ness as a subjective “I exist” and an objective “the world around me exists” awareness is unattainable as long as the ultimate reality of God is not part of this awareness, the theologians engaged in formal postulating and deducing in an experiential vacuum. Because of this, they exposed themselves to Hume’s and Kant’s biting criticism that logical categories are applicable only within the limits of the human scientific experience.

Does the loving bride in the embrace of her beloved ask for proof that he is alive and real? Must the prayerful soul clinging in passionate love and ecstasy to her Beloved demonstrate that He exists? So asked Soren Kierkegaard sarcastically when told that Anselm of Canterbury, the father of the very abstract and complex ontological proof, spent many days in prayer and supplication that he be presented with rational evidence of the existence of God.

Maimonides’ term וּנְשָׁא (Yeude ba-Torah, 1:1) transcends the bounds of the abstract logos and passes over into the realm of the boundless intimate and impassioned experience where postulate and deduction, discursive knowledge and intuitive thinking, conception and perception, subject and object, are one. Only in paragraph five, after the aboriginal experience of God had been established by him as a firm reality (in paragraph one), does he introduce the Aristotelian cosmological proof of the unmoved mover.

I MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY that only the covenantal community consisting of all three grammatical personae—I, thou, and He—can and does alleviate the passional experience of Adam the second by offering him the opportunity to communicate, indeed to commune with, and to enjoy the genuine friendship of Eve. Within the covenantal community, I said, Adam and Eve participate in the existential experience of being, not merely working, together. The change from a technical utilitarian relationship to a covenantal existential one occurs in the following manner. When God joins the community of man the miracle of revelation takes place in two dimensions: in the transcendental—Deus absconditus emerges suddenly as Deus revelatus—and in the human—homo absconditus sheds his mask and turns into homo revelatus.
second was introduced to Eve by God, who summoned Adam to join Eve in an existential community molded by sacrificial action and suffering, and who Himself became a partner in this community. God is never outside the covenantal community. He joins man and shares in his covenantal existence. Finitude and infinity, temporality and eternity, creator and creature become involved in the same community. They bind themselves together and participate in a unitive existence.*

The element of togetherness of God and man is indispensable for the covenantal community, for the very validity of the covenant rests upon the juridic-Halakhic principle of free negotiation, mutual assumption of duties, and full recognition of the equal rights of both parties concerned with the covenant. Both parties entering a covenantal relationship possess inalienable rights which may only be surrendered by mutual consent. The paradoxical experience of freedom, reciprocity, and “equality” in one’s personal confrontation with God is basic for the understanding of the covenantal faith community.* We meet God in the covenantal community as a comrade and fellow member. Of course, even within the framework of this community, God appears as the leader, teacher, and shepherd. Yet the leader is an integral part of the community, the teacher is inseparable from his pupils, and the shepherd never leaves his flock. They all belong to one group. The covenant draws God into the society of men of faith: “The God before whom my fathers did walk—the God who has been my shepherd all my life.” God was Jacob’s shepherd and companion. The covenantal faith community manifests itself in a threefold personal union: I, thou and He.†

*The strange Aggadic stories about a theoretical Halakhic “controversy” between the Almighty and the Heavenly Academy (רשויות אֱלֹהִים) and about R. Joshua b. Channania’s rejecting a Divine decision which favored a minority opinion over that of the majority are characteristic of the intimate Halakhic-covenantal relationship prevailing between man and God. Vide Bava Mezia 59b and 86a.  
†Vide Leviticus 26:12, Sifra and Rashi.

1. The giving of the law on Mount Sinai was a result of free negotiation between Moses and the people who consented to submit themselves to the Divine Will. The Halakhah treats the Sinai and Moab covenants in categories and terms governing any civil agreement. The Talmudic opinion (Shabbat 88a), that there was coercive action on the part of God during the Sinai revelation, does not refute our thesis. The action to which the Talmud refers was taken after the covenant had been voluntarily
With the sound of the divine voice addressing man by his name, be it Abraham, Moses, or Samuel, God, whom man has sought along the endless trails of the universe, is discovered suddenly as being close to and intimate with man, standing just opposite or beside him. At this meeting—initiated by God—of God and man, the covenantal-prophetic community is established. When man addresses himself to God, calling Him in the informal, friendly tones of “Thou,” the same miracle happens again: God joins man and at this meeting, initiated by man, a new covenantal community is born—the prayer community.

I have termed both communities, the prophetic and the prayerful, covenantal because of a threefold reason. (1) In both communities, a confrontation of God and man takes place. It is quite obvious that the prophecy awareness, which is toto genere different from the mystical experience, can only be interpreted in the unique categories of the covenantal event. The whole idea of prophecy would be fraught with an inner contradiction if man’s approach to God remained indirect and impersonal, expecting nature to mediate between him and his Creator. Only within the covenantal community, which is formed by God descending upon the mount* and man, upon the call of the Lord,

*חָרֵם הַיָּלֶד הַזֶּה: “And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai.”

ascending the mount,* is a direct and personal relationship expressing itself in the prophetic “face-to-face” colloquy established. “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face as man speaketh unto his friend.”†

Prayer likewise is unimaginable without having man stand before and address himself to God in a manner reminiscent of the prophet’s dialogue with God. The cosmic drama, notwithstanding its grandeur and splendor, no matter how distinctly it reflects the image of the Creator and no matter how beautifully it tells His glory, cannot provoke man to prayer. Of course, it may arouse an adoring-ecstatic mood in man; it may even inspire man to raise his voice in a song of praise and thanksgiving. Nevertheless, ecstatic adoration, even if expressed in a hymn, is not prayer. The latter transcends the bounds of liturgical worship and must not be reduced to its external-technical aspects such as praise, thanksgiving, or even petition.

*חָרֵם הַיָּלֶד הַזֶּה: “And the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up.”

†This verse telling us about the prophetic encounter of Moses with God describes the ideal state of prophecy as it was attained by Moses. The Bible itself in another passage contrasts the Mosaic confrontation with God with that of other prophets who failed to reach the same heights and hence experienced the numinous apocalyptic dread and awe. Vide Exodus 33:17; Numbers 12:6, 8; Yevade ha-Torah, VII: 6.
Prayer is basically an awareness of man finding himself in the presence of and addressing himself to his Maker, and to pray has one connotation only: to stand before God.* To be sure, this awareness has been objectified and crystallized in standardized, definitive texts whose recitation is obligatory. 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. However, no matter how important this tendency on the part of the faith commitment is—and it is of enormous significance in the Halakhah, which constantly demands from man that he translate his inner life into external facticity—it remains unalterably true that the very essence of prayer is the covenantal experience of being together with and talking to God and that the concrete performance such as the recita-

*The fact that we commence the recital of the “Eighteen Benedic-
tions” by addressing ourselves to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is indicative of the covenantal relationship which, in the opinion of our sages, lies at the very root of prayer. The fact that prayer is founded upon the covenantal relationship is responsible for the omission of Malkhut (God’s cosmic kinship or sovereignty) from the “Eighteen Benedictions.” In order to avoid misunderstanding, I wish to add that the phrase melekh ba-olam (King of the universe) was eliminated from the basic benediction formula, while the term melekh (King) does appear in several places; vide Tosafot, Berakhot 40b sub נא.

*Vide Berakhot 26b, 33a; Megillah 18a. It is not my intention here
nantal prophecy and prayer blossomed forth the very instant Abraham met God and became involved in a strange colloquy. At a later date, when the mysterious men of this wondrous assembly witnessed the bright summer day of the prophetic community, full of color and sound, turning to a bleak autumnal night of dreadful silence unillumined by the vision of God or made homely by His voice, they refused to acquiesce in this cruel historical reality and would not let the ancient dialogue between God and men come to an end. For the men of the Great Assembly knew that with the withdrawal of the colloquy from the field of consciousness of the Judaic community, the latter would lose the intimate companionship of God and consequently its covenantal status. In prayer they found the salvation of the colloquy, which, they insisted, must go on forever. If God had stopped calling man, they urged, let man call God. And so the covenantal colloquy was shifted from the level of prophecy to that of prayer.

(2) Both the prophetic and the prayerful communities are threefold structures, consisting of all three grammatical personae—I, thou, and He. The


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to investigate the controversy between Maimonides and Nachmanides as to whether the precept of prayer is of Pentateuchic or Rabbinic origin. All agree that statutory standardized prayer was introduced by the men of the Great Assembly.

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prophet in whom God confides and to whom He entrusts His eternal word must always remember that he is the representative of the many anonymous “they” for whom the message is earmarked. No man, however great and noble, is worthy of God’s word if he fancies that the word is his private property not to be shared by others. *

The prayerful community must not, likewise, remain a twofold affair: a transient “I” addressing himself to the eternal “He.” The inclusion of others is indispensable. Man should avoid praying for himself alone. The plural form of prayer is of central Halakhic significance. †When disaster strikes, one must not be immersed completely in his own passionate destiny, thinking exclusively of himself, being concerned only with himself, and petitioning God merely for himself. The foundation of efficacious and noble prayer is human solidarity and sympathy or the covenantal awareness of existential togetherness, of sharing and experiencing the travail and suffering of those for whom

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*The strict Halakhic censure of the prophet who fails to deliver the divine message underscores the public character of prophecy. Vide Sanhedrin 89a. It should be noted that Maimonides speaks also of prophecy confined to the individual; see Ye'sode ha-Torah, VII, 7 and Moreh Nevukhim, II, 37. However, such individual illumination cannot be termed covenantal prophecy.

†Vide Berakhot 12b, Bava Kamma 92a; Shabbat 12b.
majestic Adam the first has no concern. Only Adam the second knows the art of praying since he confronts God with the petition of the many. The fenced-in egocentric and ego-oriented Adam the first is ineligible to join the covenental prayer community of which God is a fellow member. If God abandons His transcendental numinous solitude, He wills man to do likewise and to step out of his isolation and aloneness.* Job did not understand this simple postulate. “And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the “number of them all.”† He did pray, he did offer sacrifices, but only for his household. Job failed to understand the covenental nature of the prayer community in which destinies are dovetailed, suffering or joy is shared, and prayers merge into one petition on behalf of all. As we all know, Job’s sacrifices were not accepted, Job’s prayers remained unheard, and Job—pragmatic Adam the first—met with catastrophe and the whirlwind uprooted him and his household. Only then did he discover the great covenental experience of being together, praying together and for one another. “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.” Not only was Job rewarded with a double measure in material goods, but he also attained a new dimension of existence—the covenental one.

(3) Both communities sprang into existence not only because of a singular experience of having met God, but also and perhaps mainly because of the discovery of the normative kerygma entailed in this very experience. Any encounter with God, if it is to redeem man, must be crystallized and objectified in a normative ethico-moral message. If, however, the encounter is reduced to its non-kerygmatic and non-imperative aspects, no matter how great and magnificent an experience it is, it cannot be classified as a covenental encounter since the very semantics of the term “covenant” implies freely assumed obligations and commitments. In contradistinction to the mystical experience of intuition, illumination, or union which rarely results in the formulation of a practical message, prophecy, which, as I emphasized before, has very little in common with the mystical experience, is inseparable from its normative content. Isaiah, Ezekiel, or other prophets were not led through the habitations of heaven, past the seraphim and angels, to

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*This is the reason underlying the institution of קהל התפילה, the recital of prayers with the congregation, which occupies such a prominent position in the Halakhah.
†Job 1:5. See Bava Kamma 92a.
the hidden recesses where God is enthroned above and beyond everything in order to get the overpowering glimpse of the Absolute, True, and Real, and to bring their individual lives to complete fulfillment. 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. What did Isaiah hear when he beheld God sitting on the throne, high and exalted? “Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for us . . .?’” What did Ezekiel hear when he completed his journey through the heavenly hierarchy to the mysterious sanctuary of God? “And He said unto me: son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me. . . .” The prophet is a messenger carrying the great divine imperative addressed to the covenantal community. “So I turned and came down from the mount. . . . And the two tablets of the covenant were on my two hands.” This terse description by Moses of his noble role as the carrier of the two tablets of stone on which the divine norm was engraved has universal significance appli-
cable to all prophets.* “I will raise them up a prophet . . . and will put my words into his mouth. . . . Whosoever will not hear unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require of him.”

The above-said, which is true of the universal faith community in general, has particular validity for the Halakhic community. The prime purpose of revelation in the opinion of the Halakhah is related to the giving of the Law. The God-man confrontation serves a didactic goal. God involves Himself in the covenantal community through the medium of teaching and instructing. The Halakhah has looked upon God since time immemorial as the teacher par excellence.† This educational task was in turn entrusted to the prophet whose greatest ambition is to teach the covenantal com-

*That every prophecy is normative does not contradict the statement of our sages, that no prophet is allowed to change even the smallest detail of the law (Tosafot Kibbutzim 12b; Temurah 16a; Shabbat 104a; Megillah 3a; Yoma 80a). The adjective “normative” has a dual connotation: first, legislative action; second, exhortatory action. While Moses’s prophecy established a new covenant entailing a new moral code, the prophecies of his followers addressed themselves to the commitment taken on by the covenantal community to realize the covenant in full. Vide Chagigah 10b; Bava Kamma 2b; Niddah 33a; Yesode ha-Torah IX, 1–4.

†There are many allusions in our Aggadah and liturgy to the teaching of Torah as part of God’s “routine.”
not through helping in a humble way to realize the covenantal norm?

Prayer likewise consists not only of an awareness of the presence of God, but of an act of committing oneself to God and accepting His ethico-moral authority.⁷

Who is qualified to engage God in the prayer colloquy? Clearly, the person who is ready to cleanse himself of imperfection and evil. Any kind of injustice, corruption, cruelty, or the like desecrates the very essence of the prayer adventure, since it encases man in an ugly little world into which God is unwilling to enter. If man craves to meet God in prayer, then he must purify himself of all that separates him from God. The Halakhah has never looked upon prayer as a separate magical gesture in which man may engage without integrating it into the total pattern of his life. God hearkens to prayer if it rises from a heart contrite over a muddled and faulty life and from a resolute mind ready to redeem this life. In short, only the committed person is qualified to pray and to meet God. Prayer is always the harbinger of moral reformation.⁸

This is the reason why prayer per se does not occupy as prominent a place in the Halakhic community as it does in other faith communities, and why prayer is not the great religious activity claim-
ing, if not exclusiveness, at least centrality. Prayer must always be related to a prayerful life which is consecrated to the realization of the divine imperative, and as such it is not a separate entity, but the sublime prelude to Halakhic action.

IF THE PROPHECY and prayer colloquy is based upon friendship and solidarity nurtured by the “we” consciousness at the experiential as well as the normative level, as a consciousness of both mutual concern and sympathy and of common commitment and determination to bring the divine imperative to full realization, the reverse is also true—that homo absconditus cannot reveal himself to his fellow man without joining him in covenantal prayer and moral action. In the natural community which knows no prayer, majestic Adam can offer only his accomplishments, not himself. There is certainly even within the framework of the natural community, as the existentialists are wont to say, a dialogue between the “I” and the “thou.” However, this dialogue may only gratify the necessity for communication which urges Adam the first to relate himself to others, since communication for him means information about the surface activity of practical man. Such a dialogue certainly cannot quench the burning thirst for communication in depth of Adam the second, who always will remain a homo absconditus if the majestic logoi of Adam the first should serve as the only medium of expression. What really can this dialogue reveal of the numinous in-depth personality? Nothing! Yes, words are spoken, but these words reflect not the unique and intimate, but the universal and public in man. As homo absconditus, Adam the second is not capable of telling his personal experiential story in majestic formal terms. His emotional life is inseparable from his unique modus existentiae and therefore, if communicated to the “thou” only as a piece of surface information, unintelligible. This story belongs exclusively to Adam the second, it is his and only his, and it would make no sense if disclosed to others. Can a sick person afflicted with a fatal disease tell the “thou,” who happens to be a very dear and close friend, the tale of a horri-stricken mind confronted with the dreadful prospect of death? Can a parent explain to a rebellious child, who rejects everything the parent stands for, his deep-seated love for him? Distress and bliss, joys and frustrations are incommunicable within the framework of the natural dialogue consisting of common words. By the time homo absconditus manages to deliver the message, the personal and intimate content of the latter is already recast in the lingual matrix, which standardizes the unique and universalizes the individual.
If God had not joined the community of Adam and Eve, they would have never been able and would have never cared to make the paradoxical leap over the gap, indeed abyss, separating two individuals whose personal experiential messages are written in a private code undecipherable by anyone else. Without the covenantal experience of the prophetic or prayerful colloquy, Adam absconditus would have persisted in his he-role and Eve abscondita in her she-role, unknown to and distant from each other. Only when God emerged from the transcendent darkness of He-anonymity into the illumined spaces of community knowability and charged man with an ethical and moral mission, did Adam absconditus and Eve abscondita, while revealing themselves to God in prayer and in unqualified commitment, also reveal themselves to each other in sympathy and love on the one hand and in common action on the other. Thus, the final objective of the human quest for redemption was attained; the individual felt relieved from loneliness and isolation. The community of the committed became, ipso facto, a community of friends—not of neighbors or acquaintances. Friendship—not as a social surface-relation but as an existential in-depth-relation between two individuals—is realizable only within the framework of the covenantal community, where in-depth personalities relate themselves to each other ontologically and total commitment to God and fellow man is the order of the day. In the majestic community, in which surface personalities meet and commitment never exceeds the bounds of the utilitarian, we may find collegiality, neighborliness, civility, or courtesy—but not friendship, which is the exclusive experience awarded by God to covenantal man, who is thus redeemed from his agonizing solitude.

LET US GO FURTHER. The existential insecurity of Adam the second stems, to a great extent, also from his tragic role as a temporal being. He simply cannot pinpoint his position within the rushing stream of time. He knows of an endless past which rolled on without him. He is aware also of an endless future which will rush on with no less force long after he will cease to exist. The link between the “before” in which he was not involved and the “after” from which he will be excluded is the present moment, which vanishes before it is experienced. In fact, the whole accidental character of his being is tied up with this frightening time-consciousness. He began to exist at a certain point—the significance of which he cannot grasp—and his existence will end at another equally arbitrary point. Adam the second experiences the transience and evanescence of a “now” existence which
is not warranted either by the "before" or the "after."

Majestic man is not confronted with this time dilemma. The time with which he works and which he knows is quantified, spatialized, and measured, belonging to a cosmic coordinate system. Past and future are not two experiential realities. They just represent two horizontal directions. "Before" and "after" are understandable only within the framework of the causal sequence of events.* Majestic man lives in micro-units of clock time, moving with ease from "now" to "now," completely unaware of a "before" or an "after." Only Adam the second, to whom time is an all-enveloping personal experience, has to cope with the tragic and paradoxical implied in it.

In the covenantal community man of faith finds deliverance from his isolation in the "now," for the latter contains both the "before" and the "after." Every covenantal time experience is both retrospective, reconstructing and reliving the bygone, as well as prospective, anticipating the "about to be."

*It is quite characteristic that Aristotle, the man of science, derived time from motion, while Plotinus, the philosopher-mystic—even though, as a pagan, unaware of the idea of the covenant—reversed the order. Of course, for Aristotle, even though he knows of three kinds of motion, the highest is related mainly to morphological change, the transition from possibility to actuality.

In retrospect, covenantal man re-experiences the rendezvous with God in which the covenant, as a promise, hope, and vision, originated. In prospect, he beholds the full eschatological realization of this covenant, its promise, hope, and vision. Let us not forget that the covenantal community includes the "He" who addresses Himself to man not only from the "now" dimension but also from the supposedly already vanished past, from the ashes of a dead "before" facticity as well as from the as yet unborn future, for all boundaries establishing "before," "now," and "after" disappear when God the Eternal speaks. Within the covenantal community not only contemporary individuals but generations are engaged in a colloquy, and each single experience of time is three-dimensional, manifesting itself in memory, actuality, and anticipatory tension. This experiential triad, translated into moral categories, results in an awesome awareness of responsibility to a great past which handed down the divine imperative to the present generation in trust and confidence and to a mute future expecting this generation to discharge its covenantal duty conscientiously and honorably. The best illustration of such a paradoxical time awareness, which involves the individual in the historic performances of the past and makes him also participate in the dramatic action of an unknown future, can be found in the
Judaic masorah community. The latter represents not only a formal succession within the framework of calendric time but the union of the three grammatical tenses in an all-embracing time experience. The masorah community cuts across the centuries, indeed millennia, of calendric time and unites those who already played their part, delivered their message, acquired fame, and withdrew from the covenantal stage quietly and humbly with those who have not yet been given the opportunity to appear on the covenantal stage and who wait for their turn in the anonymity of the “about to be.”

Thus, the individual member of the covenantal faith community feels rooted in the past and related to the future. The “before” and the “after” are interwoven in his time experience. He is not a hitchhiker suddenly invited to get into a swiftly traveling vehicle which emerged from nowhere and from which he will be dropped into the abyss of timelessness while the vehicle will rush on into parts unknown, continually taking on new passengers and dropping the old ones. Covenantal man begins to find redemption from insecurity and to feel at home in the continuum of time and responsibility which is experienced by him in its endless totality.* מָעוֹלָה וּרְאָתוּלָה, from everlasting even to everlasting. He is no longer an evanescent being. He is rooted in everlasting time, in eternity itself. And so covenantal man confronts not only a transient contemporary “thou” but countless “thou” generations which advance toward him from all sides and engage him in the great colloquy in which God Himself participates with love and joy.

This act of revelation does not avail itself of universal speech, objective logical symbols, or metaphors. The message communicated from Adam to Eve certainly consists of words. However, words do not always have to be identified with sound.* It is rather a soundless revelation accomplished in covenantal and majestic communities overlap. Therefore, it is not surprising that we come across the three-dimensional time experience, which we have presented as typically covenantal, in the majestic community as well. The historical community rests, in fact, upon this peculiar time experience. What is historical belonging if not the acceptance of the past as a reality to which one is indebted and the anticipation of a future to which one is responsible? Historical action is never confined to the “now.” It crosses the frontiers of perceptible time and relates itself to a unitary experience of time embracing the “before” and the “after.” If the stream of time be broken down into micro-units, there would be no place for history. Living in history means experiencing the total drama of history stretching across calendric time. This peculiarity of the historical experience was known to E. Burke and E. Renan. However, this time awareness was borrowed by majestic history from covenantal history.

* In reality there are no pure typological structures and hence the

* זָמִי in Hebrew means both to say and to think.
muteness and in the stillness of the covenantal community when God responds to the prayerful outcry of lonely man and agrees to meet him as brother and friend, while man, in turn, assumes the great burden which is the price he pays for his encounter with God.

1. The popular Biblical term tefillah (prayer) and the esoteric Halakhic term avodah zehav (service of the heart) refer to an inner activity, to a state of mind. Kavvanah (intention), related to prayer, is, unlike the kavvanah concerning other mitzvah (good-deed) performances, not an extraneous addendum but the very core of prayer. The whole Halakhic controversy about kavvanah vis-à-vis other mitzvot has no relevance to prayer. There is not a single opinion that the latter can be divorced from kavvanah. Moreover, the substance of the kavvanah as far as prayer is concerned differs fundamentally from that which some require during the performance of other mitzvot. While the former denotes a state of mind, an all-embracing awareness of standing before the Almighty, the latter manifests itself only in the normative intention on the part of the mitzvah-doer to act in accordance with the will of God. Kavvanah in both cases, of course, expresses direction or aiming. However, in prayer one must direct his whole self toward God whereas in the case of other mitzvot the directing is confined to a single act. Vide Berakhot 28b, 30a-b, 32b, 33a; Sanhedrin 22a; Maimonides, Hilkbob Tefillah, IV, 16; V, 4. The fact that kavvanah is indispensable only for the first benediction of the Silent Prayer does not contradict our premise. The Halakhah simply took into consideration human weakness and inability to immerse in the covenantal awareness for a long time and, in sympathy with the worshiper who is incapable of sustaining a continuous contemplative mood, related the initial kavvanah to the entire Tefillah. Vide Berakhot 34b and Chidushe R. Hayyim Halevi, Tefillah, IV, 1.

2. The Halakhic requirements of בָּשָׂם, that the recitation of Shema with its benedictions be joined to the recital of Tefillah, the “Eighteen Benedictions,” is indicative of this idea. One has no right to appear before the Almighty without accepting previously all the covenantal commitments implied in the three sections of Shema. Vide Berakhot 9b and 29b. Both explanations in Rashi, Berakhot 4b, actually express the same idea. Vide Berakhot 14b and 15a, where it is stated that the reading of Shema and the prayers is an integrated act of accepting the Kingdom of Heaven in the most complete manner. It should nevertheless be pointed out that the awareness required by the Halakhah during the recital of the first verse of Shema and that which accompanies the act of praying (the recital of the first benediction) are related to two different ideas. During the recital of Shema man ideally feels totally committed to God and his awareness is related to a normative end, assigning to man ontological legitimacy and worth as an ethical being whom God charged with a great mission and who is conscious of his freedom either to succeed or to fail in that mission. On the other hand, the awareness which comes with prayer is rooted in man’s experiencing his “creatureliness” (to use a term coined by Rudolf Otto) and the absurdity embedded in his own existence. In contrast to the Shema awareness, the Tefillah awareness negates the legitimacy and worth of human existence. Man, as a slave of God, is completely dependent upon Him. Man enjoys no freedom. “Behold, as the eyes of servants unto the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look unto the Lord our God until He be gracious unto us.”

When the Talmud (Berakhot 14b and 15a) speaks of בָּשָׂם the unitary acceptance of the Kingdom of God, it refers to the two awarenesses which, notwithstanding their antithetic character, merge into one comprehensive awareness of man who is at the same time the free messenger of God and His captive as well.

However, whether the awareness of prayer per se is, from a Halakhic viewpoint, to be construed as בָּשָׂם, as an act
of acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven, is discussed in another passage; see Berakhot 21a and Rashi there.

3. The interrelatedness of prayer, moral life, and repentance was emphasized already in Solomon's prayer, I Kings 8:34-51; II Chronicles 7:16-40. See also Exodus Rabba, XXII:3: "Just as they purified their hearts and uttered Song . . . so must a man purify his heart and then pray . . . . This is what Job said: 'Although there is no violence in my hands and my prayer is pure' (15:7). Rabbi Joshua the priest the son of R. Nechemiah said: 'Is there, then, an impure prayer? No; but he who prays unto God with hands soiled from violence is not answered. . . .' Rabbi Chama b. Chanina said 'whence do we know that the prayer of one who has committed violence is impure? Because it says, "And when you spread forth your hands . . . . I will not hear because your hands are full of blood." Whence do we know that the prayer of him who removes himself from violence is pure? Because it says . . . .' "; Saadya, Emunot Ve-Devarot, V:6. Also Maimonides, discussing the precept of prayer during times of crisis, says in unequivocal terms that prayer is only the medium through which man may normally rehabilitate himself, although with regard to daily prayer he omitted mention of this relationship. Vide Talmud, I, 1-3; Tefillah, IV. It is worthy of note that there is a double discrepancy between the Talmud (Berakhot 32b) and the above-quoted Midrash. The Talmud confined the verse of Isaiah 1:15 to the sin of murder which disqualifies the priest from imparting the priestly blessing. The Midrash extended it to all kinds of violence (embezzlement or other corrupt practices) and barred not only priests from blessing the community but all people from prayer.

In my opinion, the discrepancy is only a single one, pertaining to the meaning of the phrase "your hands are full of blood," whether it be limited to murder or extended to all acts of dishonesty and corruption. However, there is no contradiction between the two interpretations as far as extending the applicability of the verse to Tefillah; nor could there be, since, in the latter part of the verse, Isaiah himself explicitly mentions Tefillah—

"Yea, when ye make prayers, I will not hear." However, the Talmud and the Midrash treated the verse of Isaiah at two different levels. While the Talmud speaks in formal Halakhic categories, the Midrash places it in a metaphysico-moral perspective. The Talmud treats the problem of disqualification; whoever committed murder forfeits the priestly prerogative and right to bless the people. In Halakhic terms, I would say that murder results in a דא ידע ידע, in the emergence of a personal inadequacy. Indeed, in Maimonides' view, it is not the moral culpability for the sin of murder but the bare fact of being the agent and instrument of murder which causes this disqualification. Hence, the disqualification persists even after the murderer has repented, vide Tefillah, XV, 3, and Tosafot, Menachot 109a. Such a disqualification is inapplicable to prayer. The privilege and right of prayer cannot be denied to anyone, not even to the most wicked. The Psalmist already stated that everyone is admitted to the realm of prayer: "O Thou who hearkenest to prayer; unto Thee doth all flesh come." (Even drunkenness does not disqualify the person, but nullifies the act of prayer because of the lack of הכהנה; see Maimonides, Tefillah 4, 17.) In fact, the Midrash never stated that a sinner has been stripped of the privilege of prayer. It only emphasized that prayer requires a clean heart and that the prayer of a sinful person is imperfect. The Midrash employs the terms טביה וטוב העו וה الثنיא ורע, which denote pure and impure prayer. Maimonides quoted the Midrash not in the section on Tefillah, which deals with the Halakhic requirements of prayer, but in that of משעה, which deals with the metaphysical as well as the Halakhic aspects of repentance, where he says distinctly that the immoral person's prayer is not fully acceptable to God—ממש הולך וממש משוער: "He petitions and is not answered, as it is written, 'Yea, even ye make many prayers I will not hear.' As a matter of fact, Maimonides extended the requirement for moral excellence to all משוער performances—משוער שמיע שכとにי חואין: "He performs mishvor and they are thrown back in his face." It is of course self-evident that the imperfection inherent in the deed does not completely nullify the objective worth
of the deed. Maimonides' statement at the end of Tefillah "that you do not prevent the wicked person from doing a good deed" is not only Halakhically but also psychologically relevant. We let the sinful priest, as long as he has not committed murder or apostasy, impart his blessings to the congregation. Likewise, we encourage the sinner to pray even though he is not ready yet for repentance and moral regeneration, because any mitzvah performance, be it prayer, be it another moral act, has a cleansing effect upon the doer and may influence his life and bring about a complete change in his personality. Vide also, Introduction to Beth Halevi on Genesis and Exodus.

In Saadya's enumeration of the reasons which prevent prayer from being accepted we find a mixture of Halakhic and metaphysical considerations. The first reason for the rejection of prayer is of a purely metaphysical nature: one's prayer is not answered if it is offered "after the decree was issued against" the person. As an illustration, Saadya introduces the case of Moses beseeching the Lord to allow him to cross the Jordan and not being answered. On the other hand, the second reason—the lack of sincere intention—is Halakhic. It is, therefore, hard to determine whether the five reasons which are related to moral impurity are classified as Halakhic or metaphysical deterrents to prayer.

HAVING ARRIVED at this point, we begin to see the lines of the destiny of the man of faith converge. The man of faith, as we explained previously, is lonely because of his being himself exclusively and not having a comrade, a "duplicate I." The man of faith, we further brought out, finds redemption in the covenantal faith community by dovetailing his accidental existence with the necessary infinite existence of the Great True Real Self. There, we pointed out, homo absconditus turns into homo revelatus vis-à-vis God and man as well.

However, the element of the tragic is not fully eliminated from the destiny of the man of faith even after joining the covenantal community. We said at the very beginning of this essay that the loneliness of the man of faith is an integral part of
his destiny from which he can never be completely liberated. The dialectical awareness, the steady oscillating between the majestic natural community and the covenantal faith community renders the act of complete redemption unrealizable. The man of faith, in his continuous movement between the pole of natural majesty and that of covenantal humility, is prevented from totally immersing in the immediate covenantal awareness of the redeeming presence, knowability, and involvement of God in the community of man. From time to time the man of faith is thrown into the majestic community where the colloquy as well as the covenantal consciousness are swept away. He suddenly finds himself revolving around the cosmic center, now and then catching a glimpse of the Creator who hides behind the boundless drama of creation. To be sure, this alternation of cosmic and covenantal involvement is not one of “light and shade,” enhanced activity and fatigue, as the mystics are accustomed to call their alternating experiences, but represents two kinds of creative and spontaneous activity, both willed and sanctioned by God.*

*Man’s dialectical seesawing between the cosmic and the covenantal experience of God is reflected in the benediction formula in which we address God in both the second and third person. See Nachmanides, Exodus 15:26, and R. Shlomo b. Adar et, Responsa, V, 52. To be sure, the mingling of grammatical persons is quite normal in Hebrew syntax. In this case, however, our medieval scholars attributed particular philosophical significance to the change.

Let us not forget that the majestic community is willed by God as much as the covenantal faith community. He wants man to engage in the pursuit of majesty-dignity as well as redemptiveness. He summoned man to retreat from peripheral, hard-won positions of vantage and power to the center of the faith experience. He also commanded man to advance from the covenantal center to the cosmic periphery and recapture the positions he gave up a while ago. He authorized man to quest for “sovereignty”; He also told man to surrender and be totally committed. He enabled man to interpret the world in functional, empirical “how” categories to explain, for instance, the sequence of phenomena in terms of transience and mechanical causality and a quantified-spatialized, basically (if not for the law of entropy) reversible time, suitable to the human majestic role. Simultaneously, He also requires of man to forget his functional and bold approach, to stand in humility and dread before the mysterium magnum surrounding him, to interpret the world in categories of purposive activity instead of those of mechanical facticity, and to substitute time, wedded to eternity, stretching from archē to eschatos, for uniform, measured clock-time.

On the one hand, the Bible commands man, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy
might," a performance of which only covenantal man is capable since he alone possesses the talent for complete concentration upon and immersion in the focus without being distracted by peripheral interests, anxieties, and problems. On the other hand, the same Bible which just enjoined man to withdraw from the periphery to the center commands him to return to the majestic community which, preoccupied with peripheral interests, anxieties, and problems, builds, plants, harvests, regulates rivers, heals the sick, participates in state affairs, is imaginative in dreaming, bold in planning, daring in undertaking and is out to "conquer" the world. With what simplicity, not paying the least attention to the staggering dialectic implied in such an approach, the Bible speaks of an existence this-worldly centered—"When thou buildest a new home; when thou cuttest down thine harvest; when thou comest into thy neighbor's vineyard"—yet theo-oriented and unqualifiedly committed to an eternal purpose! If one would inquire of me about the teleology of the Halakhah, I would tell him that it manifests itself exactly in the paradoxical yet magnificent dialectic which underlies the Halakhic gesture. When man gives himself to the covenantal community the Halakhah reminds him that he is also wanted and needed in another community, the cosmic-majestic, and when it comes across man while he is involved in the creative enterprise of the majestic community, it does not let him forget that he is a covenantal being who will never find self-fulfillment outside of the covenant and that God awaits his return to the covenantal community.* I would also add, in reply to such a question, that many a time I have the distinct impression that the Halakhah considered the steady oscillating of the man of faith between majesty and covenant not as a dialectical but rather as a complementary movement. The majestic gesture of the man of faith, I am inclined to think, is looked upon by the Halakhah not as contradictory to the covenantal encounter but rather as the reflex action which is caused by this encounter when man feels the gentle touch of God's hand upon his shoulder and the covenantal invitation to join God is extended to him. I am prompted to draw this

*Not only Halakhic teleology but also positive Halakhic thinking is dialectical. The latter follows the rules of an N-valued logic rather than those of a two-valued logic. Positive Halakhah has never honored the sacrosanct classical principle of the excluded middle or that of contradiction. Quite often it has predicated of x that it is neither a nor b or that it is both a and b at the same time.

It is worth mentioning that it took scientific thinking a very long time to make the discovery that the complex cosmic occurrence does not lend itself to a two-valued logical interpretation. [The role of multivalued logic in Halakhah is discussed by Rabbi Soloveitchik in The Halakhic Mind (New York: Free Press, 1986).]
remarkable inference from the fact that the Halakhah has a monistic approach to reality and has unreservedly rejected any kind of dualism. The Halakhah believes that there is only one world—not divisible into secular and hallowed sectors—which can either plunge into ugliness and hatefulness, or be roused to meaningful, redeeming activity, gathering up all latent powers into a state of holiness. Accordingly, the task of covenantal man is to be engaged not in dialectical surging forward and retreating, but in uniting the two communities into one community where man is both the creative, free agent, and the obedient servant of God. Notwithstanding the huge disparity between these two communities, which expresses itself in the typological oppositions and conflicts described previously, the Halakhah sees in the ethico-moral norm a unifying force. The norm which originates in the covenantal community addresses itself almost exclusively to the majestic community where its realization takes place. To use a metaphor, I would say that the norm in the opinion of the Halakhah is the tentacle by which the covenant, like the ivy, attaches itself to and spreads over the world of majesty.¹

THE BIBLICAL DIALECTIC stems from the fact that Adam the first, majestic man of dominion and success, and Adam the second, the lonely man of faith, obedience, and defeat, are not two different people locked in an external confrontation as an “I” opposite a “thou,” but one person who is involved in self-confrontation. “I,” Adam the first, confront the “I,” Adam the second. In every one of us abide two personae—the creative, majestic Adam the first, and the submissive, humble Adam the second. As we portrayed them typologically, their views are not commensurate; their methods are different, their modes of thinking, distinct, the categories in which they interpret themselves and their environment, incongruous. Yet, no matter how far-reaching the cleavage, each of us must willy-nilly identify himself with the whole of an all-inclusive human personality, charged with responsibility as both a majestic and a covenantal being. God created two Adams and sanctioned both. Rejection of either aspect of humanity would be tantamount to an act of disapproval of the divine scheme of creation which was approved by God as being very good. As a matter of fact, men of faith have accepted Adam the first a long time ago. Notwithstanding the fact that Adam the second is the bearer of a unique commitment, he remains also a man of majesty who is inspired by the joyous spirit of creativity and constructive adventure.*

*I hardly believe that any responsible man of faith, who is verily
SINCE THE DIALECTICAL ROLE has been assigned to man by God, it is God who wants the man of faith to oscillate between the faith community and the community of majesty, between being confronted by God in the cosmos and the intimate, immediate apprehension of God through the covenant, and who therefore willed that complete human redemption be unattainable.

Had God placed Adam in the majestic community only, then Adam would, as it was stated before, never be aware of existential loneliness. The sole problem would then be that of aloneness—one that majestic Adam could resolve. Had God, vice versa, thrust Adam into the covenantal community exclusively, then he would be beset by the passionate experience of existential loneliness and also provided with the means of finding redemption from this experience through his covenantal relation to God and to his fellow man. However, God, in His inscrutable wisdom, has decreed differ-

ently. Man discovers his loneliness in the covenantal community, and before he is given a chance to climb up to the high level of a complete covenantal, revealed existence, dedicated in faith to God and in sympathy to man, man of faith is pushed into a new community where he is told to lead an expanded surface existence rather than a covenantal, concentrated in-depth existence. Because of this onward movement from center to center, man does not feel at home in any community. He is commanded to move on before he manages to strike roots in either of these communities and so the ontological loneliness of man of faith persists. Verily, “A straying Aramean was my father.”

*Jewish eschatology beholds the great vision of a united majestic-covenantal community in which all oppositions will be reconciled and absolute harmony will prevail. When Zechariah proclaimed “the Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be one and His name one,” he referred not to the unity of God, which is absolute and perfect even now, but to the future unity of creation, which is currently torn asunder by inner contradictions. On that distant day the dialectical process will come to a close and man of faith as well as majestic man will achieve full redemption in a united world.

1. Vide Berakhot 35b; Shabbat 33b. Maimonides distinguishes between two kinds of dialect: (1) the constant oscillating between the majestic and the covenantal community; (2) the simultaneous involvement in both communities, which is the highest form of
dialectical existence and which, according to Maimonides, only Moses and the Patriarchs achieved. See Yeude ha-Torah VII, 6: "Hence it may be inferred that all prophets when the prophetic power left them returned to their tents, that they attended to the satisfaction of their physical needs. Moses, our teacher, never went back to his former tent. He, accordingly, permanently separated himself from his wife, and abstained from similar gratifications. His mind was closely attached to the Rock of the Universe. . . . " This, however, is not to be interpreted as if Moses had abandoned the majestic community. After all, Moses dedicated his life to the fashioning of a majestic-covenantal community bent on conquest and political-economic normalcy on the one hand, and the realization of the covenantal kerygma on the other.

Maimonides is more explicit in the Moreh, III, 51 where he portrays the routine of the Patriarchs who, like Moses, achieved the highest form of dialectical existence and resided in both communities concurrently. "The Patriarchs likewise attained this degree of perfection. . . . When we therefore find them also engaged in ruling others, in increasing their property and endeavoring to obtain possession of wealth and honor, we see in this fact a proof that when they were occupied in these things their bodily limbs were at work while their heart and mind never moved away from the name of God. . . . " In other words, the Patriarchs were builders of society, sociable and gregarious. They made friends with whom they participated in the majestic endeavor. However, axiologically, they valued only one involvement: their covenantal friendship with God. The perfect dialectic expresses itself in a plurality of creative gestures and, at the same time, in axiological monoideism.

The concluding paragraphs of Hilkhot Shemita and Yovel should be interpreted in a similar vein. Cf. Nefesh ha-Chayyim, II, 11.

The unqualified acceptance of the world of majesty by the Halakhah expresses itself in its natural and inevitable involvement in every sector of human majestic endeavor. There is not a single theoretical or technological discovery, from psychological insights into the human personality to man's attempts to reach out among the planets, with which the Halakhah is not concerned. New Halakhic problems arise with every new scientific discovery. As a matter of fact, at present, in order to render precise Halakhic decisions in many fields of human endeavor, one must possess, besides excellent Halakhic training, a good working knowledge in those secular fields in which the problem occurs.

This acceptance, easily proven in regard to the total majestic gesture, is most pronounced in the Halakhah's relationship to scientific medicine and the art of healing. The latter has always been considered by the Halakhah as a great and noble occupation. Unlike other faith communities, the Halakhic community has never been troubled by the problem of human interference, on the part of the physician and patient, with God's will. On the contrary, argues the Halakhah, God wants man to fight evil bravely and to mobilize all his intellectual and technological ingenuity in order to defeat it. The conquest of disease is the sacred duty of the man of majesty, and he must not shirk it. From the Biblical phrase "Only he shall pay for the loss of his time and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed" (Exodus 21:18), through the Talmudic period in which scientific medicine was considered authoritative in situations in which the saving of a human life, אֶפְשָׁר הַחָּלָה, requires the suspension of the religious law, to the Judeo-Spanish tradition of combining Halakhic scholarship with medical skill, the Halakhah remained steadfast in its loyalty to scientific medicine. It has never ceased to emphasize the duty of the sick person to consult a competent physician. The statement quoted in both the Tur and Karo's Shulchan Aruch, אַלּלְקָרָה אַלַּלְקָרָה אַלַּלְקָרָה אַלַּלְקָרָה, "And if he refrains [from consulting a physician], it is as if he shed his own blood," which can be traced indirectly to a Talmudic passage, is a cornerstone of Halakhic thinking. Vide Yoma 82a, 82b, 83a; Kiddushin 82a; Rashi sub כְּדַשְׁלָא; Pesahim 56a, Tosafot sub מִלְחַמָּה; Tur Yoreh Deah 356; Bayit-Chadash sub תַּבְיִיט. See also Psachin 50a, Rashi and Maimonides' Commentary.

Nachmanides' observation in Leviticus 26:11 refers to an ideal state of the covenantal community enjoying unlimited divine grace.
and has no application, therefore, to the imperfect state of affairs of the ordinary world.

The passage in II Chronicles 16:12: “yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to physicians” referred to priest-doctors who employed pagan rites and magic in order to “heal” the sick.

The doctrine of faith in God’s charity, ḥesed, is not to be equated with the folly of the mystical doctrine of quietism, which in its extreme form exempts man from his duty of attending to his own needs and lets him wait in “holy” idleness and indifference for God’s intervention. This kind of repose is wholly contrary to the repose which the Halakhah recommends: the one which follows human effort and remedial action. Man must first use his own skill and try to help himself as much as possible. Then, and only then, man may find repose and quietude in God and be confident that his effort and action will be crowned with success. The initiative, says the Halakhah, belongs to man; the successful realization, to God.

Certainly, “except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it,” but if those who labor stop building, there will be no house. The Lord wants man to undertake the task which He, in His infinite grace, completes.

WHILE THE ontological loneliness of the man of faith is due to a God-made and willed situation and is, as part of his destiny, a wholesome and integrating experience, the special kind of loneliness of contemporary man of faith referred to at the beginning of this essay is of a social nature due to a manmade historical situation and is, hence, an unwholesome and frustrating experience.

Let me diagnose the situation in a few terse sentences. Contemporary Adam the first, extremely successful in his cosmic-majestic enterprise, refuses to pay earnest heed to the duality in man and tries to deny the undeniable, that another Adam exists beside or, rather, in him. By rejecting Adam the second, contemporary man, eo ipso, dismisses the covenantal faith community as some-
thing superfluous and obsolete. To clear up any misunderstanding on the part of my audience, I wish to note that I am not concerned in this essay with the vulgar and illiterate atheism professed and propagated in the most ugly fashion by a natural-political community which denies the unique transcendental worth of the human personality. I am referring rather to Western man who is affiliated with organized religion and is a generous supporter of its institutions. He stands today in danger of losing his dialectical awareness and of abandoning completely the metaphysical polarity implanted in man as a member of both the majestic and the covenantal community. Somehow, man of majesty considers the dialectical awareness too great a burden, interfering with his pursuit of happiness and success, and is, therefore, ready to cast it off.

LET US TRY to describe in brief the philosophy by which successful Western man is guided in his appraisal of his transcendental commitment.

I said a while ago that I am speaking of Western man who belongs and extends help to some religious establishment. Nevertheless, no matter how conscientious and devoted a fellow member he is, he belongs not to a covenantal faith community but to a religious community. The two communities are as far apart as the two Adams. While the covenantal faith community is governed, as I emphasized, by a desire for a redeemed existence, the religious community is dedicated to the attainment of dignity and success and is—along with the whole gamut of communities such as the political, the scientific, the artistic—a creation of Adam the first, all conforming to the same sociological structural patterns. The religious community is, therefore, also a work community consisting of two grammatical personae not including the Third Person. The prime purpose is the successful furtherance of the interests, not the deepening and enhancing of the commitments, of man who values religion in terms of its usefulness to him and considers the religious act a medium through which he may increase his happiness. This assumption on the part of majestic man about the role of religion is not completely wrong, if only, as I shall explain, he would recognize also the non-pragmatic aspects of religion. Faith is indeed relevant to man not only metaphysically but also practically. It gives his life, even at the secular mundane level, a new existential dimension. Certain aspects of the doctrinal and normative covenantal kerygma of faith are of utmost importance to majestic man and are, in a paradoxical way, translatable into the latter’s vernacular. It is very certain and self-evident that Adam the first cannot succeed completely
in his efforts to attain majesty-dignity without having the man of faith contribute his share. The cultural edifice whose great architect Adam the first is would be built on shifting sands if he sought to conceal from himself and from others the fact that he alone cannot implement the mandate of majesty-dignity entrusted to him by God and that he must petition Adam the second for help. To be sure, man can build spaceships capable of reaching other planets without addressing himself to the mystery of faith and without being awakened to an enhanced, inspired life which reflects the covenantal truth. He certainly can triumph to a limited degree over the elemental forces of nature without crossing the frontiers of here-and-now sense-facticity. The Tower of Babel can be built high and mighty without beholding and acknowledging the great verity that Heaven is yet higher. However, the idea of majesty which Adam the first is striving to realize embraces much more than the mere building of machines, no matter how complex and efficacious. Successful man wants to be a sovereign not only in the physical but also in the spiritual world. He is questing not only for material success, but for ideological and axiological achievements as well. He is concerned with a philosophy of nature and man, of matter and mind, of things and ideas.

Adam the first is not only a creative mind,
troubles the meditating mind of Adam the first, will remain a mystery as long as he will not admit that these two parallel lines of thought and facticity converge in infinity within the True, Real Self. In like manner, the worth and validity of the ethical norm, if it is born of the finite creative-social gesture of Adam the first, cannot be upheld. Only the sanctioning by a higher moral will is capable of lending to the norm fixity, permanence, and worth. Likewise, majestic man is quite often in need of the redemptive and therapeutic powers inherent in the act of believing which, in times of crisis, may give aid and comfort to the distressed mind. In similar fashion, the aesthetic experience to which contemporary man abandons himself with almost mystical ecstasy remains incomplete as long as beauty does not rise to sublimity and remains unredeemed. However, redemption is a covenantal category and the sublime is inseparable from the exalted. And how can majestic man be confronted with redeemed beauty in which the exalted is reflected if he is enclosed in a dreary mechanical world from which he has neither strength nor courage to free himself? In short, the message of faith, if translated into cultural categories, fits into the axiological and philosophical frame of reference of the creative cultural consciousness and is pertinent even to secular man.

For good reason did the thinkers throughout the centuries speak of philosophical religion which emanates from the deep recesses of the human personality. They knew very well that the human, creative, cultural gesture is incomplete if it does not relate itself to a higher modus existentiae. No wonder that the Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophies, scientific and empirical as they are, let the creative cultural consciousness pick out from the flow of transient impressions, abstract constructs, and ideas those bits that point toward the infinite and eternal. From these elements they tried to construct a pure, rational religious awareness in order to endow the whole creative gesture with intrinsic worth and with ultimate and unconditioned validity.* Since majestic man is in need of a transcendent experience in order to strengthen his cultural edifice, it is the duty of the man of

*According to Kant, the need for a rational metaphysics is constantly reasserted by the pure reason even though the latter cannot gratify this need. However, what the pure reason cannot achieve is accomplished by the practical reason or the moral will which is an integral part of the free, creative cultural consciousness. The three postulates of the moral will—freedom, God, and immortality—have very little in common with the covenantal doctrine pertaining to these postulates. They are pure, rational ideas which make the ethical performance meaningful. In other words, the need for religion is part of the all-inclusive human need for cultural self-expression.
faith to provide him with some component parts of this experience. God would not have implanted the necessity in majestic man for such spiritual perceptions and ideas if He had not at the same time endowed the man of faith with the skill of converting some of his apocalyptic experiences—which are meta-logical and nonhedonic—into a system of values and verities comprehensible to majestic man, the experimenter, aesthete, and, above all, the creative mind.

AT THIS POINT, however, the crisis in the relations between man of faith and majestic man begins to develop. If the job of translating faith mysteries into cultural aspects could be fully accomplished, then contemporary man of faith could free himself, if not from the ontological awareness which is perennial, then, at least, from the peculiar feeling of psychological loneliness and anguish which is due to his historical confrontation with the man of culture. The man of faith would, if this illusion came true, be at peace with the man of culture so that the latter would fully understand the significance of human dialectics, and a perfect harmonious relationship would prevail between both Adams.*

*The idea that certain aspects of faith are translatable into pragmatic terms is not new. The Bible has already pointed out that the observance of the Divine Law and obedience to God lead man to worldly happiness, to a respectable, pleasant, and meaningful life. Religious pragmatism has a place within the perspective of the man of faith.
commitment. The intellect does not chart the course of the man of faith; its role is an *a posteriori* one. It attempts, *ex post facto*, to retrace the footsteps of the man of faith, and even in this modest attempt the intellect is not completely successful. Of course, as long as the path of the man of faith cuts across the territory of the reasonable, the intellect may follow him and identify his footsteps. The very instant, however, the man of faith transcends the frontiers of the reasonable and enters into the realm of the unreasonable, the intellect is left behind and must terminate its search for understanding. The man of faith animated by his great experience is able to reach the point at which not only his logic of the mind but even his logic of the heart and of the will, everything—even his own “I” awareness—has to give in to an “absurd” commitment. The man of faith is “insanely” committed to and “madly” in love with God.¹

“Stay ye me with dainties, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick.”*  

*Vide Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah*, X, 3. “What is the love of God that is befitting? It is to love the Eternal with a great and exceeding love, so strong that one’s soul shall be knit up with the love of God, and one should be continually enraptured by it, like a lovesick individual whose mind is at no time free from its passion. . . .”

THE UNTRANSLATABILITY of the complete faith experience is due not to the weakness, but to the greatness of the latter.

If an all-embracing translation of the great mystery of revelation and its *kerygma* were possible, then the uniqueness of the faith experience and its commitments would be lost. Only peripheral elements of the act of faith can be projected on a cognitive, pragmatic background. Prayer, for instance, might appeal to majestic man as the most uplifting, integrating, and purifying act, arousing the finest and noblest emotions, yet these characteristics, however essential to Adam the first, are of marginal interest to Adam the second, who experiences prayer as the awesome confrontation of God and man, as the great paradox of man conversing with God as an equal fellow member of the covenantal society, and at the same time being aware that he fully belongs to God and that God demands complete surrender and self-sacrifice.

There is, of course, an amazing parallelism between the cultural experience and the apocalyptic one. Yet, I repeat, no matter how impressive the similarities are, the act of faith is unique and cannot be fully translated into cultural categories.

In a word, the message of translated religion is not the only one which the man of faith must
address to majestic man of culture. Besides this message, man of faith must bring to the attention of man of culture the *kerygma* of original faith in all its singularity and pristine purity, in spite of the incompatibility of this message with the fundamental credo of a utilitarian society. How staggering this incompatibility is! This unique message speaks of defeat instead of success, of accepting a higher will instead of commanding, of giving instead of conquering, of retreating instead of advancing, of acting “irrationally” instead of being always reasonable. Here the tragic event occurs. Contemporary majestic man rejects his dialectical assignment and, with it, the man of faith.

The situation has deteriorated considerably in this century, which has witnessed the greatest triumphs of majestic man in his drive for conquest. Majestic Adam has developed a demonic quality: laying claim to unlimited power—alas, to infinity itself. His pride is almost boundless, his imagination arrogant, and he aspires to complete and absolute control of everything. Indeed, like the men of old, he is engaged in constructing a tower whose apex should pierce Heaven. He is intoxicated with his own adventures and victories and is bidding for unrestricted dominion. In order to avoid misinterpretation, let me say that I am not referring here to man’s daring experiments in space. From a religious point of view, as I said before, they are quite legitimate and in compliance with the divine testament given to Adam the first that he should rule nature. When I say that modern man is projecting a demonic image, I am thinking of man’s attempt to dominate himself, or, to be more precise, of Adam the first’s desire to identify himself with the total human personality, declaring his creative talents as ultimate, ignoring completely Adam the second and his preoccupation with the unique and strange transcendental experience which resists subservience to the cultural interests of majestic man. Notwithstanding the fact that Western man is in a nostalgic mood, he is determined not to accept the dialectical burden of humanity. He certainly feels spiritually uprooted, emotionally disillusioned, and, like the old king of Ecclesiastes, is aware of his own tragedy. Yet this pensive mood does not arouse him to heroic action. He, of course, comes to a place of worship. He attends lectures on religion and appreciates the ceremonial, yet he is searching not for a faith in all its singularity and otherness, but for religious culture. He seeks not the greatness found in sacrificial action but the convenience one discovers in a comfortable, serene state of mind. He is desirous of an aesthetic experience rather than a covenantal one, of a social ethos rather than a divine imperative. In
a word, he wants to find in faith that which he cannot find in his laboratory, or in the privacy of his luxurious home. His efforts are noble, yet he is not ready for a genuine faith experience which requires the giving of one’s self unreservedly to God, who demands unconditional commitment, sacrificial action, and retreat. Western man diabolically insists on being successful. Alas, he wants to be successful even in his adventure with God. If he gives of himself to God, he expects reciprocity. He also reaches a covenant with God, but this covenant is a mercantile one. In a primitive manner, he wants to trade “favors” and exchange goods. The gesture of faith for him is a give-and-take affair and reflects the philosophy of Job which led to catastrophe—a philosophy which sees faith as a quid pro quo arrangement and expects compensation for each sacrifice one offers. Therefore, modern man puts up demands that faith adapt itself to the mood and temper of modern times. He does not discriminate between translated religion formulated in cultural categories—which are certainly fluid since they have been evolved by the human creative consciousness—and the pure faith commitment which is as unchangeable as eternity itself. Certainly, when the man of faith interprets his transcendental awareness in cultural categories, he takes advantage of modern interpretive methods and is selective in picking his categories. The cultural message of faith changes, indeed, constantly, with the flow of time, the shifting of the spiritual climate, the fluctuations of axiological moods, and the rise of social needs. However, the act of faith itself is unchangeable, for it transcends the bounds of time and space. Faith is born of the intrusion of eternity upon temporality. Its essence is characterized by fixity and enduring identity. Faith is experienced not as a product of some emergent evolutionary process, or as something which has been brought into existence by man’s creative cultural gesture, but as something which was given to man when the latter was overpowered by God. Its prime goal is redemption from the inadequacies of finitude and, mainly, from the flux of temporality. Unfortunately, modern Adam the first refuses to accept this unique message, which would cause him to become involved in the dialectical movement, and he clings instead zealously to his role as majestic man exclusively, demanding the surrender of faith to his transient interests. In his demonic quest for dominion, he forgets that relativization of faith, doctrine, and norm will inflict untold harm upon him and his majestic interests. He fails to realize that the reality of the power of faith, which may set modern man free from anxiety and neurotic complexes and help him plan the strategy
of invincible majestic living, can only be experienced if the faith gesture is left alone, outside of the fleeting stream of socio-cultural metamorphoses and tolerated as something stable and immutable. If the faith gesture should be cut loose from its own absolute moorings and allowed to float upon the mighty waters of historical change, then it will forfeit its redemptive and therapeutic qualities.

It is here that the dialogue between the man of faith and the man of culture comes to an end. Modern Adam the second, as soon as he finishes translating religion into the cultural vernacular and begins to talk the “foreign” language of faith, finds himself lonely, forsaken, misunderstood, at times even ridiculed by Adam the first, by himself. When the hour of estrangement strikes, the ordeal of man of faith begins and he starts his withdrawal from society, from Adam the first—he as an outsider, be he Moses of old, to his solitary hiding and to the abode of loneliness. Yes, the loneliness of contemporary man of faith is of a special kind. He experiences not only ontological loneliness but also social isolation, whenever he dares to deliver the genuine faith-kerugma. This is both the destiny and the human historical situation of the man who keeps a rendezvous with eternity, and who, in spite of everything, continues

tenaciously to bring the message of faith to majestic man.

1. Our description of the “individuality” and autonomy of the faith gesture should not be associated with Tertullian’s apothegm credo quia absurdum est. Neither should it be equated with Kierkegaard’s “leap into the absurd.”

Tertullian tried not only to free the act of faith from its subservience to the intellect but actually to posit them as two inexorable foes. Thus, he considered any attempt to translate aspects of faith into cultural-majestic categories as illegitimate and negating the very essence of faith. This kind of antirationalism led to complete rejection of majestic man willed and created by God. Small wonder that Tertullian's contemporary Tatian condemned the majestic gesture as the work of the devil.

Tertullian was wrong also in another respect. The terms “reasonable” and “unreasonable” belong exclusively to the realm of the logos and are, therefore, inapplicable to the act of faith. Neither does one believe because it is reasonable to do so, since the reasonable is affirmed on logical grounds and is in no need of being affirmed by an act of faith, nor is it sensible to say that one has faith because the latter contradicts human reason. The faith gesture is not motivated by intellectual insights or convictions.

The term “absurd” in the Kierkegaardian philosophy is both a logical and a psychological category. It refers not only to logically false statements but also to unreasonable psychological motivation. The act of “repetition” precipitated by failure and resignation is absurd and belongs, therefore, to the realm of faith. In a word, for Kierkegaard, faith supersedes the majestic posture of man. The world of faith rises upon the ruins and debris of the world of majesty.

This thesis is unacceptable, as we indicated in the text, to the Halakhah, which insists upon the dialectical movement between these two worlds. They do, indeed, exist concurrently according to
the Halakhah. Moreover, Kierkegaard lacked the understanding of the centrality of the act of objectification of the inner movement of faith in a normative and doctrinal postulate system, which forms the very foundation of the Halakhah. The Halakhic world of faith is "terribly" articulate, "unpardonably" dynamic, and "foolishly" consistent, insisting that feeling become thought, and that experience be acted out and transformed into an objective event. Kierkegaard's existentalist world, like Schleiermacher's pietistic world, is a place of silence and passivity, far removed from the complex array of historical events, not hungering for action or movement.

So be departed thence, and found Elisba, the son of Shafat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him and he with the twelfth; and Elijah passed by him and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "let me I pray thee kiss my father and my mother and then I will follow thee," and be said unto him, "go back again for what have I done to thee." And he returned back from him and took a yoke of oxen and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen and gave unto the people and they did eat. Then be arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him. (I Kings, 19:19–21)

Elisha was a typical representative of the majestic community. He was the son of a prosperous farmer, a man of property, whose interests were centered around this-worldly,
material goods such as crops, livestock, and market prices. His objective was economic success, his aspiration—material wealth. The Bible portrays him as efficient, capable, and practical, reminiscent of a modern business executive. When Elijah met him, we are told, he was supervising the work done by the slaves. He was with the twelfth yoke in order not to lose sight of the slave-laborers. What did this man of majesty have in common with Elijah, the solitary covenantal prophet, the champion of God, the adversary of kings, who walked as a stranger through the bustling cities of Shomron, past royal pomp and grandeur, negating the worth of all goods to which his contemporaries were committed, reproaching the sinners, preaching the law of God and portending His wrath? What bond could exist between a complacent farmer who enjoyed his homestead and the man in the hairy dress who came from nowhere and who finally disappeared under a veil of mystery? Yet unexpectedly, the call came through to this unimaginative, self-centered farmer. Suddenly the mantle of Elijah was cast upon him. While he was engaged in the most ordinary, everyday activity, in tilling the soil, he encountered God and felt the transforming touch of God’s hand. The strangest metamorphosis occurred. Within seconds, the old Elisha disappeared and a new Elisha emerged.

Majestic man was replaced by covenantal man. He was initiated into a new spiritual universe in which clumsy social-class distinctions had little meaning, wealth played no role, and a serene, illuminated, universal “we” consciousness supplanted the small, limited, and selfish “I” consciousness. Old concerns changed, past commitments vanished, cherished hopes faded, and a new vision of a redemptive-covenantal reality incommensurate with the old vision of an enjoyable-majestic reality beckoned to him. No more did the “farmer” care for the oxen, the means of making the soil yield its abundance, which were so precious to him a while ago. No more was he concerned with anything which was so dear to him before. He slew the oxen and fed the meat to the slaves who, half-starved, tilled the soil for him and whom he, until that meeting with Elijah, had treated with contempt. Moreover, covenantal man renounced his family relationships. He bade farewell to father and mother and departed from their home for good. Like his master, he became homeless. Like his ancestor Jacob he became a “straying Aramean” who took defeat and humiliation with charity and gratitude. However, Elisha’s withdrawal from majesty was not final. He followed the dialectical course of all our prophets. Later, when he achieved the pinnacle of faith and arrived at the outer boundaries of human commit-
ment, he came back to society as a participant in state affairs, as an adviser of kings and a teacher of the majestic community. God ordered him to return to the people, to offer them a share in the covenantal drama and to involve them in the great and solemn colloquy. He was God's messenger carrying, like Moses, two tablets of stone containing the covenantal kerygma. Many a time he felt disenchanted and frustrated because his words were scornfully rejected. However, Elisha never despaired or resigned. Despair and resignation were unknown to the man of the covenant who found triumph in defeat, hope in failure, and who could not conceal God's Word that was, to paraphrase Jeremiah, deeply implanted in his bones and burning in his heart like an all-consuming fire. Elisha was indeed lonely, but in his loneliness he met the Lonely One and discovered the singular covenantal confrontation of solitary man and God who abides in the recesses of transcendental solitude.

Is modern man of faith entitled to a more privileged position and a less exacting and sacrificial role?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph B. Soloveitchik was born in Russia in 1903 into a family of eminent Eastern European rabbis. Initially trained in the scholarship of the sacred texts of Judaism, at twenty-two he enrolled at the University of Berlin in order to study physics, mathematics, and philosophy. He wrote his dissertation on the philosopher Hermann Cohen. In 1932 he accepted the position of chief rabbi of Boston, where he made his home for the rest of his life. In 1939 he founded the Maimonides School there. For years he commuted to New York City in order to teach at Yeshiva University, where his lectures gained renown for their probity and breadth. During his lifetime he was regarded throughout the world as the leading authority on the meaning of Jewish law, and the leading intellectual figure in the effort to build bridges between Orthodox Judaism and the modern world. Rabbi Soloveitchik died in 1993.