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A THEOLOGY OF TENSION RESULTING FROM THE JUXTAPOSITION OF CHURCH AND SYNAGOGUE

Von J. Jocz, Toronto

I THE CATEGORY OF TENSION

In circles concerned with Jewish-Christian relationships there is a new emphasis upon dialogue. Dialogue in contemporary thinking has a more existential aspect than Greek philosophy allowed. Whereas in the Socratic tradition, dialogue was a purely dialectical exercise, since Ebner and Buber, dialogue has assumed a new dimension: it provides for a confrontation between man and man at the deepest level.

In this new context the traditional Christian monologue which began with Justin Martyr and continued till modern times, is singularly out of place. In the past, Jews were only allowed to listen, and when they tried to answer back, as in some instances during the public disputations in the Middle Ages, they did so with evil consequences¹. No real encounter is possible, however, unless both sides enjoy equal rights. But in the Buberian sense, dialogue requires more than the right of speech for both parties: it demands an open-ness for the other person so that both can discover common

¹ Cf. J. Jocz: *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, 1954, p. 99.

ground. It means that both parties take each other seriously in their human situation, otherwise the maieutic significance of the encounter is completely lost².

Dialogue at the truly human level presupposes a situation shared by both partners and a common starting point. In the case of Jews and Christians both these conditions are easily met: they share a common humanity and many areas of religious awareness. In my book *A Theology of Election* I was able to point to a number of instances which provide common ground for Jewish and Christian believers³. In all these areas Jews and Christians share a common experience which derives from the same source, namely biblical revelation. Though this revelation assumes quite different dimensions in each faith, yet both stem from the same root. It is this remarkable relatedness which provides the tension in a juxtaposition of Church and Synagogue. We regard these areas of tension as of special significance and intend to construct a theology of tension from this fact.

In times gone by, tension was emphasised to the point of physical violence. In our own times of syncretism, tension is avoided as inimical to good-will and tolerance. In the social context antinomies make for friction between groups and are best avoided. But in the realm of theology where spiritual values are at stake, polarity is the very essence of life. The purpose of these lectures is to stress the differences between Church and Synagogue not from a spirit of acrimony, and certainly not to widen the gap already existing, but for purely theological reasons.

1. Tension as challenge

Tension, as in the physical so in the spiritual realm, is always a challenge. The natural impulse is to avoid or reconcile the cause

² Such an encounter is on the purely human level. The maieutic principle does not apply to Christian witness, as Kierkegaard has already observed: "communication of Christian truth must end at last in 'witnessing'; maieutic cannot be the last form. For, Christianly understood, the truth does not reside in the subject (as Socrates understood it) but is a revelation which must be proclaimed" (Walter Lowrie: Kierkegaard, p. 447).

³ Cf. J. Jocz, *A Theology of Election*, 1958, p. 39—51.

of friction. Specially in the social sphere differences can create situations of intolerable tension. It is possible that much which would appear Christian zeal for the conversion of the Jews, on closer investigation may turn out to be a psychological need for uniformity. To allow the other man the right to be different is more than a matter of social adjustment. It also means a relativisation of my own position which is much more difficult to bear. My truth can only be absolute truth when no other truth rivals it. Each encounter with an opposite position creates suspense and insecurity. Consciously or unconsciously, we resent the challenge of another faith. If we cannot resolve the tension we react with hatred or fear, or both. Here, perhaps, is the hidden root of anti-Semitism.

In life, compromise is the law of survival. Since Hegel, thesis and antithesis which resolve in a synthesis has become the philosophical equipment of Western thought. Goethe, who was no mean nature-philosopher, saw the same principle which pervades history, operative in nature as well: "The united to divide, the divided to unite, is the life of nature," he said, "this is the eternal contraction and expansion, the eternal unification and separation, the inspiration and exhalation of the world in which we live, move and have our being⁴."

Life within the tension of opposites was not unknown to Greek philosophers. Dualism as a principle pervades much of Greek thinking. Ancient philosophers knew of the dialectic between soul and body, matter and form, the limited and the unlimited. This was specially the case in the Pythagorean school and later in Neo-Platonism. The polarity of opposites was looked upon as a principle which led to the orderly unification of the universe. For Plotinus, the most outstanding Neo-Platonist, the tension between Here and There, matter and spirit, is overcome by an act of disengagement from the visible world. "Disengaging the self from the body," he says, "this is the escape from matter." This he achieves in a two-

⁴ «Das Geeinte zu entzweien, das Entzweite zu einigen, ist das Leben der Natur; dies ist die ewige Systole und Diastole, die ewige Synkrisis und Diakrisis, das Ein- und Ausatmen der Welt, in der wir leben, weben und sind.»

fold way: first, inwardly by personal discipline; then intellectually by declaring matter as "non-existent." In essence matter is absolute negation, *στέρεσις*, and therefore an illusion which man must overcome.

Hegel coped with the same problem but resolved it in a different manner. The opposite forces we encounter in the universe are to Hegel veiled expressions of a hidden unity. It is part of the play of forces which man experiences as the process of ebb and flow in nature and in history. The polarity of these forces have their origin in the manner of our comprehension and not in reality. To quote Hegel himself: "Understanding thus learns that it is a law in the sphere of appearance for distinctions to come about which are no distinctions. In other words, it learns what is self-same is self-repulsive, and similarly, that the distinctions are only such as in reality are none and cancel one another, or that what is self-same is self-attractive." It is at this point of apparent contradiction that the world of perception and the supersensible world of changeless laws (Hegel calls it *die verkehrte Welt* — the "inverted world") meet as ectype and copy. The meeting-place however, is within the individual consciousness: the distinction of opposites is an internal distinction. In dialectical terminology, what we experience as opposites derives from the inverted world of the supersensible, but in reality constitutes a single unity⁵.

Paul Roubiczek in his approach to the problem does not differ essentially from Hegelian philosophy. His inquiry into the realm of the opposites is entirely psychologically conditioned. This he makes quite clear; here are his own words:

"The fact that we accept opposites as the basis of our thoughts, and contradictions as the result, does not mean that we take refuge in some kind of dualism. On the contrary, it robs dualism of its foundations. As these opposites are the way by which we think, they cannot disclose the true nature of reality, and as they remain dependent upon one another, they never tear the world asunder. Those contradictions which might produce the belief that reality is determined by two independent principles, are shown to be the consequences of our thinking. The very acceptance of

⁵ G. W. F. Hegel: The Phenomenology of Mind, Engl., by J. B. Baillie, 1949, p. 201—207.

such opposites, therefore, prevents us from founding any kind of dualistic belief upon them⁶."

Roubiczek, like Hegel, derives the polarity of opposites not from a dualism inherent in the universe, but from a division in ourselves which makes it impossible for us to think except in opposites. For the Hegelian antithesis between the sensible world and the super-sensible world of changeless laws, Roubiczek places "external" and "internal" reality. Apart from the difference of language, the distinction is minimal. Hegel resolves the polarity dialectically, whereas Roubiczek achieves the same result esthetically. For Roubiczek, in the experience of moral values, specially in the experience of beauty, the opposites are resolved in an "all-inclusive unity".

The antinomy which we meet on the moral plane has engaged the attention of Dr. Morris Stockhammer. His article on The Righteousness of Job is the more interesting as it is unusual for a Jew to advocate a dualistic solution⁸. Stockhammer proceeds on the assumption that the moral problem arises from a clash between two antinomies: the a-moral laws of nature and the moral law of religion. He observes that from the standpoint of the monistic point of view which neglects the a-moral aspect of nature and only acknowledges the religious one "a model creature like Job must not be allowed to suffer." But such a position overlooks the fact of nature. The real world is based on dualism "and therefore there are actually two worlds. In addition to the religious world order, there exists a natural order, which is a-religious or a-moral." The clash between the two orders, the material and the spiritual, creates a real problem for man. The conflict in which man finds himself serves however a good purpose. "A world without sin," says Stockhammer, "would make the moral order, intended to curb sinners, superfluous, and a world without saints would make it unusable."

Religion, Stockhammer suggests, arises from this very antinomy. Religion attempts "to separate God from nature and to supplement

⁶ Paul Roubiczek: *Thinking in Opposites*, 1952, p. 18.

⁷ Op. cit, p. 228—234.

⁸ Cf. Morris Stockhammer: *The Righteousness of Job*, Judaism, Winter, 1958, p. 64ff.

the material world with a spiritual and better one in which things do not just a-morally happen." But at the same time in recognizing that God is the Creator of both orders, religion creates a unity which transcends the original dualism. We thus started with dualism and ended with harmony. Dualism is therefore not inherent in the human situation but a mere requirement for the "equilibrial system," i. e. "a system which cannot function with friction."

We have used the example of Hegel, Roubiczek and Stockhammer to show that the human mind shrinks from the gap which dualism presents. Even in the case of Neo-Platonism with its sharp division between matter and spirit, the duality is overcome by reducing matter to an illusion. Oddly enough Stockhammer is quite aware of this fact. He admits that "despite the evidence for dualism, the grip of monism on our minds remains unabated because it satisfies our deep-rooted need for unity." Roubiczek makes a similar observation: "the longing for an all-embracing unity," he explains, "is the fundamental and most dangerous motive" which causes us to overlook the duality which we constantly encounter. Such unity is achieved, according to Roubiczek, by an indiscriminate intermixing of external and internal reality, by means of abstraction⁹.

There are both psychological and intellectual reasons why the acceptance of a dualistic point of view is an impossibility for man. But there is also a good religious reason specially for those within the monotheistic tradition, why dualism must be rejected: God is Creator of the whole universe and in Him all antinomies resolve.

2. Biblical dualism

We have seen that the philosopher, the moralist and the religious, all ultimately dissolve the opposites which existence implies, into a higher unity. It is our contention that the Bible refuses to allow the annulment of tension and presents a dualism specifically its own.

⁹ Roubiczek, op. cit., p. 146f, 210.

It is universally recognized the Bible knows nothing of the pagan dualism between spirit and matter. Neither for the O. T. nor the N. T. is body the source and origin of sin. *Sarx* in itself cannot be evil for it is the creation of God. Jesus Christ himself, as true man is the bearer of *sarx*, though it was not *sarx hamartias* (cf. Rom. 8. 3) which he bore, but flesh without sin.

The Bible also repudiates every semblance of polytheism. This applies to both Testaments. St. Paul is sometimes accused, specially by Jews, of introducing a plurality in the Godhead, yet he is most emphatic on the question of Monotheism. An idol, he tells us, has no real existence; and that there is but One God. Although there be many so-called "gods" and "lords," yet for us, he says, there is but one God, the Father from whom are all things and for whom we exist (1 Cor. 8. 5f.). Eph. 4. 6 is even more emphatic: "One God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." Biblical dualism, oddly enough, does not derive from the dichotomy in creation nor from a hidden polytheism — it derives from its uncompromising Monotheism on two counts:

a) *The ontological distinction between Creator and creature.* Barth has stressed that the Christian doctrine of creation must be guarded from two errors: on the one hand it must refuse to interpret the world as a divine emanation, and on the other, it must repudiate the idea that the world is co-existing with God. In the first case we would arrive at a false monism, and in the second case we would countenance a pagan dualism. To forestall such errors the Bible teaches the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. It means that between Creator and creature there is a real and eternal distinction. At no point and under no circumstances is the difference between Creator and creature obliterated or blurred. There is no fusion and no absorption. Man is never the co-equal of God, neither here nor beyond. The credal statement: "I believe in the resurrection of the body" guards against divinization of man. In this, as in other respects, the Greek Church Fathers have definitely misinterpreted the biblical position. They certainly failed to realize the implication of the credal statement regarding the resurrection of the body. We find it impossible to accept Professor David W. Hay's view that "the theme of man's divinization" is a standing one in the

N. T.¹⁰.” Prof. Hay denies that the idea derives from Platonism; he contradicts Cairns and J. L. M. Haire that 2 Peter 1. 4 is the only text in the N. T. which would warrant such a view; he emphatically affirms that “the Greek Church Fathers did not derive their doctrine of divinization from philosophy but from biblical cosmology¹¹.” Scholarly opinion, however, stands against him. Specially 2 Peter 1. 4 is entirely outside the biblical tradition. James Moffatt avers that “the ideas and even the language” of this text, betrays a non-biblical source — which he identifies as of Hellenistic and pagan provenance. In his introduction to 2 Peter, Moffatt remarks: “no N. T. writing won so limited and hesitating a recognition” and he ascribes the little book to a 2nd c. author¹². It would certainly be a mistake to put too much weight to so spurious a source. Once this text is discounted it will be hard to supply any other evidence from the N. T. to parallel the concept of *Θεία φύσις* which man shares with the Godhead.

Karl Barth with his uncanny genius for biblical exegesis applies 2 Peter 1. 4 not to the believer but to the exalted Son of Man who having accomplished his task upon earth now returns to his Father’s home. “The first-born of a new humanity; the second Adam, who is still our elder Brother and in whose exaltation our own has already taken place,” is the meaning of the text, according to Barth¹³. Participation in the divine nature is ours only by proxy, if I understand Barth correctly. There is however a real ambiguity here: our exaltation in Christ and the individuals participation in divine nature are not quite the same. The text does not seem to speak about the eschatological future, but the believer’s present condition as participant in divinity as a result of the divine power by which he escapes from the corruption of this world.

There is also a further difficulty: the identification of the believer with his Lord is never such that the distinction between them becomes invalid. There is an eternal distinction between *the Son*

¹⁰ David W. Hay: Christianity and Cosmology, Canadian Journal of Theology, 1959, p. 236.

¹¹ Ib, p. 240f.

¹² The Moffatt N.T. Commentary, The General Epistles, 1928.

¹³ Karl Barth: Ch. Dog., Engl. transl. Vol. IV/2, p. 103.

and the adopted sons which is expressed in the “Nicene” Creed by the phrase *γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα*, “begotten not made”. This can only be said of the Son and of no one else. It is for this reason that the expression: *ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί*, “being of the same substance of the Father”, carried so much significance in the Christological dispute. These expressions were intended to safeguard the biblical concept of *μονογενῆς* (Luke 7. 13; 8. 42; 9. 38) as uniquely applicable to the Messiah. It means, at any rate for Christian orthodoxy, that the relationship between God the Father and God the Son is unparalleled and unrepeatable. For this reason it is impossible to accept Norman Pittenger’s contention, that in the last resort there is only a difference in degree and not in kind between Christ and the Christian. Pittenger’s argument is similar to that of Prof. Hay, namely that man is meant to become what Jesus Christ already is, i. e. a son of God¹⁴. Being fashioned in the image (*εἰκόνη*) of God’s Son (Rom. 8. 29) and to be made like unto Him (1 John 3. 2), does not and cannot mean identity with the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Barth was warned against a false monism and a false dualism: the first derives from a false identity between the world and God; the second has its roots in a false separation which overlooks the fact that the world is an expression of God’s steadfast love¹⁵. But I contend that there is a sane biblical dualism which rests upon the eternal distinction between Creator and creature. It means that man is not an emanation of the Godhead but a real creation, a distinct and separate being not to be re-absorbed into the divinity but to retain his personality as a reconciled and accepted son of God. Only thus can there be real meaning to fellowship between God and man.

b) Moral dualism. The ontological distinction between Creator and creature carries a corollary in respect to man’s historic existence, namely the distinction between the absolute and the contingent. On the moral plane the difference between absolute good and historic good derives from the Otherness of God. In biblical lan-

¹⁴ W. Norman Pittenger: Degree or Kind? A Christological Essay. Canadian Journal of Theol., Oct. 1956.

¹⁵ Church Dog. II/1, p. 562 ff. (German ed.)

guage the otherness of God is expressed in terms of holiness. God is the absolute Holy One, which in the Hebrew Bible is expressed by the superlative of threefold repetition: the Trisagion. The moral perfection of God makes it impossible to regard him as the creator of evil. If evil exists it is only by his permissive will and not by his active will. The devil is not an anti-god, but God's tool and servant though he serves God's alien will. The question of cosmic evil is beyond our scope and belongs to metaphysics rather than theology. On the historic plane evil is a frightening fact profoundly affecting human life. Sin is not merely an aberration but a constituent element belonging to the very fabric of human history. It cannot be resolved without the dissolution of history itself. Dean Inge has shown that there is a real antithesis upon the moral plane "which makes some of dualism necessary for all who take the moral choice seriously¹⁶." It is not a problem which can be approached theoretically, it can only be faced existentially: "It is real, terribly real, for us while we live here, and it is closely bound up with the existential aspect of the world as we know it," says Dean Inge. Neither the metaphysical solution which presupposes two opposing forces, nor the idealist solution which interprets evil as a defect of goodness, are adequate. Dean Inge admits: "We cannot really solve the problem, because we are living on a plane where the conflict between good and evil is real." On the plane of history man always stands in between these two possibilities, challenged to make his choice. At no time and under no circumstances is he outside the moral tension. There is no neutral ground where the moral challenge lenge ceases.

Within this moral dualism all history takes place. The Christian is not exempt from the challenge because he is already forgiven and "saved." His "sainthood," his "holiness," his reconciliation to God, does not blur the distinction between good and evil, but rather accentuates it. He is more aware of being a sinner before God than if he had been a non-believer. Holiness on this side of history is never an accomplished fact. Sainthood in the Christian sense is not measured by achievement but by the intensity of striving

¹⁶ W. R. Inge: God and the Astronomers, 1933, p. 187.

after it and by the sense of humility and dependence upon the grace of God. Christian holiness is derived and not achieved holiness. It always remains a gift and never a possession. Man has it by promise only. It means that the moral goal lies beyond history. On this side of history perfection can only be a pious hope and never a completed fact. The God-fearing man remains to the end of his life a saint in the making. All he can do is to forget what lies behind and press towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3. 12f.). A saint who thinks to have already attained is only a conceited fool.

3. Life in suspense

This then is the peculiarly human situation: man remains God's creature and the distinction between him and his Maker is a radical distinction. Human life takes place within the polarity of good and evil. The moral tension in which man finds himself, is not, as Stockhammer suggests, the result of a clash between a-moral forces and moral laws, but the result of a dualism in which man finds himself as God's creature. He cannot overcome the opposing forces within him and so keep the equilibrium, on the contrary, he is heavily weighted towards the negative side. This applies not only to the godless but also to the godly: both Jews and Greeks are under the power of sin, says St. Paul (Rom. 3. 9). To prove his contention the Apostle quotes the O.T.: "none is righteous, no not one." The Greek without the Law and the Jew with the Law stand under the same condemnation. It is at this point that we begin to discover the depth of the moral problem: man's most noble effort to cope with evil gives him no advantage in the sight of God. The scandal of the Pauline position lies in the statement that God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4. 5). This seems to put the ungodly in a more favoured position than the godly. We hit here upon the paradoxical nature of the spiritual life: the righteous who claims merit before God by reason of his righteousness is not a truly a righteous man; the ungodly who pleads nothing except God's mercy is closer to God who looks upon the humble. Stockhamer in trying to vindicate Job's righteousness, was in fact vindi-

cating God's justice; St. Paul in trying to vindicate the ungodly was in fact vindicating God's mercy. The tension between God's justice and his mercy is not to be dissolved either dialectically or theologically. It can only be dissolved by God Himself. In history man lives between God's mercy and His justice; it means that he lives in suspense.

The Life of faith is life in suspense. A doctrine of assurance which relieves man from the tension of suspense and places him in a position of security, is a false doctrine. Any movement of holiness which overlooks what Luther phrased as *simul justus et peccator*, is a movement away from biblical realism. Faith is that hopeful looking to God "of things unseen" (Hebr. 11. 1). Here assurance and hope are so intermixed that the whole weight is placed upon the faithfulness of God who keeps man waiting. This waiting upon the Lord, as the Bible calls it, is both the obedience and suspense of faith: "as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he have mercy upon us" (Ps. 123. 2).

4. The dialectic of Israel and Church

Within the area of opposites in the context of revelation, Israel and Church stand in juxtaposition. The polarity derives from the dualism in which man lives within history. Theologically expressed, it is a difference of emphasis which makes the Church the Church and the Synagogue the Synagogue. But in existential terms the difference lies in the experience of God's grace which is always a mystery. The relation of Church to Israel is the relation of type to ektype: the one is the obverse side of the other. In the dialectic of their relatedness lies the meaning of their existence. It means that the Church is best seen in juxtaposition to the Synagogue and the Synagogue to the Church. Outside this area of tension both Israel and Church lose their natural partner in the dialogue of faith. But because the Jew is always present within the Church by the testimony of the O.T., by his historic opposition in the N.T., and by the fact of human nature within every Christian, the

dialogue with historic Israel is never a dialogue with outsiders. In addressing the Jewish people the Church speaks to herself.

This dialogue between Israel and Church centres round the three main aspects of biblical dualism, namely:

- (1) The ontological distinction between Creator and creature.
- (2) The moral dualism which derives from God's absolute holiness.
- (3) The suspense of faith conditioned by the contingency of history.

Our discussion will now follow this outline in greater detail.

II. THE "UNITY" OF GOD AND THE HOLY TRINITY

With this subject we approach the main area of tension between Church and Synagogue.

The confrontation is now between Church and Synagogue and not Church and Israel. There is good reason for the change. Israel and Synagogue are not synonymous. There was a time when there was no Synagogue and there may come a time when the Synagogue will disappear. At present the Synagogue only represents a fraction of Jewry; but traditionally she is the spokesman in matters touching upon Israel's faith.

1. The difference between Creator and creature

Our starting-point is the ontological distinction between Creator and creature. As already explained, this is not an incidental distinction but a fundamental one. It does not stem from the fact that man is a limited creature. It is not so that the distance between man and God can be lessened by man's deeper understanding, moral perfection or religious devotion. The distinction is an eternal one between Him who truly Is and us who are by His creative will. This means that in the human-divine relationship there is a point beyond which man cannot and dare not go.

This radical delimitation of the creature is indicated in the Bible in many ways. We will only mention the most obvious ones:

(a) *The invisible God.* Although we constantly come upon embarrassing anthropomorphisms in the Bible, there is never a visible presentation attempted. The theophanies are characterized by an evasiveness: the God who encounters man is never seen. A classical case is that of Moses in Ex. 33. We are told in verse 11 that the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. But then the text proceeds to present a situation in which verse 11 is contradicted several times over: first, Moses asks to see God's glory and is only allowed to see his "goodness;" then Moses is given a glimpse of his "back;" later, the vision is reduced to an audition; but worst of all, verse 20 flatly contradicts verse 11: "you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live¹⁷." The paradox is inherent in the situation, it is not an effort at spiritualizing so that there is nothing left to see. It simply means that man cannot survive the searing Presence of the living God. The God of Israel is a devouring fire (Deut. 4. 24). The Bible thus suggests that God remains invisible by reason of His gracious concern for man. He withdraws from human sight to spare man from destruction¹⁸.

Here is implied a radical division between Him who is Creator and the creatures of his creation. These two can never meet as equals. Even the Seraphim who serve before God's presence keep both, their faces and their feet covered, before the thrice holy One (Is. 6). Their creaturely existence makes it impossible for them to endure the glorious majesty of Almighty God. Not even the seraphim can remain in a direct relationship to God.

(b) *The principle of mediation.* The fundamental, radical distinction between Creator and creature is further expressed by the principle of mediation. At no point is there a direct approach to God. Moses of whom it is said that he spoke to God *panim'el panim*, only sees His "back" and this from a distance (cf. Ex. 33. 22). No mystic ecstasy, no cultic ceremonial, can pierce the veil shrouding the hidden God of Israel. The priestly function is to act as mediator

¹⁷ This translation by R. S. V. is ambiguous; the A.V. is more to the point: "there shall no man see me and live."

¹⁸ Cf. J. Jocz: The Invisibility of God and the Incarnation. Canadian Journal of Theology, July 1958, p. 179f.

as the people's representative before God; the prophetic function is to act as mediator as God's mouthpiece to his people. But the priest himself has his own mediator as well, for as a human being he can only draw near by means of sacrifice and propitiation. The prophet too has no immediate approach, he has to depend upon the Word which comes to him and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He receives his message in an indirect way by means of dreams, visions and auditions.

Biblical hierarchic structure of society has its origin in the concept of mediation. The social stratification is not aristocratically but theocratically conditioned. This is exemplified in the symbolism of the camp in the wilderness; the centre of gravity is the Ark of the Covenant, the grouping round the ark depends upon the mediatory function of the tribes. Direct, unmediated approach to Almighty God is as inconceivable to the ancient Hebrew as it is natural to the modern Jew. In the Bible mediation is the very condition of a divine-human relationship.

(c) *Yir'at Adonai*. Like **חִסּוּד** the Hebrew word for "grace" — so is the expression *yir'at Adonai* untranslatable except by paraphrase. It contains nuances of meaning which only in their totality make up what is meant by "the fear of the Lord." It comprises reverence and awe, worship and piety, obedience and trust, dread and love at the same time. Many characteristic postures in the Bible are examples of what is meant by **יראת יה** Moses with his face to the ground in humble worship; Jacob overtaken by dread: "how awesome is this place!" Isaiah in humble obedience: "here am I send me" — are all expressions of the biblical concept of the fear of the Lord.

It is widely recognized that the same attitude is evinced in the N.T. When we read in 1 John 4. 18 that there is no fear in love, we must understand it in the context of the rest of the Bible. To the Hebrew there is no contradiction between the love of the Lord and the fear of the Lord. Bp. Westcott comments on the text: "The fear of which St. John speaks is, of course, not the reverence of the son (Heb. 5. 7 ff.), but the dread of the criminal or the slave¹⁹" (Rom. 8. 15).

¹⁹ B. F. Westcott: The Epistles of St. John, 1883, p. 152.

A N.T. example of what is meant by the fear of the Lord is the dedication of St. Paul to his missionary task. We find here the same compulsion as in the case of the Prophets. Like Jeremiah of old (Jer. 20. 9) he knows himself under the compelling presence of God: "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel — necessity is laid upon me" (1 Cor. 9. 16). It is not by his own will that he preaches: "I am entrusted with a commission," he tells us. This is the characteristic biblical consciousness which takes the fear of the Lord dead seriously. At the root of this awareness is the knowledge of God's absolute Lordship and claim. He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. His is the earth and the fulness thereof. Not to fear God is to trifle with Him.

(d) *'El kannah.* God's claim upon creation is both exclusive and unique. For this reason man is only a steward over what he owns. There is no absolute ownership for all that man has he holds in trust. Israel's land is God's land; every Israelite is God's possession. That is why no Israelite can be a slave in perpetuity. Biblical theocracy is therefore democratic: because all are under the tutelage of God, all are equals. This absolute claim upon man is implied in the sentence: "I the Lord your God am a jealous God." It means that God's Lordship is such that he tolerates no rivals: "You shall have no other gods beside me" (Ex. 20. 3). Idolatry is heinous because it challenges God's sovereignty.

The God of Israel is intolerant of other gods not because He is narrow-minded and wants all the glory for Himself, but because God ceases to be truly God if man's loyalty is divided between Him and another. No one can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other (Mtt. 6. 24). This does not apply only to mammon but to every idol in relation to God.

2. The Synagogue and God's "unity"

The foregoing remarks lay the foundation for the present subject. In our discussion of the Unity and Trinity of God, we constantly must bear in mind the Otherness of God as demonstrated by

His invisibility, by the principle of mediation, by the biblical concept of the fear of God, by His claim to absolute exclusiveness as the *'El kannah*, the jealous God. It is this fact of His Otherness which lays the limit to our understanding and which imposes upon us the paradoxical nature of all our statements. It means that any direct and immediate speech about God is open to suspicion. It is in this light that we approach the subject of God's "unity."

The "unity" of God carries an ambivalence which must be clarified at the start.

First, let us stress that Monotheism and Unity are not necessarily correlative terms. Monotheism stands for the denial of a plurality of gods. Polytheism, it affirms, is self-contradictory; God is not God if He has rivals. On this score Christians and Jews are in perfect agreement. A Christian who believes in three gods is an idolator, pure and simple.

On the other hand, the "Unity" of God affirms His indivisibility which is a philosophical concept. On some aspects of this question Jews and Christian Sdiffer. Christians are Monotheists but not Unitarians, Jews are both.

The second point we want to make, is that much of the confusion in the discussion between Jews and Christians stems from an unwarranted identification of biblical Monotheism with philosophical Unitarianism. Unless we manage to disentangle these two heterogeneous concepts we will fail in our purpose.

(a) *Biblical Monotheism*. We have seen already that the uniqueness of Israel's God allows of no rivals. Any other god beside Him can only be a false god. Such "gods" are the idols of the heathen: they are the work of men's hands; they have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see (Ps. 115).

Behind the affirmation of God's uniqueness is the other affirmation that this true and only God is in a special sense the God of Israel. Not that Israel owns God but that God owns Israel. The gravity of Israel's sin lies in that he trifles with this fact: the ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand (Is. 1. 3). This is not non-knowledge by ignorance but by wilful refusal to allow God's overlordship as his legitimate right.

Israel's unique relation to the Creator of the Universe is not by choice but by divine election: it pleased Almighty God to reveal His Name to this people. The secret of God's Name is the secret of His sovereignty. He reveals himself to Israel as the Lord of history: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20. 2). This fact is spelled out in his Name: 'eheyeh — 'asher — 'eheyeh. Yahwe is a contraction or cryptic form of the original Name. This personal Name of the God of history expresses both His hidden-ness and sovereignty: He-is-what-He-is; He-will-be-what-he-will-be. Past, present and future are in His Almighty hand. What He is in himself only He knows, what He is to usward we know by His mighty acts.

This is the difference between the God of Israel and Baal: while Yahwe intervenes the idol remains inactive. Elijah mocks at Baal's prophets: "cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened," yet "there was no voice, no one answered, no one heeded" (1 Kings 18. 27 ff.). In fact, there could be no answer, for Baal is only an illusion and not God; only Yahwe is God and all the gods of the heathen are idols.

Biblical Monotheism is not founded upon metaphysical or philosophical speculation. It is derived from a demonstration of God's mighty deeds in history. Monotheism here is not a philosophical statement about God but the recognition of man's involvement in God's historic acts. In the Bible God is never a concept, a principle, an ideal. He is the intensely Acting-One in Creation, in history, amidst his people. He is always beyond man, above man, independent of man, yet intensely concerned with man. He is inscrutable, hidden, and mysterious, but never irrational and never capricious. His will is a sovereign will but He does not impose it. He kills and makes alive (Deut. 32. 39), but only for the sake of life and not of death. He is "jealous" but only because he loves as a Father. He is invisible only to allow man's survival.

Biblical Monotheism is an acknowledgement not of a philosophical postulate but of the incomparable uniqueness of the living, acting, judging and saving God of history.

(b) *Philosophical unitarianism.* As already indicated, the concept of Unity and the concept of Monotheism are usually treated as synonymous. Traditionally, the Unity of God is derived from Deut. 6. 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. The *Shem'a* has become the epitome of the Synagogue's Creed. The pious Jew recites it in all the circumstances of life, and dies with these words upon his lips as his confession of faith. There is a difficulty as to the translation of the text. The R. S. V. offers four possible readings: in addition to the one in the text, the margin suggests three more:

the Lord our God, the Lord is one
the Lord is our God, the Lord is one
the Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

The first three renderings only differ slightly linguistically and not at all in meaning. The last rendering is totally different from the rest. In my book, *A Theology of Election*, I have argued in favour of the last rendering for it alone makes sense and is in keeping with the biblical position that only the Lord is God and that beside Him there are no gods²⁰.

Martin Buber, obviously aware of the difficulty cleverly circumvented it by being indefinite. He translates: "Hör Jisrael: ER unser Gott, ER Einer!" ER (He) is Buber's paraphrase of the Tetragrammaton. ER Einer can mean either: The Lord alone, or the Lord One. Personally, I hold that 'ehad in this context is the same as *yahid*. A parallel to this we find in the Hebrew Prayer book: shomer goy 'ehad shemor she 'erit 'am 'ehad [O Guardian of an (thine) only people, guard the remnant of an (thine) only people²¹.] Here *ehad* obviously means thy special people. The emphasis is upon the *Einzigartigkeit* of Israel's relation to Israel's God. If we read the *Shem'a* in the same sense it is a confession not of unity but of loyalty: for Israel Yahwe alone is God and there is none beside Him.

It was only as a result of the controversy with the Church that the Synagogue's accent gradually shifted from 'ehad as *yahid* to

²⁰ Cf. A. Theology of Election, p. 41.

²¹ Singer's Prayer Book, p. 65.

'ehad as 'ahdut: the One who alone is God in all His uniqueness, became God as One in His indivisible Unity.

From here the journey to philosophic Unitarianism is easily mapped. The most important influence is Maimonides. The *yigdal* Prayer in the Hebrew *siddur* is fashioned after the Maimonidean creed. It stresses the Unity in obvious opposition to Christian doctrine:

He is One, and there is no unity like unto
his unity, inconceivable is he and unending
in his unity²².

Other passages in the Hebrew liturgy accentuate the same point which is classically expressed in the 2nd art. of the Maimonidean creed: "I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be his name, is a unity, and that there is no unity in any manner like unto his and that he alone is our God, who was, who is, and will be²³."

The moment we ask what Maimonides means by Unity, we find ourselves outside the biblical context and in the realm of speculative philosophy.

In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides goes into a careful discussion as to the nature of God. God, he tells us "is not a magnitude," for this reason he has no qualities which can be superadded to his essence. "God is one in every respect, containing no plurality." It is therefore sheer sacrilege to aver that he has any attributes. Maimonides chides those who "declare the unity with their lips but assume plurality in their thoughts." They are no better than the Christians who believe in a Trinity. These are those who ascribe attributes to God. To maintain true Unity, he tells us, we must reject all essential attributes ascribed to God for these militate against his indivisibility and incorporeality. Attributes imply quality; quality implies composition; but this is an impossible predicate of God for "He is absolutely One."

The fact that the Scriptures speak of God in terms of His attri-

²² Ib. p. 2: "inconceivable" is inaccurate; הַנִּתְבֹּא means hidden as in Is. 1. 15.

²³ Singer, p. 89.

butes, Maimonides overcomes by the explanation that this is only apparently so for the biblical descriptions of God are only significations of the multitude of His actions. He concludes the chapter with this definition: God is “one simple substance excluding plurality, though accomplishing different actions²⁴.” In other words: we only know what God does but cannot know who He is.

Though Maimonides’ philosophical rationalism was vigorously opposed by some of his contemporaries, his thinking has made a permanent mark upon Judaism. The Synagogue’s easy accommodation to the scientific temper of our times it owes to a large degree to Maimonides’ influence.

But philosophic Unitarianism carries its dangers. There is a latent tendency toward pantheism in the Synagogue from which not even the orthodox can escape. So pious a man as the late chief Rabbi of Palestine, Abraham Isaak Kook, sometimes used expressions which were closer to Spinoza than to the Bible. Here is a typical sentence: “There is nothing but the Absolute Divinity²⁵.” Here creation is absorbed in the Godhead and God Himself has ceased to be a person.

The discovery that the concept of Unity is of purely philosophical provenance carries even greater dangers. Once God is reduced to a concept He becomes an abstraction and is divorced from the actualities of life. Salomon Suskowicz is thus able to infer from the fact that “the Unity of God is not an ethical, but a purely philosophical attainment,” that Jewish ethics is entirely independent of belief in one God, there is no such thing as ethical Monotheism. The only foundation for Jewish ethics is “logical perception²⁶.” Once God has been removed from the realm of moral values His existence becomes hypothetical.

There is a great gulf between the biblical affirmation: the Lord alone is God and the kind of “Unity” which is defined in terms of “simple essence” and “absolute divinity.”

²⁴ Moses Maimonides: *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Engl. by M. Friedlander, 2nd ed., 1947, p. 67, 72.

²⁵ Quoted by S. H. Bergmann: *Judaism*, Summer 1958, p. 243.

²⁶ Salomon Suskowicz: *Is there a Jewish Philosophy?* *Judaism*, 1958, p. 206f.

3. *The Church and the Holy Trinity*

The doctrine of the Trinity is the dividing line between Church and Synagogue. This has been so from the very beginning. Jesus of Nazareth would have ultimately found a place in Jewish tradition but for the fact that the Church made extravagant claims on his behalf. The rejection of his Messiahship has something to do with the question what kind of a Messiah he wanted to be. It was no religious trespass to claim Messiahship, but it was a sacrilegious act to claim an unique relationship to God. The Church did so on behalf of her Lord.

The issue turned on the interpretation of O.T. texts. The exegetical question was and remains the burning issue in the Church-Synagogue discussion: does the O.T. warrant the Christological ideas of the Church?

The Church insists that it does and tries to prove her position by quoting a *catena* of texts. The Synagogue denies the legitimacy of Christian exegesis. She is unable to accept the Christian "proofs" as compelling or even reasonable.

There are three areas of dispute in the discussion of messianic prophecy:

(a) Are there any messianic texts in the O.T. which warrant belief in a personal Messiah?

For the ancient Synagogue there was no doubt that the O.T. looked towards the coming of a person and not just of a messianic age. This is not the case any more. There is a growing conviction within the Synagogue to-day that the messianic hope of the O.T. can be detached from the idea of a personal Messiah. Most Jews look towards a Messianic Age and do not expect the advent of a Messiah.

(b) Is the Messiah, granted that such a person is envisaged in the Hebrew Bible, more than a human being? On this question both the ancient and the modern Synagogue are in complete agreement: the O.T. gives no grounds for the Christian doctrine of the Messiah, in fact it contradicts it.

(c) Can it be proved from the O.T. that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah?

The Synagogue's answer is that there is no such proof.

These questions bear directly upon the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and therefore need more careful treatment.

(a) *The O.T. and the doctrine of the Trinity.* It is an old established tradition within the Church that vestiges of a trinitarian point of view are already contained in the O.T. The early Church Fathers had no doubts on this score. It must however be admitted that they did not invent the idea, they inherited it. The N.T. pioneered in the field of messianic exegesis and the Fathers followed suit. In Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* we have already a fully worked out exegetical tradition of christological proofs. Trypho the Jew asks of Justin that he provide proof that Christ is God from the Spirit of prophecy, and the Church Father enters upon a lengthy and frequently far-fetched biblical exposition to prove his point. He is able to quote "Moses," "David," Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah and Zechariah in support of his christological views. Wherever God acts and speaks in the O.T. Christ acts and speaks, for Christ is the Word of God. "You must not imagine," he says to Trypho, "that the unbegotten God Himself came down or went up from any place. For the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither has come to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor rises up... How then, could he talk with any one...?" Justin maintains that whenever we read in the O.T. of an encounter between man and God, it was not the ineffable Lord who was heard and seen but His Christ, God's Son, who both represents God and is God himself²⁷.

Less than a century later, Tertullian in his *Treatise against Praxeas* (c. A. D. 217) provides already a carefully defined trinitarian doctrine based upon proof-texts from the O.T. The tradition to go back to the O.T. for the christological proof has persisted in the Church to this day. However, the modern approach to the exegetical problem is gradually shifting. This is the result of a more careful treatment of the biblical text. My good friend, George A. F. Knight, now of McCormick Seminary, Chicago, has tried to re-state the case for a trinitarian approach to the Hebrew Bible. The principle of his exegetical effort is the Hebrew concept of the

²⁷ Cf. Justin's Dial. ch. 127.

Word as an extention of the person who speaks. Prof. Knight, though he quotes many texts, does not involve himself in minute exegesis, but rather uses the Hebraic thought-forms as a basis for his argument. Much in what he says is well justified in support of the N.T. position. But he admits, and this is the most significant aspect of his study, that it is only from the perspective of the N.T. that his results can be obtained. These are his words: "From our knowledge of God gained through reading the O.T. alone we could never have dared to suppose the Incarnation or the Cross a possibility²⁸." Although he posits "that the mystery of the Holy Trinity was not entirely hidden from the minds of God's people even before his coming to earth in Christ," yet it is only because "our knowledge of God as we have it revealed to us in Christ" tallies with the "pictorial representation of the Nature of God" in the O.T. that we can detect a trinitarian aspect within the Hebrew Scriptures²⁹.

Prof. Knight's cautious approach to the subject is an indication of a complete shift in the history of Christian exegesis. The method employed is different from the traditional one in that it treats the text in its context and refuses to go beyond the permissible. But there is still another aspect to it: it recognizes the difference between a subjective and a purely objective approach to the Bible. By detached, objective exegesis, there are no indications of a trinitarian doctrine in the O.T. It is only subjectively, with the eyes of a Christian believer, that the trinitarian aspect extends from the N.T. to the Hebrew Scriptures. With regard to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the O.T. evidence is even more tenuous. Prof. Knight frankly admits: "I do not believe we shall discover neat and cut-and-dried biblical evidence for a doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity³⁰."

(b) *The Trinitarian doctrine of the Church.* The view is frequently expressed, specially by Jews, that the doctrine of the Trinity is a remainder of pagan polytheism in the Church. But it is enough

²⁸ G. A. F. Knight: A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity, 1953, p. 51.

²⁹ Ib., p. 33.

³⁰ Ib., p. 47.

to read any of the early Church Fathers to doubt the veracity of such a view. They are most insistent that Christians can only believe in One God. To the possible accusation that Christians believe in two gods, Tertullian replies: God forbid! That there are two Gods or two Lords “is a statement which at no time proceeds out of our mouth.” Otherwise, he asks, why should the Gentiles have to become Christians, except that they pass “from the multitude of their idols to the One Only God, in order that a difference might be distinctly settled between the worshippers of One God and the votaries of polytheism³¹.” If it were otherwise, Christians need not undergo persecution, says Tertullian, as soon as they would swear to a plurality of gods they would be free. Justin composed a short treatise *On the Sole Monarchia of God* quoting even from pagan poets as a testimony to the Unity of God. Athenagoras (the Athenian philosopher and Christian in his *Apology* addressed to Marcus Aurelius c. A. D. 177) refutes the accusation that Christians are atheists. Although they reject polytheism as absurd, they acknowledge one God only, the Maker of the Universe. Like Justin he calls upon the witness of poets and philosophers that there is only one God in whom Christians believe.

It therefore must come as a surprise that the same Christian writers who are so insistent upon the Unity of God should express that Unity in trinitarian language. It is an odd fact that the Church Fathers were able to point to Greek philosophers and poets when they tried to prove the Unity of God, but when they speak of the Trinity they have no such support. At this point they have to fall back upon their faith and their inward conviction. One can still feel something of the embarrassment on the part of Athenagoras when he reaches this subject. “Nor let any one think it ridiculous that God should have a Son,” he warns, “For though the poets, in their fictions, represent the gods as no better than men, our mode of thinking is not the same as theirs, concerning either God the Father or the Son. But the Son of God is the Logos of the Father, in idea and in operation; for after the pattern of Him and through Him were all things made, the Father and the

³¹ Tertullian: *Adversus Praxeian*, ch. 13.

Son being one³².” When he speaks of the Holy Trinity, he can only quote the Bible.

The trinitarian doctrine of the Godhead has dominated Christian thinking through the centuries. The philosophical working out of the doctrine may be due to the temper of the time, but the substance itself is implicit in the N.T. With this doctrine the Church separates itself from polytheism on the one hand and from Judaism on the other. She rejects the plurality of gods as idolatry, and the unity of God as sheer rationalism. Her knowledge of God she derives primarily from the Word spoken to her in history by Jesus Christ.

(c) *The Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ.* The peculiar bias in the Christian doctrine of God is towards Jesus Christ. He stands in the centre of revelation. Jews experience this infraction of the divine-human relationship as an intolerable interference. They prefer the medium of the Torah, the means of Prayer, the experience of mysticism, to this personal encounter with a person in history as the vehicle of God’s grace. As a matter of fact, the Christian too frequently avoids the Centre of revelation and prefers to find less personal avenues of approach to God. Legalism, mysticism, moral endeavour, as expressions of man’s ability to reach beyond himself, are the ever — present temptations to Christians, as they are to all men. It is only when man discovers himself as creature before the Creator and realizes the total Otherness of God that the Gospel begins to make sense. By the Gospel we mean God acting on behalf of man in the person of Jesus Christ.

But the Holy Trinity as a doctrine of God implies more than Jesus as the Mediator between God and man. Christ is not merely a tool which God uses, he is a person in an unique personal relationship to the Father. This is what the Church means by the Son of God. Though Tertullian sometimes lacks precision in his theological statements there is a passage in *Adversus Praxeas* which inimitably expresses what the Church means by the Holy Trinity: “Bear always in mind,” he says, “that this is the rule of faith which I profess: by it I testify that the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit

³² Athenagoras, ch. 10.

are inseparable from each other, and so will you know in what sense this is said. Now, observe, my assertion is that the Father is one, and that the Son is one, and that the Spirit is one, and that they are distinct from Each Other.” But he quickly adds: “The statement is taken in a wrong sense by every uneducated as well as every perversely disposed person, as if it predicated a diversity, in such a sense as to imply a separation among the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit³³.” To explain the paradox of unity and separation, Tertullian says that the distinction in the Holy Trinity is not by division but by the mode of their being. All this may sound rather abstract but it is the theological way of saying that in Christ God Himself draws near to man for his salvation. Nothing less than this is the Gospel. Unless God truly acts in Christ on our behalf the Cross is not God’s radical answer to man’s need. God does not act by proxy, He Himself stoops down to the level of man’s position. In this sense God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5. 19). We see now why the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is at the very heart of the Gospel.

4. The area of tension

There is no real area of tension unless Church and Synagogue face each other. In separation and detachment the Synagogue’s accentuation of the Unity of God ultimately degenerates into philosophical Unitarianism. The Church without the challenge of the Synagogue is constantly tempted to by-pass the Otherness of God. This is the peculiarly Christian temptation by reason of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

The Incarnation, unless balanced by the doctrine of the Holy Trinity reduces God to manhood by sheer exposure. God becomes the obvious *vis-à-vis*. This is the equation: God — the Incarnate Word — Jesus of Nazareth — God in visible form. “God in the boat on the lake of Galilee” was a sermon I once heard. The description of the Virgin Mary as the *Theotokos* (Lat. *Deipara*) is a

³³ Tert.: Adv. Praxean, ch. 9.

classical example. The Polish for Christmas is *Boże Narodzenie* — God's birthday. Ignatius speaks of Jesus: "Our God Jesus Christ," pure and simple³⁴. The Anglican Canadian Hymnal No. 526 hymn begins with the words: "Jesus is God." All Jesus-worship, so prevalent in R. C. mysticism and in the devotional life of pietism, belongs to this order of immediacy.

Here the basic biblical presuppositions have been thrown to the wind: the Otherness of God has been annulled by His humanity; the invisible God has become visible in a historic person; the ontological distinction between creature and Creator has been removed: man can now achieve divinity; the moral dualism in which man moves between God's absolute holiness and man's sinfulness becomes invalid; *yir'at Adonai* becomes a morbid love which ends in mystical absorption; the *'El kannah* is now the placated God by the presence of a partner. In fact we find ourselves with a divine family of three members in utter *Gemütlichkeit*.

In the face of such a terrible parody of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Synagogue stands as the constant witness to the One and Only God: *Shem'a Yisrael, 'Adonai Eloheinu, 'Adonai 'ehad*.

But the Church's witness to the Synagogue is no less important. We have seen how the doctrine of the Unity of God can degenerate into philosophical Unitarianism. This always happens when Judaism allies itself with philosophy. In the end God becomes an abstract concept until He is declared to be altogether unnecessary. Rationalism on the one hand and pantheism on the other reduce His Otherness to Nothingness. Humanism overcomes the biblical moral dualism and the distance between God and man is reduced to a minimum. The suspense of faith is overcome by religious activism. Disorientated Judaism and disorientated Christianity find themselves in the same boat — in religious syncretism.

Here the Church with her trinitarian orientation reminds the Jew: this is not the God of Israel.

³⁴ Ignatius: The Eph., ch. 18.