implies unity of fate."[4] That is, the people experienced together the great historical event that molded them into a nation: the exodus from Egypt. The physical leaving from Egypt was but the first step in a series of transformations that led to the fashioning of a political structure construed as representative of God. The tribes who were slaves were shaped into a new entity; they were molded by common experiences and memories, and a shared

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[3]Translated from the German by O. Marx, it is reprinted as "Nationalism" in Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), pp. 214-226 (hereafter referred to as Israel and the World.

[4]Ibid., p. 217. It is both interesting and valuable to compare Buber's distinction between "people" and "nation," formed by fate and mission respectively, to the formulations of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik in his essay, "Kol Dodi Dofek" (Hebrew). Soloveitchik distinguishes between goral (fate) and ye-ud (destiny or mission), aligning them with the covenants of Egypt and Sinai respectively. Originally an address given in 1956, the article has been reprinted in Besod Hayahid Vehayahad, ed. Pinchas H. Peli (Orot: Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 331-400.

destiny. Buber makes a distinction between "people" and "nation."

> It is decisive activity and suffering which produces a people. A nation is produced when its acquired status undergoes a decisive inner change which is accepted as such in the people's self-consciousness . . . Being a people may be compared to having strong eyes in one's head; being a nation, to the awareness of vision and its function.[5]

The tribes became a people by having experienced slavery and the exodus. The people became a nation when, with self-consciousness and cognizance, it began to realize its task. National ideology, or what Buber calls the "spirit" of nationalism always remains that which informs the higher mission of the people; it must never become an end in itself.[6]

Jews thus form not only a people but also a nation. They are not, however, "merely" a nation, with a common language and civilization. They constitute a unique national entity in that they are bound by membership in a

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[5]Ibid., p. 218.

[6]One of the purposes of this address was to criticize certain segments of the Zionist movement which, in Buber's estimation, had become enamored of the concept of the Jewish state as an end in itself, without concommitant emphasis upon the goals of that state in the light of the historical and spiritual destiny of the Jewish people.

community of faith. Certain Zionist groups, Buber contends, tend to sever that connection, i.e. to disregard the uniqueness derived from a common faith community. Such a cutting off separates the organic, inner strength of the people, the awareness of national task, from its external goal: nationhood.

Jewish thought--especially modern Jewish thought--has grappled with the problem of articulating the traditional concept of election in a way that does justice both to the universalist and humanistic values in Judaism as well as to the specific characteristics of the Jewish historical and spiritual experience. In "Nationalism," Buber attempts to deal with this difficulty. While in later writings he brings biblical sources to validate a universalistic understanding of election, the emphasis here is on function and withdrawal of value-judgements and comparisons.

Election, Buber states,

> does not indicate a feeling of superiority, but a sense of destiny. It does not spring from a comparison with others, but from the concentrated devotion to a task . . .[6]

It is the sense of great responsibility, of realizing a divinely-ordained task that informs the election of the Jewish people. All peoples are elected by God to fulfill

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[6]Martin Buber, "Nationalism," op. cit., p. 223.

a specific function in the historical drama of world history.

> A people fully aware of its own character regards itself as an element without comparing itself to other elements. It does not feel superior to others, but considers its task incomparably sublime, not because this task is greater than another, but because it is creation and a mission. There is no scale of values for the function of peoples. One cannot be ranked above another. God wants to use what he created as an aid in His work.[7]

The task for which the Jewish people is chosen or elected, however, cannot be realized "unless--under its aegis--natural life is reconquered."[8] Once again the close connection among the concepts of election, nationhood and the land of Israel is demonstrated. Buber goes so far as to define Jewishness within this context: "If we really are Jews," he states, then we recognize ourselves as "the bearers of a tradition and a task. . ."[9] In subsequent writings, Buber separated these notions and dealt with each individually, although they reappear, in their interconnectedness, in many essays. "Thé Election of Israel:

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[7]Ibid., p. 221.

[8]Ibid., p. 225.

[9]Martin Buber, "And If Not Now, When?" Israel and the World, op. cit., p. 234.

A Biblical Inquiry," focuses on the concept of chosenness. Interestingly, it was published in Berlin in 1938, just before Schocken Publishers closed down and Buber fled to Palestine.

The aim of this essay is to explicate the meaning of election, to show its biblical roots and to explain it in terms of world history. At the outset, Buber brings two verses from Amos, one manifesting national universalism, the other, an exclusivity. Verse 9:7 states:

> Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians
> unto me,
> O children of Israel? saith the Lord.
> Have I not brought up Israel out of
> the land of Egypt,
> And the Philistines from Captor,
> And Aram from Kir?[10]

This demonstrates that

> As a historical people, Israel enjoys no precedence over any other. Like Israel, the other peoples were all wanderers and settlers. The one God, the Redeemer and Leader of the peoples, strode before all of them upon their way . . .[11]

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[10]The Jewish Publication Society translation will be used for all biblical translations. Buber quotes this same verse, in a similar context, in "The Promise," On Zion: The History of an Idea, trans. by Stanley Godman (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), p. 19 (hereafter referred to as On Zion).

[11]Martin Buber, "The Election of Israel: A Biblical Inquiry," in On the Bible: Eighteen Studies, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 80.

However, Amos also says, in 3:2:

> You only have I known of all the
> families of the earth;
> Therefore I will visit upon you all
> your iniquities.

The Hebrew root yada, "know," indicates an exclusive, intimate relationship; it is used to designate the union of love between man and woman. Only with Israel, Amos is saying, does God have a relationship of intimate love, so to speak. The consequence of such an interaction is ("therefore") that Israel's failings are judged in light of this relationship. Pakad, to "visit upon" means that one receives what one deserves, either reward or punishment. Israel's failings are thus judged in accordance with its special relationship with God.

Buber uses Amos 3:2 both to delineate and support the concept of the election of Israel. Verses 1:3-2:3 insist that the other nations also must atone for the historical iniquities they have committed. But their sin consists in having done evil to one another, while Israel's sin is at the same time an offense against God. Having received God's teaching (Torah) and entered into a covenant

with Him, all sin[12] is a repudiation of the original and on-going commitment. Thus there is a universal principle: all nations are accountable to the Creator of the world. There is also a particular application of the universal. Having consented unconditionally to a covenant, having subjected itself to the laws and directives thus imposed, any offense against the covenant between God and Israel is "visited upon" the nation Israel. Its chosenness is a special responsibility commensurate with a unique liability to punishment.

The election of Israel did not occur for the first time at Horeb; it is not synonymous with the giving of the law. Rather, the destiny of all nations, including Israel, was set out in Genesis 11, when the nations were divided. Having become discouraged, so to speak, with the human race, God decided to select one nation to realize

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[12]The three most commonly used designations for "sin" in the Bible are het, pesha, and avon. According to the Babylonian Talmud, Yoma, 26:b, they may be explained as follows: het is inadvertent omission; pesha is a rebellious deed; and avon a deliberate misdeed. This accords with the etymology of the three terms as discussed in The Encyclopedia Judaica, XIV, pp. 1587-1593. Hata is to miss something, to fail; pasha is to breach; and avon is crookedness. In light of this, it is interesting to note that Amos 3:2, referring to Israel, uses the word avon, or deliberate wrong, while 1:3-2:30, the rebuke of the nations, uses pesha, rebellious misdeed. Buber does not discuss this difference. See also Mishnah Yoma, chapter 4, mishnah 2.

His dominion on earth.[13] Once a true community is realized, one that is am Elohim, a nation of God, it will, by example, aid all others in attaining a similar goal. Particularity thus leads to universalism; the specific task and destiny of Israel will eventually bring universal harmony. At the very beginning of human history, then, Israel becomes the reshit, the first fruits of God, the am segulah, the nation that is a special treasure. The uniqueness, however, is always predicated upon the obligation that is a consequence of the covenant. First the kingdom of God is actualized by Israel. Subsequently, other nations will follow, and God's kingdom will rule the world.

In his "Letter to Gandhi" and in later essays, Buber reiterates and amplifies this conception of election. Election, he maintains in "Hebrew Humanism," is completely a demand. What is demanded is truth and righteousness, both for the individual person and the community as a whole.

> Israel is chosen to enable it to ascend from the biological law of power, which the nations glorify . . . to the sphere of truth and righteousness. (Israel is to provide) . . . an order of life for a future mankind.[14]

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[13]This accords with Buber's exegesis of the story of Abraham in "Abraham the Seer," On the Bible, ed. N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), esp. pp. 25-29. See also Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilhot Avodat Kohavim, halakhah 1.

[14]Martin Buber, "Hebrew Humanism," trans. from the Hebrew by O. Marx, in Israel and the World, op. cit., pp. 240-252.

More than merely a nation, Israel is, indeed, the carrier of a revelation and therefore a religious community as well. Thus it has the potential to realize its mission. The connection between nationhood and a faith community is intrinsic to the task which is its ultimate goal. Both internally and externally, the function of Israel in world history determines its structure, which brings one to the issue of the land of Israel.

Buber has redefined and explicated the concept of election in a manner which is in accord with and supported by traditional sources. Both biblical and rabbinic sources reinforce and strengthen his delineation of this notion.[15] He has merely touched upon, however, the difficult theological and philosophical issue of universalism and particularism.[16] It is clear, despite the lack of resolution of this difficulty, that the concept of election is based upon

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[15]See, for instance, Genesis 12:3, 17:2-9, 16, 18:19; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 33:3; Joshua 24:22; Isaiah 42:3-4, 49:6; T. B. Avodah Zarah 2b-3a; T. B. Bezah 25b; Numbers R. 14:10; Sifre Deuteronomy 343. Also, in the liturgy for Festivals, Amidah, in Hertz, Siddur, p. 819, and Kiddush for Festivals, p. 809.

[16]This problem has been addressed in a unique manner --incorporating some Buberian notions--by David Hartman in an address entitled "Jews and Christians in the World of Tomorrow." It is published in Immanuel, Ecumenical Research Fraternity in Israel, No. 6 (1976), pp. 70-81.

a view of the biblical God as the God of history. The God of nature creates and blesses natural man in the first story of creation, while the God of history punishes man in the second version. The biblical God in His relational aspect is primarily and fundamentally the God of History, and His reality is attested to through the reality of man. Election implies a God who seeks to be revealed through the quality of life of men: "You are My witnesses," the Bible states.[17] Israel is chosen to act out on the arena of history a designated aim of the Creator of the world. By keeping the covenant in its own land, it will form an exemplary community destined to play a significant role in the ultimate redemption of mankind.

Although man relates to God fundamentally as He who acts within human history, the God of history and the God of nature cannot be separated. The land, according to Buber, is "the token of their unity."[18]

> In Israel the earth . . . is also the partner in a moral, God-willed and God-guaranteed association.[19]

Since the land of Israel is willed as the concrete material out of which the people Israel will hew the kingdom of God,

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[17]Isaiah, 43:10.

[18]Martin Buber, On Zion, op. cit., p. 9.

[19]Ibid., p. 14.

the very earth becomes sensitive to the categories of sin. That which is done with impunity elsewhere has dire consequences in the geographical area of the land of Israel. Buber quotes Leviticus 18:25, which concludes a listing of sexual prohibitions, and Leviticus 20:22, which concludes the corresponding penal code.

> And the land was defiled, therefore did I visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomited out her inhabitants (18:25).

The Canaanite peoples had made not only themselves but also the land unclean with their abominable customs, and the land was able to rid itself of this impurity only by casting out the peoples themselves.

> Ye shall therefore keep all My statutes, and all Mine ordinances, and do them, that the land whither I bring you to dwell therein vomit you not out (20:22)

The very land on which the people Israel is chosen to live will not tolerate unethical behavior, actions that contravene the covenant. The same fate as that meted out to the Canaanites awaits Israel if it becomes unclean and makes the land unclean.

In Egypt, Israel was merely involved in the natural processes of existence. By bringing the people to Canaan, to the land which is the object of His immediate personal care, God sets them into direct relationship with Himself.

The land of Israel by its very nature is subject to and dependent upon the providence and grace of God.

> For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out . . . but the land, whither ye go over to possess it . . . drinketh water as the rain of heaven cometh down; a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year (Deuteronomy 11:10-12).

One shall not act in a prohibited manner because

> . . . thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance (Deuteronomy 24:4).

The eyes of God are constantly upon the land. The sin of man who lives on the land, therefore, irreparably affects the earth itself. God, the land and the people are intertwined in a unique chain of connection, the movement of one link necessarily affecting the other two. The direct interrelation between man and the earth is "of a cosmically ethical character," in which the ethical component remains prominent.[20]

According to Buber,[21] both the people and the land of Israel are elected by God. There is, however, a funda-

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[20]Buber, On Zion, op. cit., p. 13.

[21]And based upon various aggadoth, primarily in T. B. Taanith. See Buber, On Zion, op. cit., p. 47.

mental difference between the two elections. The people is chosen in a specific historical moment, when a single man is selected to father the nation. From his seed, the people arises, a distinctive group in human history. While the election of the people is transmitted historically from generation to generation, that of the land precedes historical time. It is part of the original act of Creation.[22]

The two elections are bound by the love of God. Deuteronomy 7:7-8 states that God chose Israel ". . . because the Lord loved you," while in the midrash God says, "I love this land more than anything else."[23] This love is not arbitrarily bestowed. The ultimate purpose of creation is the redemption, and the revelation remains the center pole between these two. The union of people and land, under the aegis of revelation, is intended to lead toward the perfecting of the world in order to become

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[22]See the listing of midrashim in Ozar Ha aggadah (Hebrew), I (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1974), under the entry erez Yisroel; of especial note is the following, taken from Taanith, 10a (the translation is mine): "The land of Israel was created first and the entire world afterwards."

[23]Bamidbar Rabbah, 7.

the Kingdom of God.[24] "People and land are connected by the Election," Buber states,

> but they can only remain connected if and so long as the commission which it implies is carried out by the people in humble work for God.[25]

By maintaining the people Israel and its land, God preserves humanity as a whole and transmits His care for the entire earth. Israel--both nation and land--are the media through which God's hope for the ultimate redemption will be transmitted to the world and realized.

In the remaining two sections of On Zion, Buber traces the above notions of election, nationhood and the land of Israel as they are articulated in the writings of selected Jewish thinkers from medieval times to the early twentieth century. All of them, from Judah Halevi to the High Rabbi Liva, from The Book of 'Sohar' to modern Zionist theorists, express, each in his own style, the intimate and eternal connection that binds the people Israel to its land

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[24]Compare Buber, "The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul," Israel and the World, p. 35: ". . . the Jew, as part of the world, experiences perhaps more intensely than any other part, the world's lack of redemption," and "The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible," Ibid., p. 94: "The Jewish Bible is the historical document of a world swinging between creation and redemption, which in the course of its history, experiences revelation . . ."

[25]Buber, On Zion, op. cit., p. 51.

in the furtherance of its chosen mission. Each incorporates and elaborates upon the biblical and rabbinic sources Buber himself uses to support the concept of election as a national idea with universalist ramifications. In his formulations of Zionism, Buber is deeply rooted in the tradition--its sources and the traditional understanding of the sources.

Martin Buber's understanding of election and nationhood, and of the centrality of the land of Israel, can be seen most clearly as traditional when placed alongside that of Nahmanides who formulated conceptions of the same concept, especially of the centrality of the land of Israel that went further than his noted predecessors, Judah Halevi and Maimonides. Articulated primarily in the Commentary on the Torah, he provided an halakhic and philosophic basis for conceiving of the land of Israel as the focal point from which all other aspects of Torah derive meaning. When Buber writes in his letter to Gandhi that "the question of our Jewish destiny is indissolubly bound up with the possibility of ingathering,"[26] or proclaims "The word went forth from Sinai but the land of

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[26]"The Land and Its Possessors," Israel and the World, op. cit., p. 227.

Israel is to prepare the realization of the word,"[27] he is standing firmly on traditional ground.

Nahmanides' Position

The conception of Nahmanides (commonly known by the acronym Ramban) in relation to the land of Israel has two aspects from which all other statements on the subject emanate. First, the land of Israel has a specific, natural holiness that was conferred upon it at the time of the creation of the world. This holiness is not dependent upon the land being conquered or settled and therefore can never be abolished or cancelled. Second, the conquering and settlement of the land of Israel is a Divine injunction.[28]

That the land of Israel possesses a unique holiness is discussed most fully by the Ramban in his comments to Leviticus 18:25, which states: "And the land was defiled, therefore I did visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomited out her inhabitants." Following the section dealing with forbidden relations, verse 18:25 is paralleled by 20:22, which concludes a list of prohibited acts, some

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[27]On Zion, op. cit., p. 42.

[28]That is, it is a mizvah d'orata, a commandment the source of which is biblical, not a mizvah d'rabbanan, one which is rabbinic, or talmudic.

of them sexual in nature.[29] The latter verse says:

> Ye shall therefore keep all My statutes, and all Mine ordinances, and do them, that the land whither I bring you to dwell therein vomit you not out.

The Ramban's extensive comments to 18:25 include interpretation of 20:22.

He begins with a straightforward question. Forbidden sexual relationships are matters affecting personal conduct and do not depend in any way upon the land of Israel; why then should the land be affected by these acts of personal immorality?[30] The response is partially based upon what we would consider a medieval astrological concept, but one which Nahmanides also found in the Bible. Deuteronomy 32:8-9 states:

> When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the portion of the Lord is His people . . .

This verse is interpreted to mean[31] that God gave the heav-

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[29]Also included are the prohibitions against cursing one's parents, against going astray after ghosts or "familiar spirits," against unbalanced weights and measures. Note the significant similarities to Buber's exegesis and use of these same verses.

[30]See Nahmanides, Commentary on the Torah (Hebrew), ed. by C. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mosad Harov Kook, 1970), II, pp. 109-112. The English translation of Chavel is published by Shilo Pub. Inc., N.Y., see III, pp. 268-275.

[31]With the support of other verses, such as Deuteronomy 4:19, Genesis 10:31.

enly powers the responsibility of overseeing His creation. Every nation is looked after by an angel, who serves an an intermediary between it and God. Over the land of Israel, however, God placed no heavenly tutelary as ruler, as He had taken upon Himself the task of overseeing the land belonging to those who declare the unity of His name.[32] Thus, the land which is the inheritance of God will not tolerate that which the earth elsewhere can endure. It will vomit out those who defile it, be it through idol worship or the practice of immorality. Once again the intertwining of election and land becomes apparent. Just as the people were given a unique mission, the land on which it is to be actualized possesses a special status. To further support this notion, Nahmanides cites II Kings, 17:26 in regard to the Cutheans,[33] who were settled by the king of Assyria in the cities of the kingdom of Israel:

> . . . they knew not the manner of the God of the Land; therefore He hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the Land.

The Cutheans were not punished in their own land when worshipping their gods, but only when they came into "the Land

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[32]See Exodus 19:5.

[33]According to some interpretations these are the Samaritans.

of God."[34] The land of Israel is unlike other lands; it is unable to contain sinners.

Israel's conquering and living in Canaan is the union of God of the land with people of the land. A triangle is formed: God, people and land. The Talmud expresses this notion when it states: "Whoever lives outside the Land is as if he had no God."[35] How can this be? Several verses are cited in support of this aggadic statement. Two of them state:

> I am the Eternal your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God. (Leviticus 25:38)
>
> And I (Jacob) will come back to my father's house in peace, then shall the Eternal be my God. (Genesis 28:21)

They imply: when you, the people of Israel, are in the land of Canaan, I am your God; when you are not in the land of Canaan, I am, as it were, not your God. In addition, the Ramban cites I Chronicles, 22:18: "and the Land is subdued before the Eternal, and before His people." This cannot mean that Israel would subdue the land before God did, since the land is clearly under God's subjection

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[34]Nahmanides, Commentary on the Torah, op. cit., Leviticus, p. 270 (English edition).

[35]Kethuboth, 11b.

to begin with. However, "so long as Israel occupies it, the earth is regarded as subject to Him; when they are not in occupation, the earth is not subject to Him."[36] At first glance this would seem to contradict the premise that the land of Israel possesses a unique, natural holiness. Such, however, remains the case, for the holiness of the land itself is eternal, no matter what the identity of the inhabitants. What the Ramban indicates by bringing this citation from Chronicles is that God's direct providence is removed when the people whose mission of holiness is to be realized on the land of holiness is absent.

Nahmanides is here operating with a concept of what might be termed national differentiation. Each people has developed its own culture and history, influenced by geography and other environmental factors. But the national ideals thus formed remain divorced from the religious and ethical. Only in the case of the nation Israel does the religious and ethical ideal converge with the national: acceptance of the kingdom of heaven. This aspiration, however, can only be truly realized in the Holy Land, where ethical strictures and religious observances can be fully actualized under political autonomy. Outside the land of

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[36]Nahmanides, Commentary on the Torah, op. cit., Leviticus, 18:25.

Israel too many foreign influences are active, "intermediaries" in the Ramban's formulation, liable to distract the people from its primary objective: the cultivation of holiness.

From these conceptions of the election of the people of Israel to a specially designated mission, realizable only on the soil of the Holy Land, Nahmanides arrives at an extreme, but logical conclusion. Since the aim of Torah is to create a people immersed in and disciplined toward holiness, and since the land of Israel is a sine qua non for the actualization of this goal, the religious mizvoth observed outside the land are in fact only provisional measures. While they have some value of their own, their primary merit lies in maintaining a vitally alive consciousness of the eternal task of the people Israel. Mizvoth performed in the Diaspora are preparatory for real Jewish life in the homeland. They continue to be necessary in the land itself.

Support is given to this notion through exegesis of various passages, especially of several verses in Deuteronomy. In the second paragraph of the Shema prayer, recited twice daily, is stated:

> Take heed to yourselves that your heart mislead you not, and ye turn aside and serve other gods, and prostrate yourselves before them. And then the wrath of the Eternal will glow against you, and he will restrain the heaven, that there be no rain,

> and that the ground give not its increase; and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which the Eternal giveth you. (Deuteronomy 11:16-17)

The ultimate consequence of disobedience, especially of idolatry, is exile. But the command is given immediately afterwards:

> Therefore shall ye put these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand . . . and write them upon the door-posts of thine house . . . (Deuteronomy 11:18, 20)

The biblical commentator Rashi quotes the Sifre, an halachic midrash on Numbers and Deuteronomy, who comments on the phrase "and ye shall perish quickly."

> In addition to all the other sufferings I will banish you from the soil which made you sin. A parable: It may be compared to the case of a king who sent his son to the banqueting hall and earnestly charged him, "Do not eat more than you need, in order that you may come home clean!" The son, however, took no notice of this; he ate and drank more than he needed, and vomited it up and befouled all the company. They took him by his hands and feet and cast him out of the palace.[37]

Rashi continues in this direction when commenting upon the words "Therefore shall ye put these my words in your heart."

> Even after you have been banished, make yourselves distinctive by means of My commands: lay Tephillin, attach Mezuzoth

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[37]Rashi, Commentary on the Pentateuch, trans. and annotated by Rosenbaum and Silbermann (New York: Hebrew Pub. Co.), Deuteronomy, p. 61.

> to your doorposts, so that these shall not be novelties to you when you return.[38]

According to Rashi, one must continue fulfilling the mizvot such as tefilin in exile in order to retain one's distinctiveness. The Ramban comments that the commandments of tefilin and mezuzah are in the category of personal obligations, and as such are applicable everywhere, not just in the land of Israel. However, the verse applies specifically to the land of Israel, as is written: "that your days be multiplied, and the days of your children, upon the Land (Deuteronomy, 11:21)." Why would we think, Nahmanides is asking, that mizvot which are hovot haguf, personal duties, should be relinquished once in exile? Surely they are not in the same category as agricultural laws, which are clearly tied to the land. But this indicates, in fact, that basically all the mizvot are meant for those living in the land.[39] Those practiced and kept in the Diaspora incline one towards holiness, accustom one to the discipline, but there is about them the ambience of the practice session or rehearsal; the full concert can only be played on the land itself.

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[38]Ibid., pp. 61-62.

[39]See Nahmanides, Commentary on the Torah, op. cit., on Deuteronomy 11:18, Genesis 26:5, Leviticus 18:25.

That conquering the land of Israel is a positive commandment is first explicated by the Ramban in the discussion of additional mizvot in his notes to Maimonides' Sefer Hamizvot. In this work he analyzes at length the reasons why conquering and settling the land of Israel must be enumerated as one of the positive commandments. In doing so, Nahmanides is taking issue with Maimonides, who does not include it as a positive commandment. He was also the first to mention it as binding for all times. The Ramban's discussion is given in brief in his Commentary on the Torah as exegesis of the verse "And ye shall drive out the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein; for unto you have I given the land to possess it (Deuteronomy 33:53)." He states there:

> In my opinion this is a positive commandment, in which He is commanding them to dwell in the Land and inherit it, because He has given it to them and they should not reject the inheritance of the Eternal (I Samuel 26:19). Thus if the thought occurs to them to go and conquer the land of Shinor . . . or any other country and to settle therein, they are transgressing the commandment of G-d.[40]

According to the Ramban, this verse is the source for many laws in the Talmud. It is forbidden to leave the land of Israel, for instance, except for specified reasons. A woman who does not want to emigrate with her husband is

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[40]Ibid., Deuteronomy, pp. 385-86.

considered a "rebellious wife," as is the man, in the converse situation, considered a "rebellious husband." The consequence of the refusal of a spouse to settle in Israel is construed as sufficient legal ground for divorce. The legal manifestation of this principle argues strongly for its status as a positive commandment.

Differences Between Buber and Nahmanides

In discussing the election, nationhood and land of Israel, Buber remains rooted within the tradition of which Nahmanides is a prime example. Not only do both use some of the same verses as the originating source of various conceptions,[41] but they also interpret them similarly, arriving at almost identical conclusions.

The very strength of Buber's traditional roots in this area, however, brings to the fore even more markedly the aberrant manner in which the issue of law--both biblical and rabbinic--is dealt with in the aforementioned essays. Settlement of the land of Israel cannot be separated from establishment of law in the land. Buber writes:

> If the depth of faith . . . is robbed of its content of faith, then inorganic ethics cannot fill the void . . .[42]

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[41]As, for example, Leviticus 18:25.

[42]Buber, "Nationalism" in Israel and the World, op. cit., p. 225.

But how is the "content of faith" to be construed? Buber elucidates four meanings of the term "Hebrew humanism," one of which is explained as:

> . . . reception of the Bible, not because of its literary, historical and national values, important though these may be, but because of the normative value (emphasis mine) of the human patterns demonstrated in the Bible.[43]

How, it must be asked, are these normative values articulated and incorporated in human life? What status do they have in "human patterns?" How can the concept of covenant be understood without obligation and prescription? And if the latter are necessary components, are the "patterns" in the Bible normative but not obligatory? Can emulation have the status of "normative?"

> . . . we can truly retrieve the normative only as we open ourselves to the biblical word, wherein it appears as a primal force.[44]

No analysis, systematic or otherwise, is offered as to what is meant by "normative."

In yet another essay, the following is proclaimed:

> If we really are Jews, we believe that God gives his commands to men to observe throughout their whole life, and that whether or not life has a meaning depends on the fulfillment

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[43]Buber, "Hebrew Humanism," Israel and the World, op. cit., p. 244.

[44]Buber, "Biblical Humanism," On the Bible, op. cit., p. 213.

> of those commands. And if we consult our deep inner knowledge about God's command to mankind, we shall not hesitate an instant to say that it is peace.[45]

On the one hand the very meaning of life depends upon the commands of God. On the other, the many commands are reducible to one intention, peace. To what commands is Buber here referring? What status do they have, optional or mandatory? Can the "faith community" he speaks of in other places retain its cohesiveness based on norms that are of one's choice and selective? Once again, Buber's statements imply an antinomianism.

One is left puzzled at how a people can be chosen, commands received, and a land specified, within a context in which the word "covenant" can only have, according to Buber's philosophical presuppositions, the meaning and presence of encounter, but no actual content.[46] Thus, a significant difference between Buber and Nahmanides becomes apparent. Although Buber uses the concepts of land and covenant, he does not imply continuity of content. The Ramban, however, both assumes and specifies the transmission of content and the appropriation of the tradition.

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[45]"And If Not Now, When?," Israel and The World, op. cit., pp. 236-37.

[46]"Man receives, and what he receives is not a 'content' but a presence, a presence as strength." Buber, I and Thou, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 158.

For the Ramban, the commands of the Torah can be completely fulfilled only when living in the land of Israel. Law (Torah) is properly realized only on the soil of the land for which it was especially designated. Buber will agree that actualization of the faith community and nation of Israel occurs optimally on the soil of its own land. But for him, law in the Ramban's sense is too restrictive and inflexible--indeed, an inappropriate concept. Justice and truth are to be realized in the land of Israel, according to Buber, thus creating in microcosm the community which will eventually lead to the Kingdom of God. The demands of justice and those of truth are met by walking the "narrow ridge" in holy insecurity, by maximizing I-Thou encounters, thus being more open to God.

> I have occasionally described my standpoint to my friends as the 'narrow ridge.' I wanted by this to express that I did not rest on the broad upland of a system that includes a series of sure statements about the absolute, but on a narrow rocky ridge between the gulfs where there is no sureness of expressible knowledge but the certainty of meeting what remains undisclosed.[47]

The open-endedness of Buber's concept constitutes a reduction to an individualism, indeed, an antinomianism. Man is left to depend upon his own resources.

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[47]Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 184.

Philosophical Problem in Buber

Buber's philosophic outlook appears to be one in which man is left to find his own way, carve out his own responsibilities, determine his own actions. Within such a framework, one would not expect the strong and deep attachment to the land of Israel Buber has manifested. Indeed, the particularism of his notion--a people realizing God's goals only and ideally in a specific land--is anomalous. It is important, therefore, to examine carefully the philosophical premises that constitute the underlying structure of his conceptual constructs, and see if they are consistent with the Zionism he so passionately espouses. The concepts of the individual and the community will be analyzed, as set within the framework of the dispute between Buber and Hermann Cohen.

Cohen's anti-Zionist stance was made public over a period of time. In 1914, he signed a proclamation against Zionism issued by the leadership of the Berlin Jewish community. Then, in 1916, he wrote an article against Zionism, entitled "Zionism and Religion" for a Jewish students' association. When Buber attacked Cohen's position in Der Jude in 1916, Cohen responded in a booklet entitled "Reply to the Open Communication Addressed by Dr. Martin Buber to Hermann Cohen." Despite attempts to gain Cohen's influential endorsement for the Zionist cause, he remained a staunch opponent of Jewish nationalistic principles.

Cohen's position, as delineated in "Zionism and Religion" (1916), is one which disputes Zionism's understanding of religion and nationality as equivalent. Based on his conception of the modern state, Cohen challenged the claim that the Jews were a nation. A nation, he insisted, arises as the creation of the state; it is determined by it, and is one result of its unique structure. The state, for Cohen, is a primary means for the realization of morality on earth; as such it is the very essence of ethical norms, the focus of human civilization. Jewish nationality is labeled by Cohen as "a natural fact,"[48] in recognition of a shared history and culture. But nationality is to be distinguished from nation.

Cohen's opposition to Zionism stems from several theories. First, the state has a specific function in Western history which argues against re-establishing an ancient polity. This is closely allied to a deep German patriotism. Second, Zionism implies separateness, a ghetto-consciousness, and this runs counter to the universalism which is the goal of messianism, the gift of Jewish monotheism to the world. Third, Zionism places in question the loyalty of citizens in their places of residence.

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[48]Martin Buber, "Zion, the State and Humanity," in The Jews: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal, Der Jude, op. cit., p. 88.

Fourth and most significantly, Zionism is antithetical to the true prophetic teachings, which propound a universalistic ethic: all mankind will come together in one society, in which ethics and morality will reign supreme.

Jewish monotheism, according to Cohen,[49] is an integration of the idea of the spirituality of God and the messianic prophecy. One deals with Divinity, the other with the moral ideal of all mankind as conveyed in history. Monotheism becomes the basis for the universalistic view of one peaceful society: one God, one mankind, one morality.

> It is indeed the highest triumph of religion that only it has produced the idea of mankind.[50]

> Monotheism required a continuous development beyond the Bible, which could not be entrusted to those peoples who did not produce the ancient Bible.[51]

The law, a national dimension, and the ancient state were at one time necessary. Isolation was a prerequisite to the rise of Jewish monotheism. But it had to be superseded in order to attain the messianic vision. "That the state

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[49]See J. Melber, Hermann Cohen's Philosophy of Judaism (New York: Jonathan David, 1968), p. 386f.

[50]Hermann Cohen, Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism, trans. Simon Kaplan (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972), p. 238.

[51]Ibid., p. 253.

declined, while the people were preserved, is a providential symbol of Messianism: it is the sign of the truth of monotheism."[52] Israel is chosen to remain stateless due to its unique destiny in world history. Its task is both to propagate and symbolize the future unity of a messianic mankind.

Buber's reply reaffirms the need for a Jewish state. Clearly, his philosophical premises are other than Cohen's. First, the realization of Judaism is necessary for the sake of mankind, but it can only be attained through the re-establishment of the distinctive Jewish people within its own polity. As Buber states: "The ancient Jewish creation of the spirit . . . was essentially a creation of the people, the nation; it could survive only latently in individuals."[53] Strong expression is here given to the view that a community or a people can achieve that which is destined to remain mere potential within the solitary person. Specific ideals can only be nurtured, ripen and blossom forth within the context of peoplehood. Moreover, the land of Israel represents not a "state," i.e. a political structure, but "this old soil, the promised guarantee of ultimate and sacred abiding, the hard earth, the only one where the seed of the

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[52]Ibid.

[53]Martin Buber, "Zion, the State and Humanity," in The Jew: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal, Der Jude, op. cit., p. 93.

new unity can sprout."[54] Buber here emphasizes "the promised guarantee," a specific interchange between God and a people in which the increase of God's power on earth was seen as bound up with the self-realization of a people within a designated geographical area. Buber is stating an axiom, offering only the supportive evidence of "the promised guarantee."

Second, Buber disputes Cohen's interpretations of various prophetic writings, saying, "Never has anyone so abused the lofty concept of the symbol."[55] He quotes Jeremiah, whom Cohen frequently cites, to show that the prophet cannot intend other than the restoration of Zion as the central spiritual light to set aflame the rest of mankind. The obligation towards humanity, Buber asserts, is "to show how God lives within us"[56] as part of a nation in its own land. The historical mission of the Jewish people is to proclaim God's sovereignty on earth. Cohen implies that Jews must disappear in order that messianism make itself manifest. Also, Judaism does not demand the spreading of its doctrines and beliefs by its followers. The building of an ethical society on the promised land is

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., p. 94.

[56] Ibid.

task enough. Only in a Jewish state can the spiritual resources of the Jewish people attain fruition.

A Jewish state, therefore, is needed to provide the possibilities first, for a full development of the Jewish way of life, and second, for the construction of a model moral society that will lead the world towards messianism. Palestine is a place for political attachment and social realization, the only place where Jews can usher in the Jubilee, not merely praise it.[57] Buber here becomes an advocate of the social legislation of the Torah, arguing for the concretization of specific laws. In contrast, for Cohen, the land of Israel is but a place of eternal symbolic sanctity.

Hermann Cohen's view of Zionism is one with which Buber would be expected to be in sympathy. Buber's response, however, is to express strong opposition and assert the philosophical viability of the Jewish state. It is insufficient to take note of Buber's greater cognizance of history and ascribe to it the primary motivation for his pro-Zionist stance. Cohen's system of rational concepts does lack "the grit of history;"[58] in its loftiness, it manifests

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[57]". . . in a life of dispersion . . . we can praise the Jubilee, but we cannot usher it in." Buber, ibid.

[58]Ibid., p. 86.

a kind of historical innocence. Just as Cohen's vision is the outcome of specific philosophical concepts, however, Buber's defense of the particularism at the root of Israel's eventual universalism is the result of fundamental conceptual premises. To determine whether or not these premises form a consistent or coherent system, i.e. whether or not they justify Buber's position, is the query under investigation. The first step is to examine the emphasis on the individual that is prominent in many of Buber's writings.

Uncertainty and risk are the consequences of man's realization that his authentic existence is affirmed by his openness to true dialogue. In the I-Thou encounter, when the Thou is the Eternal, man receives confirmation of meaning and strength in awareness of God's Presence, but no specific guidelines. The result of an I-Thou meeting is to ask oneself: to whom am I responsible; what ought I to do? God's dialogue with man leads man to creative problem-solving and great resourcefulness. It confirms man's autonomy and conveys trust in his decisions.

> . . . there is no certainty . . . The risk does not ensure the truth for us; but it, and it alone, leads us to where the breath of truth is to be felt.[59]

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[59]Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, op. cit., p. 71.

But in depending upon one or more I-Thou encounters for confirmation of self and of meaning, it becomes clear that while moral behavior derives from man himself, the demand for moral behavior has its source in the absolute Thou, in God. Only in relationship to the Absolute can true values be discovered. Man uncovers and discovers that which he ought to do. That man can encounter God at all is due to the on-going nature of revelation.[60] Meeting with the Absolute, however, yields no clear and certain moral guidelines. Rather, "No prescription can lead us to the meeting, and none leads from it."[61] Or, as Buber says elsewhere, "God has truth, but he does not have a system. He expresses his truth through his will, but his will is not a program."[62] What comes out of revelation, therefore, is not a set of rules, but a cognizance that reforms the human spirit. Through revelation man knows that he is commanded and responsible, that demands are put on him. But only he himself can decide how to respond.

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[60]See above, Chapter I, in which some of the problems relating to revelation have been discussed.

[61]Martin Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 159.

[62]Martin Buber, "False Prophets," Israel and the World, op. cit., p. 114.

Marvin Fox, in an essay entitled "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy,"[63] has convincingly shown that this view of revelation, allied with Buber's ethical theory, moves moral decision exclusively into the private realm, thereby implying an antinomianism, if not ethical anarchism. His reasoning illustrates first, that the premises of I and Thou, together with those of other writings, can be understood as propounding an individualism so extreme that it leads to anarchy, and second, that Buber seems to contradict the very groundrules he sets down. Professor Fox's argument states:

1. According to Buber, moral values must be absolute and must be related to an absolute if they are to be binding at all.
2. God, the Absolute exists, and is the source of all values and moral obligations.
3. Man's moral decisions and relationship to God derive from revelation.
4. In an experience of revelation, man is transformed and this moral transformation is the impetus to ethical behavior.

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[63]Found in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, ed. Schilpp and Friedman (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), pp. 151-170, and referred to in Chapter I.

5. Man's response to revelation/encounter/ dialogue is of his own choice and totally personal. He cannot rely on established moral codes. There is no assurance he is making a "right" decision.
6. That is, revelation obligates man to make a decision in a set of circumstances so unique that only he can decide what it is he ought to do.

As Fox points out, the conclusion reached in number six above is at the opposite extreme of the premise set down in number one.[64] Buber seems to violate his doctrine of the absoluteness of moral demands by making each person the sole yet uncertain arbiter of what he ought to do. Individual decision comes to transcend absolute value, and moral conflict is relegated completely to the realm of the private self. This has several implications.

7. There can be no moral codes that are binding, as each situation is unique, requires its own unique solution, and is the sole responsibility of the individual.

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[64] Ibid., p. 160.

8. Therefore, one cannot judge other individuals, groups or societies, as general principles of evaluation do not exist.
9. Man must not only decide for the good; he must create for himself an understanding of what constitutes the good.[65]

As Professor Fox indicates, however,[66] Buber himself, in spite of his theories, establishes criteria of behavior, makes moral judgements, and in general attempts to keep chaos at bay. By so doing he acknowledges the limitations, if not the untenability of the conclusions above.

10. Good is defined as making a decision with one's whole being. Such a decision cannot fail but to move in the right direction. Evil is the lack of decision. One cannot, it seems, consciously choose evil; it is the result of a weak will or slothful nature.
11. That is, good appears to be the dedication of man to his own self-realization.

Professor Fox ends his essay by stating:

> For we have seen in Buber's moral philosophy an attempt to defend moral anarchy while pleading for moral order. It is my hope

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[65] Ibid., p. 161.

[66] Many examples are given in ibid., pp. 163-167.

> that Professor Buber will favor us with a clarification of his position.[67]

The volume in which Marvin Fox's essay is found concludes with a series of responses by Buber to the various statements and critiques of his philosophy made in the thirty studies which comprise the book. Fox has shown the existence of an unresolved antinomy: moral order and moral anarchy. In answering Fox's request for clarification, Buber, who calls Fox "an opponent," compounds the antinomy.

1. In answer to Fox's statement that no action is morally significant unless it is linked to God, Buber claims that the ethical deed is accessible to the godless, but that an action arising out of a system that acknowledges the Absolute is done within the context of that relation.[68] This latter explanation seems to me a tautology, and Buber is not explaining or refuting Fox's interpretation as much as trying to hold two contradictory positions.

2. Buber claims he does not set the privacy of individual decision in the place of absolute value. Rather,

> . . . I cannot hold the decision of a man (not in the full security of any tradition) as to what is right and wrong in a certain

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[67]Ibid., p. 169f.

[68]Martin Buber, "Replies to My Critics," The Philosophy of Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 719.

> situation to be a decision valid in itself . . . rather, he must understand himself as standing every moment under the direction of God.[69]

But if God provides only direction, man's decision is right and wrong in itself, unless Buber wants to say that man's decision is determined by dialogic meeting with God. But that would be totally unacceptable. Buber denies heteronomous law, but simultaneously denies that without it, man is left to depend entirely upon the resources of autonomous law.

3. From the assertion that each situation is unique and requires a unique solution, Professor Fox concluded that there can be no universally moral rules. Buber counters this by saying that of course the command to honor one's father and mother is absolute; only its application requires individual decision-making. But surely this is to circumvent the problem Fox presents. From whence comes the absolute content of "Honor thy father and mother?" The antinomy of moral order and moral anarchy remains unresolved.

Buber then attempts to clarify his concepts of good and evil,[70] but only reiterates that one cannot do evil

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., p. 720.

with his whole soul. He does acknowledge, however, "my ethical anarchism,"[71] but disputes Fox's claim that his philosophy moves in the direction of an extreme individualism by referring the reader to the concluding sections of "What is Man?" (in Between Man and Man). Once again, the antinomy stands.[72]

In his study of Buber's moral philosophy and the view of the individual implicit in it, Professor Fox also acknowledged the strong commitment Buber makes to the notion of community.

> . . . Buber is deeply committed to the view that true humanity, and hence true morality, is only possible when men are related to each other in a living community. Every true culture is such a community and the same man who, we were told, must make his own decision and find his own way must also act as a member of his culture.[73]

It is to the concept of community as explicated by Buber that we now turn in the attempt to better understand the philosophical basis of his commitment to the land of Israel.

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[71] Ibid., p. 721.

[72] Cf. Maurice Friedman, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," The Philosophy of Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 198. ". . . Buber's moral philosophy implies that one ever again finds the absolute in the relative--not as . . . a universal, but just in and inseparable from the unique, the unrepeatable, the new."

[73] Marvin Fox, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," The Philosophy of Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 168.

Buber's social philosophy was influenced by the German sociologists Ferdinand Tonnies and Hermann Schmalenbach, through his good friend,the socialist Gustav Landauer. The former emphasized community as an organic form of living together, while the latter stressed its personal, voluntary nature.[74] The early essay, "My Way to Hasidism" (1918), portrayed a vibrant community maintaining the traditional Jewish relation to God, world and man. "The Holy Way," written in 1919, states: "The true community is the Sinai of the future."[75] That is, men living together in the brotherhood of true community are the means of realizing the promise of Sinai, the messianic era.

It is in the 1923 publication of I and Thou, however, that Buber's concept of community received its most theoretical treatment. While the first section of the book deals with the individual and his two-fold attitude toward the world, the second explores various manifestations of the human spirit, including the collective and the community. Three statements of Buber encapsulate his notion:

> True community (comes into being) on two accounts: all of them (people) have to stand in a living reciprocal relationship

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[74]See Grete Schaeder, The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber, trans. Noah J. Jacobs (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), pp. 256-265.

[75]Martin Buber, "The Holy Way," in On Judaism, p. 139.

> to a single living center, and they have to stand in a living single relationship to one another.[76]
>
> When a culture is no longer centered in a living and continually renewed relational process, it freezes into the It-world which is broken only intermittently by the eruptive, glowing deeds of solitary spirits.[77]
>
> Not the periphery, not the community comes first, but the radii, the common relation to the center. That alone assures the genuine existence of a community.[78]

The community is the perimeter of a large circle; the individuals are the radii; God, the Absolute, is at the center. Not surprisingly, true community is an extension of the I-Thou relationship which characterizes genuine meeting between persons and authenticity between man and God. An individual, no matter what his stature, remains a "solitary spirit" if he is not part of a group which renews its creative impetus through the I-Thou. The community offers to the individual that which cannot be reached in one's singleness. In an essay written in 1941, Buber makes obvious this very point.

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[76]Martin Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 94. See also p. 98.

[77]Ibid., p. 103.

[78]Ibid., p. 163. See also p. 155, after hiatus.

> Though something of righteousness may become evident in the life of the individual, righteousness itself can only become wholly visible in the structures of the life of a people . . .; to function in abundance and diversity and with regard to all possible social, political, and historical situations.[79]

Although community is so powerful a structure, Buber is quick to reassert a strong individualism if he thinks a uniformity is implied. James Muilenberg, in his essay, "Buber as Interpreter of the Bible," states:

> Revelation, Buber is saying, comes in community, through the immediacy of word and event. Israel can address her God with the intimacy of Thou because He has first addressed her with His divine I and has accompanied His unique words with the eventful words of His activity.[80]

Muilenberg is using the word "community" in the very meaning Buber ascribes to it in I and Thou, i.e. those whose commune with each other and with the Thou who is their center and source. Buber, however, takes the term to mean "group," against which he proceeds to argue for the individual.

> Muilenberg ascribes to me the view that revelation 'comes in community.' That is not my view at all. Even when the community as such, whether merely passive, whether also with an active movement,

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[79]Martin Buber, "The Gods of the Nations and God," Israel and the World, op. cit., p. 210.

[80]In The Philosophy of Martin Buber, ed. Schlipp and Friedman, op. cit., pp. 380-402.

> seems to take part in an event of revelation transmitted in historical form, even when the report includes a divine address directed to a 'You' (plural). I can understand as the core of the happening discernible by me only a central human person's coming into contact with transcendence.[81]

In preventing "community" from being construed as a group, Buber reduces it to the individual's I-Thou encounter, even when the divine address is in plural form. It could be that Buber is saying that in the instance of the giving of the Decalogue, that which each person heard was unique, based on his personal I-Thou encounter with the Absolute at that moment. There cannot be a group encounter which obliterates the uniqueness of each individual's meeting. But in asserting the role of the single person, Buber does not clarify what revelation, or I-Thou encounter with a community does or can mean. Yet there must be a discernible difference if God uses the plural form of address to a community rather than the singular form to an individual. Buber does not develop the concept of community in a manner that clarifies this problem. It is interesting to note that Grete Schaeder, whose The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber was written with Buber's approval,[82] makes a statement almost identical to

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[81]Martin Buber, "Replies to My Critics," The Philosophy of Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 726.

[82]See Preface, Grete Schaeder, The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber, op. cit.

that of Muilenberg. "It was to a community," she says, "that the biblical word was once addressed.[83]

It is the community of Israel that is ordained with a special task in world history. The monotheism of Judaism, Buber insists, is unique in its "all-embracing subservience to the divine Ruler, extending, without exception, over all areas of national life." This means "the realization of justice and truth . . . in the private conduct of the individual . . . in his behavior as a member of society and as a citizen of the State."[84] "National life" does not here refer to the German state or the universal state of Hermann Cohen, but the particular society that a people committed to "justice and truth" will create. The concept of community as developed by Buber, however, does not support the choice of a specific land on which that social structure is to be realized.

In the Introduction to On Zion, Buber points out that the national movement of Zionism is named after a place, therefore indicating a particular land. This land is associated with the King of Israel in Psalms, 48:3, pointing to a unique connection between it and the rulership of God.

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[83]Grete Schaeder, op. cit., p. 272.

[84]Martin Buber, "Zion, the State and Humanity," in The Jew: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal, Der Jude, op. cit., p. 93.

> Fair in situation, the joy of the whole earth;
> Even mount Zion, the uttermost parts of the north,
> The city of the great King.
> (JPS translation, 1954).

But the problem still remains unresolved: why did Buber not carry his individualism to its logical end, and arrive at a conclusion similar to Hermann Cohen's? Based on his philosophical premises, is his nationalism justified?

Any nation wants to go back to its land. But Zionism is different in that its aim is not only return but also the perfectability of society. This goal of chosenness involves community, which implies all forms of community, including therefore an autonomous polity. As tolerated strangers within another country, an important form of community is missing. Living as a sub-group in another nation constitutes a kind of pacifism without temptation. One cannot teach others without the challenges posed by a national polity. Judaism can only be "activated" once the natural unity of land and well-rooted community take hold.[85] If Buber's antinomianism, deriving from a specific understanding of individual dialogue, is carried too far, the concept of a larger community cannot be justified. This is one of the conclusions to be drawn from Marvin Fox's essay. In addi-

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[85]See Martin Buber, "Judaism and Mankind," On Judaism, op. cit., pp. 25-30.

tion, as has been shown, Buber's attempt to demonstrate the theoretical validity of the notion of community is not successful; it remains vague and unclear. One can conclude that the antinomianism is limited by a reading of the Bible that, despite statements to the contrary, assumes the transmission of a specific content. Even if the Bible is conceived of as a written record of memories of an original auditory event, at some point there had to be a content transmitted: the promise of the land, the mission of the people, the social legislation.[86] Marvin Fox points out several places where Buber has admitted the existence of content; he also demonstrates that Buber's premises lead to a rejection of much of the legislation of the Hebrew Bible.[87] Even in I and Thou there are passages which seem to contradict one another.[88]

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[86]See, for instance, Martin Buber, "Zion, the State and Humanity," in The Jew: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal, Der Jude, op. cit., p. 94. Also, Moses (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), pp. 174-180.

[87]Marvin Fox, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," The Philosophy of Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 163 and p. 159.

[88]Cf. "They leave no content that could be preserved," p. 82; "It is not in the law that is afterward derived from the appearance itself that the being communicates itself," p. 90; ". . . from God to man is called mission and commandment, from man to God seeing and hearing," p. 133. I and Thou, Kaufmann translation, op. cit.

Although Buber's traditionalism predominates in the areas of the election, nationhood and land of Israel, his antinomianism remains operative in that it prevents the formulation of a clear conceptual basis for his viewpoints. His refutation of Hermann Cohen, the problems in his moral philosophy, concept of revelation, and understanding of community all indicate an antinomianism that works on a one to one basis--an openness, spontaneity, feeling of trust, experience of concreteness and presentness--but encounters serious theoretical difficulties when applied to a larger domain. Yet Buber is an advocate of and justifies the larger arenas of community and nation, especially the unique mission, as he conceives it, of the people Israel. Buber articulates traditional concepts, but at the same time manifests an antinomian bias which tends to distort those very concepts, undermining the sense of public meaning that confers continuity upon a community. At some point, despite his theoretical framework, Buber's open-ended dialogue with God does have the limiting factor of a specifically given content. It is to be concluded that Buber's antinomianism detracts from his traditionalism in regard to the election, nationhood and land of Israel.

CHAPTER IV

KINGSHIP AND MESSIANISM

Introduction

This chapter will argue that Buber's understanding of messianism stays within the parameters of tradition except for the issue of law. It describes those parameters as given in talmudic sources, understood by Maimonides and Nahmanides, and examined by Gershom Scholem. It then states and analyzes Buber's discussions of messianism, presented primarily in Kingship of God, The Prophetic Faith, the later essays, and Two Types of Faith. It is shown that Buber's notion accords with that of Maimonides in terms of its strong anti-apocalyticism. There is a significant difference, however, in regard to the understanding and function of law. While genuinely inspired by traditional elements, Buber's antinomian tendency continues to make its influence felt.

Were one to encapsulate the concept that pervades nearly all of Buber's thinking, it would be that of unity. Buber is deeply concerned with unity of self, unity of relationship, unity within community and within political structures. His mind seemed to formulate this large notion and then subsume various arenas in which it is worked out. From his early writings to the later essays, unity is a

recurrent theme. In the early address, "Herut: On Youth and Religion," Buber puts forth the true task of religion as "the unity of the spiritual and the worldly."[1] In that essay, he continues to carry the metaphor of division and unity to man himself.

> Divided man is, of necessity, unfree; only unified man becomes free . . . only unified man can establish unity. Unified, unifying, total man, free in God, is the goal of mankind's longing . . . just as he is the meaning of Judaism's religious forces.[2]

In another essay of the same early period, the theme of unity is amplified.

> It is this striving for unity that has made the Jew creative. Striving to evolve unity out of the division of his I, he conceived the idea of the unitary God. Striving to evolve unity out of the division of the human community, he conceived the idea of universal justice. Striving to evolve unity out of the division of all living matter, he conceived the idea of universal love. Striving to evolve unity out of the division of the world, he created the Messianic ideal . . .[3]

Anthropocentric in tone, the above indicates various ways the pervasiveness of the unity concept is manifested. In an essay written some decades later, Buber continues to refer to the "wholeness and unity of civilization, which

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[1]"Herut: On Youth and Religion" in On Judaism, ed. N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 158. This essay was originally a lecture given in the period 1909-18.

[2]Ibid., p. 170.

[3]M. Buber, "Judaism and Mankind," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 195.

can be whole and united only if it is hallowed to God."[4]

The unity theme and its ramifications well illustrate both that which Buber was not and that which indeed he was. While not a philosopher or theologian or Bible scholar in the specialist's sense, he was, nonetheless, "the most prominent representative of a universally comprehensive spirituality."[5] Expressed somewhat differently, "As long as we fail to see his central attempt to create a humanistic religion, we do not understand him."[6]

Buber's attempts at drawing together the seemingly disparate is clearly evident in the writings on the Hebrew Bible and the Bible translation. While recognizing the thematic, chronological and form-critical diversity of the various biblical books, Buber insisted that the collection is a unit. Indeed, the elucidation of the essential unity of the Bible was the primary goal of his multi-faceted efforts. Although Buber does use some of the skills of the specialist, his objective is the broad stroke rather than the minute detail: to "comprehend biblical faith as it is

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[4]M. Buber, "Judaism and Civilization," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 195.

[5]Shemaryahu Talmon, "Martin Buber's Ways of Interpreting the Bible," Journal of Jewish Studies, XXVII (1976), p. 209.

[6]Walter Kaufmann, "Martin Buber: The Quest for You," Jewish Spectator, XLV (1980), p. 28.

impressed upon and expressed in the various aspects"[7] of the Hebrew Bible. Methodologically, the problem entailed in putting forth such an aim is how much detailed analysis is required to sustain and support the broader generalizations. Ascertaining whether or not Buber sufficiently supports his contentions is an important way of evaluating his work. It also needs to be stated, however, that some may guide and instruct by outlining the larger vision, leaving to others the filling in of fine detail.

Biblical faith is the unifying, if not the one theme of the Bible. It is most simply characterized as "the encounter between a group of people and the Lord of the world in the course of history,"[8] and became the focus of what was originally intended to be a three volume study.[9] As Buber states in the Preface to the first edition of Kingship of God:

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[7]Talmon, op. cit., p. 196.

[8]Buber, "The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible," in On the Bible, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 1.

[9]Kingship of God, first published in 1932, was the first volume of a planned trilogy. Three chapters of the second book, Der Gesalbte, appeared in the Ernst Lohmeyer volume (1951), Tarbitz, 22, and Zion, 4, respectively. The main thesis of the projected third book appears in the second half of The Prophetic Faith.

> I wanted originally to combine the results of many years of Bible studies in a theological commentary which would have to treat Old Testament problems in the exact order of succession in which the text presents them: since these were entirely, directly or indirectly, problems of faith, it was to be called The Biblical Faith.[10]

Realizing that this task was of too large dimensions, Buber chose to concentrate on what he regarded as the most significant manifestation of biblical faith, messianism and redemption.

> Thus it proved to be my duty to abandon the all too wide-ranging work and to dedicate an independent presentation to those subjects which seemed of special consequence . . . of most importance to me . . . was the question of the origin of 'messianism' in Israel.[11]

Messianism represented to Buber the culmination of an all-pervading unity present in the Judaic tradition.

Parameters of Messianism Within the Tradition

Before describing and evaluating Buber's conception, it is important to consider the parameters delineated by the tradition in relation to messianism. How has the tradition formulated the concept of redemption; how is this state to be brought about; what are the roles of individual man and of human history?

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[10]Martin Buber, Kingship of God, trans. by Richard Scheimann (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973), p. 13.

[11]Ibid., Kingship of God is subtitled, "An Inquiry into the Historic Formation of Messianic Belief."

As Gershom Scholem has clearly shown, Judaism, in all its manifestations, always maintained the concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, within the community and in the midst of history. It is thus sharply distinguished from the Christian notion, in which redemption is spiritual and unseen, occurring in the private soul of each individual. The prophetic promises of the Hebrew Bible cannot be legitimately transferred to a realm of inwardness; they refer to external events in the world of material being and social intercourse.[12]

The historical and ideological manifestations of messianism move between two understandings of this notion, the utopian and the restorative.[13] The utopian looks forward toward that which is new and untried. In its vision of the future, it aims at a state of things which never yet existed. The restorative, in contrast, is directed to the return and re-creation of the past. Springing somewhat from historical phantasy, it conceives this past as ideal. While it may be

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[12]Gershom Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken, 1971), pp. 1-2, 16-17. See also Ephraim E. Urbach, The Sages (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press), 1975, Chapter XVII, esp. pps. 650, 652, 662, 666.

[13]This description will closely follow Gershom Scholem's account in "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," ibid.

possible to describe each in its pure form, the messianic idea crystallizes out of both conceptions and one does not find, in Scholem's estimation, an appearance of messianic theory that is exclusively one or the other.[14] This is so because the restorative force contains a utopian factor and in utopian notions restorative factors are operative. Restorative and utopian forces are the poles between which Jewish messianism moves. They are, indeed, the parameters of the traditional conception.

The messianic idea in Judaism is not an abstract, theoretical notion; it is also not arbitrary doctrine or dogma. Rather, it arose in response to specific historical circumstances. The exhortations and predictions of the biblical prophets, such as Hosea, Amos and Isaiah, arose from concrete situations. Their messages address the community of Israel and describe natural and historical events through which God makes His will known to man. In the apocalyptic books, such as Daniel, the Fourth Ezra or the two books of Enoch, the content of biblical prophecy is shifted, and in the process a new eschatology is created. That which was national in the prophets, with some universal overtones, becomes of cosmic proportion and significance.

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[14] Ibid., p. 3f.

The utopian current, basing itself both on the words of the prophets and the apocalyptic literature, has two aspects: the catastrophic and destructive nature of the redemption, and the utopianism of the content of realized messianism. These correspond to the elements of dread and consolation, closely intertwined in apocalyptic thinking.[15] The catastrophic aspect is characterized by the notion of a revolutionary, cataclysmic event that forms the transition from every historical present to the messianic future. The state of redemption, that is, is not causally related to prior history. The transition is a lack of transition, a spontaneous breaking forth in which history itself perishes; hence, the dread. The consolation and hope of the apocalyptists is not directed to what history and man's efforts will bring about, but rather to that which will arise out of the ruins following the cataclysm. Thus there can be no preparation for the Messiah, and human efforts are in no way connected to the demise and re-creation of history when it should occur. Two implications derive from the lack of relation between human history and redemption: man must have faith in God, and he cannot master his own future. The various talmudic dicta stating

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[15] Ibid., p. 10.

that such-and-such an action "brings redemption into the world,"[16] do not indicate, according to Scholem, a matter of real causality, but

> . . . only of an already established frame for pointed, sententious formulations which are directed less at the Messianic redemption than at the moral value of the suggested conduct.[17]

Apocalyptic utopianism, which stresses the sudden breaking in upon history of the Messianic era and therefore the complete lack of preparation for the event, nonetheless attached itself to restorative tendencies. This is most evident in the notions of a restored and idealized Davidic kingdom as a kingdom of God (e.g. II Samuel, 7:16) and of the Last Days described by Isaiah (e.g. Isaiah 11:9), the latter a recapitulation of the divine idea of Creation. The model of a renewed humanity and a renewed kingdom of David, which represent the prophetic legacy of messianic utopianism, is often integrated by the advocates of apocalypticism with a renewed mode of the natural universe.

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[16]For instance, T. B. Sandhedrin, 97b-98a, from which the following is taken (Soncino translation): "R. Eliezer said: If Israel repent, they will be redeemed; if not, they will not be redeemed. R. Joshua said to him: If they do not repent, will they not be redeemed! But the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a king over them, whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman's, whereby Israel shall engage in repentance, and he will thus bring them back to the right path." Or, more directly, T. B. Sandhedrin, 98a: "The son of David will not come until there are no conceited men in Israel."

[17]Scholem, op. cit., p. 4.

Despite these restorative proclivities, however, the very lack of relation between human history and the redemption which utopianism puts forth leads to a kind of messianic activism. The premise that man cannot master his own future can be overrun by what Scholem calls "the revolutionary opinion,"[18] which proclaims with certainty that the End has begun and that the only requirement is the call to ingathering.

This revolutionary propensity is one aspect of a more generalized anarchic element present in the very nature of messianic utopianism: the cutting of old ties which lose their meaning and context in the new perspective of messianic freedom. Utopianism aims for complete newness, thus coming into conflict with Jewish law as embodied in halakhah, which emphasizes bonds and limits. A situation of tension is created, in which messianic utopianism sees itself as the completion and perfection of halakhah. It will perfect in a redeemed world that which necessarily remains imperfect and incomplete in the unredeemed world of human history. It will also bring to expression that which is unarticulated. In the example brought by Scholem,[19] only in the times of the Messiah will those parts of the

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[18] Ibid., p. 15.

[19] Ibid., p. 19. See T. B. Kiddushin, 71a.

law not actualizable during the exile become capable of fulfillment. Therefore there seems to be no conflict between what can be provisionally fulfilled in the law, i.e. in the here and now, and what can be completed in the days of the Messiah. The law, then, is totally realized only in a redeemed world.

But there is another vantage point from which to view the problem of halakhah in the messianic era. According to Scholem, rabbinic apocalypticism necessarily raises[20] the question of what would happen to the status of halakhah and of Torah given the freedom so much a part of the messianic vision. On the one hand, many halakhot would for the first time become capable not only of fulfillment but also of true understanding. Thus a life lived in accordance with the observance and study of Torah would be richer and more complete. On the other hand, however, messianic utopianism postulated certain changes in nature and/or in man's moral character, either or both of which would radically alter the applicability and operation of the

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[20]See ibid., p. 20.

law.[21] If man's evil impulses evaporated, and human beings operated strictly from a pure, spontaneous freedom attuned of necessity only to the good, the need for many positive commandments as well as prohibitions and restrictions would disappear. The utopian conception embraces an anarchic element as well as a restorative tendency. In its final logical form, the implicit anarchism becomes an explicit antinomianism.[22]

As Scholem notes, the disparity between the restorative and radical elements in the utopian conception of messianism creates an obvious tension in the attitude of the halakhah. Strict adherents to halakhah felt comfortable with apocalypticism, but only because it remained an ab-

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[21]See W. D. Davies, "Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come," Journal of Biblical Literature, Monograph Series, VII, (1952), pp. 11-13, 31, 47f, 55-58, 72, 80, 82. Despite the changes indicated by the biblical and rabbinic sources brought by Davies, however, his conclusion tends toward the restorative view: ". . . we found . . . the profound conviction that obedience to the Torah would be a dominating mark of the Messianic Age (p. 84)." It is significant, however, that Nahmanides uses the same verses in Jeremiah as Davies to reach the opposite conclusion: "But in the days of the Messiah, the choice of . . . good will be natural; the heart will not desire the improper and it will have no craving whatever for it . . . Man will return at that time to what he was before the sin of Adam, when by his nature he did what should properly be done, and there were no conflicting desires in his will." Nahmanides, Commentary on the Torah: Deuteronomy, trans. C. B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publishing, 1976), p. 341.

[22]See Scholem, "Redemption through Sin" in The Messianic Idea in Judaism, op. cit., pp. 84, 89, 91, 96-101, 110-117, 126.

stract, distant hope, a theoretical idea with no concrete significance for the daily life of the Jew. Conservative rabbinic authorities did not feel challenged by the vaguely defined messianic authority as long as they maintained control over present legal decisions. It was quite another matter, however, when the messianic hope gained influence as a soon-to-be actual occurrence. When utopian messianism entered the historical realm as a concrete idea, affecting people's behavior and seeming to threaten halakhic authorities, the tension between rabbinic authority and that of the messianic notion became manifest. The conclusion can cautiously be drawn that the antinomianism which appeared among the followers of David Alroy in twelfth century Kurdistan, or in Yemen at around the same time, encouraged Maimonides to limit and restrict utopian messianism to a bare minimum.

The radical element in utopian messianism is clearly manifested in a late thirteenth century work, Ra'ya Mehemna.[23] Written by an unknown Kabbalist from within the halakhic tradition, it uses exegesis of Genesis, primarily of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, to push the

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[23]See Scholem's detailed exposition, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea," The Messianic Idea in Judaism, op. cit., pp. 22-24. Also, Scholem's article on "Antinomianism" in Encyclopedia Judaica, III, 70.

utopian vision in rabbinic Judaism to its outermost limit. Where everything is holy, i.e. in the messianic age, restrictions and prohibitions will no longer be necessary; a new, as yet undiscovered manifestation of freedom and positiveness will appear. The full and true meaning of the Torah will become known. The messianic era takes on a strongly spiritual dimension, with a concommitant diminishing of the national and political aspects of utopia. It is interesting to note that no explanation of transition between the world now and its fullest unfolding in the messianic utopia is given in this work. Its significance lies in the restrained but obvious antinomianism it puts forth.

Messianic utopianism is a concept pervaded by uneasiness and tension. No sense of easy confidence or security emanates from its various formulations. The deep hope and yearning it conveys, often arising from a sense of desperation, is characterized by cataclysmic intrusions into history accompanied by fear and dread, the lack of continuity between man's behavior now and the future era and the unknown status of Torah. In its restorative or radical manifestations, messianic utopianism promised an uncertain, if glorious future.

Restorative utopianism in its purest form is an outcome of the rationalistic tendencies present in the

philosophical world in general, and Jewish philosophy in particular, in the Middle Ages. In the attempt to demonstrate Jewish monotheism as a religion of reason, all aspects of the tradition were subjected to a rational critique. The critical scrutiny applied to rabbinic apocalypticism resulted in a definite receding of the utopian element in messianism and the placing into prominence of the restorative factor. As Scholem points out, the utopian variable is maintained only because as a central element of the prophetic promise, namely, the universal knowledge of God, it is related to the supreme good of the rationalistic philosophical doctrines.[24]

This final good, however, does not, in a strict sense, require the messianic era for fulfillment. In medieval, rationalistic formulations, the contemplative life as a positive--indeed, the supreme--value is realizable, if only for a small elite, even in a world as yet unredeemed. Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed reaches

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[24]G. Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," op. cit., pp. 24-25.

[25]Given the emphasis in biblical and especially rabbinic sources on the study of Torah, it was not difficult to incorporate the Greek philosophical legacy into the religious sphere. Torah study, the aim of which is both "for its own sake" as well as for proper fulfillment of the active life, was easily identified with the contemplative life described by the Greeks.

its zenith in the final chapters with a description of the life of the mind capable of being realized, albeit by a select few, in this world.[26] The utopian element of rabbinic messianism in Maimonides' formulations, however, is retained in the ascribing to everyone dedication to the ideal of the contemplative life during the messianic age. Utopianism is maintained only as an intensive and more extensive version of that which can already be reached under non-messianic conditions. All other aspects of messianism become restorative.

These are graphically described in "Laws Concerning the Installation of Kings" in Chapters 11 and 12 of Maimonides' Mishneh Torah.

> The Messiah will arise and restore the kingdom of David to its former might. He will rebuild the sanctuary and gather the dispersed of Israel. All the laws will be reinstituted in his days as of old. Sacrifices will be offered and the Sabbatical and Jubilee years will be observed exactly in accordance with the commandments of the Torah. But whoever does not believe in him or does not await his coming denies not only the rest of the prophets, but also the Torah and our teacher Moses.
>
> Do not think that the Messiah needs to perform signs and miracles, bring about a new state of things in the world, revive the dead, and the like. It is

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[26]The Guide of the Perplexed, III, Chapter 54.

not so. . . . Rather it is the case in these matters that the statutes of our Torah are valid forever and eternally. Nothing can be added to them or taken away from them. And if there arise a king from the House of David who meditates on the Torah and practices its commandments like his ancestor David in accordance with the Written and Oral Law, prevails upon all Israel to walk in the ways of the Torah and to repair its breaches (i.e., to eliminate the bad state of affairs resulting from the incomplete observance of the law), and fights the battles of the Lord, then one may properly assume that he is the Messiah. If he is then successful in rebuilding the sanctuary on its site and in gathering the dispersed of Israel, then he has in fact (as a result of his success) proven himself to be the Messiah. He will then arrange the whole world to serve only God, as it is said: "For then shall I create a pure language for the peoples that they may all call upon the name of God and serve him with one accord" (Zeph. 3:9).

Let no one think that in the days of the Messiah anything of the natural course of the world will cease or that any innovation will be introduced into creation. Rather, the world will continue in its accustomed course. The words of Isaiah: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the panther shall lie down with the kid" (Isa. 11:6) are a parable and an allegory which must be understood to mean that Israel will dwell securely even among the wicked of the heathen nations who are compared to a wolf and a panther. For they will all accept the true faith and will no longer rob or destroy. Likewise, all similar scriptural passages dealing with the Messiah

> must be regarded as figurative. Only in the Days of the Messiah will everyone know what the metaphors mean and to what they refer. The sages said: "The only difference between this world and the Days of the Messiah is the subjection of Israel to the nations."
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> . . . Concerning all these things . . . no one knows how they will come about until they actually happen, since the words of the prophets on these matters are not clear. Even the sages have no tradition regarding them but allow themselves to be guided by the texts. Hence there are differences of opinion on the subject. In any case, the order and details of these events are not religious dogmas.
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> . . . The sages and prophets longed for the days of the Messiah not in order to rule over the world and not to bring the heathens under their control, not to be exalted by the nations, or even to eat, drink, and rejoice. All they wanted was to have time for the Torah and its wisdom with no one to oppress or disturb them.
>
> In that age there will be neither famine nor war, nor envy nor strife, for there will be an abundance of worldly goods. The whole world will be occupied solely with the knowledge of God. Therefore the Children of Israel will be great sages; they will know hidden things and attain an understanding of their Creator to the extent of human capability, as it is said: "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).[27]

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[27]This is Scholem's translation, quoted in "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," op. cit., pp. 28-29.

The Messiah, in strangely Jamesian fashion, validates his identity by the mark of success. His endeavors must be realized within history: the fulfilling of portents, miracles and other workings of the supernatural are not legitimate means of proving his identity and accomplishing his mission. In the messianic era, human nature will not change, and Torah will be as binding as before. Political stability will reign, and the result will be the intensification of spiritual pursuits.

While Maimonides' approach was an attempt to diminish (in as thorough a manner as possible) the power of the radical, apocalyptic vision of messianic expectancy, the great Nahmanides, living after Maimonides, from 1194-1270, took the opposite view. Writing in his Commentary on the Torah regarding the verse "God will circumcise your heart" (Deut. 30:6), he says:

> Since the time of Creation, man has had the power (reshut) to do as he pleased, to be righteous or wicked. This applies likewise to the entire Torah-period, so that people can gain merit upon choosing the good and punishment for preferring evil. But in the days of the Messiah, the choice of their good will be natural; the heart will not desire the improper and it will have no craving whatever for it . . . Man will return at that time to what he was before the sin of Adam, when by his nature he did what should

> properly be done, and there were no conflicting desires in his will . . .[28]

The Ramban builds upon Jeremiah's vision (31:30-32), in which the Torah is described as being inscribed in the heart of man.[29] Man will be propelled toward the good, and the struggle between reason and inclination will disappear. Human nature itself will change; certainty and security will prevail.

The Ramban, in his Commentary on the Torah, is usually careful to cite his sources, both biblical and rabbinic. In commenting upon this verse in Deuteronomy, however, he chooses not to specify any, indicating the dearth of sources available. There are, in fact, only a few places where the change in man's moral nature in the messianic age is discussed. The first mentions the

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[28]Nahmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Deuteronomy, translated and annotated by C. B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publishing, 1976), p. 341.

[29]See footnote 21. Also see W. D. Davies' discussion of these verses in Jeremiah in "Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come," op. cit., pp. 15-28. After citing several Christian biblical scholars who put forth a viewpoint similar to the Ramban's, i.e. the new Torah alluded to in Jeremiah and written on the heart refers to an inward, spiritual change, Davies argues that Jeremiah's reference "does not necessarily imply any rejection of the written Law as such . . . an external Torah is part of Jeremiah's hope for "the latter days." Davies interprets Jeremiah differently from the Ramban. Methodologically, it appears that the Ramban uses Jeremiah to support his understanding of "the days of the Messiah," but does not actually base his contention on the prophet's words.

"slaying" of the evil inclination "in the time to come." This latter expression is usually, although not always, equated with the messianic age.[30]

> R. Judah expounded: In the time to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring the Evil Inclination and slay it in the presence of the righteous and the wicked. To the righteous it will have the appearance of a towering hill, and to the wicked it will have the appearance of a hair thread. Both the former and the latter will weep; the righteous will weep saying, 'How were we able to overcome such a towering hill!' The wicked also will weep saying 'How is it that we were unable to conquer this hair thread!' (T. B., Sukkah, 52a, Soncino translation).

The second, also from the Babylonian Talmud, states:

> Our rabbis taught: there were three to whom the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave a foretaste of the future world while they were still in this world, to wit, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham (we know) because it is written of him "(The Lord blessed Abraham) in all"; Isaac, because it is written, "(and I ate) of all"; Jacob, because it is written "(for I have) all." Three these were over whom the evil inclination had no dominion, to wit, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . . because it is written in connection with them, "in all," "of all," "all." (T. B., Baba Batra, 16b-17a, Soncino translation).

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[30]For a discussion of the expressions "days of the Messiah," "the time to come," "the future world," "at the end of days," see W. D. Davies, "Torah in the Messianic Age and/or The Age to Come, op. cit., pp. 35, 55-57 and Ephraim Urbach, The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs, op. cit., pp. 649-653.

The third source is a short comment on the latter citation by the Baalei Hatosafot.[31] It attempts to deal with the meaning of the statement, "the evil inclination had no dominion," i.e. will have no dominion in the future world.

> One is not to understand by this that the evil inclination had no dominion whatsoever, for if so, how could they (i.e. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) receive for it (their behavior) a reward? Rather, as it is said (T. B. Yumah 38): What does the verse mean, "The steps of His pious ones He will watch over?" It means when a person has lived most of his days and not sinned, he will not begin to sin at that point. Also here (in the talmudic passage cited) when God saw that they exerted themselves so much in order to distance themselves from sin, the Holy One, Blessed be He, helped them so that the evil inclination had no dominion over them. (T. B., Baba Batra, 17a, translation mine)

It is obviously based on this reference that Chavel adds the following footnote to the English translation of his Commentary on the Torah (it does not appear in the Hebrew version):

> It should be noted here that Ramban's intention is not to state that man in the era of the Messiah will be completely devoid of the desire to do evil, for if that were the case there

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[31]The Baalei Hatosafot were descendants and pupils of Rashi, who flourished in Germany and France in the 12th-14th centuries. They questioned and expanded upon the concise commentary on the Talmud written by Rashi. I am indebted to Rabbi Eliezer Cohen of Oak Park, Michigan, for assistance in locating these apparent sources of the Ramban.

> would be no place for reward and punishment, which is founded on the principle of man's freedom of choice between good and evil. Rather, the import of his words is to state that man will then be so motivated for good that he will naturally be doing the good and proper according to the Will of G-d, and it will appear as if the instinct for evil has been completely eliminated from him, although potentially it will still be with him. The case is similar to what we say now of a normal knowledgeable person that it is "impossible" for him to jump into a blazing fire. Of course, it is within his powers to do so, but it is his knowledge of the danger entailed that makes it "impossible" for him to do so. In the messianic era man will have that kind of reaction to all things prohibited by G-d. There will, therefore, still be place for reward and punishment, since potentially man will still have his freedom of choice.[32]

The viewpoint expressed here presents several problems, both of interpretation and of philosophical outlook. For Chavel's footnote seems to contradict directly that which Nahmanides expressly states:

> This is a reference to the annulment of the evil instinct and to the natural performance by the heart of its proper function.
>
> Now it is known that 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth (Genesis 8:21)' and it is necessary to instruct them, but at that time it will not be necessary to instruct them (to avoid evil) for their evil instinct will then be completely abolished.

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[32]Nahmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Deuteronomy, translated and annotated by C. B. Chavel, op. cit., p. 341.

> . . . for in the days of the Messiah there will be no (evil) desire in man but he will naturally perform the proper deeds and therefore there will be neither merit nor guilt in them, for merit and guilt are dependent upon desire.[33]

It is also to be stated that the Ramban's use of zecut and hovah and zecut and onesh, i.e. merit and guilt and merit and punishment, are to be understood as parallel to the more common words, sekhar and onesh, reward and punishment. That being the case, does Chavel alter the plain sense of Nahmanides words? Or does the language of the Ramban leave room for such modification? Is the Ramban being deliberately ambiguous? Does the discussion in T. B. Baba Batra espouse a viewpoint Tosafot finds unacceptable and therefore re-interprets? We may then construe Tosafot's comment as an anti-apocalyptic bending of an apocalyptic source.

The philosophical questions arising from these various sources revert to and derive from the first chapters of Genesis. The discussion here, however, will be limited to the sources, while keeping in mind the diversity of interpretation of Genesis, chapters one, two and three. The concept of being "free," yet having a definite propensity for "good" is replete with problems. For if one has such a tendency, is he really "free?" The difficulty

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[33]Ibid., pp. 341-342.

centers on the meaning of freedom. Does freedom imply that one can be good or bad at all times, in all situations? Or does not the educational process from infancy onwards, move towards and reinforce the tendencies to do "good?" If the process succeeds, even partially, is one to maintain that people are then less "free?" One might say the potentiality for evil is still present, but behavior is weighted toward the good.

The problem was articulated in all its complexity by Immanuel Kant. For in Kant's ethical theory, as put forth in Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (1785) and Critique of Practical Reason (1788), freedom is identified with obedience to the moral law. Kant stated clearly that a free will is one which finds the law within itself and obeys this law.[34] Leaving aside the significant disdinction between autonomous (Kant) and heteronomous (the entire biblical tradition) law,[35] freedom, in this formu-

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[34]Immanuel Kant, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, trans. L. W. Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Library of Liberal Arts, 1959), p. 29, where Kant states: "Will is the capacity of a rational being of acting according to the conception of laws . . . will is nothing less than practical reason." Also pp. 38, 45, 65.

[35]On this question see Emil L. Fackenheim, "The Revealed Morality of Judaism and Modern Thought: A Confrontation with Kant," Quest for Past and Future (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 204-229. Also Chapter 2 in Fackenheim's Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

lation of Kant, means obedience to the law. But Kant recognized the limitations put on the concept of free will in his ethical writings, and therefore chose to re-examine the problem in "On the Radical Evil in Human Nature (1792)," which became the first essay in Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (1793). Among interpreters of Kant, however, the question as to whether or not--and to what extent--Kant modified his earlier formulations remains unresolved.[36]

Basing himself on Kant in his understanding of "good" but moving away from Kant in his definition of "evil" is Buber.

> 'Good' is the movement in the direction of home, 'evil' is the aimless whirl of human potentialities . . .[37]

Good is making a decision toward the good, while evil is both the absence of direction and, by implication, of relation. Buber's conception implies that if one knows the good, one will choose the good. Kant's essay on radical evil, however, posed the question: can one knowingly choose

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[36]See, for instance Emil L. Fackenheim, "Kant and Radical Evil," University of Toronto Quarterly, 23 (1953-54), and John R. Silber, "The Ethical Significance of Kant's Religion," trans. T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson, in Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960).

[37]M. Buber, "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 78f.

evil? But this is to take one back to Plato, to the relationship between theories of cognition and ethical behavior. Determining the connection between knowing and doing, between cognition and will, is the essential problem of understanding the concept of freedom. Chavel writes of "knowledge of danger," while Tosafot stresses behavior, habit, and character development: ". . . they exerted themselves so much in order to distance themselves from sin . . ."

The philosophical problem remains unresolved. Given the large grey area of interpretive leeway, Nahmanides is to be seen as espousing the apocalyptic view, i.e. man will change radically in the messianic era, and reward and punishment will no longer be applicable. Chavel and Tosafot envisage a modified alteration of human nature, curtailing the apocalyptic tone of the Ramban and his presumed talmudic sources. They have restrained the "anarchic breeze" (to use Scholem's term) that is implied by the Ramban. They do not want that breeze to blow. The spontaneous freedom it adumbrates is frightening, and one must protect oneself against storms and hurricanes.

Chavel's interpretation of Nahmanides and Tosafot's comment on the gemara point to a related philosophical problem. Will there be accountability in the time of the Messiah? Will people be responsible for their actions and

suitably rewarded and punished? To eliminate the reward/ punishment nexus is to create a world of angels, not human beings. And in the world of celestial beings, Torah is not necessary. While not mentioning Torah specifically, the straight-forward interpretation of the Ramban does indicate a radical change in human nature. Chavel is perhaps justified in his understanding because of the phrase, "Man will return at that time to what he was before the sin of Adam," and Adam, although naturally good, did sin. The differences in understanding the Ramban can be seen to a matter of degree or of substance.

Although Chavel and Tosafot bring Nahmanides closer to the Rambam's viewpoint, a wide gulf between the two remains. Maimonides envisages man devoting himself to the study of Torah in an economically and politically secure domain; a change in external conditions allows man to change himself. Nahmanides, in contrast, describes the essential modification as beginning within man, and does not emphasize at all the political structure or the nature of society. For Maimonides, Torah remains the primary object of study and the ever-present moral and ethical guide. Nahmanides formulation seems to render Torah superfluous, or, taking into account Tosafot and Chavel, only peripherally relevant.

If Nahmanides and Maimonides are taken as proponents of opposing viewpoints, it is found that the two threads that delimit and intertwine within the messianic idea in Judaism go back to philosophic models (and not only prophetic promises) found within the Torah itself. These are then expanded upon by the earlier and later teachers of the Talmud, subsequently taking root in the medieval philosophic tradition.

David Hartman characterizes these two approaches as two aspects of hope. The first is "the expectation of a future resolution to all human problems," while the second is "the courage to bear human responsibility, to persevere in partial solutions, and to accept the burden of living and building within contexts of uncertainty."[38] The first is derived from the biblical account of the Exodus from Egypt, which provides a theological model in which man is fundamentally helpless before God. The enslaved nation in Egypt did not merit redemption, nor were the people especially cooperative in its realization. In the Exodus model, God suddenly breaks into history, and from a disparate group

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[38]David Hartman, "Sinai and Messianism" in Joy and Responsibility: Israel, Modernity and the Renewal of Judaism (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Posner Pub., 1978), p. 233. Hartman continues, "The first aspect might be called 'halakhic' hope and the second 'radical' hope, suggesting what Gershom Scholem calls 'restorative' versus 'utopian' views of messianism."

of downtrodden tribes, He creates His elected community. The suddenness of God's hand in history at this juncture is akin, in Harman's words, to a "rupture."[39] It closely parallels the Creation story, in which God breaks into chaos and declares "Let there be light!" The one is divine fiat in the arena of human history, the other divine fiat in the natural world.

The Exodus model is incorporated in the Mishnah by R. Yehoshua, in response to the statement that redemption is provisional upon repentance.

> If they (Israel) do not repent, will they not be redeemed? But what will happen? God will send a wicked king, one whose decrees will be as Haman's, and then Israel will do teshuvah (turning, repentance). (T. B., Sanhedrin, 97b)[40]

R. Yehoshua is arguing that if the people fail--or perhaps even if they have not put forth any effort whatsoever--God will enter the process of history. God will intervene in history, compelling men to teshuvah. National salvation is an inevitable process. This is further taken up by Shmuel in the Gemara in a discussion of the mishnaic

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[39]Ibid., p. 249.

[40]For a discussion of this statement and the views of R. Eliezer, R. Yehoshua's opponent, see E. Urbach, The Sages, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), pp. 668-673. See also footnote 16 in this chapter.

statements just examined. In response to the view that redemption depends wholly upon repentance, Shmuel states: "It is sufficient for the mourner to remain in his mourning." Hartman's understanding of this is, "It is enough for Israel to sustain herself in history; redemption is not dependent on successful moral renewal."[41] Redemption, that is, is not an on-going process in history, but rather a catastrophic upheaval within the natural order. The Mishnah in various places paints a dark picture of the time when the Messiah will come. Houses of study will become brothels; many will be homeless and none will take the homeless in; the morally upright will be mocked; the young will shame their elders. This is the time of dread and upheaval of which Scholem writes. Given these circumstances, the Mishnah asks, "On whom then shall we lean?" "On our Father who is in heaven," is the response (T. B. Sotah, 49b).

The signs of redemption in the apocalyptic approach are not manifested in man's self-improvement, but rather in conditions of darkness and feelings of utter despair. Based on the Exodus model, this notion does not encourage behavioral change or the setting of feasible social goals. Rather, it maintains that no matter what, God will never abandon humanity.

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[41] Ibid., p. 233.

The second concept of hope, one which neutralizes apocalyptic fervor and has vastly different social implications, derives from the theological model of Sinai. The giving of the Torah at Sinai, and its acceptance by Israel, is characterized neither by divine fiat ordering primal chaos nor by divine fiat freeing powerless slaves. Rather, it is an experience of dialogue, a situation in which God speaks and the people respond.

> . . . And Moses took the book of the covenant and read in the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do and obey." (Exodus 24:7-8)

The Torah symbolizes divine acceptance of human limitations; in some ways it follows naturally the covenant with Noah and that with Abraham. As Hartman writes, it signifies "God's move from Creator-redeemer to Teacher who is prepared to educate, to guide, and to impart of Himself."[42] Not only does God become the teacher, par excellence, but man is also deemed worthy of being student. The giving of the Torah thus expresses confidence in man, despite his frailties and limitations. It conveys the positive belief that man is capable of implementing right behavior in his life, even of

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[42] Ibid., p. 251. The notion of God as teacher of His people is prominent in the public lectures and writings of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik. He uses it, for instance, in interpreting Exodus 19:6.

becoming "a holy people" (Exodus 19:6). Sinai adumbrates not only a certain concept of man, but also a specific model of God. The Sinaitic covenant bespeaks a God who is Lord of history, who realizes His promises by creating a nation from the seed of Abraham, who chooses interaction with men over solitary self-sufficiency. History, community and relationship are significant factors in the theological model derived from Sinai.

The hope emanating from this structure stresses human action and responsibility. R. Yehoshua's counterpart, R. Eliezer ben Hyracanus, says, "If Israel repents they will be redeemed; if not, they will not be saved (T. B. Sanhedrin, 97b)." And Rav, Shmuel's discussant, declares (in the same source): "All the appointed times of redemption are over, and the matter depends wholly upon repentance and good deeds." The course of human history--and ultimately, its salvation--is dependent upon man being responsible for how he acts.

Hartman's models of hope are helpful in their drawing philosophical implications from important primary sources. They also further amplify the dual structured manner in which Scholem has treated the messianic idea. A significant question that remains unresolved, however (and is, indeed, the crucial nexus among the philosophical variables that constitute the messianic idea), is that of

the relationship between man's efforts and divine grace. Is Hartman's Exodus model weakened by the crying out of the people in Exodus 2:23, or are the cries only signs of the "Haman" mentioned by R. Yehoshua? Do the Exodus and Sinai models maintain their cogency if the former is understood primarily as manifesting God's physical might, while the latter evidences spiritual sharing? It might be said that the Exodus model of hope necessarily precedes that of Sinai. Nahmanides' and Maimonides' conceptions represent the dual strands of the messianic idea, medieval philosophical versions of what may originate from the Creation-Exodus and Sinai paradigms.

In targeting rabbinic apocalypticism for liquidation, the medieval rationalists manifested fear of the anarchism implicit in the freedom of messianic utopianism. This was not merely a theoretical difficulty, but was motivated to a great extent by the disruptions caused by apocalyptic movements during those times. Although Maimonides, for example, attempted to stymie and quash the ideas underlying those eruptions, he was not completely successful. The classical utopian concept has maintained a steady, if low-keyed presence in Jewish history, while the restorative has been progressively diluted by the notion of universal progress, which is a secularized version of the utopian idea. Both propensities have maintained a hold upon the

currents that determine Jewish destiny. As Scholem says: "The particular vitality of the Messianic idea in Judaism resides in the dialectical tension between these two tendencies."[43]

Buber's Account of Messianism in His Essays and Kingship of God

Buber's exposition of messianism must be evaluated against this background of the history of the messianic idea in classical Jewish sources. Although the intention is to trace Buber's thoughts developmentally, i.e. from his earliest writings to his later, the discussion will begin with one of the latest references in order to indicate the direction Buber takes.

In an essay originally published in 1954, Buber takes a strong anti-apocalyptic stance. Apocalyptic thinking, he asserts, denies the intention of creation, which is "that the world should become an independent seat of free decision out of which a genuine answer of the creature to his Creator could issue." Then Buber continues:

> There exists for him (the apocalyptic writer) no possibility of a change in the direction of historical destiny that could proceed from man, or be

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[43]G. Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," op. cit., p. 27.

> effected or co-effected by man . . . The turning is nowhere acknowledged to have a power that alters history, or even one that manifests itself eschatologically, again in marked contrast to the early talmudic tradition which held that the historical continuation of existence depends on the turning.[44]

Apocalypticism renders teshuvah inefficacious. Man's efforts are of no worth; redemption appears unannounced, its arrival time arbitrarily chosen. The incursion of the transcendent transforms all things, and history becomes anti-history.

Buber is here basing his viewpoint not only on the mishnah and gemara previously cited and discussed,[45] but also on abundant talmudic evidence. There is no question that teshuvah is a central concept in Judaism, and no doubt that apocalypticism neutralizes it. Among Buber's sources for the statement, "the historical continuation of existence depends on the turning," are the following:

> The purpose of all wisdom is teshuvah and good deeds. (T. B. Berachot, 17a)

> Seven things were created prior to the creation of the world, among them, Torah and teshuvah. (T. B. Pesahim, 54a)

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[44]M. Buber, "Prophecy, Apocalyptic, Historical Hour," trans. Maurice Friedman, in On the Bible, op. cit., p. 182.

[45]See footnotes 16 and 37, and discussion following the latter.

> Teshuvah is greater than bringing the redemption. (T. B. Yoma, 786a)
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> Teshuvah is greater than approaching the heavenly throne. (T. B. Yoma, 86a)[46]

In the context of Buber's overall philosophy in which individual direction, decision and dialogue prevail, his anti-apocalypticism is quite consistent. His strong affinity for Hasidism, and especially for certain aspects of the Lurianic Kabbalah as ensconced within Hasidism, further reinforce this position. However, in keeping with his writings in other areas as well, Buber is often imprecise and unclear.[47]

In the early essay, "Renewal of Judaism," Buber emphasizes the significance of teshuvah in kabbalistic language.

> The fallen divine sparks . . . are liberated through the deed that is sanctified by its intention. By his acts man works for the redemption of the world.[48]

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[46]Taken from Otzar Ha-aggadah, ed. M. D. Gruss (Jerusalem: Mossad Harov Kook, 1973), III, pp. 1451-53 (the translations are mine).

[47]See, for instance, Steven T. Katz, "A Critical Review of Buber's Epistemology of I-Thou," As Yet unpublished, this paper will be part of the Proceedings of the Buber Centenary Conference at Ben-Gurion University, January, 1978.

[48]M. Buber, "Renewal of Judaism," in On Judaism, op. cit., p. 48.

Man's efforts effect the possibility of redemption; arbitrary cataclysms and utopias have no place in Buber's formulation.

Further on in the same essay, Buber hints at the two approaches to messianism delineated by Scholem. ". . . Messianism," he writes, is "the idea of an absolute future that transcends all reality of past and present as the true and perfect life."[49] This description of the messianic era is open to both interpretations, the utopian and the restorative, although it leans, strangely enough, toward the utopian. But Buber corrects the impression of the above by describing the messianic idea as the "complete realization of Judaism's two other tendencies, the unity-idea and the deed-idea," paralleling, so it seems, the utopian and restorative.[50] He recognizes the "battle" these two concepts have fought, and states:

> . . . we frequently find . . . the most exalted concept of the Messianic ideal next to the vulgar notions of future comforts . . . the Messianic movements are a mixture of the most holy and the most profane, of a future-oriented purpose and lack of restraint, of love of God and avid curiosity.[51]

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[49] Ibid., p. 50.

[50] The unity and deed notions can also both be seen as part of an overall messianic idea, whether utopian or restorative. The utopian can be incorporated into the restorative, and vice versa, as Scholem has shown.

[51] Ibid., p. 51.

The people, he continues, "resist spiritualization, and tarnish the purity of fulfillment."[52] Certain aspects of the messianic idea, in both approaches, are subject to vulgarization. Jewish redemption, Buber insists in a second early essay, is "the idea of God's redemption through the creature, through every soul's progress from duality to unity." And further, "Striving to create unity out of the division of the world, he (the Jew) created the Messianic ideal, which later . . . was reduced . . . made finite, and called socialism."[53] Several things are to be noted here. First, redemption occurs due to individual action, both internal and external; teshuvah remains paramount. Second, unity, both of the individual and of the world community, is an essential concept. Buber's ever-present stress on the over-coming of duality and dualism is once again made manifest. Interestingly, the notion of unity expressed here is appropriate for either the utopian or the restorative conception. Third, there is a clear recognition of the weakening of the messianic ideal in its worldly form, socialism.

A third early essay espouses a definite anti-apocalyptic view.

> . . . the prophets never differentiate between the spiritual and the temporal, between the realm of God and the realm

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[53]M. Buber, "Judaism and Mankind," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 28.

> of man. For them, the realm of God is nothing more than the realm of man as it is to be . . . Messianism (does not) signify an antithesis to this human world in which we live; it signifies, instead, its purification and completion; not a community of detached spirits but a community of men . . .[54]

Neither angels nor "detached spirits" will people the messianic world, but human beings in a state of fullest realization.

An hypothesis as to the formation of the messianic idea is described in a fourth essay from the early period. Like the first three, it was originally a lecture, this one given in 1928. Buber indicated prior to this date[55] that he regards I Samuel 8:20 as "the true turning point in Jewish history." In that verse, the people request a human monarch, saying, "We also may be like all the nations." God advises Samuel (in I Samuel 8:7), in response to the nation's initial demand, "Hearken unto the voice of the people . . . for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me that I should not be king over them." This dialogue in chapter eight of I Samuel marks the transition between what Buber describes as "a unified community, a living unity of the

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[54]M. Buber, "The Holy Way," in On Judaism, op. cit., p. 119.

[55]In "The Holy Way," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 117. As part of the "Early Addresses," this essay was originally written in the 1909-1918 period.

spiritual and temporal realms, a community permeated by the guiding presence of the Divine,"[56] and the beginning of the temporal state, which implies fragmentation. From the nation's embrace of human monarchs and the subsequent, repeated failures of the kings to realize the promise of their anointing derives the concept of a king whose promises will become reality.[57] That which the Messiah will actualize, however, will come "from out of mankind itself . . . . It is an earthly consummation that is awaited, a consummation in and with mankind."[58] The messianic era will be a consummation of human history, in which man's efforts will play a vital role, not an arbitrary ending of that history. The interaction between divine will and human efforts is articulated in the following: "But this precisely is the consummation toward which God's hand pushes through that which He has created, through nature and through history."[59] Human history will triumph in the days of the Messiah through the mysterious intertwining of

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[56]Ibid.

[57]Buber puts forth this same notion in The Kingship of God, which will be discussed shortly, and in The Prophetic Faith (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), pp. 43-59.

[58]M. Buber, "Biblical Leadership," On the Bible, op. cit., p. 148.

[59]Ibid.

man's endeavors and God's purposiveness. Noting that God's intention is attained through man's willing, Buber here supports an anti-apocalyptic position.

Kingship of God, originally published in German in 1932, contains Buber's most extensive discussion of messianism. As noted earlier (footnote 9), it was originally conceived as the first of a trilogy, which was to deal with three aspects of messianism: verifying the historicity of the religious idea of a folk-kingship of God in the early period of Israel; showing how the sacral character of the Israelite kings as being "anointed" of God (JHWH) is related to this idea; making manifest how both notions, beginning in the period of the kings, change from history into eschatology.[60] Buber mentions, in the "Preface to the First Edition," that he had begun thinking on the origin of "Israelitish messianism" over twenty years prior to the writing of Kingship of God.[61] It was an issue of central concern to him, and some of the early essays, especially "The Holy Way" prefigure the more extensive examination of the questions treated by Buber in this volume. Buber's objective is to verify, insofar as is possible, the historicity of God as king of the Israelite people.

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[60]M. Buber, "Preface to the First Edition," Kingship of God, op. cit., p. 14.

[61]Ibid., pp. 13-14.

Validating divine kingship serves two significant and interrelated aims in the totality of Buber's work. First and most essentially, it is the highest expression of the biblical dialogue between God and man, most specifically on the community level.[62] The Melekh, the King who guided Abraham in his wanderings, leads the people Israel, unites them and brings them into the land of His choosing. The people recognize God as He who is One, who created Heaven and Earth, and who redeemed them from Egypt.

> But in the exodus history for the first time those who undergo it become aware of His actuality as God of history; only now can they call Him melekh.[63]

They acknowledge their task as making real God's kingship through becoming a holy people, and bringing all spheres of life under His rule. The theophany at Sinai and the covenant agreed upon there become paradigmatic of the dialogue existing between man and God. Openness, reciprocity, immediacy, relation: these central concepts in Buber derive from a carefully examined notion of God as Melekh, or King. Second, by describing the evolution of the messiah concept from concrete historical circumstances (and

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[62]For a discussion of the problems relating to dialogue between God and community, see Chapter II, pp.

[63]M. Buber, "Preface to the Third Edition," Kingship of God, op. cit., p. 49.

in the process refuting a number of theories of various modern biblical critics), Buber sets forth, however loosely, a philosophy of the messianic idea, connecting it to the aforementioned notions of dialogue and immediacy.

> . . . we are confronted here (in the Bible) by a religio-historical uniqueness in the strictest sense: the ever and again realized, but always intended relation of dialogical exclusiveness between the One who leads and those who are led.[64]

The messianic hope becomes the ultimate aim of the people, a re-establishment, in different form, of that which was experienced in its pristineness at Sinai and immediately thereafter. Indeed, the messianic idea, although expressed in Buber's customary loosely-structured manner, is the highest expression of biblical faith. The many facets of Buber's thinking are unified in this notion.

Before proceeding with a detailed outline of the issues and evidence brought together by Buber in Kingship of God, a difficulty in interpretation must be dealt with. Buber's thesis is that the experience of a primitive theocracy in the early stages of the history of the people, Israel, created a memory which lay dormant for long periods of time, but was everpresent. The vitality of this memory was a constant spur toward the eventual re-establishment of

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[64]Ibid., p. 56.

a theocratic type of political structure in which God's total rulership and leadership, in all its ramifications, would be recognized. While traditional conceptions of the messianic era stress the figure of the Messiah, i.e. a human being through whose efforts this ideal state will be created,[65] Buber definitely leans towards a concept of the messianic era which is a return to the original theocracy experienced in the time of the Judges.

> The messianic faith of Israel is . . . the being-oriented-toward the fulfillment of the relation between God and world in a consummated kingly rule of God.[66]

His analysis is one which singles out "the actualization of divine rulership."[67] The Buberian thesis regards the development of the monarchy as a result of an inability of the people to function in the ideal political structure, i.e. a theocracy. As a concession to human frailty, it is beset with difficulties, and the prophet becomes he who reminds the people of the theocratic conditionality of the

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[65]Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhat Melakhim, 12:1 refers to "Hamelekh Hamoshiah," i.e. the King who is the Messiah, the Anointed One.

[66]Kingship of God, "Preface to the First Edition," op. cit., p. 14f.

[67]Ibid., "Preface to the Third Edition," p. 57.

kingship. It is the repeated failures of the kings and subsequent rulers that stir the memories of the people, moving them to acknowledge as an attainable goal "the actualization of divine rulership." Thus Buber's conception of the messianic age appears devoid of a human leader, even be he from the House of David. As Buber notes in "Preface to the Second Edition," an objection to this interpretation had already been voiced.

> Jecheskel Kaufmann, to be sure, regards a primitive theocracy in Israel as historical, but my interpretation of a theocratic tendency in the sense of the exclusion of a human kingship (emphasis mine) as far too venturesome.[68]

Kaufmann asserts that no fundamental opposition existed between prophethood and kingship, and also that messianism cannot be derived from the primitive theocracy. Proving that messianism can be so derived is of great significance to Buber and will be discussed further on. While not putting forth his standpoint as straightforwardly as Maimonides, Buber evidences a view of messianism in which human kingship, in however elevated a form, is absent. Three interpretations are possible. First, this may indicate a difference between Maimonides and Buber only in regard to political structure, with other variables remaining constant. Thus it is implied

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[68]Ibid., "Preface to the Second Edition," p. 40.

that the alteration in political structure is not especially significant. Second, the two versions of a political structure, i.e. a ruling king who is the Messiah and the return to a direct theocracy, have significantly diverse implications, despite the constancy of other factors. And third, the difference in political structure is accompanied by the dissimilarity of other elements. The implications of the above will be discussed further on, in the context of an evaluation of Buber and Maimonides on messianism.

The examination of Kingship of God will critically state Buber's views, emphasizing his use of the biblical text in relation to tradition. The eight chapters commence with a study of "The Gideon Passage." By this title, Buber is referring to Judges 8:22-23.

> Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon: Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also; for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them: I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you. (Jewish Publication Society translation)

Buber regards Gideon's words as a political declaration, but one with universal vibrations.

> His (Gideon's) No, born out of the situation, is intended to count as an unconditional No for all times and historical conditions . . . The saying dares to deal seriously with the rulership of God.[69]

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[69]Ibid., Chapter One, p. 59.

He deals with the large question of the dating of biblical books and parts of those books, asserting that:

> The answer of Gideon is said to express an antithesis between human and divine rulership as it was conceived only in a far later epoch more capable of abstraction.[70]

It is also noted that the Hebrew root for "rule" used in the above quoted verses from Judges is mashal and not malakh. In biblical language, according to Buber, it "signifies not the formal possession, but rather the factual practice of a power."[71] Thus it is used to describe Joseph's rule in Egypt (Genesis 45:8, 26) and Eliezer's governing of Abraham's affairs (Genesis 24:2), as well as the sun and moon's rule of the heavens (Genesis 1:16, 18) and a husband's 'ruling' over his wife (Genesis 3:16). Mashal does not signify the king-concept connoted by malakh. The non-mention of this concept in the incident of Gideon (as well as that of his son Abimelech), Buber is quick to point out, "dare not be taken as incidental."[72] Gideon's reply to the people indicates that the practical power of the people's destiny and daily affairs is in the hands of God, thus implying the presence of a direct theocracy.

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[70] Ibid., p. 62.

[71] Ibid., p. 61.

[72] Ibid.

Buber argues against Wellhausen that "in ancient Israel a theocracy never existed as a form of government."[73] That which is demonstrated by the Gideon passage is a joining of the religious and political in specific historic circumstances, "a will toward constitution combined with faith,"[74] a dialogue between humanity and divinity.

Chapter Two, "Books of Judges and Book of Judges" describes Judges as fundamentally two books between which stand the Samson legends.

> Each of the two books is edited from a biased viewpoint, the first from an anti-monarchical, the second from a monarchical. We have in 'Judges' the result of a compositional balancing of two opposing editorial biases.[75]

Describing the incidents in Judges in some detail, Buber's ascertains why, in the narrative concerning Gideon and the offer of rulership to him, the concept of king is avoided. "It was," he states:

> precisely a question of devaluing the concept, and therefore it dared not be employed in a positive sense. Where otherwise God is always characterized as king, here it was not allowable.[76]

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[73]Ibid., p. 64.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid., p. 68.

[76]Ibid., p. 76.

The Gideon passage stands as part of the anti-monarchical book within Judges, which presupposes an organic folk unity. The coalescence of antithetical tendencies within one unified book points to the simultaneous truth of both. As Buber comments, a view of history is implied, one in which "Something has been attempted--about which the first part reports; but it has failed--as the last part shows. This 'something' is that which I call primitive theocracy."[77]

Buber has attempted to prove the historicity of the Gideon passage and to demonstrate the theocratic disposition in pre-royal Israel by showing how such propensities functioned in this early historical period. The objection is advanced, however, that this proposition is invalid, "since the notion of unconditional divine rulership does not correspond to the religio-historical level of that epoch, but to that of a far later period."[78] Most of Chapter Three, entitled "The Kingship of God in the Ancient Orient," is a harnessing of historical evidence to disprove this objection. Buber's method is to analyze the concept of kingship, asserting from the outset that "a strictly political meaning is not inherent in the Semetic root malk."[79] The melekh does

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[77]Ibid., p. 83.

[78]Ibid., p. 85.

[79]Ibid., p. 86.

not have to be king or regent, but may be leader or he who offers counsel and guidance. Thus the passages under discussion are viewed against a wide historical background. One can see not only how certain concepts fit into the "ancient oriental existence and ideals," but also their elementary particularity."[80]

The inquiry as to whether or not there can have been a primitive will to theocracy in Israel is continued in a discussion of "The West-Semitic Tribal God," which comprises Chapter Four. Analyzed are the designations malk, el and baal, which Buber insists are concepts, not proper names. El has its source in the non-historical, regular experience of the world, and, as a "phenomenal" concept, manifests potency and efficacy. Malk and baal originate in history, and therefore are relational and more personal. While baal are manifold and are encountered divinity, malk is one, and means the accompanying god.[81]

Chapter Five is devoted to a short exploration of "YHVH the Melekh." Once again Buber points out that melekh is the God who leads the people, who led the wandering Israelites. The Mosaic "becoming known" of YHWH in Exodus 6:3 "thus signifies the revelation of His nature from His

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[80]Ibid., p. 90.

[81]Ibid., pp. 94-95.

name, the revelation of His nature as melekh - God."[82] The inquiry is pursued further in "The Faith of Israel," Chapter Six. Buber sees Exodus 15:18 and 19:6 as God's proclamation of His sole kingship.

> He makes known His will first of all as constitution--not constitution of cult and custom only, also of economy and society--He will proclaim it again and again to the changing generations, certainly but simply as reply to a question, institutionally through priestly mouth, above all, however, in the freedom of His surging spirit, through every one whom His spirit seizes. The separation of religion and politics which stretches through history is here overcome in real paradox.[83]

It is Buber's contention that this concept of divine kingship is not a doctrine, but rather a core experience. It emanates from the report of a real event and therefore is part of a genuine historical tradition. A confederation of tribes called Israel, he writes, "dared as a people, first and once-for-all in the history of peoples, to deal seriously with exclusive divine-rulership."[84]

"The Kingly Covenant," Chapter Seven, describes the unique agreement set out between the people Israel and their

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[82] Ibid., p. 106.

[83] Ibid., p. 119.

[84] Ibid.

Melekh-God. The Sinaitic covenant, as described in Exodus 24:7, is a "sacral-legal act of reciprocity," and its uniqueness consists in its being "between God and man."[85] Buber emphasizes that the concept of brit, or covenant, does not imply that the participants are unknown to one another until the agreement. Brit can also alter an existing relationship in numerous ways. In response to an objection of Mowinckel, Buber insists that "The spirit of an historical religion is nothing else but the passion of transmitting decisively awakened by experience."[86] Through the covenant, YHVH's presence becomes theopolitical; it becomes that of melekh. As such, He dispenses both instruction and command.

"Concerning the Theocracy," the last chapter, pulls together some of the concepts Buber has developed. Buber defines a positive and negative content of the Sinaitic covenant. From the positive side, it signifies that the wandering tribes of Israel accept YHVH "forever and ever" (Exodus 15:18) as their Melekh. From the negative, it indicates that no man of the people is to be called king; in its ideal form, kingship is the exclusive domain of God. "You shall be for me a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6;

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[85]Ibid., p. 121.

[86]Ibid., p. 126.

Buber translates the verse as "a kingly domain") is, according to Buber, a statement also with respect to "secular lordship." Buber interprets this to mean that YHVH does not want to be guarantor of a human monarch; He only is leader and king, and the entire nation is His kingdom. Buber sees the Sinai covenant as a positive proclamation of the people Israel's eternal acceptance of God as their King, and as a negative declaration that no human being is to be called king of Israel. The political sphere is the theo-political arena, and all Israelites are priests, or kohanim.

The Judges and early prophets attempted time and again to strengthen direct theocracy.[87] But the two trends evident in Judges become more and more powerful in reality. A crisis arises, with proponents of monarchic unification pitted against representatives of the divine kingship. From the ensuing conflict "emerges the human king of Israel, the follower of YHVH, as His anointed, mashiach."[88] So Buber ends Kingship of God.

The abundance of historical and philological detail, as well as the polemical undertone (Buber is, after all, asserting the validity of certain theses adjudged flawed

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[87]Buber calls this "the theocratic will toward constitution." Kingship of God, op. cit., p. 162.

[88]Ibid.

by some biblical critics) evidenced in this study of messianism seem distant indeed from the parameters of the messianic idea in Judaism traced earlier. Before demonstrating the connection, however, it is important to take note of a particular problem related to the above exposition.

A Problem in Buber's Account

At the very beginning of this chapter, it was stated that messianism represented to Buber the culmination of an all-pervading unity present in the Judaic tradition. This is so because messianism and biblical faith are closely intertwined. The concept writ large, "biblical faith," raises the serious question of just what it is one committed to this faith has faith in. Thus one is led again to the problematic and central issue of revelation in Buber. While analyzed in Chapter I, specific aspects of the problem will be considered here for the bearing they have in interpreting sections of Kingship of God and their relation to an understanding of Buber and messianism.

For Buber, the Bible stands as the classic document of the life of dialogue. His attitude in relation to the Bible is toward that in which the divine-human encounter is revealed as a possibility in the human situation. To say this, however, is to call for clarification of the meaning

of revelation as used by Buber. As Scholem has noted, in formulating the notions of creation, revelation and redemption, Buber was much influenced by Franz Rosenzweig.[89] But while Rosenzweig maintains a consistent, theological use of the terms throughout Star of Redemption and various essays, in Buber the meaning shifts, and the theological frame of reference which illuminates Rosenzweig's usage is so extensively weakened as to be lost altogether. This is especially true in regard to revelation.

For Buber, revelation is always of the present; it is the "primal phenomenon . . . of the supreme encounter."[90] In that creative moment of dialogue between the I and Thou, what is received is not a content, "but a presence, a presence as strength." Or, to put it even more simply, and also more vaguely, "something happens."[91] The person involved in the encounter is cognizant of the fullness of the reciprocity experienced, and receives a guarantee that

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[89]Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism," in G. Scholem, On Jews and Judaism in Crisis (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 156. This was also noted by Professor Rivka Horwitz of Jerusalem, in conversations I had with her in 1976-77.

[90]M. Buber, I and Thou, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 157.

[91]Ibid., p. 158.

there is meaning, "the inexpressible confirmation of meaning."[92] As pure encounter, revelation cannot be expressed, defined or formulated in any way: "No prescription can lead us to the encounter, and none leads from it."[93]

As previously indicated, the philosophical problems resulting from Buber's understanding of revelation are many, and they undermine stronger aspects of his thinking. Scholem has stated that Buber's definition of revelation is a purely mystical one. In the passages just cited from I and Thou, Buber is at pains to articulate the inarticulateness of revelation, to say what it is not, rather than express what it is. His very use of language is that of mysticism. In tracing Buber's thought, there are many references, especially in the period of the ten year gap between the publication of Daniel (1913) and I and Thou (1923), to a distancing from the mystical tradition. It is significant to recall, however, that Buber's doctoral dissertation was a study of an aspect of German mysticism.[94]

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[92]Ibid.

[93]Ibid., p. 159. See Chapter II, p. 118, n. 46.

[94]It was entitled The History of the Problem of Individuation: Nicholas of Cusa and Jacob Boehme, University of Vienna, 1904. Cited by Grete Schaeder, The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1973), p. 54f.

In Scholem's words, "It is among Buber's most astonishing illusions that he believed to have left the sphere of mysticism with such words (i.e. from I and Thou), indeed to have rejected it."[95] Scholem feels Buber's statements really belong with those of the kabbalistic concept of revelation, but with a significant difference. For the kabbalists, historical revelation implies mystical revelation, meaning the former is developed and articulated by the latter. But in Buber, according to Scholem, there is "only one revelation, and that is the mystical one."[96] Buber's formulation of historical revelation reveals this clearly:

> This is the eternal revelation which is present in the here and now. I neither know of nor believe in any revelation that is not the same in its primal phenomenon. I do not believe in God's naming himself or in God's defining himself before man . . . The eternal source of strength flows, the eternal touch is waiting, the eternal voice sounds, nothing more.[97]

The question here, in relation to Kingship of God and Buber's understanding of messianism, is how the mystical concept of revelation is incorporated into Buber's

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[95]Scholem, op. cit., p. 156. See I and Thou, Pt. III on the doctrine or immersion.

[96]Scholem, ibid.

[97]M. Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 160.

exegesis of the Sinaitic revelation and what implications this has for his notion of messianism. Buber's handling of the historical revelation at Sinai is also related to his conception of prophetic revelation. In the exposition of the covenant at Sinai in Kingship of God, Buber's interpretive methodology is to follow the biblical text rather closely. But, in Scholem's words,

> In the reports of the Torah, which he considers unhistorical, he seeks the 'core' of an original event, namely that 'encounter' in the highest sense, and he finds the latter by the application of a purely pneumatic exegesis, the subjectivity of which bewilders the reader.[98]

This pneumatic construction occurs at the crucial juncture of the discussion of the religious origin of the Israelite theocracy in the covenant at Sinai. Buber dilutes all previous interpretation of historical phenomena by stating that the people "erected the theocracy upon this anarchic psychic basis."[99] One is hard put to elicit a clear-cut meaning from this, except to state first, that it reverts to the vagueness of Buber's mystical revelation, and second,

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[98]Scholem, op. cit., p. 158.

[99]M. Buber, Kingship of God, op. cit., p. 138. See also p. 161: ". . . erected the theocracy upon an anarchic psychic foundation." Scholem's translation is "the anarchic ground of the soul."

that Buber is projecting this upon what the religious tradition asserts to be a specific and historical occurrence of revelation. Thus Buber achieves a phenomenal loosening of the texts which are the basis of historical Judaism as a religiously functioning society. Through this method of textual analysis, he maintains an identification of revelations accepted by the Judaic tradition as authoritative with those revelations that can occur at any time, in any place, to almost anyone who listens intensely: "The powerful revelations that stand at the beginnings of great communities, at the turning-points of human time, are nothing else than the eternal revelation."[100] This loosening of the texts is consistent with Buber's conceptual premises, but it represents as well a loosening from tradition. Buber's pneumatic interpretations allowed him to accept important aspects of the tradition, while remaking the less palatable (to him) elements to fit his fundamental notion of dialogue. In so doing, he moved towards an antinomianism that is antithetical to the tradition.

By referring to the erection of theocracy upon an "anarchic psychic basis" at the very point when the leadership of God as Melekh becomes concrete and is given tangible

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[100]M. Buber, I and Thou, op. cit., p. 166.

content (according to traditional interpretations of the biblical text), Buber demonstrates that he regards theocracy as the purest form of dialogue, or revelation. The concept of theocracy, however, becomes attenuated due to Buber's understanding of what is entailed by encounter. It is only if one concurs with the philosophical premises of the I-Thou that the idea of divine kingship, as explicated by Buber, retains its overall cogency. In addition, the difficulty brought up earlier as to whether or not Buber puts forth and supports the traditional concept of a messianic king, is here clarified. For if theocracy, the community in its on-going encounter with its leader, God, the Melekh, embodies the purest form of dialogue on a group level, then the messianic era, as a dominion of the good, will reenact that primitive theocracy. The I-Thou between a human community and God will once again reach the absoluteness and purity of the very earliest attempt of man and Melekh to respond to one another as manifested in the exodus from Egypt and at Sinai. The eschatological hope of a future in which the most profound expectations between the I and Thou would be actualized always contains the historical hope deriving from this early theocracy. It is growing

disappointment in history that nurtures memory as well as expectation.

The detailed textual studies which constitute Kingship of God, as well as Buber's espoused aim expressed in his Prefaces, qualify in several important ways the restorative tendencies of his understanding of messianism as articulated in the early essays. The anti-apocalypticism is reinforced. No arbitrary messianic paradises for Buber; no times of necessary chaos, destruction and tumult. The historical roots of messianism as Buber explicates them demand from man his constant and strongest efforts to overcome human frailty, overturn, in a sense, the human history that seeks compromise with its Melekh, and reinstitute, once again the pure I-Thou, the kingdom of God on earth as a historical, political fact. This is not only anti-apocalyptic; it is also restorative. But it lacks two components nearly always included in this interpretation of messianism. First, from all indications, there is no human leader, or melekh hamoshiah, present. Given Buber's premises, the presence of a human king, no matter what his stature and authority, would be a compromise. The true kingdom of God, Buberian style, is free from political hierarchies. Second, there is no reference whatsoever to the study of Torah or the place Torah will occupy in the messianic society. But

granted Buber's understanding of revelation and its implications in interpreting the meaning of Jewish law (both as specific laws and as a general category), this is not to be wondered at. Buber's anti-apocalypticism remains strong. The qualifications discussed above, however, weaken the traditionalism usually evident in this interpretation of messianism.

Buber's Account of Messianism in His Other Works

The concepts developed in Kingship of God reach their culmination in the last section of The Prophetic Faith.[101] While noting different tendencies or traditions[102] in the prophetic texts, Buber goes about the task of explicating the prophetic faith on the assumption of a "primitive unity, preserved in the memory of generations."[103]

After Gideon's refusal to rule, others, in the agreed upon position of Judge, provide leadership to the struggling

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[101]As noted earlier, Buber states in the "Preface to the First Edition" of Kingship of God that the fundamental ideas of the third volume of the originally planned trilogy on biblical faith are to be found in The Prophetic Faith.

[102]Buber renames "source criticism" tradition criticism. M. Buber, The Prophetic Faith (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 7.

[103]Ibid.

nation. But finally, in what Buber calls the Samuelic crisis, the monarchical forces claim victory, and human kingship is instituted among the people Israel. The navi, or prophet, who was a leader as in the time of Moses, becomes the established opposition during the period of the monarchy. It becomes the task of the navi to expound to the kings the meaning of and practical parameters of true leadership. Maintaining the vitality of the reestablishment of the kingdom of God as the true ideal was the mission of the prophet, in his varied capacity as political advisor, social critic, unpopular protester and even outcast. In the words of what Buber calls Deutero-Isaiah,[104] the navi is the servant of God, who suffers and is afflicted in order that the kingdom of God be established.

Deutero-Isaiah, according to Buber, is the "originator of a theology of world-history."[105] Seeing his task as the refuting of the claims of other deities to the leadership and destiny of the world, Deutero-Isaiah is impelled to action by the historical realities of the time of Cyrus. He asserts the preeminence of the redemption of Israel, and the relation of that redemption to that of all the nations.

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[104]For Buber's divisions and subdivisions of the chapters 40-66 of Isaiah, see The Prophetic Faith, op. cit., p. 205f.

[105]Ibid., p. 208.

Thus a universalism is expressed, one which links Israel and all the nations, one which joins redemption with creation. Just as Israel is the servant of God in fulfilling its task of leading the world toward redemption, the prophet also is servant of the Lord in guiding Israel toward that goal. By means of the navi, that which remained unattainable through the kings will find its ultimate fulfillment. In Deutero-Isaiah, the suffering and acting servant no longer responds, as did the earlier neviim, from opposition to Israel. Rather, "he suffers and acts in the name of Israel."[106] He proclaims the messianic message to the nations of the world. The God of Deutero-Isaiah proclaims himself not only the Lord of history, but also the God of the oppressed. The justice and hesed which comfort and support the sufferer are the very components of hope for the future in which they will be actualized on earth.

> He Whom the navi Abraham had recognized in days of old as the God of the way, remained the leader in the way in the anonymous prophet's message (48, 17), which the suffering generations have carried with them on their wanderings.[107]

They do this in the strength of the prophetic faith: "For the Lord (YHVH) will go before you" (52:12). Thus, in

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[106] Ibid., p. 234.

[107] Ibid., p. 235.

Deutero-Isaiah, creation and redemption, primordial beginning and end of time, are conjoined.

It is significant that the Protestant Bible scholar, James Muilenburg, in assessing Buber as an interpreter of the Bible, takes especial note of his studies on messianism.

> Yet it is still true that Buber's many studies on the origins and history of messianism are his most important contribution to an understanding both of the Old and New Testament,[108]

he writes. The study of the kingship of God and His role as Melekh Muilenburg regards as "the most significant and fruitful of all of Buber's contributions to Biblical study."[109] Muilenburg recognizes Buber not only as "the greatest Jewish thinker of our generation," but also as "the foremost Jewish speaker to the Christian community," "the great Jewish teacher of Christians."

> He gives Jewish answers to Christian questions, the kind of answers Christians must have if they are to understand themselves . . . With all this Christians, but perhaps not all Jews, will heartily agree.[110]

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[108]James Muilenburg, "Buber as an Interpreter of the Bible," in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1967), p. 402.

[109]Ibid., p. 399.

[110]Ibid., p. 382f.

One may ask why Buber earns the epithet of "the great Jewish teacher of Christians," and why a Christian scholar realizes that Jews may not concur in his assessment of Buber. In responding to this query, it is interesting to compare Muilenburg's essay with that of Nahum N. Glatzer. Glatzer's study, with the same title in the same volume, treats not only methodology, hermeneutics and biblical content, but discusses as well Buber's relation to biblical law and his understanding of revelation. Glatzer's analysis points out this central problem in Buber's biblical works.

> But the prophetic motif determined the course he had taken: he became the grand expounder of the prophetic meaning of the Voice speaking in Revelation and of the prophetic criticism of the distortion of the law in ritualism and legalism. The Torah, mastering day-to-day life . . . this Sinai, the central concern of Israel, Biblical and post-Biblical, remains outside the main province of Buber's work.[111]

Muilenburg does not treat the issue of biblical law; he regards the studies of messianism as Buber's major contribution. Glatzer, while acknowledging the importance of Buber's work on the kingship of God and messianism, most candidly asserts that a central biblical concern, the law,

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[111]Nahum N. Glatzer, "Buber as Interpreter of the Bible," in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 379.

remains decidedly outside the purview of Buber's work. May it not be that the centrality of the studies on messianism coupled with a deliberate downplaying, loosening or even ignoring of the legal texts has made Buber's biblical works especially attractive to Christian scholars? As Glatzer points out, within the context of the Bible itself, "the laws do appear as an absolution . . . Torah is more than law, but in the law is Torah."[112]

Two texts remain for consideration in studying Buber's references to messianism: the later essays, published after 1939, and Two Types of Faith, published in 1951 and subtitled, "A Study of the Interpenetration of Judaism and Christianity." The later essays continue the themes found thus far in relation to messianism: unity, history, and the promise of the anointing. Prophetic religion fought for the "wholeness and unity of civilization, which can be whole and united only if it is hallowed to God."[113] It is characterized by a unique religious realism, which requires that abstract truths be made concrete, that the lived life manifest the expressed ideal. Significantly, in formulating this idea Buber asserts that the task of

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[112] Ibid.

[113] M. Buber, "Judaism and Civilization," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 195.

Israel is to demonstrate the "absolute validity" of the "normative principle."[114] In Buber's terms, this principle appears to be "the charge that is higher than every formulation of individual precepts . . . The life of the nation . . . as one of justice."[115] Once again, Buber considerably loosens the meaning of "normative," by interpreting it as "justice" with no supporting concept of law, or halakhah. The unfulfilled divine demand of justice engendered the messianic promise. The people's experience was of kings who failed, while "the promise centers around the king who will bring the fulfillment. He is called the Messiah. . ."[116] In this essay, Buber sees the Messiah leading man "to meet God," and being the center of Israel's, and then all mankind's "fulfilled kingdom of God."[117] Here, in contradistinction to earlier works, Buber posits a strong, political leader, a king to replace the many who failed during the times of Israel's monarchy. It is not clear whether the Messiah will precede the pure theocracy described previously,

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[114] Ibid.

[115] M. Buber, "The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 183.

[116] M. Buber, "Judaism and Civilization," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 197.

[117] Ibid., p. 198.

or perhaps even supercede it (although that seems unlikely). Buber does not order these important details systematically. Once again, broad strokes, rather than fine points, are most evident.

The essay, "Judaism and Civilization," demonstrates once again the strong anti-apocalyptic stand taken by Buber. The "religious-normative principle"[118] of Israel is described as "essentially historical." The highest goal of Israel, i.e. the redemption, is likewise historical in character.[119] The origin of Christianity is said to be "a deformative late phase of Jewish Messianism,"[120] deformative because it sought to escape from history to purer spheres; it no longer aimed to conquer history. Buber's perspective is Maimonidean. History--man's strivings and attainments--remains the crucible in which the success or failure of the world goal, redemption, is tested. Redemption does not come about arbitrarily. The holiness of the world men create determines its worthiness. Buber turns beautifully homiletic when he quotes Psalms, 47:10: "The noble ones of the peoples are

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[118]Buber uses specific terms, then loosens their meaning so that the usual understanding of the term is all but lost. Given Buber's attitude toward law, "religious-normative principle" here means "the search for justice," a generalized norm with few specific prescriptions subsumed under it.

[119]M. Buber, "Judaism and Civilization," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 198.

[120]Ibid., p. 199.

gathered together as the people of the God of Abraham." Why is Abraham singled out? In Genesis 17:5, he is called "the father of a multitude of nations." All of world history is a move toward the realization of the goal described by the Psalmist, so that "world history . . . is essentially sacred history."[121]

Buber takes cognizance of the mysterious interaction between grace and human effort.

> Of course, it lies in the power of heaven to introduce the kingdom of God; the preparation of the world in readiness for that kingdom, the beginning of a fulfillment of the truth, calls for men and a nation consisting of men.[122]

Thus one is taken back to the talmudic dispute between Rav and Shmuel, R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and R. Yehoshua, in T. B. Sanhedrin 97b. Buber, like Rav and R. Eliezer, views redemption as an open-ended possibility. The movement of grace will come from the Divine, but only when man himself reaches the stage of moral renewal. National salvation is not, as for Shmuel and R. Yehoshua, an inevitable process.

Two Types of Faith, written in German in 1950 and published in English in 1951, is a comparison of early

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[121]M. Buber, "Dialogue Between Heaven and Earth," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 218.

[122]M. Buber, "Spirit of Israel and the World of Today," On Judaism, op. cit., p. 184.

Judaism and early Christianity. The former is characterized primarily by emunah, or trust, while the essential quality of the latter is pistis, or true belief. Only a few references to the Messiah and the messianic era are made in the courses of Buber's comparison, and they will now be examined. No new concepts or details, however, are added to his already delineated notion of messianism.

It is Buber's contention that Jesus understood himself, under the influence of the notion of Deutero-Isaiah, "to be a bearer of Messianic hiddenness."[123] After elaborating upon this, Buber gives a short history of the messianic idea during the pre-Christian period, when two concepts existed simultaneously. The first was that of the king who fulfills; it originated in the historical situation and was described and amplified by the prophets. Following the exile, the second is articulated in the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah. Envisioned is the establishment of the righteous community of Israel as the center of the nations of the world. The task of the servant of YHVH is to structure this community. Both the pre-exilic king and the exilic form of the prophetic servant share a singular characteristic, "that the Messianic man is here an ascending and not a descending

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[123]M. Buber, Two Types of Faith (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 107.

one."[124] By this Buber means each figure is a human being, becoming cognizant of his mission on earth and realizing it on earth; "he is not sent down from heaven to earth with it."[125] Once again, Buber emphasizes the concrete, the immediate, the historical. Also, although one cannot be certain of Buber's intention, the figure of the Messiah here receives prominence, with no mention made of the pure theocracy. However, since Two Types of Faith does not include a systematic treatment of the messianic idea, merely mentioning it in passing, one may assume the validity of both for Buber.

It is Scholem's contention that Buber came to the realization that halakhah, as a conservative element in the Judaic tradition, served as an anti-apocalyptic force in the history of Judaism. Accordingly, his attitude toward Jewish law became more positive. Scholem finds this change of position obvious in a 1925 essay, Pharisaertum. But he takes especial note of Two Types of Faith, which he regards as Buber's "weakest book," characterizing the emunah-pistis distinction as "extremely dubious."[126] Two Types illustrates

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[124]Ibid., p. 111.

[125]Ibid.

[126]Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism," On Jews and Judaism in Crisis, op. cit., p. 164.

that although a new, less strident tone regarding halakhah was manifested in Buber's post-1925 works,[127] he was still very far from embracing normative Judaism. For in emphasizing emunah and pistis as pivotal in understanding Judaism and Christianity, the issue of the law is treated only secondarily. One would think that the differing attitudes toward the law would be a significant part of Buber's comparison; they receive but slight mention. Buber once again loosens the prescriptive quality of the legal parts of the Torah. He states: ". . . He (God) gives the people chosen by Him direction in the form of statutes and ordinances."[128] But Buber is more concerned with the 'direction' than with the content and meaning of the statutes and ordinances. Here is Buber's pneumatic explanation:

> Hence the Torah has assigned to man actions agreeable to God, in the doing of which he learns to direct his heart to Him. According to this purpose of the Torah the decisive significance and value does not lie in the bulk of these actions in themselves but in the direction of the heart in them and through them.[129]

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[127]The Buber-Rosenzweig correspondence on revelation and the law terminated in June, 1925.

[128]M. Buber, Two Types of Faith, op. cit., p. 87.

[129]Ibid., p. 64.

The biblical and talmudic citations brought by Buber to support his emphasis upon kavanah, or direction, are all correctly interpreted. What is omitted is the fact that a very strong value is given by the tradition to the actions themselves. So strong is it that actions without kavanah are definitely acceptable and certainly preferable to no actions at all.[130] The action may be said to have a value independent of he who performs it, or doing the action, even in the absence of kavanah, may itself create the kavanah. The Talmud deals with the various possibilities, regarding the issue of direction as central. But a tradition cannot rest on the genuineness of immediate, spontaneous, direction of the heart; external actions are far more substantive, in terms of content, psychological dynamic and ramifications for the community.

Conclusion

Both Nahmanides and Maimonides, it has been shown, put forth interpretations of messianism that are within the parameters of the tradition. Nahmanides builds his approach upon the apocalyptic views of the Talmud, while Maimonides constructs his from the restorative concepts. The extent to which Maimonides is successful in neutralizing the

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[130]See T. B. Rosh Hashanah, 28a-b. Also Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilhot Hamez Umazah, 6:3.

apocalyptic impulses is the source of a dispute between Gershom Scholem and David Hartman. It is Scholem's contention that while for Maimonides the messianic age is definitively restorative and is a public event realized within the community, "Maimonides nowhere recognizes a causal relationship between the coming of the Messiah and human conduct."[131] Accordingly, it seems that the Rambam is interpreting R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Rav with much latitude. Scholem continues:

> It is not Israel's repentance which brings about the redemption; rather, because the eruption of redemption is to occur by divine decree, at the last moment there also erupts a movement of repentance in Israel itself, which is tied to no idea of progress toward the redemption, is and remains a miracle--though of course not a miracle that occurs outside of nature and her laws, but a miracle because it has been previously announced by the prophets to affirm God's dominion in the world.[132]

The restorative concept which is at the center of Maimonides' messianism relates to the nature of the messianic era, according to Scholem. "Do not think," the Rambam begins chapter twelve of Hilkhot Melakhim in the Mishneh Torah,

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[131]Gershom Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea," The Messianic Idea in Judaism, op. cit., p. 31.

[132]Ibid.

"that in the days of the Messiah anything in the customary pattern of the world will change" (translation mine). The statement in Isaiah that a sheep and lion will lie together in peace is but a parable. The notion of restoration, then, would not include any cause-and-effect relationship between man's repentance, or turning, and the onset of the messianic age. There is a hint of this in the following:

> Some of our rabbis have said that Elijah will come prior to the Messiah. This idea and similar ones a man cannot judge, for he knows not what will be until it will occur. These matters are concealed in the prophets, and the rabbis also have no tradition regarding them, except that which each adjudges the necessary meaning of the verses. Therefore, they have a dispute in regard to these matters. (Hilkhot Melakhim, 12:2, translation mine)

How and in what manner the messianic age will commence is, as shown earlier, subject to much speculation. The Rambam is being deliberately vague and open-ended not only because the opinions expressed are in fact speculation, but also, apparently, to undermine the apocalyptic assertion of chaos and destruction. Implied as well is the lack of causality, or lack of knowledge of causality, between the moral state of the world and the commencing of the messianic age. In this citation, and in Scholem's explication of Maimonides' view, the issue addressed is the relation and interaction of human conduct and divine action. Can one comprehend the relation of repentance to redemption? Does it not, of

necessity, remain mysterious, as Kant and Buber, as well as R. Eliezer and Rav assert? For the statements of the latter indicate not direct, literal causality, but the significance of moral renewal as a central factor. One cannot determine when the redemption will occur, but it will definitely be in an era of true repentance. Scholem insists, however, that the messianic restoration "is tied to no idea of progress toward the redemption." Rather, it erupts "by divine decree," and only then, with the messianic age recognizably on the horizon, does a movement of repentance manifest itself in Israel.

David Hartman raises a number of questions regarding Scholem's analysis. His overall criticism is that sudden ruptures in history are inconsistent with "the Maimonidean spirit" and cannot be borne out upon careful textual study.

> There is no compelling reason to maintain, as Scholem does, that Maimonides reverted to an eschatology of sudden divine intervention. Scholem is not sufficiently radical in his treatment of the 'rationalism' of Maimonidean messianism.[133]

Hartman's interpretation of the Rambam is based on three arguments: that Maimonides repeatedly attempted to naturalize the miraculous; that he argued for human freedom and responsibility and against historical determinism; that he

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[133]David Hartman, "Sinai and Messianism," Joy and Responsibility: Israel, Modernity and the Renewal of Judaism, op. cit., p. 237.

rejected the notion of an end to history as we know it and its replacement by a new messianic history. A number of passages from the Guide of the Perplexed and Mishneh Torah are analyzed to support the above.[134] The following, however, appears to favor Scholem's interpretation:

> All the prophets charged the people concerning repentance. Only through repentance will Israel be redeemed, and the Torah promised that in the end, at the end of their exile, Israel will repent and immediately they will be redeemed. (Hilkhot Teshuvah, 7:5)

Here is noted the prophetic promise regarding repentance and the eventual realization of the messianic age, and the notion of an end, a time that will be recognized as the end of ordinary human history and the beginning of the messianic era. The difficulty of the prophetic promise, and its presumed meaning of inevitability, can be overcome by discerning the purpose inherent in this kind of pledge. It may be said that the Torah makes such a promise because living according to the normative standards established in Torah causes one constantly to assess one's character and make self-improvement an important goal. Torah, that

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[133]David Hartman, "Sinai and Messianism," Joy and Responsibility: Israel, Modernity and the Renewal of Judaism, op. cit., p. 237.

[134]See ibid., pp. 238-248.

is, creates a person who does teshuvah. Halakhah encourages man to enlarge his scope of responsibility, pointing out the tasks that require man's efforts. He who adheres to Torah recognizes the power of teshuvah to alter his individual well-being and influence the community; normative behavior influences communal life. The Torah-abiding person experiences renewal through discovering within himself the capacity for moral change. This "halakhic activism," Hartman contends, "does not admit spiritual incapacity."[135] Maimonides' philosophy is permeated by the belief that man can always do teshuvah: "The gates of prayer are sometimes open and sometimes closed, but the gates of repentance always remain open."[136] Earlier, in responding to Buber's pneumatic understanding of halakhah, it was stated that external behavior may itself generate inner direction, or kavanah. Hartman is stating an analogous case. A Torah society is an optimal environment for the nourishing of spiritual growth and the moral renewal which constitute teshuvah. Such a society tends to generate that which is required to fulfill the prophetic promise. Realization of the prophet's words is not unrelated to human efforts and attainments in the spiritual and moral arenas. A complex

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[135] Ibid., p. 247.

[136] Midrash Rabbah, Deuteronomy, 2:12.

interaction of human history and divine will weaves the fabric of a society which will some day reach redemption; historical inevitability is not part of this process. The promise that 'in the end' Israel will repent implies, according to Hartman, "that a messianic era of political security peace and prosperity will make possible the unprecedented flowering of human spiritual potentialities."[137] In addition, by rejecting the belief in an end to human history as non-Maimonidean, Hartman concludes that the possibility of the repeated loss and attainment of the messianic age is consistent with Maimonides' overall philosophy: "The possibility of losing or of regaining messianic social and political conditions is a perennial feature of history."[138] Putting aside this new factor, it may be said that Maimonides proposes a concept of messianism nurtured by halakhah. Both the pre-messianic and the messianic societies are guided by the primacy of the Law. Messianism, then, is not a final resolution of human struggles and conflicts; it is a realistic and feasible state of affairs which allows for the realization of the highest spiritual potentialities.

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[137]David Hartman, "Sinai and Messianism," op. cit., p. 248.

[138]Ibid., p. 247.

Scholem's understanding of Maimonides undoubtedly derives from R. Yehoshua's approach in the Talmud:

> If they (Israel) do not repent, will they not be redeemed? But what will happen? God will send a wicked king, one whose decrees will be as Haman's, and then Israel will do teshuvah. (T. B. Sanhedrin, 97b)

The sudden bursting forth of the redemption, concommitant with an eruption of repentance in Israel, has strong echoes of God's decreeing the rule of an evil despot in order to bring about teshuvah in order to will the commencement of of the messianic era. As such, redemption and the occurrence of teshuvah are events independent of the chain of natural historical connections. Hartman has marshalled a mass of evidence[139] to support his interpretation of Maimonides as a staunch advocate of the views of R. Eliezer and Rav, rather than R. Yehoshua and Shmuel. Redemption and teshuvah would be integral components of the natural and historical processes governing the world.

Buber's messianism sides with Hartman's understanding of Maimonides. Repentance and the human striving to create a just society are necessary prerequisites for the

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[139]See also his book, Maimonides: Torah and Philosophic Quest (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1976). P. 249, n. 33 calls attention to the issue under discussion, and notes "Maimonides aversion to separating divine action from the intelligible processes of nature and history."

arrival of the era of redemption. Man must merit the tranquillity of the messianic time; he must demonstrate his worthiness for the spiritual pursuits of that era.

Buber's messianism accords with traditional notions. He is a follower of Maimonides' line of thinking rather than of Nahmanides. He stands squarely within the anti-apocalyptic, restorative tradition deriving from the tannaitic teacher, R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. While the notion of a pure theocracy, i.e. the absence of a monarch, in the messianic era is new, it may be regarded as one more variable in the number of speculations revolving around the messianic idea. In the same way as Hartman envisions a perennial attainment and loss of messianic realization as an outcome of Maimonides' philosophical principles, can Buber's concept of the reestablishment of pure theocracy be seen as the result of his fundamental explication of messianism.

There is, however, a significant difference between Buber's messianism and the traditional, anti-apocalyptic notion. This lacuna centers, once again, on the issue of the Law. For Maimonides, the full-bodied justice characteristic of the messianic age is a direct realization of halakhic norms. Not only is the society circumscribed by halakhic guidelines; its sole aim is the worship and knowledge of God, and this is attainable only through Torah.

> The rabbis and prophets did not desire the days of the Messiah in order to rule the world . . . nor to eat and drink and be happy, but only in order to be devoted to Torah and its wisdom . . . And the strivings of the entire world shall be only to know God . . . (Hilkhat Melakhim, 12:4-5, translation mine)

Buber has taken a traditional concept and removed from it its very essence. All the structures of traditional messianism are present in Buber, but they are filled with a vague notion of justice, based on an open-ended conception of teshuvah. To what is one to direct one's heart in the turning that is teshuvah? Immediacy, spontaneity and openness indicate relationship, but not content. Content, guidelines, norms, prescriptions, rules: law has a value and a flexibile method of functioning that Buber was unable to perceive.

Why is it, it might be asked, that Buber admired the period of the Judges? It was, after all, not a distinguished era in Jewish history. Lapses into idolatry, wars and intertribal conflicts characterize the Book of Judges. But it was a new beginning, the adolescence, one might say, of a people, the turbulent time before its slow ripening and maturity. And that is what appealed to Buber: the struggle of the people to become a political unit and a people under God's rule.

> Buber sought the creative transformation of Judaism; he sought those moments in the latter's history and present in which the creative bursts forms asunder and seeks a new formation, and in the course of his emphasis he abstracted extensively from the given historical forms of Judaism.[140]

Buber was attracted to the struggle for unity, and it was the failure to reach that goal, in his estimation, that led to the messianic idea of Judaism. No note is taken by Buber, however, of the existence of law in the time of the Judges. It was after the giving of the Torah and after the entry into the land of Israel. The people were not only retrenching their military positions; they were also living according to the law of the Torah. Their tendency to lapse into idolatry during this period is well-documented in Judges. But each time, the text tells us, they "did evil," they "forsook God." They were cognizant of having transgressed the Law. The Book of Ruth, an account of the time of the Judges, describes the law of peah (2:2) of leaving over from the gleaming for the poor. A detailed account of the legal transfer of property is also given (4:2-5). The judges may have been military leaders, but provided spiritual guidance as well. Religious prescriptions were known and practiced.

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[140]Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Conception of Judaism," On Jews and Judaism in Crises, p. 129.

The last verse of the Book of Judges states: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes (21:25)." It is customarily interpreted as a rather straightforward description of the chaos and lack of unity characteristic of that time. The structure of the verse implies causality: since there was no monarch, each person did as he pleased. It also serves as a transition to Samuel I, in which the beginnings of unity and stability are attained through the anointing of Saul. But Buber, it is to be recalled, regarded the monarchy as a compromise, as indeed it was on one level. However, on another, it signified a moving forward toward political stability and true nationhood. "That each man did what was right in his own eyes" is usually seen as an implied critique of the period. Perhaps Buber, however, would expound the verse differently. There was no restricting, central figure of authority. Therefore, the individual (the verse uses "man" in the singular) could do that which in his judgement was "good." Individual relationships and dialogue, characterized by immediacy and pure spontaneity could flourish. Community structure was loose, adherence to Torah was weak: each could blaze his own way. This last verse in Judges can be interpreted as offering praise for that which has been described in the previous twenty-one

chapters: it was good that there was no king in Israel, for each person was free to pursue his own path to realization. The primitive theocracy described in Judges and the first part of Samuel I, however, was a community, for it was through leading the community that God became acknowledged as Melekh. Buber's concept of the interaction of community and individual is quite insightful.[141] But he wants structure as well as individual openness, a sufficiently legitimate desire in terms of political philosophy. Their interaction, however, is poorly worked out. Once again, the problem of law rears its head. Guidelines, norms, restrictions are difficult for Buber to countenance. He seeks the "creative transformations," nearly always the periods prior to the established transmission of law. Buber's concept of messianism is traditional, but without the tradition of law.

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[141]See, for instance, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

CONCLUSION

The goals of Buber's diverse biblical studies were primarily two: to confront the Bible as a unified text, and to elicit from that confrontation the beginnings of religious faith, leading eventually to the I-Thou relationship between man and God. That biblical study and religious faith are closely intertwined is a traditional notion which Buber enthusiastically espoused. Buber approached the Bible searching earnestly for the essence of faith, for the ultimate matrix of meaning, for formative existential values.

The quest led him to identify with the elements of faith found within the historical books, and especially the writings of the prophets and the psalmists. The ethical tenets of the prophets, far removed from the realms of ritual, ceremony, and legal stricture emphasize the good person. For Buber, they became the prototype of faith par excellence: relationship to God, leading to individual and community responsibility. While making the prophetic experience of dialogue central to his concept of faith, Buber's antinomian tendency caused him to by-pass other crucial aspects. In prophecy or prophetic revelation, spontaneous moment of the present becomes the vehicle whereby "presence

as power" is conveyed. Revelation is pure encounter, the meaning of which finds expression in the deeds of men. In formulating revelation in such a way as having no definite public content, Buber constructed a theory in which the individual is motivated but not directed. By putting the onus for moral action completely on the individual's idiosyncratic interpretation of the meaning of encounter, Buber set forth a confused conception, one which clearly indicates an "apparently innate antinomian temperament."[142] The relationship between revelation and human action remains ambiguous.

Nonetheless, Buber has succeeded in articulating significant aspects of the meaning of prophecy within the Judaic tradition. He has made clear that the God of the Bible is not only an object of belief, but also He who speaks to man and to whom man can respond. In emphasizing the dialogical, Buber brought to the fore a significant traditional concept: God is He who relates to man.

Buber's traditionalism expresses itself also in his understanding of the election, nationhood and land of Israel. Buber proclaims the special responsibility of a

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[142]Shemaryahu Talmon, "Martin Buber's Ways of Interpreting the Bible," Journal of Jewish Studies, XXVII (1976), p. 198.

nation chosen to act in history in a distinctive manner. God demands of Israel that it fulfill its mission: the formation of a community or nation on a particular land. God is shown as the God of human history, whose particular choice, i.e. the nation of Israel on the land Israel, leads to universalism and redemption. For the task of Israel, in its destined time, will bring universal harmony.

But in putting forth the traditional concepts of the election, nationhood and land of Israel, Buber is compelled to interpret words such as "commands," "covenant," and "normative." One is again confronted with the expected distortions of these terms. Buber writes of the commands accepted as part of a covenant, or contractual agreement. Yet he praises man for being his own commander and writing his own contract, restricted only by the general ethical prescriptions of justice and peace. But what creates and sustains the communal structure? How does law function for the individual and for the nation? The lack of guidelines leads to an individualism that does not hold together with Buber's concept of community and nationhood and fails to adequately justify a specific land. Buber does not attempt to make consistent these disparate implications. His antinomian propensity persists in diluting the intrinsic traditionalism of the concepts he has established.

While the core concept of Buber's writings, the

I-Thou relationship, focuses on the individual, the ultimate aim is the universal, the messianic. The particularity of the nation and land of Israel reaches its culmination in the universality of the kingship of God in the messianic era. Buber has boldly entered into the traditional notion of messianism, one which accords with the anti-apocalyptic stance espoused in the Babylonian Talmud by R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and further articulated by Maimonides. Repentance and human efforts to create a just society are necessary pre-conditions for the beginning of the age of redemption. Man must merit the serenity and stability of redemption. The era itself is characterized by a restorative quality. For Buber, this means a reenactment of the primitive theocracy, which he regards as the purest form of dialogue on a group level.

Despite the strong traditionalism that pervades Buber's anti-apocalyptic understanding of messianism, elements of antinomianism are evident. The traditional anti-apocalyptic view as articulated by Maimonides makes clear that the justice characteristic of the messianic age is based on legal norms. The goal of messianic society is the worship and knowledge of God, realizable only through Torah. In Buber's messianic era, however, teshuvah leads to an increase in the capacity for dialogue with others and with God; to a greater meaning and sense of authenticity

thus brought about; to more responsible action. The guarantee of meaning is palpable, but concrete guidelines are absent. Thus, Buber's antinomianism is once again apparent. Buber's content cannot accord with Jewish tradition because it is inconsistent with any tradition that requires public meaning and continuity as means of forming and sustaining a community.

That Martin Buber's writings have been influential in our century is not to be disputed. His biblical studies have been acclaimed by non-Jewish theologians, but ironically, have failed to produce dialogue with contemporary Jews. Rather, an attitude of distrust has prevailed. A compelling reason for the distrust is the fundamental antinomianism which characterizes Buber's approach to the Bible. The framework is in part traditional, the internal structure is in part traditional, but the foundation is decidedly non-traditional. Buber was never immersed in the halakhic, legal interpretation of the Bible; it was a discipline that remained foreign to him. He approached the Bible, instead, from the standpoint of Western humanism, gradually developing a Hebrew humanism of his own. Much influenced by Zionist and Hasidic thinking and formulating a philosophy of dialogue, Buber's Hebrew humanism aspired to reach an existential understanding of the Bible.

The wide-ranging theology fashioned by Buber remains incomplete, with antinomian aspects that are not overcome by traditional elements. Nonetheless, for the insights gained in the attempt, all students of the Bible are grateful.

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