



# ST. ANDREW'S THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE P R E S S

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE OF HUMANITY IN AUGUSTINE & SOLOVEITCHIK

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A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Humanity in Augustine and Soloveitchik  
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***De Civitate Dei and Ish ha-halakah: A Comparative Analysis of the  
Nature of Humanity in Augustine and Soloveitchik***

by

Adrian D. E. Sieunarine

## **DEDICATION**

**To Irwin, Cynthia, Yvonne (Nandrani) and other beloved members of  
The City.**

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This thesis shall compare and analyze the nature of humanity as presented by Augustine of Hippo in his *De Civitate Dei (The City of God)* and by Joseph Soloveitchik in *Ish ha-halakah (Halakhic Man)*. The thesis shall demonstrate, in addition to the expected differences, that there is a curious closeness in their thought. **Setting and Significance:** Volumes have been penned over the course of history which explore the dimensions of varied views of the *imago dei*- the “image of God.” Inseparably part of that image is the vocation of humanity. However, there has been no study which examines that brilliant thinker of Christianity, Augustine of Hippo, in conjunction with that profound and influential thinker of Judaism who was known as ‘HaRav’, Joseph Soloveitchik. This thesis shall compare and analyze the views of Augustine and Soloveitchik on an area of like interest, namely, the nature of humanity. This thesis shall undertake this analysis on the primary basis of their mature, major theological works, *City of God* for Augustine and *Halakhic Man* for Soloveitchik.

**Relation to other areas of research:** The comparative analysis of the nature of humanity in Augustine and Soloveitchik has tremendous implications for several fields of research. Three main areas of study which would find this thesis interwoven with their interests are the study of traditional Christian doctrines (studies of Augustine in particular), the study of traditional Jewish doctrines (studies of Soloveitchik in particular) and the burgeoning corpus of Jewish-Christian dialogue and research. The Christian world owes much of its doctrines to Augustine. Catholics and Protestants alike claim many of his views as authoritative. Soloveitchik’s position on certain matters has been

adopted by all segments of Orthodox Jewry.<sup>1</sup> By highlighting some of their views, this thesis can clarify them in the comparison and contrast. The cause of Christian-Jewish dialogue could be furthered since the fundamental concepts of key thinkers would be appreciated. In the world of Augustinian studies, more can be learned about the view of humanity which he presented in *City of God*. There are so many books currently available about Augustine's thought that one scholar points out that a new writer has to explain why another book "is a necessary contribution to the already formidable total"<sup>2</sup> but this work enters the realm of the relatively scarce in taking the ideas of two authors, Augustine and Soloveitchik, who are representative of their traditions, treating them both seriously, and engaging in comparison of a key theme in a major work of theirs. Augustine is thoroughly Christian and Soloveitchik is completely Jewish in his outlook. Soloveitchik is celebrated and studied in Judaism but I have not encountered any Christian who has published a study of his writings, and I look forward to breaking new ground in this direction. Soloveitchik dismissed Christianity as Augustine dismissed Judaism, but this study shall not focus on their opinions of the faith traditions to which they did not belong, but on their articulation of their own position, since it is only through this that interesting similarities in their thought can be perceived.

This thesis is undertaken in a spirit of humility forced upon me when I realize that it perhaps is impossible for a lesser mind like mine to understand these great minds and the worlds they represent. With sincere respect for each, I offer my analysis of their views as interpreted. Both thinkers have attracted students so there is an abundance of secondary

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<sup>1</sup> "Soloveitchik, Joseph Dov", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, Keter Publishing, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1963, p.9.

sources, and my interpretation is carried out while engaging in an ongoing dialogue with other writers who have studied either thinker.

The structure of this thesis shall usually be that of close textual study, presenting one view, then the other. Operating in chronological order, the view of Augustine then that of Soloveitchik shall be presented except in those instances where an issue demands close juxtaposition of their views, or back and forth comparison on a particular point.

This study is undergirded and animated by the rabbinic methodological principle of *hiddush*. As Neusner observed, *hiddush* (novelty) constitutes a scholarly disquisition upon a supposed contradiction between two earlier authorities regardless of the ages in which they lived or in their relation to one another.<sup>3</sup> A higher harmonization between the authorities is then discerned. In this context, the authorities are Augustine and Soloveitchik and the *hiddush* resides in the mystical equivalence of humanity's alternatives when offered a relationship with Christ or the Halakhah.

The introduction shall consist of two parts designed to introduce the reader to the scope of thought under discussion by introducing the thinkers themselves. The section on Augustine's life and work shall note that the lifetime of Augustine (354-430) was simultaneous with that of a crucial if not actually critical period in the life of the Roman state. He witnessed the moral and physical degeneration of the Empire, and the sack of Rome by barbarians in 410, a sack which would have been unthinkable a few years earlier. In his personal life, he was born of a pagan father and a Christian mother and converted to Christianity himself in 386, from which point onward he was a staunch defender of his faith to which he believed God had called him. He was animated

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<sup>3</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism: From Talmudic to Modern Times*, New York, Ktav, 1974, p.9.



throughout his life and writings by the fervent, overwhelming conviction best expressed as an outpouring to God: "Thou hast made us for Thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in Thee."<sup>4</sup> His work *City of God* was written to disprove the charge that the sack of Rome was due to the neglect of the old pagan gods, a neglect traceable to the influence of Christianity. The book is divided into two unequal sections. The first and shorter section is directed toward establishing that worldly calamity does not come from neglecting the pagan gods, even as worldly security cannot be acquired by devotion to them. The second and longer section describes the origin, growth, and ultimate destiny of the two cities, heavenly and earthly, whose citizens Augustine sees inhabiting this world.

The life and work of Joseph Dov Soloveitchik (1903-1993) also occupied a significant era in the course of an important nation. Israel was established in 1948 and Soloveitchik witnessed the strife attendant upon and following its establishment. His attitude to Israel itself can be the focus of a fascinating study. It shall suffice to say here that he was remarkably akin to Augustine in avoiding the identification of the presence of God with a particular temporal location.

In his personal life, Joseph Soloveitchik came from a very distinguished family of scholars. His father Moses was a famous rabbi, and Joseph learned much from his grandfather Hayyim, such as the method of incisive analysis, exact classification, critical independence, and emphasis on Maimonides. Most of his teaching was never written, and

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<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, I, i, 1 in A. C. Outler, *Augustine: The Confessions and Enchiridion*, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. VII, London, S. C. M., 1955, p.31.

has emerged only recently as former students publish their memories and reflections.<sup>5</sup> His chief concern in all he said and did, in all the varied concepts of his thought, was to clarify halakha and explain its relevance.<sup>6</sup> His work *Halakhic Man* was written to explain that there was another world view apart from that of the rational and the religious, which were both collapsing. This other and better world view is that of Halakhic Man, for whom “The world was created in accordance with the will of God, who wills to contract His Divine Presence in it. Therefore we are called to act and to arrange our lives in accordance with this fundamental idea.”<sup>7</sup> The book describes in the first and longer section the world view and life of Halakhic Man, and in the second, his creative capacity since the Halakhic man longs to create.

### **Chapter One: The Character of God:**

It is essential to the study of the nature of humanity in Augustine and Soloveitchik to undertake a brief comparison of their views of God. This comparison shall focus on three main ideas.

#### **(i) Sovereignty and Tzimtzum:**

Augustine’s theology was very strongly God-focused. Augustine stressed the Sovereignty of God as can be seen from the title of Book V:22 of *City of God*: “The true God, in whose hands all power resides, and by whose providence universal rule is exercised,

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<sup>5</sup> As for example, Leon M. Mozeson, *Echoes of the Song of the Nightingale: The Torah as a Divine Document*, New Jersey, Shaare Zedek, 1991, and Pinchas H. Peli, *Soloveitchik on Repentance: The Thought and Oral Discourses of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, New York, Paulist Press, 1984.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Joseph Epstein, ed., *Shiurei HaRav: A Conspectus of the Public Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, Hoboken, New Jersey, KTAV Publishing, 1974, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, tr. Lawrence Kaplan, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1983, p.53.

was himself responsible for the ordering of the Roman Empire.”<sup>8</sup> God by his will conceals the direct application of his providence from us most of the time, except for miraculous works. We can never see God exactly as he is since his glory would be beyond us. As Book X:13 states, “The invisible God often makes himself visible, not as he is but according to the capacity of those who see him.”<sup>9</sup>

The fact that Soloveitchik’s theology was anthropocentric in no way interfered with his belief in Divine Sovereignty. More fundamental to Soloveitchik’s theology in this regard was the Lurianic mystical principle of Tzimtzum. In order for the Infinite, which can be understood as Absolute Spirit, to create a world, the Divine had to deliberately withdraw or contract the Infinitude of the Divine Presence. In a vital corollary to this thought, Soloveitchik believed that the Halakhah was the tzimtzum of the Shekinah.<sup>10</sup> In other words, when the Divine Presence is contracted in the world, the Halakhah is its contraction.

(ii) Holiness:

Both Augustine and Soloveitchik emphasized the holiness of God. For Augustine, this holiness was most evident in contrast to human sinfulness, because there is no evil in God who created and can create only good. In Augustine’s theology in *City of God* goodness was more of a focus than holiness. At this point, there is sharp contradistinction between Augustine and Soloveitchik. Soloveitchik believed that both the good and the evil principle are created by God, but the initiation of evil by the Divine in no way interferes with or

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<sup>8</sup> The title is translated from the original Latin, as found in *St. Augustine’s City of God*, abridged and translated by J. W. C. Wand, London, Oxford University Press, 1963, p.111.

<sup>9</sup> Also a chapter title from the original Latin, *ibid.*, p.169.

<sup>10</sup> *Halakhic Man*, pp.55, 108. This has been also noted by Zvi Kolitz, *Confrontation: The Existential Thought of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik*, Hoboken, New Jersey, KTAV Publishing, 1993, p.15.

interrupts God's status as the Holy One. In Soloveitchik's view, human life has great capacity to achieve holiness.

(iii) Christology and Theonomy:

An expected contrast between Augustine and Soloveitchik in the character of God is in Augustine's view of Christ, who Augustine regarded as the revealed Mediator and Son of God who is the Christian's beloved Saviour and Example. This section shall then look at Soloveitchik's concept of Theonomy, Divine Law, which contends that one should have a loving relationship with the Torah, which is the higher essence of the freedom for which humanity yearns. In Soloveitchik's theological framework, the Torah and the Halakhah are identical. In Augustine and Soloveitchik, the depiction of Christ or Halakhah/ Torah as the dimension in which God intervenes in humanity is strikingly similar.

**Chapter Two: Humanity's Situation:**

This section shall examine Augustine's and Soloveitchik's perspectives on sin. Related concepts of repentance, forgiveness and grace shall also be discussed, and the issue of humanity's created state compared to its present condition shall be explored. Augustine believed that sin was the inescapable, hereditary result of the disobedience in the Garden of Eden and there was thus a sharp distinction between our created and our present condition. He believed, however, that evil was the absence of good and therefore it was possible for a being to be completely good, but not completely evil, or it would cease to exist. He also believed that there was an evil will in humanity, the cause of which we should not explore, but it is a pervasive perversity. Forgiveness is always available and always needed: as long

as we are in our mortal bodies there can never fail to be a reason for saying to God ‘Forgive us our trespasses’, Augustine declared in Book XXII: 23.

Soloveitchik had a frequent metaphor for ‘sin and repentance’; it was ‘illness and cure.’ There were two types or paths of repentance for Soloveitchik: the first was the penitence initiated by those who sanctify themselves “through acts of conquest” and the second was the path taken by those who “attain sanctity by inspiration received from the Shekhinah.”<sup>11</sup> He regarded sin as an organic creation which needed an environment in which it could bud, flower, bear fruit and take root, but the remorse of repentance would be sufficient to acquit, and one also needed to refrain from sinning and turn away from the path of sin. Like Augustine, Soloveitchik clearly stated that God pardons only because of his grace, and Soloveitchik also advocated repentance as a lifestyle and not as a solitary act. In Augustine and Soloveitchik, the source of sin was seen as our own free choice, the communication of the sin through the ages was different, but the effects and the resolution strikingly similar. Augustine stressed that only God’s grace can forgive sin, and on this point Soloveitchik agreed but then differed when he strongly stressed human striving, and free choice in seeking Divine forgiveness. The Christian theology of forgiveness can learn a great deal from Soloveitchik, a very recent (1995) and influential Christian theologian has noted.<sup>12</sup>

### **Chapter Three: Humanity’s Negative Alternatives:**

(i) Augustine saw only one negative alternative, in contrast to some of the people against whom he debated and whose views are recorded in *City of God*. (Marcus Varro, for

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<sup>11</sup> Soloveitchik on Repentance, op.cit., p.317.

<sup>12</sup> L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*, Grand Rapids, William Eerdmans, 1995, p.159.

example, saw three choices in life; the contemplative, the active, and a mixture of the two). The Earthly City was the choice of those whose only god was themselves, and who followed their own desires and devices of body and mind. The first founder of the Earthly City was Cain, whose deed was paralleled by the founder of Rome—fratricide; as Cain killed Abel, so Romulus slew Remus. Augustine uses the Greek word ‘archetype’ here to highlight that these are archetypes of the citizens of the Earthly City. Any person today can belong to either (Book XIV:28, XV:14). Those who follow the path of the Earthly City are obsessed with transient pleasures and deprive themselves of God.

- (ii) Soloveitchik described two negative alternatives: the cognitive man and the religious man. The cognitive approach cannot tolerate mystery and seeks to regulate the universe, negate the unforeseen and incomprehensible, and understand the wondrous and sudden. Anything which does not fit this system is excluded from it. The religious approach accepts mystery, but bars the intellect from all access to reality. Soloveitchik explained that astonishment, which can be the first step to understanding, is considered the ultimate goal and crowning glory of the *homo religiosus*. Those who choose these world views and follow these ways deprive themselves of the fullness available to them. Soloveitchik portrayed the choice away from halakhic fulfillment, which would include the choices of the cognitive and religious man, as the choice of “species man.”

#### **Chapter Four: Humanity’s Positive Alternatives:**

For Augustine, the positive alternative was the City of God. Those of this city follow God's ways, despite all the suffering they may endure in the process. They are transformed and exert a transforming power for good on their surroundings. They look

forward to eternal blessedness with the Messiah. In the Heavenly City, the final vindication of the City of God occurs; some of the most rapturous passages in Christian religious literature are Augustine's description of this ultimate state.

(ii) Soloveitchik's positive alternative was Halakhic Man. Halakhic Man "reflects two opposing selves"<sup>13</sup> because he is a union of cognitive and religious approaches while as a whole differing from either of them, and suffering much in the conflict caused by their union. (As an aside, it is fascinating to note that a philosopher who does a biographical study of *Augustine* has observed this struggle and union in that "he typifies the anxiety endured by one who is torn between the appeal of God's revelation and fidelity to his own intellect"<sup>14</sup>) Soloveitchik boldly stated that halakhic man is "devoid of any element of transcendence"<sup>15</sup> but the reader can see that transcendence comes with the vocation. The ideal Halakhah has an ideal standard for everything in this world; the Sinai-given Torah which guides along the path leading to existence. The halakhic approach begins with an ideal creation and ends with a real one, but the ideal Halakhah rather than the real is the yearning of the halakhic man. The ideal world will triumph over this profane reality in national redemption, the coming of the Messiah, and the building of the eternal Temple when the Halakhah will shine in undimmed majesty and beauty.<sup>16</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Curious Closeness**

In their views of the nature of humanity, the systems of Augustine and Soloveitchik exhibit the differences one would expect: In philosophy, the largely Platonic system of

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<sup>13</sup> Halakhic Man, op.cit., p.3.

<sup>14</sup> Albert B. Hakim, *Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, New York, Macmillan, 1987, p.121.

<sup>15</sup> Halakhic Man, op.cit., p.17.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, pp.19-29.

Augustine contrasts with the largely existentialist system of Soloveitchik. In theology, they exhibit variations with each other in their concept of sin, forgiveness and redemption. I think their contrasts make their closeness even more remarkable, because there is surprising similarity in their views of God and humanity. Both see a Sovereign God who restricts the exercise of His Sovereignty, both see the nature of created humanity as interwoven with negative and positive alternatives open to the will, both determine that our need is for dependence and obedience on God, and both describe the transformed and transformative effect that God's people have. God's people are changed and communicate that change to the world around them by their radically different world view and lives. Both explain in a careful and caring way that following the positive alternative is not easy- it can very well lead to suffering, if not from societal pressures, from a mental dialectic. Both anticipate a future blessedness by means of a revealed guide from heaven- Christ for Augustine, Halakhah for Soloveitchik.



## INTRODUCTION

### (i) Augustine: Life and Work.

The personal and professional dimensions of Augustine's life have undergone severe scrutiny and rigorous analysis, resulting in extensive if not exhaustive publications. The consensus appears to be that Augustine's distinctive personal journey must be outlined together with his career, for they were intertwined.

Augustine was born in 354 in the town of Thagaste. Peter Brown called this town "one of the many nuclei of egregious self-respect, which the Romans had scattered all over North Africa."<sup>1</sup> The prosperity of the town had declined since the first century and Augustine's father, Patricius, was of some social standing but meagre financial resources. A classical education was the obvious route out of poverty, and Augustine always cherished the sacrifices his family had to make for his schooling. For a while, he was a handbreadth away from destitution and his family was poorly dressed since they were spending all their funds on his education. The lack of money engendered in Augustine a distaste for wealth. When he became a bishop, for instance, he protested thus against those who tried to give him gifts of expensive robes for his episcopal station:

It is not becoming for Augustine who is poor, and who is the son of poor parents. Would you have men say that in the Church I found means to obtain richer clothing than I could in my father's house or in the pursuit of secular employment? That would be a shame to me.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969, p.19.

<sup>2</sup>Augustine, *Sermons*, 356, 13.

About Augustine's father, little else is known apart from the interesting fact that he was a pagan and was baptized only shortly before his death, which occurred when Augustine was seventeen. From the *Confessions*, one gets the impression of Patricius as a passionate man who cared deeply for his son and for his wife, Monica, but who had a crude personality and violent temper.<sup>3</sup>

Much more is known about Monica, Augustine's mother, than about his father. She was a devout Christian who ensured that her child was dedicated to God, although baptism was postponed until adulthood, a common practice at the time. As Gerald Bonner pointed out, Monica's "influence of exhortation and example"<sup>4</sup> was an abiding one, and would lead to the blending of intellect and devotion in Augustine's works.

Monica had other children, but they were overshadowed by Augustine. Some scholars have pointed out that sometimes Monica's care for Augustine could be interpreted as an unhealthy dominance in his life. R.L. Ottley and Bonner reviewed the situations of Augustine's life in which Monica appeared, and Bonner sided with Ottley in agreeing that Monica "was by no means faultlessly virtuous and wise."<sup>5</sup> Ottley pointed out that her actions indicate that Monica had "a touch of African fanaticism; she cherished some worldly

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<sup>3</sup>Augustine, *Confessions*, IX, ix, 19.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1963, p.39.

<sup>5</sup>Bonner, *op. cit.*, p.40. R.L. Ottley, *Studies in the Confessions of St. Augustine*, London, 1919, p.5.

ambitions, and in her upbringing of Augustine she made some grave mistakes which the providence of God overruled for good.”<sup>6</sup>

Augustine loved his education and resolved to be a teacher. After teaching grammar for a year in his home town (374-75/6) he taught rhetoric in Carthage for about seven years. During the summer of 383, he decided to go to Rome where he taught rhetoric for a year then became a public professor of rhetoric in Milan where his mother, one of his brothers, a woman whom he loved and their son, Adeodatus, as well as three cousins joined him in 385.

While living in Carthage, Augustine had grown interested in Manicheism, a religion based on the teachings of a Persian called Mani who regarded himself as the Apostle of Jesus Christ and taught such doctrines as the world was the product of a struggle between two co-equal and co-eternal powers of Light and Darkness, and who held to a pantheistic concept of God, and a high view of astrology. Augustine was a Manichean for nine years, then broke with them for several reasons: a close friend converted to Catholicism shortly before death, discrepancies within Manicheanism and between their system and the realities of the world, and between their lifestyles and beliefs became evident to the once ardent believer. Augustine left Manicheanism and plunged into despair.

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<sup>6</sup>Ottley, *ibid.*

In 386, the sermons of Ambrose which Augustine had attended only for their oratorical merit, and the prayers of his own mother Monica, had their effect. Augustine experienced a dramatic conversion and embraced a Christianity clad in neo-Platonic philosophy. Warren T. Smith believed that what clearly appealed most to Augustine was the possibility of combining Platonism with Christian cosmology so that the Platonic conception of God—the One as the Absolute, the All-Perfect, from whom emanates the intelligence- is key to understanding the God in Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Augustine and his friends moved into Cassiciacum, north of Milan. There, they engaged in debate and Augustine's works *On the Happy Life* and *On Order* demonstrate Augustine's transition from philosophy to theology. In Milan, Augustine and his son were baptized by Ambrose. Monica died shortly after this, and Augustine returned to Rome where he plunged himself into writing. His works *On the Immortality of the Soul* and *On the Greatness of the Soul* reveal his faith as textured by the recent death of his mother.

At a small estate in his home town in Africa, Augustine established a lay retreat and published *On True Religion* which took the Trinity as the foundation of true religion, and saw Christianity as the consummation of Plato's teaching. A visit to Hippo Regius in 391 resulted in conscription to the priesthood under Bishop Valerius. By 392, Augustine's interests as a priest had turned to Biblical

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<sup>7</sup>Warren Thomas Smith, "Augustine", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, editor in chief Mircea Eliade, New York, Macmillan, 1987.

matters and he wrote to Jerome in Bethlehem asking for Latin translations of Greek texts. Augustine's numerous commentaries show a keen mind, but one with only a scant knowledge of Hebrew and only a slightly better knowledge of Greek. Erudite reasoning and a wealth of knowledge in a variety of subjects compensated for the lack of linguistic explorations into the heart of the original languages of the Scripture.

At Augustine's behest, the Catholic Church realized that answers were necessary to the Manicheans, pagans and other attackers of Christianity. Augustine issued *On Faith and the Creed* to the General Council of Africa, when they met in Hippo in 393. In that work he called for reform of the Church, defense of the faith, and evangelism.

Augustine was made a bishop in 394 or 395, the coadjutor of Valerius until 396 when Valerius died and Augustine was sole bishop of Hippo. Around this time, Augustine worked on the *Confessions*. This treatise was a confession of praise to God in which intimate, often embarrassing facts and reflections were admitted. Augustine revealed his struggle with himself, his sexual temptations, and his pride and rejoiced in the glory of the God who redeemed him. The *Confessions* best demonstrate how Augustine was animated throughout the remainder of his life and writings by the fervent, overwhelming conviction best expressed as an outpouring to God: "Thou hast made us for Thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in Thee."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Augustine, *Confessions*, I, i, 1, in A. C. Outler, *Augustine: The Confessions and Enchiridion*, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. VII, London, S. C. M., 1955.

The *Confessions* was also a theological work. In the last three books, Augustine outlined his theory of memory, time and Genesis and his discernment of the work of the Holy Spirit in the act of creation. Warren Smith observed the significant point that in the *Confessions* Augustine also developed the theological direction in which he would move—“emphasizing divine predestination, personal religious experience through conscious conversion, and the direct relationship of the believer to God.”<sup>9</sup>

The story of the rest of Augustine’s life is the story of controversies throughout which Augustine staunchly defended the Catholic position. The Donatists provoked a major schism in the African Church by claiming that a blemished priesthood of the Catholics invalidated their sacraments, and Augustine capably responded by arguing that the source of the efficacy of the means of grace is the God who alone gives grace.

In his work *On Free Will*, Augustine tried to explain the contradiction of the existence of evil in the world with the goodness of God, and located evil in the free will of humanity. Themes given in part in this work are expanded in the some fifteen works attacking Pelagius and Julian of Eclanum and maintaining that God’s grace alone can redeem. Some of Augustine’s views appear to contradict others because of the polemic nature of so many of his works. In some works he stressed human responsibility and in others he seemed to deny it and to scoff at those who believe that human achievement is possible. In some works such as *Enchiridion* he declared that the whole of doctrine might be summarized as service to God through faith, hope, and love while in his anti-Manichean and anti-Pelagian works he contended that without the sacraments there was

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<sup>9</sup> Warren Thomas Smith, op. cit., p.522.

no salvation. The variation in his views according to his audience can frustrate anyone attempting to summarize his positions, and is one of the reasons this study shall be confined to the views explicated in *City of God*.

Augustine witnessed the moral and physical degeneration of the Roman Empire, and the three-day sack of Rome by Alaric in August 410 which had a powerful impact on civilization. Jerome lamented, "If Rome can perish, what can be safe?"<sup>10</sup> Alaric regarded himself a Christian and spared the churches. People began accepting the rumor that neglect of the pagan gods had led to the downfall of their city. Burleigh suggested that the governing and literary classes afterwards probably felt that the horrible episode should not be mentioned. However, Augustine chose to dwell on it in *City of God* which is written in what Peter Brown called a "tone of massive deliberation."<sup>11</sup> Five books deal with those who worship the pagan gods for felicity on earth, five with those who worship them for eternal felicity. The remaining twelve books deal with Augustine's grand theme of the city of God and the city of the earth: four speak of their origin, four of their course in the past, and four with their ultimate destinies.

Henry Chadwick was partially right when he cautioned:

The *City of God* is treated incorrectly if it is regarded as a statement about political theory or as containing a philosophy of history intended to discern a divine pattern in the course of events. In fact, at many points in the work the argument is designed to show how hard it is to discern such a pattern.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> in Warren Thomas Smith, op. cit., p.525.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Brown, op. cit., p.303.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Chadwick, *Augustine*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986, p.106.

Seeing the *City of God* as political theory trivializes it, and overlooks what this work has to say to us today. As Chadwick further noted, “Augustine offers more hope to the individual than to the institutions of human society”<sup>13</sup> in this work. *City of God* can be interpreted in a staggering multitude of ways. In fact, it has been subject to varying interpretations of varying degrees of validity. It has been treated as a polemical work or an apology directed to the situation following the sack of Rome,<sup>14</sup> as a recommendation to accept the existing character of political life,<sup>15</sup> or as a towering demand that it be changed for the better.<sup>16</sup> TeSelle cited Joseph Ratzinger who thought that it is a massive theology of history, Franz Georg Maier who considered it an analysis of political ideology and an analysis of the political situation in antiquity, and Gustave Combes who regarded it as a source of principles which can still guide the political and moral theory, and the ecclesiastical policies of later generations.<sup>17</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, *City of God* is a comprehensive philosophy and theology which regards God as Sovereign over the events and movements of world history, and which includes as an integral part of its reasoning a philosophy of humanity.

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> John Neville Figgis, *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God'*, London, Longman, Green & Co., 1921.

<sup>15</sup> To some degree, Figgis, but moreso in Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*, New York, 1963.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Howard McIlwain, *The Growth of Political Thought in the West*, New York, 1932, pp. 154-160.

<sup>17</sup> Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine The Theologian*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1970, p. 269.



Four years before his death, Augustine began surveying, cataloging and correcting his vast corpus of literature. This was published as the *Retractions* and in it Augustine wondered whether he had written too much!<sup>18</sup> Augustine worked hard at this task, occasionally pausing to compose a treatise such as *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Gift of Perseverance*, defending his views and refuting challengers. He died in 430, a year before the city was besieged, sacked, evacuated and burnt. Augustine's works somehow escaped destruction and survived to establish doctrine in much of the Christian world to this day.

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<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *Retractions*, Prologue, 2.

(ii) Soloveitchik: Life and Work.

Joseph Dov Soloveitchik's family's name is first recorded with the spelling of 'Soloveichik'.<sup>19</sup> They were a prominent Lithuanian rabbinical family whose members have many great accomplishments to their credit. Soloveitchik was born in 1903 in Pruzhan, Poland where his maternal grandfather was rabbi. His early years were spent in Hasloviz, Belorussia where his father Moses was rabbi, and until his twenties, his virtually sole pursuit was the study of the Talmud and Halakhah. His grandfather, Hayyim Soloveichik, had developed a new method of Talmudic study which Joseph was able to master through his father's expert tutelage. This method involved carefully analyzing the subject under discussion after its division into categories and component parts. Hayyim produced a terminology to describe the different concepts and to demonstrate that the differences in the Talmud and in its authoritative interpreters flowed from them. Critical independence and an emphasis on Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* were integral to Hayyim's methodology.

Most studies of Soloveitchik's life include the formal training received from the males in the family but unfortunately overlook the immense learning he received from his mother. In a tribute to the Talner Rebbetzin, he wrote about his mother:

Most of all I learned that Judaism expresses itself not only in the formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She taught me that there

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<sup>19</sup> "Soloveichik", in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, Keter Publishing, 1971.

is a flavor, a scent and warmth to mitzvot. I learned from her the most important thing in life— to feel the presence of the Almighty and the gentle pressure of His hand resting upon my frail shoulders. Without her teachings, which were often transmitted to me in silence, I would have grown up a soulless being, dry and insensitive.<sup>20</sup>

Soloveitchik proceeded to explain how he may have learned about the laws of the Sabbath from his father, but from his mother he learned of the Sabbath as a “living entity.” He recalled, “The fathers knew much about the Shabbat; the mothers lived the Shabbat, experienced her presence, and perceived her beauty and splendor.”<sup>21</sup> From his mother, he learned how to abide in theology. The world of Divine realities became a universe in which Soloveitchik found he could delight and not just about which he could learn. His studies and teachings were filled with the passion of being in the presence of God. The fruits of his intellect became suffused with the warmth of experienced and beloved reality. As Goldberg explained, Soloveitchik saw himself throughout his life as “seizing and seized by a magnetic, continuously fluctuating relation with God.”<sup>22</sup>

In his late teens, Soloveitchik received the equivalent of a high-school education from private tutors, and at twenty-two entered the University of Berlin where he majored in philosophy and was attracted to the neo-Kantian school. This attraction is hardly surprising when one considers Kant’s articulation of the

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<sup>20</sup> Leon M. Mozeson records these words from Soloveitchik’s tribute in *Echoes of the Song of the Nightingale: The Torah as a Divine Document*, New Jersey, Shaare Zedek, 1991, p.263.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Hillel Goldberg, *Between Berlin and Slobodka: Jewish Transition Figures from Eastern Europe*, Hoboken, New Jersey, Ktav Publishing, 1989, p.95.

concept of the categorical imperative as a course of moral action whose intrinsic morality is instinctively grasped, propelling action only on a maxim through which one can will that it might become a universal law. The morality, indwelling and universality of the law are emphasized in this system.

In 1931, Soloveitchik received his doctorate for his dissertation on Hermann Cohen's epistemology and metaphysics. It has been noted that his first hope had been to undertake a dissertation on Plato and Maimonides but no one at the University of Berlin felt qualified to supervise it.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Soloveitchik was able to combine his continuing interest in Plato, Maimonides and Cohen's neo-Kantianism in his later works. In the same year, 1931, he married a doctor of education, Tanya Lewit, and in the following year they emigrated to the United States. They had such a fulfilling marriage that years after her death he publicly pined for her and would say, "What I would not give for just five minutes of conversation with her."<sup>24</sup>

A few months after their emigration, Soloveitchik became rabbi of the Orthodox Jewish community in Boston and founded the first Jewish day school in New England—the Maimonides School. He taught classes for talmudic students until 1941, when his father's death vacated the position of *rosh yeshiva* of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

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<sup>23</sup> David Singer and Moshe Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik: Lonely Man of Faith," *Modern Judaism*, vol.2, 3, 1982, p.268.

<sup>24</sup> Hillel Goldberg, *Between Berlin and Slobodka: Jewish Transition Figures from Eastern Europe*, Hoboken, New Jersey, Ktav Publishing, 1989, p.xii.

(RIETS). Soloveitchik ably succeeded his father as professor of Talmud there and proceeded to enhance the reputation of Yeshiva University.

Many hundreds of American rabbis made Soloveitchik their mentor but, as Helmreich observed, this did not hide him from condemnation by others for his modern views.<sup>25</sup> Helmreich noted that even those who considered Soloveitchik's views too radical did not dispute his vast knowledge of talmudic law or his powers of oratory. He adds that Soloveitchik rarely participated in the deliberations of other *rosh yeshivas* and was not accepted as part of their circle.

His students and many others respected "the Rav", as Soloveitchik was known. Aaron Kahn was associated with him for years, as a student and then as the person responsible for reviewing Soloveitchik's classroom lectures. He wrote:

The students realize that they're next to a giant in Torah who is also a great orator and philosopher and who has a great impact on *halacha*. Yet he relates to us on our own level. He'll say: "This question [concerning the Talmud] will keep me up all night. Will it keep any of you up all night?" Or he'll present something in class and, if the fellas don't react to it, he'll say: "I've been working on this solution for days and you just accept it! It's not a problem for you?!"

There are quite a few people who see the *Rav* as their father, in a sense. They regard their whole exposure to Torah as coming through and because of him.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> William B. Helmreich, *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986, p.38.

<sup>26</sup> Rabbi Aaron Kahn's views are in Helmreich, op.cit., p.152.

Soloveitchik's talent for simplifying the technical problems endeared him to his students and ensured that his lectures and public discourses had unusually wide influence. The annual halakhic and aggadic discourse which Soloveitchik delivered on the anniversary of his father's death was undisputedly the major annual academic event for United States Orthodox Jewry.

Like many others in his family, Soloveitchik published relatively little because of the perfectionism he demanded from himself. When his views were stated, they were always thoroughly considered, and in print the exactness to which he subjected himself was often prohibitive. Some of his views, particularly on the relation of the sacred to the secular, infuriated other rabbis. Soloveitchik approved of secular studies and delivered a lecture on talmudic matters to a group of women at Stern College. He even defended teaching the Torah to women in a lecture entitled "Shall Women Study Torah?" where he noted that when Maimonides freed women from the obligation of Torah study in *Laws for the Study of Torah* 1:1, Maimonides also permitted the teaching of the written Torah to women in *Laws for the Study of Torah* 1:13, and in modern contexts, women who did not study the law from its primary sources cannot perfectly observe it.

This teaching was revolutionary both in its method which involved the conjoining of Maimonides, reason and the modern context, and in its conclusion that women *should* study Torah. To some, the ingredient of the modern context was threatening, but to Soloveitchik the realities of modern life had to be taken into consideration in his careful articulation of Judaism for the necessities of the present.

Soloveitchik's position in the Orthodox Jewish community was strengthened in 1952 when he assumed the chair of the Halakhah Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America. He also served in and from 1946 was honorary president of the Religious Zionists of America. Following the death of Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog in 1959, Soloveitchik turned down an opportunity to succeed him as Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel. However, he worked in the United States on government and university-appointed committees and commissions. For instance, he represented the American Jewish Community in the Advisory Committee on Humane Methods of Slaughter created by the Secretary of Agriculture in 1959. He was also the main Jewish representative in a project undertaken by Yeshiva University with Harvard and Loyola to study religious attitudes to psychological problems. It is clear from these activities that worldly concerns were always united with religious matters in his mind and there never seemed to be a gulf separating the sacred and the secular. Instead, he treated all knowledge and research with respect and eager interest

Soloveitchik's main publication was *Ish ha-Halakhah (Halakhic Man)* in 1944. David Singer and Moshe Sokol made the poignant observation that this work was written when Lithuanian Jewry was being destroyed by the Nazis and Soloveitchik was still mourning his father's death.<sup>27</sup> In the community dear to his heart and in his own life there was the end of a cherished existence. Death and the attendant sadness of those who grieve would have been the dominating themes on the horizon but Soloveitchik did not

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<sup>27</sup> David Singer and Moshe Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik: Lonely Man of Faith," *Modern Judaism*, vol.2, 3, 1982, p.257.

allow those to waylay him. In this book one can see that Soloveitchik's chief concern in all he said and did, was to clarify halakhah and explain its relevance.<sup>28</sup>

*Halakhic Man* was written to explain that there was another world view apart from that of the rational and religious, which were both collapsing. This other and better world view is that of halakhic man, for whom "the world was created in accordance with the will of God, who wills to contract His Divine Presence in it. Therefore we are called to act and to arrange our lives in accordance with this fundamental idea."<sup>29</sup> The book describes in the first and longer section the world view and life of halakhic man, and in the second, his creative capacity since the halakhic man longs to create. Soloveitchik assessed the human situation and viewed humanity as both active and passive, cause and effect, object and subject. When man lives in accordance with the halakhah, he becomes master of himself, sanctifies his life, and then God and man are drawn into a covenantal community. Other approaches to life exist (cognitive man and religious man, both of whom might be included in species man) but those are deprived of the fullness attainable to the halakhic man in his nearness to God. Interestingly, *Halakhic Man* is not merely a philosophy of human existence; it is a theology of the Halakhah in its real and ideal, present and eschatological aspects. In this work and Soloveitchik's other writings, there occasionally surfaced his Mitnagged (or mitnagdic) tradition with its opposition to many aspects of Habad Hasidism. The extent to which Soloveitchik opposed Hasidism is a matter of some disagreement. Borowitz was convinced that the early opinion that

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Joseph Epstein, ed., *Shiurei HaRav: a Conspectus of the Public Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, Hoboken, New Jersey, Ktav, 1994, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, tr. Lawrence Kaplan, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1983, p.53.



Soloveitchik opposed it was shown to be incorrect,<sup>30</sup> Lamm averred that any interpretation of Soloveitchik's opposition to Hasidism is an "oversimplification"<sup>31</sup> while Soloveitchik's grandson declared that his grandfather certainly was Hasidism's opponent, even if oversimplification was his pedagogical tool.<sup>32</sup>

Soloveitchik also published "The Lonely Man of Faith."<sup>33</sup> In its stark presentation of his inmost struggles, it is similar in thrust to Augustine's *Confessions*. "The Lonely Man of Faith" does not show the sweeping, often witty intelligence of *Halakhic Man* but a theology of the bleak encounter with despair. Soloveitchik declared, "I am lonely"<sup>34</sup>, and explained that this loneliness was not because he was alone— instead, he thanked God, he enjoyed people's love and friendship and still talked, argued and reasoned with the comrades and acquaintances with whom he was surrounded. Yet somehow, Soloveitchik agonized, the companionship and friendship did not alleviate the "passionate experience of loneliness" which drained him constantly because he felt rejected and thrust away by everyone. He pointed out the paradox that the closer two individuals got to know each other, the more they were aware of the metaphysical distance separating them. Whenever Soloveitchik wanted to structure reality, as Borowitz and Peli have commented, he exhibited a tendency to create typologies.<sup>35</sup> In "The Lonely Man of Faith" the typologies of 'Adam the First' and 'Adam the Second' are

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<sup>30</sup> Eugene B. Borowitz, *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought*, New York, Behrman, 1983, p.223.

<sup>31</sup> Lamm quoted by Kolitz, in *Confrontation*, op. cit., p. xvi.

<sup>32</sup> Kolitz, *ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> "The Lonely Man of Faith", *Tradition*, 7, no.2, 1965, pp.5-67.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*. Also as in "The Lonely Man of Faith" in Zvi Kolitz, *Confrontation: The Existential Thought of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik*, Hoboken, New Jersey, KTAV Publishing, 1993, pp.69-71.

<sup>35</sup> E. B. Borowitz, "The Typological theology of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," *Judaism*, vol. 15, 2, Spring 1966, p.206. Pinchas H. Peli, *Soloveitchik on Repentance: The Thoughts and Oral Discourses of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, New York, Paulist Press, 1984, pp. 11-12.

created to reflect the two versions of the creation of man in the Torah. Adam the First is the natural-instinctive man. Adam the Second is the one who hears God command and with the birth of the norm is suddenly confronted with God and:

aware of his singularly human existence which expresses itself in the dichotomous experience of being unfree, restricted, imperfect, and unredeemed and, at the same time is potentially powerful, great and exalted, uniquely endowed and capable to rise far above his environment in response to the Divine Challenge.<sup>36</sup>

Traceable to the first Adam is the natural work community, and to the second, the covenantal faith community. The natural work community included virtually every form of human association. The covenantal faith community was the mystical body which truly worshipped God in partnership with Him.

Peli has further noted that the collected oral discourses of Soloveitchik on repentance seem to point to another typology- one of "Repentant Man" on his way to salvation.<sup>37</sup> Peli admitted that Soloveitchik himself never spoke of this type, but Peli himself suggested that "The Lonely Man of Faith" and *Halakhic Man* build up to the point where Repentant Man inhabits the highest rung on the typological ladder. The ontological tendencies of independent creativity and attraction toward the Divine which are the positive traits in the other established types converge and become what Peli considered a 'unified perfection' in Repentant Man.

Although this is a fascinating hypothesis, it is risky to extrapolate what Soloveitchik might have said, and I cannot adopt Peli's 'repentant man' into this thesis. I

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<sup>36</sup> "The Lonely Man of Faith" in "And God Commanded" in *Confrontation*, op.cit., p.43.

<sup>37</sup> Peli, op.cit., pp.12-13.

consider it far more probable that the lost manuscript which Rabbi Lamm mentioned to Soloveitchik's grandson and which has been sought in vain may one day be found. That manuscript was entitled "Ish ha-Elohim" and as Soloveitchik's grandson noted, its discovery would revolutionize the study of Soloveitchik's thought by demonstrating how even the halakhic man is "superseded by the Man of God."<sup>38</sup>

Soloveitchik wrote *Kol Dodi Dofek* (1969) in which he explained the views of the Religious Zionist Movement which was presented with the realities of the state of Israel. In all his writings, Soloveitchik is remarkably akin to Augustine in avoiding the identification of the presence of God with a particular geographic location. As Augustine was committed to his faith, so was Soloveitchik to his. He opposed many aspects of Jewish-Christian dialogue since he stressed the uniqueness of religious communities which do not wish to merge— one can see his "Confrontation" in *Tradition*, volume 6, 2 of 1984. His position on this was accepted as the official policy of all segments of Orthodox Judaism.

The work *The Halakhic Mind* which Soloveitchik completed in the same year that *Halakhic Man* was published, 1944, was not published until 1986.<sup>39</sup> In it, Soloveitchik offered an overview of the recent history of philosophy and he adduced that modern science had stripped philosophy of its autonomy. This created a condition of opposition and prompted the "religious man" to consider his views on the irreconcilability of science and religion confirmed. To restore the autonomy of philosophy, Soloveitchik

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<sup>38</sup> Zvi Kolitz, "Preface", *Confrontation*, op.cit., p.xvi.

<sup>39</sup> Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, New York, Seth Press, 1986.

advocated what he termed “epistemological pluralism.” Reason led the “physicist, psychologist, philosopher” and even the religious personality to a pluralism of viewpoints evincing the “heterogeneity of knowledge.” This led Soloveitchik to conclude that “pluralistic interpretations of reality” must be accepted.<sup>40</sup>

*The Halakhic Mind* reiterated many of the elements of *Halakhic Man* with a different trajectory. Whereas *Halakhic Man* provided a theology of Halakhah and described the personalities in the enterprise of life, *The Halakhic Mind* was an extended philosophical argument culminating rather than beginning with the Halakhah. The concluding sentence that is the climax of *The Halakhic Mind* provides the reader with the foundational assumption of *Halakhic Man*, that “Out of the sources of Halakhah, a new world view awaits formulation.”<sup>41</sup>

When Soloveitchik died in 1993, a year later it could still be said that, “The Torah world is just coming to terms with the void left by the death of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, zt”l.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, New York, Seth Press, 1986, pp.44-56.

<sup>41</sup> *The Halakhic Mind*, p.102.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Epstein, ed., *Shiurei HaRav*, op. cit., p. vii.

## Chapter One: The Character of God

Prior to embarking on a study of the nature of humanity in Augustine and Soloveitchik, it is essential to undertake a brief comparison of their views of God. When Augustine or Soloveitchik referred to the Divine, they referred to a specific Being about whom they had expressed beliefs. The human response to God is strongly conditioned by the kind of God who is worshipped, and this is markedly true in both thinkers whose opinions about humanity were natural progressions of their views of God.

### (i) Sovereignty and Tzimtzum:

Augustine avoided defining God because God for Augustine was Being itself and thus removed from every kind of determination. As Gilson explained, however, Augustine in *City of God* “formulated a doctrine which was to remain the permanent possession of Christian philosophy and theology.”<sup>1</sup> This statement was simply that God is what he has.<sup>2</sup> The Divine nature has nothing it can lose, Augustine explained, because it is not one thing and its contents another. Augustine compared the situation to our mind which can lose the wisdom it contains. God, by contrast, *is* wisdom. Unlike humanity, God does not *have* but rather *is* His attributes.

For Augustine, the key aspect of God’s existence which governs our relationship with him is His Sovereignty. Early in *City of God* he titled a section and expounded his

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<sup>1</sup> Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, New York, Random House, 1960, p.217.

<sup>2</sup> *COG*, XI, 10.

opinion that “the vicissitudes of this life” are dependent on the will of God alone.<sup>3</sup>

Augustine was concerned with constructing a comprehensive theology which could explain to pagan and Christian alike why “health, power, wealth, honours, dignity, length of days” can be enjoyed by some like the cruel conqueror Marius to whom the pagan gods were hostile and “captivity, bondage, destitution, watchings, pain, and cruel death” can be the lot of others if the friendship of the pagan gods was theirs.

Augustine explained that all material benefits are to be attributed to “the secret providence of God.”<sup>4</sup> Even if evil spirits (demons) had power in the matter of assigning material rewards, Augustine argued, it could only be so because the one true God allowed the demons that ability through His secret decree.

God’s sovereign decree is secret because it is so inexplicable. This did not deter Augustine from offering his own explanation for the good fortune of the cruel Marius—it was “in order that we may not set too great store by earthly prosperity, seeing that it is oftentimes vouchsafed even to wicked men like Marius.”<sup>5</sup> Just in case we are prone to the opposite temptation and would like to dismiss prosperity as evil, Augustine cautioned that this would be wrong since many pious worshippers of the one true God are pre-eminently successful. This is all part of the decree of God whose judgments are all good.

This theme of the ‘secret decree’ of God found widespread acceptance in Christianity. John Calvin (1509-62) adopted and expanded it to make it the foundation

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<sup>3</sup> *COG*, II, 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

of much of his doctrines.<sup>6</sup> Following Augustine, Calvin also thought that the explanation of an aspect of religion as a matter of God's secret decree should restrain "the wantonness and itching curiosity of human nature."<sup>7</sup> Those who wished to know more than God ordained by his secret decree were regarded by Calvin as guilty of "impious boldness."<sup>8</sup> Augustine also contended that people sinned against God with their "impious curiosity"<sup>9</sup> which caused the deprivation of an earthly kingdom.

There seems to be a striking inconsistency in Augustine's thought when he discussed Divine Sovereignty. On the one hand he knew that God is Almighty: He could declare that: "The true God, in whose hands all power resides, and by whose providence universal rule is exercised, was himself responsible for the ordering of the Roman Empire."<sup>10</sup> God ruled by secret decree known only to the Divine Mind which no one could fathom. On the other hand, Augustine occasionally appeared to know an inordinate amount about this secret decree. He stated that the "impious curiosity" mentioned above was the sin which led to the Jewish people being deprived of their earthly kingdom that could otherwise have remained theirs and would have been perhaps larger but certainly happier, than Rome. This interpretation is in direct violation of Augustine's statement in *City of God* IV:33 that God gives kingdoms in a way that seems indiscriminate to us, both to the good and the bad, according to the order that is hidden

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<sup>6</sup> As can be seen in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Ford Lewis Battles, ed., John T. McNeill, Library of Christian Classics, vols. XX and XXI, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1960.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, II:XII:5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *COG*, IV:34.

<sup>10</sup> The title of Book V:22 of *COG* as found in *St. Augustine's City of God*, abridged and translated by J.W.C. Wand, London, Oxford University Press, 1963.

from us and known only to him. Over all these changing scenes God rules as lord and governor, Augustine proclaimed. The prediction of a possible course which the future could have taken is also contrary to Augustine's own belief in the almighty will of the God who alone unfolds and sees the future. It is evident that Augustine's own desire to offer explanations and his own biases led him to suggest his own reasoning as that of the Divine Mind.

Augustine nevertheless had an excellent interpretation of Divine Sovereignty in the growth and preservation of the Israelites in Egypt and in the ensuing exodus. God himself delivered them from the hands of their persecutors, the Egyptians, who wished to kill their infants, Augustine discerned. In part of a brilliant comparison to highlight how the Israelites did not worship the pagan gods, he declared:

without the invocation of Neptune the divided sea opened up a way for them to pass over, and overwhelmed with its returning waves their enemies who pursued them. Neither did they consecrate any goddess Mania when they received manna from heaven; nor, when the smitten rock poured forth water to them when they thirsted, did they worship Nymphs and Lymphs. Without the mad rites of Mars and Bellona they carried on war; and while, indeed, they did not conquer without victory, yet they did not hold it to be a goddess, but the gift of their God. Without Segetia they had harvests; without Bubona, oxen; honey without Mellona; apples without Pomona: and, in a word, everything for which the Romans thought they must supplicate so great a crowd of false gods, they received much more happily from the one true God.<sup>11</sup>

The one true God blessed and preserved his people in direct, visible ways.

Everything is within the scope of God's almighty power, Augustine claimed.

Augustine's main intention was to assert that the politics of the earth is overseen and bounded by the care of heaven, but he engaged in a sweeping motion to explain that

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<sup>11</sup> *COG*, IV:34.



nothing is outside God's sovereign power; the One who designed it all governs all— heaven and earth, angels and people, “the entrails of the smallest and most contemptible animal” as well as the feather of a bird, the flower of the field and the leaf of the tree.<sup>12</sup> Omnipotence must necessarily include everything. Augustine also observed that omnipotence does not mean that God can do anything. In fact, omnipotence in His nature prevents God from doing certain things, such as dying or falling into error.<sup>13</sup> The parallel was fittingly drawn to our own will, which is free but certainly not unlimited. It also indicated that, for Augustine, our will is a reflection of the character of God.

Augustine noted that God by his will usually conceals the direct application of His sovereignty from us most of the time, except for miracles. God knows that we can never see Him as He is because His glory would be beyond us. In fact, God knows everything- omniscience is another aspect of Divine sovereignty. The “will, supreme power and prescience” are defended against the disputations of the philosophers<sup>14</sup> and these facets of sovereignty were comforting to Augustine. The philosophers and systems of the world might fear such a being, because they cannot understand how almighty power and knowledge could coexist with free will. However, we are told that we should not fear this situation, nor should we fear not using our wills inappropriately. Augustine assured us that, “after all, we do not do by will that which we do by will” but God, “whose foreknowledge is infallible, foreknew that we would do it.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., V:11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., V:10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., V:9

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Closely related to his belief in the impossibility of defining God because of the completeness of Divine Sovereignty was Augustine's belief in Divine accommodation. Even if Augustine's God could not be defined, his attributes certainly could be described, as one can see. This God could not ever be accessible to us, however, since every Divine attribute effectively places him further away. Yet, "The invisible God often makes Himself visible, not as He is, but according to the capacity of those who see Him."<sup>16</sup> In other words, God accommodates the Divine Self to the limitations of our finite perception and understanding.

It was unsurprising to Augustine that God often appeared visibly to the patriarchs. There was a distinction between God-in-Self and God-as-revealed. The God who reveals himself and carries on a conversation beautifully demonstrated the ability and willingness of God to accommodate to people. Augustine was quick to explain here that, "as the sound which communicates the thought in the silence of the mind is not the thought itself, so the form by which God, invisible in His own nature, became visible, was not God Himself."<sup>17</sup> This did not discount the fact that it was the very God under that form just as the thought is heard in the sound of the voice, Augustine admitted in his differentiation of Divine manifestation from the inherent reality. From reading Augustine, one can realize that God not only limits appearances to the range of our senses, but also to the physical dimension of our tolerance. Sovereignty would kill us if we ever beheld it, so overwhelming is the weight of Divine majesty. This is why

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., X:13.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

accommodation is the normal course of operation for theophany and communication.

We cannot extend ourselves to the dimension in which we could ever be either spiritually or physically capable of witnessing the full impact of glory, so it is up to God to restrict himself to the level we can tolerate and survive.

Soloveitchik's anthropocentric theology in no way interfered with his belief in Divine Sovereignty, but transmuted its focus. Similar to the way in which Augustine believed that Divine revelation chose to limit what is known about God and this stifles impious curiosity, Soloveitchik noted that the Halakhah "does not concern itself with metaphysical mysteries"<sup>18</sup> or inquire into that which is too remote for it. He stated this in order to distinguish between the principle of *tzimtzum* in his halakhic theology and as it appears in mystical doctrine.

In mystical doctrine, Soloveitchik believed, *tzimtzum* expresses a metaphysical system which peers into the hidden recesses of creation, contemplates the foundation stones of the cosmos, being and nothingness, beginning and the end. In halakhic theology, Soloveitchik contended, *tzimtzum* refers to "law and judgment" and not to the secrets of creation.<sup>19</sup> The theology of *tzimtzum* which he detailed was mostly that of the Lurianic Kabbalah.<sup>20</sup> Although the precise origin of the theory of *tzimtzum* is unknown<sup>21</sup> it was forwarded with greatest clarity by R. Yitzhak Luria, known as the Holy Ari. The essence of his thought is that in order for the Infinite, Absolute Spirit, to create a material world, only its deliberate withdrawal in a process of 'contraction' could allow

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<sup>18</sup> *HM*, p.49.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> As noted, for instance, by Kolitz, "*Tzimtzum* as an Existential Experience," *op. cit.*, p.13.

<sup>21</sup> Kolitz, *ibid.*, believes it can easily be traced to Scripture and the sages.

that material world to be created. The Infinite would never reach out to the finite if the finite did not possess the power to reach out to the Infinite. Finite humans can, though, find themselves in the situation where they reach out to the Infinite without possessing the power to be a receptacle for the Infinite.

This selective appropriation of Kabbalah prompted Soloveitchik to add the note that his dismissal of the mystical doctrine of *tzimtzum* did not refer to the kabbalistic literature in general, but the teaching in the teachings of Habad Hasidism— that is, the teachings of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady.<sup>22</sup> The Judaism Soloveitchik described was targeted to practical human existence. Human existence for him was blessed. Thus, he was repelled by any mystical suggestion that the world was an “affront” to God’s glory and the cosmos impinged on the infinity of the Creator.

Soloveitchik went into some length outlining the mystical view of *tzimtzum* to which halakhic man does not subscribe. In that view of creation, the glory of God emerged from the hiddenness of infinity, became embodied in the creation of the cosmos and became contracted in and by it. The creation of the world means therefore that the glory of God is held in abeyance and the cosmos is the revelation of the goodness of God, because in the presence of God’s splendor “all worlds are nullified and they are as if they had not been and they revert to nothingness and naught” the *Likkutei Torah* declared.

This mystical view senses and empathizes with the *Shekhinta be-galuta*, the Divine Presence in exile. Its yearning is to liberate both humanity and the *Shekinah* (the Presence of God) from the narrow straits of earthly reality. In its eschatological vision,

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<sup>22</sup> *HM*, note 54, p.151.

only then shall humanity and the *Shekinah* rise to God “who is exalted, lofty, and separate, all alone and not manifest in any other being.”<sup>23</sup>

The interpretation of *tzimtzum* in halakhic theology rejects the pessimistic perspective of the world which the mystics have. In fact, the chief difference between the mystical and halakhic view of *tzimtzum* appears to be not so much what it involves, as the emotional effect it has. The mystics react with anguish because the Presence of God is “held captive in the tresses of the cosmos and the chains of reality.”<sup>24</sup> Halakhic man reacts with gladness and joy because his task is to bring down the Divine Presence to this lower world. We reside here together with our Creator and should rejoice in existence and not deem it a blemish on the glory or infinity of God. Instead, it is the will of God that his *Shekinah* should contract and limit herself within the realm of empirical reality.

This conviction in the supremacy of the will of God is like Augustine. Soloveitchik firmly believed in it, as did Maimonides, Solomon ibn Gabirol in *Fountain of Life* and Duns Scotus who Soloveitchik states was influenced by the former. One of Soloveitchik’s favorite illustrations regarding the will of God involved his grandfather (R. Hayyim) and R. Simha Zelig (his grandfather’s disciple and friend). They were visiting someone’s house in Vilna, and R. Hayyim glanced through some works of Habad Hasidism lying on the table. The books were on the subject of God’s motivation in creating the world and proffered two opinions. The first was that God created the world

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<sup>23</sup> Described in *HM*, p.50.

<sup>24</sup> *HM*, p.52.

for the sake of His goodness, and the second, that He created it for the sake of His grace. R. Hayyim turned to R. Simha Zelig and solemnly informed him that, “Both views are incorrect, the world was created neither for the sake of His goodness, nor for the sake of His grace, but for the sake of His will.”<sup>25</sup>

To Soloveitchik, this statement of R. Hayyim represented a triumph of halakhic over Habad theology. It also meant that the true home of the Divine Presence is in this world because God so willed. The Divine Presence would go into exile were it to depart from earth and retreat into the transcendent sphere. When this happens, the effects are harsh, Soloveitchik suggested, for the departure would mean that the Divine Presence is concealed in “the shadow of absolute separateness and complete estrangement from this world, the Temple is destroyed and the long chapter of the exile of the Divine Presence begins.”<sup>26</sup> The vision of the mystics would lead to disastrous results were it ever fulfilled.

Soloveitchik and Augustine shared a belief in special dispensations of providence. Augustine explained at the outset of *City of God* that acts of clemency in the sack of Rome shown to God’s people were not fortuitous, but a demonstration of divine providence.<sup>27</sup> Augustine also contended that since temporal as well as eternal blessings are governed by providence, even the “petty temporal boons” can be sought from God.<sup>28</sup> Although Augustine wrote against philosophers who believed that earthly pleasure was the sole good, he did not fly to the extreme of denigrating temporal existence. Augustine

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>27</sup> *COG*, I:7.

<sup>28</sup> *COG*, X:14.

emphasized that God's providence distributes to all people their due portion so we should always remember that a vast difference exists "between the private presumption of the creature and the Creator's protection."<sup>29</sup>

Soloveitchik stated that the belief in individual providence is a cornerstone of Judaism both from the Halakhah and from philosophy— it is the tenth of Maimonides' thirteen laws. Soloveitchik's belief in providence came from Maimonides and was based on worthiness. The human species is the particular recipient of individual providence, and this "is graded as human perfection is graded."<sup>30</sup> God watches over prophets, and over excellent and righteous men in direct proportion to their prophecy, excellence, or righteousness. It is the measure of the overflow of the divine intellect which causes such good people to be as they are. As for the ignorant and disobedient, their state is despicable in proportion to their lack of overflow and they are relegated to the rank of the beasts, Maimonides and Soloveitchik contend. Soloveitchik omitted the most searing statement of Maimonides in this regard, that because of the beast-like situation of the wicked and disobedient, "it is a light thing to kill them, and has even been enjoined because of its utility."<sup>31</sup>

The description of a providential system based on individual worth is very different from the view of Augustine, who saw providence as operating with its secret decree and administering grace according to the dictates of the Divine Mind. The

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<sup>29</sup> *COG*, XIV:27.

<sup>30</sup> Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, tr. with an introduction and notes by Shlomo Pines, introductory essay by Leo Strauss, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963, III:18. Soloveitchik, *HM*, p. 126.

<sup>31</sup> Maimonides, *ibid.*

substitution of personal worth for Divine grace in this pattern of providence places a heavy responsibility on human shoulders. This relegation of humans to the level of beasts, who it was believed were outside the boundaries of individual providence, is unusually arrogant for Soloveitchik and is a distasteful side to his view of providence. Deciding who should be banished from providential oversight cannot be the responsibility of humanity. Here, Soloveitchik's thought might be bettered by the caution of Augustine to hearken to the difference between the presumption of the creature and the protection of the Creator. In Augustine's scheme, even the wicked have a vital role in Divine providence. Sometimes greater glory and good can be accomplished overcoming wickedness and its effects than could have been had the wicked not acted.<sup>32</sup>

Whenever God is discussed by Soloveitchik, it is always in relation to humanity. Like Augustine, he believed that we know God because of God's self-disclosure to us. "Judaism has insisted on the centrality of revelation," Soloveitchik noted, "and each attribute of the Creator must reveal itself to man."<sup>33</sup> An attribute of God is only known when it has been revealed in Scripture and in the tradition of the sages, or in human experience.

Soloveitchik was solidly in keeping with Jewish tradition but very different from Christian tradition when he affirmed that humanity can have a tremendous impact on God. We can even precipitate the exile of the Divine Presence from this realm. Augustine could never have conceived of the creature having any effect, let alone a

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<sup>32</sup> *COG*, XIV:27.

<sup>33</sup> "Adam and Eve" in *Shiurei Ha-Rav: A Conspectus of the Public Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, ed. Joseph Epstein, Hoboken, New Jersey, KTAV Publishing, 1994, p.138.



damaging one, on the presence or being of the Creator. Soloveitchik explained that in Judaism, human sinfulness virtually drove the Divine Presence from below to the seventh firmament and there arose seven righteous men who brought it down again, culminating in Moses who returned it to earth.

In a similar fashion to the insistence of Augustine that we accept God's will, it is clear in Soloveitchik's thought that the overriding reason we should joyfully accept the Shekinah and not try to thrust her and ourselves away from earth is that, "The *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, does not anguish over the mystery of *tzimtzum*, over her descent into the empirical realm."<sup>34</sup> Halakhic man is at home when the shofar sounds on Rosh Ha-Shanah and wails for the God whom no thought can grasp, who is *Ein-Sof*, the Infinite God separated from the cosmos by infinite distance. Halakhic man is still at home when rejoicing at Sukkot over the resplendent world reflecting the glory of its Creator who fills and encompasses all worlds. Both sides of God are accurate and both are grounded in what might be called halakhic reality.

For Soloveitchik, *tzimtzum* meant not only the abstraction of Divine self-limitation, but the possibility of the physical location of God's presence with him. In a similar vein to the manner in which Augustine found that the Sovereign qualities of God were a comfort rather than an invasive insult as the pagans saw them, Soloveitchik noted that *tzimtzum* was most vividly realized in the moments of despair in his life.

In moments of joy and elation, "not even the vast universe is large enough to accommodate" the God who addresses the ecstatic individual through the roar of

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<sup>34</sup> *HM*, p.63

endlessly distant heavens.<sup>35</sup> However, in moments of “agony and black despair, when living becomes ugly and absurd, plainly nauseating” then God addresses the despondent individual not from infinity but from the infinitesimal.<sup>36</sup> For Soloveitchik, this was the proof of tzimtzum. He described the tragic loss of his wife and of the agony of watching her die, and of praying fervently during that time. At this time he had an experience that can only be described as mystical. He felt God present with him, right there in the narrow confines of a small, dark, room, “taking up no space at all. God’s abiding in a fenced-in, finite locus manifests His humility and love”<sup>37</sup> Soloveitchik reflected. He added that in such moments, the humility of God, “which resides in the humblest and tiniest of places, addresses itself to man.”<sup>38</sup> In an interesting sidelong glance at Augustine, one scholar has rightly observed that it was the humility of God which moved him.<sup>39</sup> Only the Divine humility could undertake the accommodation inherent in tzimtzum.

The incorporation of tzimtzum into theology allows Sovereignty to be directly related to a personal God. Tzimtzum enables more than the existence of the world and humanity, it allows intimacy with the God who can will to contract Himself to our need. This is reminiscent of Augustine’s system, where God accommodated Himself to the people to whom He appeared. In the neo-Platonic understanding of the utter supremacy of God a true contraction would be not only impossible, but would seem ridiculous, for it

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<sup>35</sup> Kolitz, “He Was Right There,” in op. cit., p.95.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> From “Majesty and Humility” cited ibid.

<sup>38</sup> From “Majesty and Humility” cited ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Gerald Bonner, “The Christian Humanism of Augustine,” in *God’s Decree and Man’s Destiny: Studies on the Thought of Augustine of Hippo*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1987, p.18.

would entail change in the Divine Being. To make this exceedingly clear, Augustine proclaimed that nothing new can occur with God and there can be no “changeableness” in Him.<sup>40</sup> This prevents such a contraction of the Almighty in Augustine, where accommodation is for God to undertake communication and is not necessary for creation or coexistence. This capacity of *tzimtzum* for manifestation in human existence shares some similarities with Augustine’s Christology, since for Augustine, Christ is God for us, the ultimate accommodation since in Christ God took on our nature.<sup>41</sup> This shall be examined later, along with Soloveitchik’s thrust that the Halakhah is the *tzimtzum* of the Shekinah.

(ii) Holiness:

Both Augustine and Soloveitchik believed in the holiness of God. In *City of God* Augustine did not embark into a discussion of holiness in any detail. He considered holiness an intrinsic ingredient of the nature of God and the angels. He spoke of the Holy Spirit<sup>42</sup> and of the holy angels<sup>43</sup> and seemed to believe that holiness either was or was not part of the constitution of a nature, and thus avoided any extensive discussion of the topic itself. The Holy Spirit is imparted by the Father and the Son, Augustine explained, and one can understand that the Holy Spirit is holy because such is the nature of God. The

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<sup>40</sup> *COG*, XII, 14.

<sup>41</sup> As can be seen, for instance, in *COG*, XXI:15 where Augustine states that Christ “abiding unchangeable, took upon Him our nature, that thereby He might take us to Himself.”

<sup>42</sup> *COG*, XIII:24.

<sup>43</sup> *COG*, VIII:25.

Holy Spirit can even be called the “holiness” of the Father and the Son, not as if He were just an attribute, but as Divine substance and “as if He were the substantial holiness consubstantial with the other two.”<sup>44</sup>

Augustine did not explain what holiness involves and why it should be an attribute of God. The angels who are holy, by contrast, are holy because they chose to remain so. Augustine believed that all humanity fell from grace in the person of Adam, and one-third of the angels followed Satan in his rebellion against God. We differ from the holy angels, he explains, in “miserable unlikeness to them in will, and by the weakness of our character.”<sup>45</sup> In his theology, holiness seems to be evident only in the face of human sinfulness. This is unfortunate because it usually leads to a theology by contrast, and our sinful nature seems to exist to highlight God’s goodness. Holiness in this context appears to be such a qualitative distinction between the human and the Divine that aspiration to holiness might appear futile. It is true, though, that God is utterly distinct from us in His holiness and therefore we cannot identify with God in this area of His character.

In Augustine’s theology in *City of God*, the role of holiness is taken by goodness. Augustine declared that “divine goodness is nothing else than the divine holiness.”<sup>46</sup> God is the sovereign over all good and the source of all good. God is the only simple and indivisible Good and is eternally and unchangeably so in His nature. Augustine declared that, “God is the supreme good.”<sup>47</sup> Augustine believed that those who have professed the

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<sup>44</sup> *COG*, XI:24.

<sup>45</sup> *COG*, VIII:25.

<sup>46</sup> *COG*, XI:24.

<sup>47</sup> *COG*, XI:10, XII:3

study of wisdom sought to obtain the supreme good and to avoid the supreme evil and later declared that eternal life is the supreme good and eternal death the supreme evil.<sup>48</sup> This may appear to be a contradiction, and Augustine himself did not resolve it, but one can be sure he would contend that to have God is to have eternal life and therefore the supreme good is identifiable with either, for each necessarily includes the other. Since God is what He has, the supreme good is indivisibly God and eternal life since the property of eternal life cannot be obtained apart from God and since God cannot be divorced from His abiding eternity. Also closely related to this is the fact that humanity can imitate the Divine Holiness by following the paths of goodness.

As an automatic effect of Augustine's concept of God as holy is the fact that God cannot create evil. God created only good<sup>49</sup> and whatever evil exists is where good is absent. Free will led to the choice of lesser good which is, by contrast, evil. Nothing was evil in nature but many chose in their will to oppose God (who is supreme good) and this opposition defines them as evil.

The question arises about whether there is another Creator who initiates evil, if it exists and our good God did not create it. This had been what Augustine believed as a Manichean and here, in his determination to establish that there was and is only one Creator, he was forced to make evil into a nothingness. At one point, however, he observed in the account of creation that when God divides Light from Darkness there is no attached "and God saw that it was good."<sup>50</sup> Had this statement been subjoined,

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<sup>48</sup> *COG*, XIX:4.

<sup>49</sup> *COG*, XI:22.

<sup>50</sup> *COG*, XI:20.

Augustine explained, both light and darkness would have been designated good while in fact the darkness was evil, “not by nature, but by its own fault.”<sup>51</sup> How something just created for the first time could be held at fault for being evil and how evil could not be innate in its nature if it was created exactly in that manner, Augustine had no explanation. Instead, he concluded that, “light alone received the approbation of the Creator, while the angelic darkness, though it had been ordained, was yet not approved.”<sup>52</sup> This means that God did not err in creating the darkness, though Augustine refrained from using the word “created” in his summation preferring to use the word “ordain.” This strongly suggests that, despite Augustine’s stringent efforts to the contrary, in his system God is ultimately responsible for evil, assuming that one is responsible for that which one ordains. God must be its origin, for the darkness Augustine readily identifies as evil was precisely created the way it emerged. Augustine is correct that no “And God saw that it was good” is appended but neither is any admission of a Divine mistake. This would have had tremendous implications for the character of God in Augustine’s theology, because it was a stated and defended belief that God could not create anything less than good because God did not know how, not knowing evil. The fact that God could actually have created the darkness identified as evil demonstrates that Augustine’s theology is precarious in this area and his concept of goodness, and the supreme goodness of God, need to be reformulated carefully.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

There is a sharp contradistinction between Augustine and Soloveitchik in the concept of holiness and in the relative importance of holiness in their respective systems. Soloveitchik, who has a less systematic theology of God's sovereignty than Augustine, has a far more systematic analysis of God's holiness and of what this holiness entails for us. The typical form of reference to God for Soloveitchik is "the Holy One" and Soloveitchik had firm thoughts about what implications this has for humanity. Augustine used the expression "the supreme good" to denote God and to show that all who were wise sought this. Soloveitchik declared that he eschewed such an expression because it could refer to an ethical ideal with no transcendent sphere, merely grounded in this world of norms and values. Instead, "Holiness, according to the outlook of Halakhah, denotes the appearance of a mysterious transcendence in the midst of our concrete world."<sup>53</sup> Not an incommunicable aspect of the nature of God or angels who all exist in another dimension unless they wish to communicate with us, holiness for Soloveitchik is the very "descent" of the *Ein-Sof* who no thought can grasp onto Mount Sinai, the bending down of a hidden and concealed world and lowering it onto the face of reality.

Soloveitchik was thus capable of deriving a practical theology of holiness, something which escaped Augustine. Soloveitchik spoke about the beginning and end of holiness. He stated that holiness has a beginning in the highest heavens, and we might presume that this is the case since it originates with the Infinite, and therefore is uncreated since God is uncreated and has existed from eternity. The end of holiness is

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<sup>53</sup> *HM*, p.46

embedded in the eschatological vision of the “end of days.” As an essential attribute of God, holiness is eternal.

Soloveitchik cites:

And they called to one another and said: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. They received from one another and said: “Holy in the highest heavens, His divine abode; holy upon the earth, the work of His might; holy forever and to all eternity. (Isa. 6:3 and Targum ad loc.)”<sup>54</sup>

Holiness therefore begins in eternity and ~~an~~ ends in the eschatological fulfillment but flows into our daily lives on earth between its timeless start and unforeseeably distant finish. The holiness of God consequently leaves us with work to do and is not an empty belief. For Soloveitchik, holiness consisted in the ordering of life according to the Halakhah. The laws which are about mundane matters regulating human biological existence sanctify the lives obeying them.

Soloveitchik’s theology bestows on humanity the power to engender holiness. In this respect, holiness begins as an attribute of God and lends itself to human acquisition. In the imitation of God, humanity has the ability to make holy. Soloveitchik used the example of the Temple to affirm that through the power of our mouths and only through that verbal sanctification can holy offerings be created for the Temple treasury and for the Temple altar. The land of Israel became holy through conquest and Jerusalem became holy through the bringing of two loaves of thanksgiving. The Temple courts themselves became holy through the bringing of the meal offering and song, Soloveitchik described, and he deduced in a statement which sounds strikingly similar to Abraham

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<sup>54</sup> *HM*, *ibid.*



Heschel, "It is man who sanctifies space and makes a sanctuary for his Creator."<sup>55</sup>

Humans as agents of sanctification leaves one with a stark contrast to Augustine's view of God as the agent of all goodness, let alone such an ethereal property as holiness.<sup>56</sup> For Augustine, such distinctive property of the Divine is not given or even lent to human subjects.

Soloveitchik's intentions in *Halakhic Man* did not include an explication of the theology of holiness and evil, and a thorough analysis of this is absent. Soloveitchik believed that God created the good and evil principle, but the initiation of evil by the Divine in no way interrupts or interferes with God's status as the Holy One. Soloveitchik knew of the talmudic passage which speaks of man serving God "with both urges"<sup>57</sup> and reflection on this matter enabled him to conclude that it was possible to reach the level where one could say, "I am sanctifying evil and raising it to new heights."<sup>58</sup> Needless to say, a theology of personal sanctification of evil is conspicuously absent in Augustine. Evil for Augustine was to be eschewed, not embraced and elevated.

(iii) Christology and Theonomy:

An expected contrast between Augustine and Soloveitchik in their portrayals of the character of God is in Augustine's view of Christ. At some occasions, however, Soloveitchik's view of the halakhah is functionally equivalent to Augustine's view of

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<sup>55</sup> *HM*, p.47.

<sup>56</sup> For instance, in his *Expository Sermons on the Gospel of John*, 2:6, Augustine attacked the Platonic tendency to call the one who was enlightened also a "light" since the true light is only that which (in this case, He who) enlightens.

<sup>57</sup> Cited in Kolitz, *op. cit.*, p.79.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

Christ. Within the confines of this thesis, it is impossible for this section to provide a complete discussion of Augustine's view of Christ or Soloveitchik's view of the Halakhah. On either of those, volumes can be penned. This brief survey shall be confined to exploring the relevant views in the texts that are the focus of this thesis, *City of God* and *Halakhic Man*.

Augustine's theology in *City of God* was strongly colored by his Christology. Augustine believed that who Christ was and what he did were of paramount importance to the religion advocated in *City of God*.

In Augustine's view, Christ existed from the dawn of eternity and it would have been a foolish attempt to suggest that there was a time when Christ did not exist since he is one with the Father and the Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Christ was seen by Augustine in a variety of ways depending on those against whom he was debating. Augustine drew many of the terms for his Christology from the terminology of the varied groups with whom he was contending and thus developing his theological outlook. His endeavor was to show that Christ was implicit in rational thought and sound belief and therefore was the logical conclusion to which all human activity led.

Augustine noted that Porphyry and Plotinus taught what all Platonists believed. They taught that humanity was purified by "principles."<sup>60</sup> Platonists, from the Alexandrian and Athenian schools from Plotinus to Proclus, were all of one opinion that in God there were three principles or hypostases: the One or Good, which is the Father,

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<sup>59</sup> *COG*, XI:10.

<sup>60</sup> *COG*, X:23.

the Intelligence or the Word, which is the Son, and the Soul which is the universal principle of life. The similarities of this to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity are readily apparent. As a contradiction to their teaching Augustine declared that there is only one God and thus only one Principle, and within that One, "Christ is the Principle by whose incarnation we are purified."<sup>61</sup>

That for which the Platonists searched, Augustine located in Christ. In the character of Christ, Augustine was most impressed by the humility demonstrated in submitting to the incarnation. Christ descended, "brought low by His humility, manifesting Himself to mortals by the mortality which He assumed."<sup>62</sup>

Bonner has observed that it is the humility of Christ that Augustine saw as the most striking feature of the Incarnation. Bonner rightly observed that a recurring theme in Augustine is that "man, who was cast down by the mediation of the proud devil persuading him to pride, may be raised up by Christ, the humble mediator, persuading him to humility."<sup>63</sup> John Leith is a modern scholar celebrating the strong emphasis Augustine gave on Christ showing us how to live.<sup>64</sup>

The incarnation referred to the life of Christ in the flesh, which gave to Christ a specific geographic and temporal locale. It also demonstrated that such a thing as God having a transient human nature was possible. Christ is "the uncreated Word of God"<sup>65</sup> Augustine explained. As the Mediator between human and divine, bridging the chasm

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<sup>61</sup> COG, X:24.

<sup>62</sup> COG, X:24.

<sup>63</sup> Bonner, "Christ, God and Man," in *God's Decree and Man's Destiny*, op. cit., p.275.

<sup>64</sup> John Leith, *Basic Christian Doctrine*, Louisville, Westminster/John Knox, 1983, pp.151-152.

<sup>65</sup> COG, IX:15.

separating them, Christ could not be the Mediator in his nature as the Word, because that nature is “supremely blessed and supremely immortal.”<sup>66</sup> Therefore, he chose to be in the form of a servant, taking on humanity to afford us “ready access to participation of His divinity.”<sup>67</sup>

For Augustine, Christ did not shed divinity but adopted the human nature to deify humanity. In the humanity Christ accepted, Augustine believed we are also taught that “it is sin which is evil, and not the substance or nature of flesh.”<sup>68</sup> This would have represented an astronomical elevation of the view of human flesh which prevailed among many religions in Augustine’s time, including the Manicheans of whom he himself had once been a member. By adopting human flesh God had pronounced it acceptable. By submission to the humility of death, God had manifested the ultimate lesson for the world to learn— a lesson in humility which could cure the primal sin of pride.

Christ also accomplished the liberation of humanity from the devil, to whom humanity was bound as to a real and authoritative power. The devil was seen by Augustine as the wicked mediator who separates friends.<sup>69</sup> As the source of much temptation, the tempter was identified by Augustine with the serpent in Eden. Adam and Eve were the friends of God in Eden before the temptation to partake of the forbidden fruit. The establishment of the devil as the one who wickedly separates friends paves the way for Augustine to highlight “a good Mediator, who reconciles enemies.”<sup>70</sup> In the

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<sup>66</sup> *COG*, IX:15.

<sup>67</sup> *COG*, IX:15.

<sup>68</sup> *COG*, X:24.

<sup>69</sup> *COG*, IX:15.

<sup>70</sup> *COG*, IX:15.

post-Eden existence, humans were seen as opposed to God because they chose to be ensnared by their pride. Christ eliminates the battle by destroying the enmity and thus drawing to God separated humanity.

Augustine noted that Christ chose “to be rather than to receive a sacrifice.”<sup>71</sup> This laid a solid exemplarist foundation for his doctrine of self-sacrifice to God. Christ opted to give himself up and thus is both the Priest who offered the sacrifice and the Sacrifice rendered. An effect of Christ choosing to be a sacrifice was “that not even by this instance any one might have occasion to suppose that sacrifice be rendered to any creature.”<sup>72</sup> With an eye for theological problems, Augustine was doubtless relieved that Christ had not received a sacrifice, lest later generations wonder why one who had Divine and human natures conjoined could receive a sacrifice, and whether others, who have a human nature and are created in the image of God, might not deserve sacrifices.

For Augustine, Christ operated throughout the ages before his incarnation. God and the angels instructed certain people in the way of “faith in this mystery, and godliness of life”<sup>73</sup> even long before the Law was given. Augustine believed that Christ himself composed the Law as well as the prophets and the other parts of “Scripture which is called canonical, which has paramount authority, and to which we ought to yield assent in all matters of which we ought not be ignorant, and yet cannot know of ourselves.”<sup>74</sup>

One might say that in Augustine’s thought the Word produced the Word: Christ produced the Scripture.

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<sup>71</sup> *COG*, X:20.

<sup>72</sup> *COG*, X:20.

<sup>73</sup> *COG*, X:25.

<sup>74</sup> *COG*, XI:3.

Augustine's view of the authority of the Scripture is significant for his theology and would be the basis for later Christian doctrine in this area. Scripture has authority over all matters in faith and life for Augustine, and is interpreted by that part of the human being that is best and compared to which, only God is better—the mind. Christ himself heals the mind to renew it from corruption and vice, and urges humanity onward to study the things of God. God speaks “by the truth itself” to our minds.<sup>75</sup>

Augustine saw Christ typologically represented in Scripture in more places than one might imagine. Augustine interpreted typology backwards, that is, he believed that matters which at one time were hidden were revealed by the unfolding of time and events which were prefigured actually occurring. Soloveitchik, by contrast, also employed typology but preferred to use it forwards, creating it on the basis of existing situations to explain present and future reality. However, both dissected reality into bite-size pieces for the mind by the use of typology. Existence was subject to the idealization of typology so that theology would be clarified.

Augustine discerned Christ in many Scriptural passages in a similar fashion to his identification of Christ with some elements in Platonic thought. It is instructive to consider some of the occasions where Augustine extracted Christ from the text, because only then can one appreciate the multifaceted view of Christ Augustine had, even in a work such as *City of God* in which Christology was not his focus. Augustine saw Christ in the account of creation when God declared, “Let us make man in our image.” The “us” could not have referred to the angels, Augustine noted, so this must demonstrate that

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<sup>75</sup> *COG*, XI:2.

the Triune God made humanity, since it is afterward stated that “And God made man in His image.”<sup>76</sup> In another fairly brief passage Augustine included other aspects of his view of Christ:

Shem, of whom Christ was born in the flesh, means “named.” And what is of greater name than Christ, the fragrance of whose name is now everywhere perceived, so that even prophecy sings of it, comparing it in the Song of Songs [1:3] to ointment poured forth?<sup>77</sup>

The name of Christ was here seen as exalted and enticingly fragrant. As has been observed by scholars,<sup>78</sup> Augustine’s Christology was inseparable from his ecclesiology and this often found its way into typological interpretations. Continuing the discussion about Noah’s sons, Augustine declared that the “houses of Christ, that is the churches” were meant by Japheth’s name “enlargement” for the churches were the enlargement of the nations.<sup>79</sup>

Ham, whose name meant “hot” was separated from the other brothers, thus “neither belonging to the first-fruits of Israel nor to the fulness of the Gentiles” and he typified two sets of people. The first set was the “tribe of heretics” who were “hot with the spirit, not of patience, but of impatience.” With considerable insight, Augustine described the second set of people typified by Ham; those not openly separated from the church “but all those who glory in the Christian name and at the same time lead

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<sup>76</sup> *COG*, XVI:6.

<sup>77</sup> *COG*, XVI:2.

<sup>78</sup> Bonner, “Christ, God and Man,” op. cit., p.288.

<sup>79</sup> *COG*, XVI:2.

abandoned lives.”<sup>80</sup> They have good brothers, but are themselves profligates who proclaim the truth with their lips and dishonor it by their lives.

Augustine devoted some effort to explaining to his readers the lineage of Shem to Heber, down to Abraham and Jacob’s line, “who distinctively and eminently constituted God’s people, and received His covenants, and were Christ’s progenitors according to the flesh.”<sup>81</sup> Christ was a real historical figure and Augustine was determined to demonstrate that the origins of his biological lineage symbolized spiritual truths. For him the spiritual truth of Israel was embodied in the reality of Christ.

The prefiguring of Christ for Augustine included such as Melchizedek who in his blessing of Abraham was seen as first offering the Eucharistic sacrifice and establishing the order of priesthood in which Christ would stand. The words of Psalm 110 “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” were seen to designate the permanent and irrevocable Priesthood of Christ.<sup>82</sup> When Abraham was promised the land of Israel and asked how he would know that he would inherit it, it prefigured for Augustine the virgin birth of Christ.<sup>83</sup>

In the Psalms, Augustine found references to kingship in some, like Psalm 45. He believed that the main features such as the throne that is forever and the oil of anointing would “properly” point to the Kingship of Christ “who reigns because of truth, meekness and righteousness.”<sup>84</sup> When this is understood, then the more concealed aspects of the

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<sup>80</sup> *COG*, XVI:2.

<sup>81</sup> *COG*, XVI:11.

<sup>82</sup> *COG*, XVI:22, XVII:17.

<sup>83</sup> *COG*, XVI:24.

<sup>84</sup> *COG*, XVII:16.



description such as the sword and arrows, the “tropological” features, could be explored. “Then let them look upon His Church, joined to her so great Husband in spiritual marriage and divine love”<sup>85</sup> which Augustine saw described in the words of the Psalm that speak about the “queen” who “stood upon Thy right hand in gold-embroidered vestments, girded about with variety.”

Christ in the present time is the foundation of the faithful, Augustine maintained.<sup>86</sup> His power and grace enable the believers to face the troubles of this life and simultaneously deliver from sin.<sup>87</sup> Christ hears prayer and receives adoration from all who worship the God of the Bible. In what would be considered an irksome statement today, Augustine declared that the Jewish people praise Christ but “think they are blessing another for whom they erringly hope.”<sup>88</sup> Augustine saw Christ as so universal that all good, all truth, and all true knowledge came from him and all worship directed to the true God was received by him.

The eschatological fulfillment of Christ had two aspects. There was the realized eschatology of the Church and the perfection of the individual. The Church was seen as the body of Christ on earth<sup>89</sup> and believers were built into the edification of this body. Augustine believed that true and false believers were within the Church on earth but that was quite permissible because we should always be humble about human inclinations and possibilities. Those who might be seen as enemies at the present time might develop

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<sup>85</sup> *COG*, XVII:16.

<sup>86</sup> *COG*, XXI:26.

<sup>87</sup> *COG*, XXII:22-23.

<sup>88</sup> *COG*, XVI:37.

<sup>89</sup> *COG*, XXII:17, 18.

into friends, and even if they do not, Augustine noted, it was not for humanity to decide who were the true and the false members of Christ's body on earth.<sup>90</sup> The Church itself consequently occupied a dual role in Augustine's theology, being at the same time an agglomeration of individuals and the manifestation of the superterrestrial entity of the body of Christ.

The fullness of the body of Christ Augustine reserved for individual perfection. Christ was the perfect man and each believing human is destined to be conformed to his image. Augustine painstakingly explained this doctrine and the fact that both men and women were included in the plan.<sup>91</sup> By being destined to conform to the image of the Son of God, Augustine pointed out, humans are not destined to be in the same gender or bodily structure or race as Christ, but to be like him in the "inner" self. The inner self shall be perfect in and because of Christ, the Perfect one.

For Augustine, then, in each age of history Christ actively operated in the creation of the cosmos and humanity, and the initiation and sustenance of the righteousness in the lives of the chosen people. Good people and choices were interpreted to point favorably to the beauty of Christ, sufferings or discomfort (even the drunkenness of Noah) to the passion of Christ, and triumphs to his resurrection. Christ was seen in the roles of Priest, King, Prophet, and in many other relationships to the Christian. The Christian lives in the body of Christ, the Church, and shall one day see Christ in completeness and shall know and even *be* in him perfectly.

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<sup>90</sup> *COG*, I:35.

<sup>91</sup> *COG*, XXII:12-21.

For Soloveitchik and his followers, the religion explicated in *Halakhic Man* was characterized by Theonomy— Divine Law.<sup>92</sup> The combination of the two elements of Divine and Law was fundamental to Soloveitchik's understanding of God's relationship with humanity. God was no longer confined to the status of that about which no thought can be formulated but had chosen to reveal His will through His words which constituted the Law.

Soloveitchik believed that the Torah was given by God on Sinai to His human partners.<sup>93</sup> There was thus a fixed nature to the giving of the Law in a certain geographic and temporal location. The Torah itself is eternal for the time within its purview begins with the creation of heaven and earth.<sup>94</sup> Parallel to the fixed nature of the Law was also its flexibility within specific confines. God and humanity are in a constantly dynamic relationship, and this meant that the Law is always flowing and always growing. Soloveitchik believed that the "power of creative interpretation (*hiddush*) is the very foundation of the received tradition."<sup>95</sup> To illustrate this, Soloveitchik cited the story from Menahot 29b that, when Moses ascended on high, he found God sitting there, tying crowns to the letters in order that future generations should, by virtue of their powers of creative interpretation, discover heaps upon heaps of law contained in every jot and tittle. Soloveitchik also believed that all insights thus gained are an integral part of the Oral Law.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> As noted for instance by his grandson, Kolitz, in *Confrontation*, op. cit., p.151.

<sup>93</sup> *HM*, p.81.

<sup>94</sup> *HM*, p.117.

<sup>95</sup> *HM*, p.81.

<sup>96</sup> *HM*, pp.81-82.

Existence is always changing, so the Torah must always be interpreted by the only beings with the power to do so; humanity. Soloveitchik drew on R. Hayyim Volozhin to explain why humanity was given the Torah: Not even the angels are capable of creative interpretation since God “created them in a state of perfection, they need not and, therefore, cannot develop and progress.”<sup>97</sup> In the unlikely event that the Torah had been given to angelic recipients “it would remain forever unchanged, without addition or diminution.”<sup>98</sup> As it is, however, the Torah has been given safeguards around laws that testify to the progress and intellectual power of humanity. This mirrors the ever-moving relationship of God and His people. Safeguards are imposed by humanity to protect the Divine Law and to raise its sanctity.

In *Halakhic Man*, Soloveitchik believed that the Halakhah and the Torah were one. Torah and Halakhah both designate the “a priori, ideal creation.”<sup>99</sup> The ideal Divine creation is provided there and can still be accessed by us, and implemented in this world. Humanity can work for that day when “the ideal Halakhah” is actualized in the midst of this world and the deficiency of the world is thereby replenished.<sup>100</sup>

The theoretical and practical domain of halakhah cannot be separated, Soloveitchik believed. Creation now languishes because of its deficiency and but the practical obedience to Halakhah has as its “telos” nothing less than the “renewal of the cosmos.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *HM*, pp.82.

<sup>98</sup> *HM*, pp.82.

<sup>99</sup> *HM*, p.94.

<sup>100</sup> *HM*, p.99.

<sup>101</sup> *HM*, p.99.

Soloveitchik's identification of the Torah with the Halakhah is not typical in Jewish theology. David Shapiro carefully distinguished them: "Halakhah is the way of life formulated by the Torah for the guidance of mankind and Israel."<sup>102</sup> The Torah gives birth to the Halakhah. The Torah is the eternal, unchanging will of God and the Halakhah is the historically conditioned application of His will. Following *Shabbat* 138b, Shapiro nevertheless noted that Halakhah is a "phase of Torah" and thus is "the earthly embodiment of the Divine word" and "derives its contents from the essential character of God."<sup>103</sup>

From Soloveitchik's perspective, the situation was different. There were many ways of regarding the Torah. Soloveitchik considered how the Halakhah looks at the Torah and he concluded that "The Halakhah sees the Torah as consisting of basic laws and halakhic principles." No aspect of the Torah exists except for the confirmation and establishment of Halakhah. Even the narratives in Scripture "serve the purpose of determining everlasting law."<sup>104</sup> Soloveitchik noted that *Genesis Rabbah* 60:11 commented that there is a relatively long passage about Eliezer and a very short statement about the uncleanness of reptiles in Scripture. Yet the uncleanness of reptiles is a basic principle of the Law and Eliezer's conversation which is not only recorded but repeated, is largely forgotten. Even so, Soloveitchik declared, "Our Torah does not contain one superfluous word or phrase."<sup>105</sup> Everything in it— every letter and word,

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<sup>102</sup> David Shapiro, *Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 1, New York, Yeshiva University Press, 1975, p.122.

<sup>103</sup> Shapiro, op. cit., p.126.

<sup>104</sup> *HM*, p.99.

<sup>105</sup> *HM*, p.100.

points to basic principles of halakhot, practical principles, commandments and judgments.

In the conversations of the servants, the trial of the fathers, the fate of the tribes, Soloveitchik sees the teaching of Torah. In the accounts of creation, the Torah is not providing Divine mysteries, esoteric teachings and “cosmogonic secrets” but Halakhah.<sup>106</sup> In this differentiation, Soloveitchik again distanced himself from the Zohar, which teaches that “The Torah, in all its words, holds supernal truths and divine secrets.”<sup>107</sup> The Zohar sees the Torah as possessing a body clothed in the raiment of narratives relating to the things of this world. The fools see only the garments of the narratives, the somewhat more knowledgeable discern also the body while the truly wise gaze upon the very soul, the root principle of the Torah.

For Soloveitchik the Halakhah was the very soul of the Torah. Franz Rosenzweig had argued in his “Apologetic Thinking” that Judaism based on haggada or on philosophy has little validity since authority derived from the Halakhah. The Halakhah alone teaches what Jews must believe. Rosenzweig did not survive to undertake a study of the theology of the Halakhah based on his methodology so the derivation of a theology of the Halakhah is indebted to Soloveitchik.

Soloveitchik often personified the Halakhah. This has exasperated some scholars. Borowitz thought that the relation of the Halakhah “to the structure and content” of Soloveitchik’s philosophy was rendered unclear by his usage of phrases like “the

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<sup>106</sup> *HM*, p.100.

<sup>107</sup> Zohar, III:152a, op. cit.

Halakhah thinks” or “the Halakhic idea of.”<sup>108</sup> This would cause the reader to believe that what Soloveitchik explicated was a central aspect of “the” theology of Halakhah, Borowitz complained. Yet Soloveitchik never did exactly that but elaborated a philosophic anthropology involving God, and then used the halakhah to clarify and amplify it (or vice versa) without demonstrating how necessary or sufficient one body of thought was for the other.

As Kolitz has observed,<sup>109</sup> Borowitz was not always accurate in his analysis of Soloveitchik. In what confused Borowitz in Soloveitchik’s philosophical anthropology involving God, Soloveitchik was delineating the core theology of Halakhah that Borowitz expected but did not perceive. To Soloveitchik, the necessity and sufficiency of the connection between his thought and Halakhah would thus have been self evident in the existence of both the Halakhah and the halakhic man. The experience of those whose lives were founded on Halakhah amply justified the distillation of their mutual relationship into the theology of *Halakhic Man*. As David Hartman explained, Soloveitchik was not writing a philosophy of Jewish Law but was rather “defining the characteristics of the halakhic hero.”<sup>110</sup>

Shapiro’s exasperation was focused on Soloveitchik’s lack of clarification of his assumption that the Halakhah had a normative, teleological and ideal character.<sup>111</sup> This appears to be a valid criticism. Soloveitchik was so captivated by the Halakhah that he

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<sup>108</sup> Eugene B. Borowitz, *Choice in Modern Jewish Thought: A Partisan Guide*, New York, Behrman House, 1983, p.222.

<sup>109</sup> Kolitz, op. cit., pp.160-161.

<sup>110</sup> David Hartman, “The Halakhic Hero: Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik’s Halakhic Man,” *Modern Judaism*, vol.9, 3, 1989, p.263.

<sup>111</sup> Shapiro, op. cit., pp.137-138.

leapt from one height of insight to another. This can frustrate the uninitiated reader who might be trying to comprehend whether a particular statement pertains to the practical Halakhah that sets the norms for human life, to the Halakhah that has a goal to which it strives in partnership with humanity, or to the ideal, a priori, perfect Halakhah.

There is the possibility that the distinctions between the practical, teleological and ideal merge at a higher level. Since there seemed to be no distinction for Soloveitchik, or at least none that he shared with the reader, one can be reluctant to entertain too much speculation about 'which Halakhah' is meant. All meanings were probably subsumed into one unless a particular meaning was extracted and specified for a reason.

Soloveitchik firmly believed in Berakhot 8a "God only has in this world the four cubits of the Halakhah."<sup>112</sup>

This leads to a very interesting belief of Soloveitchik. As a vital corollary to the principle of tzimtzum, he was convinced that the Halakhah was the tzimtzum of the Shekinah.<sup>113</sup> Following Soloveitchik, Kolitz also declared his own identification of the Halakhah as the tzimtzum of the Divine "within the four cubits of the Law."<sup>114</sup>

Soloveitchik cited Numbers Rabbah 13:2 where:

R. Ishmael b. R. Jose said: It does not say in the text 'I am come into the garden,' but 'I am come into My garden.' This means the bridal chamber—namely, into the place which has been My principal abode from the very beginning, for the principal abode of the Divine Presence is in the lower realms.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *HM*, p.87.

<sup>113</sup> *HM*, p.55-57, 108-109.

<sup>114</sup> Kolitz, *op. cit.*, p.26.

<sup>115</sup> *HM*, p.55.



Yet the Divine Presence was on high because of human sins until Moses brought it down into the garden of God that is the earth, Soloveitchik noted. What Moses brought down was the Halakhah. The Halakhah revealed to Moses on Sinai uses “contraction” in the “quantification” of religious quality and subjectivity in the “form of concrete, objective, phenomena that are standardized and measurable.”<sup>116</sup>

For each and every commandment the Halakhah has fixed statutes, laws and measures. Soloveitchik noted that even mundane matters such as what constitutes eating and what are its measurements, what constitutes drinking and what are its standards, what constitutes a fruit and what are its stages of development and distinguishing characteristics, the thirty-nine categories of work on the Sabbath are all defined and delimited by the Halakhah.

The theology of Halakhah encompasses so many dimensions of Soloveitchik’s thought that it is inseparable from his views on sovereignty, humanity and holiness. A simple belief like the Halakhah filling the deficiency in this world by drawing the Shekinah down to us and thus “contracting” transcendence within our flawed world<sup>117</sup> is replete with implications for many areas of theology. Human partnership with God in entailed in the work of repairing the deficiency and returning the Shekinah to her earthly abode. The concept of tzimtzum as the accommodation of God’s sovereignty is evident also in this statement. As for holiness, Soloveitchik believed that “Judaism explains the concept of holiness from the perspective of the secret of ‘contraction’.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> *HM*, p.55.

<sup>117</sup> *HM*, p.108.

<sup>118</sup> *HM*, p.108.

Holiness is intimately related to the Halakhah. Just as the Halakhah is the descent of the Divine will and word into our existence, holiness is the descent of divinity in the midst of our concrete world. Soloveitchik offered Deuteronomy 23:15 as an illustration: “For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp... therefore shall thy camp be holy” and he deduced that holiness is the contraction of Infinity “within a finitude bound by laws, measures, and standards, the appearance of transcendence within empirical reality, and the objectification and quantification of that religious subjectivity that flows from hidden sources.”<sup>119</sup>

The Halakhah is not only the revelation of the will of God by the submission of His word, it is also the *tzimtzum* of the Shekinah and the holiness of God. In Soloveitchik’s thought, when the Halakhah is handed over to human keeping, it is an indescribably great treasure. As the contraction of the Divine, the halakhah also bestows on humanity a great power.<sup>120</sup> This shall be explored in the later section on halakhic man.

The Halakhah gives human beings the power to be holy and to be creators, two key elements of Sovereign power. Soloveitchik linked halakhic holiness and creation, stating that “The dream of creation finds its realization in the actualization of the principle of holiness.”<sup>121</sup> Holiness cannot be attained until creation is achieved. Those who never bring anything new or original into being in the world cannot be holy unto God. They have never sought holiness in their own existence. Creation itself is the lowering of transcendence into our coarse, material world and this descent can only occur

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<sup>119</sup> *HM*, p.108.

<sup>120</sup> *HM*, pp.80, 108.

<sup>121</sup> *HM*, p.108.

with what Soloveitchik called “the implementation of the ideal Halakhah in the core of reality.”<sup>122</sup>

It would appear that a multitude of concepts are identical to one another in Soloveitchik’s theology. To explain what he has defined as analogous, Soloveitchik provided an equation:

“realization of the Halakhah = contraction = holiness = creation”<sup>123</sup>

This equation is invested with tremendous possibilities. One should note at the onset that it seems likely that the converse of the equation would also be accurate, that creation = holiness = contraction = realization of the Halakhah. True to Soloveitchik’s existentialism, however, he began with our lives and pointed to their fulfillment in the Divine. One might also notice that Soloveitchik places contraction as the equal of the realization of the Halakhah and not merely as the equal of the Halakhah itself. This dimension which might appear on the surface to be an alternation of his stated belief is probably explicable by the truth that the Halakhah derives its essence from its relation to humanity. The Halakhah contains the potential for returning the Shekinah to earth but this is a concealed possibility until the Halakhah outside humanity becomes what Kolitz rightly calls the “experienced Halakhah.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> *HM*, p.108.

<sup>123</sup> *HM*, p.109.

<sup>124</sup> Kolitz, p.73.

## Chapter Two : Humanity's Situation

Both Augustine and Soloveitchik looked at humanity's present situation and thought that something was wrong. Both of them characterized what was wrong as sin. Both discussed the source, effects and resolution of sin and their thoughts frequently intersected.

Augustine located the ground of sin in the free will of humanity. He believed that since all creation was originally good, sin could not have its source in the nature but must have its source in the will, which is free. Augustine never answered the question about the source of the capacity of sinning in the will. In his depiction of the will, it seems as though the will itself had the ability to create that wayward inclination, although Augustine railed against this notion and preferred to think that the evil will was a falling away from the work of the good will which God created rather than a work.<sup>1</sup> Even the devil, Augustine maintained, is good by his nature and wicked only by his own will.<sup>2</sup> Evil is good which has been corrupted.

In Augustine's thought, departure from God would not even be a vice, had not our nature been designed to abide with Him. The first man was made upright, with a good will which God created. There was also an evil will which preceded the evil act of disobedience. Augustine strongly suggested that the evil will was not in existence synonymously with the good, but was a choice freely made. Evils exist for the purpose of demonstrating how "the most righteous foresight of God" can make a good use even of

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<sup>1</sup> COG, XIV: 11.

<sup>2</sup> COG, XI:17

them.<sup>3</sup> Augustine also believed that, once Adam made the choice of disobedience, our wills were ensnared in the trap of that evil pathway, and only the Author of our wills can be our Liberator.

The evil in our nature is removed, not by removal of any part of our nature or any nature itself since evil has no independent existence, but by “healing and correcting that which has been vitiated and depraved.”<sup>4</sup> There is the possibility then, of a renewal of the will so that it is as truly free as when it was given by God.

The perfectly free will we once had was lost by “its own fault” and it can only be restored by the One who had the power to give it. Like the darkness discussed earlier, the will is held at fault for what is deemed its choice but what appears to be its nature.

Augustine believed what was to become a hallmark of Christian teaching, that the devil deceived the woman, who gave the forbidden fruit to the man, and they and their descendants were forever expelled from the garden of Eden.

The loss of paradise and the blemish of sin on our natures forever might appear to be a drastic consequence of merely eating the forbidden fruit, and Augustine anticipated that objection in offering the explanation that, “the iniquity of violating it was all the greater in proportion to the ease with which it might have been kept.”<sup>5</sup> The objection which might be raised here is that the commandment was not easy to keep since the tree was right in the garden, so even if temptation had not intervened, a mistake might have occurred. At this point one might wonder why the tree was in the garden anyway, since

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *COG*, XIV:11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., XIV:12.

in Augustine it seems to have no function but to have the consumption of its fruit foreordained by the One who so forbade.

Augustine nevertheless had to explain how such an act which brought sin into the world and constituted the fall from a state of grace (in Christian terminology, 'the Fall') was possible to human nature, which until then should have been completely pure. So, he explained that Adam and Eve were "secretly corrupted" prior to the temptation with the fruit.<sup>6</sup> Pride led to the craving for a more exalted status, and the wicked deed was committed by people who were already wicked. Pride continued after the sin, and was worse than the sin itself. This Augustine inferred from the fact that when the couple were discovered in their sin, they blamed another and did not think of asking for pardon. The rudimentary root of the first and of all sin is pride. Pride in this sense is defined as love of self over the love of God.

The effects of that first sin were severe. Instead of liberty, man was now doomed "to live dissatisfied with himself in a hard and miserable bondage" to the devil<sup>7</sup> to whom he had yielded himself. The nature of human existence was also dramatically altered. In place of the physical immortality which would have prevailed in Eden man was "doomed in spite of himself to die in body as he had willingly become dead in spirit" and condemned to eternal death as the penalty for forsaking eternal life.<sup>8</sup> As Versfield observed, the "consequence of mortality" was important to Augustine who dwelt for a while upon the matter of its entry into the world through the "deprivation of nature by the

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV:13.

<sup>7</sup> *COG*, XIV:15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

Fall.”<sup>9</sup> It is intriguing that only humanity suffered the loss of immortality when we disobeyed God and the angels did not although Augustine believed that the reason for the rebellion of the angels who followed the devil was the same pride as that which led to the Fall of humanity. Some modern Christian theologians dislike the Augustinian emphasis on the cause and consequence of mortality. Macquarrie, for instance, thinks that this emphasis “tends to obscure the distinction between finitude (which belongs intrinsically to human existence) and sin (which is an imbalance or perversion affecting existence).”<sup>10</sup>

Augustine believed that there had been no sin in Eden. It would have been sin “to desire those things which the law of God forbids”<sup>11</sup> as it is sin to desire that which the law of God forbids but not to yield out of fear of punishment rather than through love of righteousness. One might assume that only when the inclination to evil is completely absent is there no sin. It is noteworthy that Augustine here defined sin as transgression of the law, because for Soloveitchik, sin was just that; the violation of the Halakhah.

For Augustine, the Fall could be summarized as “man’s own disobedience to himself.”<sup>12</sup> This statement is striking because it reminds us that, although God inflicted the punishment, human beings had mastery over their own destiny by the power of the will. Augustine explained that before the Fall, humanity could do everything they wished, since they only wished to do what they could.<sup>13</sup> No amount of elaboration of this point can detract from the fact that his depiction of the effects of the Fall makes it

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<sup>9</sup> Marthinus Versfield, *A Guide to the City of God*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1958, p.45.

<sup>10</sup> John Macquarrie’s view, as quoted here from his *Principles of Christian Theology*, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966, pp.210-211.

<sup>11</sup> *COG*, XIV:10.

<sup>12</sup> *COG*, XIV:15.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

appear that the Fall was beneficial for the growth of human consciousness. Human nature in the created state would have been very naïve and limited in its range of options. Since it could only will to do what it could, there would never have been any drive to mature spiritually. Augustine maintained that the existence of evil in the world today was so that the good might shine all the brighter<sup>14</sup> and this contention shows that the static goodness of the primal condition would have generated the faintest and most unappealing of glows.

The drive to improve may not have been necessary in what Augustine describes as a state of perfect tranquility, free from the blight of sorrow and illness. It might be wondered whether an existence without emotional, mental or physical stress would be not perfect tranquility but perfect ennui.

Peter Brown thought that in *The City of God* Augustine wrote about Adam with “particular poignancy” because he now sympathized with Adam’s plight. There certainly often appears to be sympathy when Augustine described the fallen condition of humanity because he experienced so much tension with temptations in his own life. I would dare to suggest, however, that there is more than sympathy, and the careful reader can discern nothing less than *admiration* for the blessings of the fallen condition in some of the most insightful passages of *City of God*.

In our fallen condition, the image of God in us is not quenched. The image of God principally resided in the human mind which is active and powerful, endowed with

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<sup>14</sup> For instance *COG*, I:8-11.



reason and intelligence even after the Fall.<sup>15</sup> (At this point, a critic might say that only after an Augustinian Fall does a mind seem to be needed! The limitations of our experience and reason, however, prevent us from understanding what would have been the occupation of the mind in Edenic bliss). The enduring image of God in humanity had dramatic results for how “the creative energy of God”<sup>16</sup> as Augustine saw it, filtered down into and through humanity. Augustine perceived the creative energy in humanity manifesting itself in a myriad of ways such as in the birth of children, in the growth of a person in body and character, and in the genius of humanity which has “invented and applied countless astonishing arts, partly the result of necessity, partly the result of exuberant invention.”<sup>17</sup> It might be observed that both the necessity and the drive which led to the exuberance of invention are direct results of the expulsion from Eden. In Eden, where everything was provided, there was no invention or exuberance.

Augustine continued that this vigor of the human mind “betokens an inexhaustible wealth in the nature which can invent, learn, or employ such arts.” Among other illustrations, he gave the examples of the advances of human industry and displays of human skill in construction, agriculture, pottery, theatrical performances, and even the instruments of destruction such as weapons which are often countered by equally amazing instruments of medicine. Food, writing implements, songs and musical instruments receive Augustine’s praise. An endearing aspect of his encomium here is that Augustine even extolled the “genius of heretics and philosophers” as part of the

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<sup>15</sup> *COG*, XI:12.

<sup>16</sup> *COG*, XXII:24.

<sup>17</sup> *COG*, XXII:24.

creative energy in humanity which “adorns this mortal life.”<sup>18</sup> The dimensions of human finitude certainly have expanded since Eden. All of the items that Augustine listed as enjoyed by him in existence were probably the result of the Fall. So, in Augustine’s thought we lost Adam and Eve’s original unity of mind, body and will and are sinful. However, the entire frame of lived experience we have is far greater than anything for which they could have striven in Eden. It is possible, therefore, to posit that the present state of humanity in Augustine’s thought compared to its created state might be ontologically inferior but certainly is existentially superior.

After Eden, troubles of the body, mind and spirit entered the world. Humanity’s disobedience there was our disobedience as descendants of Adam and Eve. This monogenism means that their punishment is also ours in the present. Augustine can therefore declare that “our disobedience brought troubles upon ourselves, not upon God.”<sup>19</sup> One can contrast this with Soloveitchik’s thought, where our disobedience would wound both human and Divine. In the cursed post-Eden existence fear, sadness, bodily pain are our lot, as is ‘lust’ which Augustine used to refer to all desires. Augustine explained, however, that the term ‘lust’ is particularly appropriate for sexual desires, for in Eden children would have been begotten without lust, but in the post-Eden existence, lust of this kind is uncontrolled by our own will.<sup>20</sup> This is an interesting statement, because it indicates that the dissonance between body and mind is a symptom of the Fall. Harmony is perfection and any sort of tension, such as body versus mind, is a symptom

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<sup>18</sup> *COG*, XXII:24.

<sup>19</sup> *COG*, XIV:15.

<sup>20</sup> *COG*, XIV:21, XIV:16.

of malaise and not endued with what Hegel would see as dialectical potential. In Hegelian philosophy, the existing thesis is met by an opposing antithesis and the resulting tension produces a higher creation, a synthesis. This is true whether in the realm of the universe or of the individual struggle of body and mind.<sup>21</sup> Soloveitchik wholeheartedly adopted much of the “fundamental contention” set forth by the dialectical philosophy of Hegel regarding the “ongoing course of existence in general.”<sup>22</sup> Human existence, in particular for Soloveitchik, was the prime example of how an ongoing battle pushes creativity and the dimensions of humanity forward.

Augustine embarked into ambitious detail in his discussion of the shamefulness of sexual intercourse in post-Eden existence. In Eden children would have been born without lust, for the command of God to ‘increase and multiply’ preceded the expulsion from Eden. This was “in order that the procreation of children might be recognised as part of the glory of marriage, and not of the punishment of sin.”<sup>23</sup> As for how the children would have been born without lust, Augustine pointed out that obviously there was now no example to teach us, since even our first parents were expelled before they had the opportunity to procreate in Eden. It is instructive that when Augustine wanted to support his hypothesis of ideal sexual intercourse without lust, he did not use any Scripture but resorted to Cicero’s *De Republica* and to a discussion of reason, will and authority in philosophical terms.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Although the terms themselves are not used by Hegel, this is the accepted summation of his thought in works such as his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A.V. Miller, Oxford, Clarendon, 1977.

<sup>22</sup> *HM*, p.4.

<sup>23</sup> *COG*, XIV:21.

<sup>24</sup> *COG*, XIV:23.

The present effects of sin were evident universally, Augustine believed. We were created free, and yet some people were in slavery so the institution of slavery itself which was extant in his time was “the result of sin.”<sup>25</sup> Those of us who are not physically enchained by slavery to a human authority are slaves to the empire of sin.

As for how those in bondage to the slavery of sin can be freed, Augustine was very clear and emphatic. Although sin is our fault, we cannot rescue ourselves. We are thrust into the predicament of being “separated from God only by sins”<sup>26</sup> and do not have the virtue to cleanse ourselves. This became a key element in mainline Christian teaching, and is stated in many different ways, all of which explain that the restoration of humanity to purity cannot be undertaken by a nature that is stained by sin and our innate sinfulness precludes any attempt on our part to heal and redeem ourselves. Having once fallen from a state of grace, the barrier of sin is too wide for humanity to traverse.

Augustine’s concept of the nature of humanity has come into adoption by most Christian churches. It has also been under fire because, as Bonner noted, “Few Christian writers have painted the state of fallen man in darker colours than he.”<sup>27</sup> Bonner cited critics who thought that Augustine’s theology was really a “pathology,” that instead of being a theologian he was a “penologist” and, instead of a theology he gave us a “criminology.”<sup>28</sup>

These criticisms of Augustine are rather extravagant, however, because Augustine not only painted the dreary state of fallen humanity but also spoke of its deification. In

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<sup>25</sup> *COG*, XIX:15.

<sup>26</sup> *COG*, X:22.

<sup>27</sup> Bonner, “Augustine’s Doctrine of Man,” in *God’s Decree and Man’s Destiny*, op. cit., p.508.

<sup>28</sup> Bonner, *ibid.*

speaking of deification Augustine is so reminiscent of Athanasius that to Bonner it suggested direct borrowing when Augustine declared that “He who was God was made man to make gods those who were men.”<sup>29</sup>

Following Augustine, John Calvin outlined what humanity’s situation was in relation to God; “our iniquities, like a cloud cast between us and him, had completely estranged us from the Kingdom of Heaven.”<sup>30</sup> However, the power and love of God is able to bridge the dividing gap. So Augustine was able to rejoice that “divine compassion” cleansed the stain of sin from our nature and “through His indulgence, not through our own power”<sup>31</sup> we were freed from sin. Complete estrangement could be bridged in this system by the person and work of one who was both human and Divine, Christ. Whatever sinful evil there is in our nature is the fault of our will, but whatever is good is not our own, but is bestowed by the goodness of God.<sup>32</sup>

It appears rather unbalanced to have humanity responsible for all its evil but none of its good. Augustine’s theology stressed the utter goodness of God. This is a strength when Augustine spoke about how God deals with humanity but a flaw when humanity’s nature is under consideration. The view of human existence as fatally flawed nature was very pessimistic, and although Augustine’s intention was to entice people to the goodness of God, such a portrayal of the fallen nature of humanity could have the effect of impelling his readers to despair if they missed the beauty in Augustine’s explanation that only the goodness of God effects redemption, and therefore we should never be downcast

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<sup>29</sup> Bonner, *ibid.* Augustine, *Sermons*, 192,1,1.

<sup>30</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, *op. cit.*, II:XII:1.

<sup>31</sup> *COG*, X:22.

<sup>32</sup> *COG*, X:22.

since humanity's fulfillment is so easily assured. At the same time, we can never be proud, since the capacity to achieve the greatest blessing in the universe must be conferred as a gift rather than attained by endeavour.

Forgiveness comes from God's free, unmerited grace.<sup>33</sup> It is to be sought from God for those sins we have committed with or without knowing it, and must be accompanied by a desire to change our lifestyle. Almsgiving does not produce forgiveness, Augustine maintained, against those in his day who thought it did. Augustine pointed out that if they had extorted money from widows and orphans all week and sought to give some of the money as alms, it would be useless. Augustine also effectively used one of Jesus' illustrations to intensify what the repentant lifestyle involved: If a man, angry at his brother, unjustly reviled him and had no desire of repenting, his alms-deeds would not go any distance in bringing about his forgiveness. In this illustration from Jesus, Augustine noted, the readers are told that even if you bring a gift to the altar and then remember that your brother has something against you, you are obliged to return and be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer the gift.<sup>34</sup> One might conclude that God's free forgiveness does not eliminate the need for upright living. In fact, the renewal of life which God affords, in Augustine's system increases the inclination to upright living and decreases the tendency to pride. While in "the flesh" Augustine explained, we live "in the receipt of pardon."<sup>35</sup> Living "in the receipt of pardon" appears to have two benefits in Augustine's theology; The first is that it suffuses

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<sup>33</sup> *COG*, XXI:27.

<sup>34</sup> *COG*, XXI:27. The illustration is from Matthew 5:22-24.

<sup>35</sup> *COG*, X:22.

all that we do with joy, because we are a pardoned people and do not live under the cloud of separation from God although we are not yet fully in His presence. The second is that it infuses into us a spirit of humility because the pardon was not obtainable by our own power.

Augustine noted that the righteous life is more difficult than the unrighteous life. While there are miseries common to both the good and bad, but the righteous undergo interior suffering peculiar to them “as they make war upon their vices, and are involved in the temptations of such a contest.”<sup>36</sup> The unrighteous who enjoy the sinful nature and the pursuit of sin have no such interior battle. Only the righteous try to live in accordance with the will of God as far as God gives them the ability.

It is impossible for human repentance in Augustine’s system to lead to the earthly victory over sin, even for the righteous who are:

vigilantly keeping watch lest a semblance of truth deceive us, lest a subtle discourse blind us, lest we should take good for evil or evil for good, lest fear should hinder us from doing what we ought, or desire precipitate us into doing what we ought not, lest the sun go down upon our wrath, lest hatred provoke us to render evil for evil, lest unseemly or immoderate grief consume us, lest an ungrateful disposition make us slow to recognise benefits received, lest calumnies fret our conscience, lest rash suspicion on our part deceive us regarding a friend, or false suspicion of us on the part of others give us too much uneasiness, lest sin reign in our mortal body to obey its desires, lest our members be used as the instruments of unrighteousness, lest the eye follow lust, lest thirst for revenge carry us away, lest sight or thought dwell too long on some evil thing which gives us pleasure, lest wicked or indecent language be willingly listened to, lest we do what is pleasant but unlawful, and lest in this warfare, filled so abundantly with toil and peril, we either hope to secure victory by our own strength, or attribute it when secured to our own strength, and not to His grace....<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *COG*, XXII:23.

<sup>37</sup> *COG*, XXII:23

The forgiven people proceed through life continually repenting. Augustine often quoted the section of the 'Our Father' prayer which states, "forgive us our trespasses."<sup>38</sup> He declared that we shall have to offer that petition and act it out as long as we are on earth. However righteously we live, we still commit sins for the remission of which we are admonished to pray.

The ground of sin for Soloveitchik was also the free will of humanity.<sup>39</sup> Soloveitchik believed that the will of humanity was free and still is. Moreover, he followed Maimonides in broadening the principle of choice to "encompass man's entire spiritual being"<sup>40</sup> rather than limiting it to the facet of the will. Soloveitchik approvingly quoted Maimonides, "Choice is granted to every human being."<sup>41</sup> If people wish to follow the good path and be righteous or the evil path and be wicked, the choice is theirs. Soloveitchik believed with Maimonides that every human being is fit to become as righteous as Moses or as wicked as Jeroboam. In this theology there is a specific good path and a contrasting evil path. We can wonder whether this contradicts Soloveitchik's earlier plan to 'sanctify evil' or if the possibility of sanctifying evil is open to only the halakhic men as the spiritual elite. Perhaps Soloveitchik believed that only the halakhic man was capable of raising the element of evil in his life to the evolution of goodness. It is also probable that Soloveitchik's belief in the growth of good or evil into the good or evil path is founded on Aristotelian ethics, particularly the notion that we

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<sup>38</sup> For example, *COG*, XXI:27, XXII:23.

<sup>39</sup> *HM*, pp. 136-137.

<sup>40</sup> *HM*, p. 136, following Maimonides *Laws of Repentance*, 5:1.

<sup>41</sup> Maimonides, *Laws of Repentance*, 5:1.



become what we repeatedly do, so good and evil people are not spontaneously defined but are in their respective pathways out of practiced custom.

The concept of good and evil paths also prevailed in Augustine but, as was mentioned, for Augustine evil was the corruption of the good and had no independent existence. The good path was following God and the evil was following the self.

Soloveitchik noted that, “in the final analysis it is the will which is the source of freedom.”<sup>42</sup> This found the source of freedom in innate nature of humanity and not in God. Soloveitchik did not have Augustine’s doctrine of the bondage of the will to sin until it is freed by divine agency. Instead, he added his own distinctive interpretation to our existence when he deduced that “Indeed, man’s entire spiritual existence is enhanced by his unique privilege to create himself and make himself into a free man.”<sup>43</sup> Our present existence offers us the opportunity to avoid the randomness of being one of a species and to create the our own life, free from any sense of compulsion by an outside power.

In contrast to Augustine, Soloveitchik had a thought-provoking belief which linked the Divine will to the human counterpart. Soloveitchik referred to an earlier statement that God created the world for the sake of His will. As a consequence, Soloveitchik contended, “when God apportioned some of His glory to mortal man and bestowed on him the power of creation, He grounded this creative power in man’s will.”<sup>44</sup> The grounding of creative power in the post-Eden will that lingers in a state of

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<sup>42</sup> *HM*, p.136,

<sup>43</sup> *HM*, p.136.

<sup>44</sup> *HM*, p.137.

fallenness would have been unthinkable to Augustine. Augustine believed that before the Fall, humanity was “endowed with reason and intelligence.”<sup>45</sup> After the Fall, however, the image of God was totally obliterated and this was the dismal result:

No nature can be depraved by vice except such as is made out of nothing. Its nature it derives from the fact that it was made by God; but its fall derives from the fact that it was made out of nothing. Man did not fall to the extent that he became nothing at all, but by stooping to follow his own inclination he became less than he was when he clung to God, who is Being in the highest degree. When man abandoned God and lived to himself to do his own pleasure he did not become nothing, but approached nothingness.<sup>46</sup>

It is interesting that this statement of Augustine finds an answer in Soloveitchik, who contended that the cognitive man has to establish a cosmic order characterized by necessity and lawfulness. “Any phenomenon which cannot be subjected to the rule of law and principle is relegated to the realm of nonbeing and nothingness.”<sup>47</sup> The philosophic system with which cognitive man operates when he does something like this was that of the Platonists, Soloveitchik observed. The random and the particular are not seen as deserving the status of the real and existent, and remain in the realm of chaos. All that exists for cognitive man must fit into his perception of order. That which does not fit into this perception is not deemed worthy of existence since it is not effective being. One might wonder if this criticism of ‘cognitive man’ may be applicable to Soloveitchik when he declared (as noted in the discussion of providence) that the ignorant and disobedient have been stripped of their status as humanity and are at the level of the “random” examples of biological species.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *COG*, XII:23.

<sup>46</sup> *COG*, XIV:13.

<sup>47</sup> *HM*, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> *HM*, p.126, as seen in the earlier discussion of the Sovereignty of God.

In another statement of Soloveitchik, when he wanted to portray as starkly as possible the human drama, he noted that within humanity there is the image of God and the microcosm of monstrous “nothingness.”<sup>49</sup> The tendency to nothingness did exist for Soloveitchik when he spoke of the cosmic drama of light and darkness which is incorporated in the human soul. This tendency was evenly balanced by the equal weight of the image of God.

The elemental difference here is that for Augustine, humans begin that way and for Soloveitchik there can be what might be called a personal choice to Fall and the truly rebellious end in that state. Soloveitchik sounded Augustinian when he spoke about the “turbid and blurred image of universal existence”<sup>50</sup> which accrued to those who prove themselves unworthy of cleaving to infinity and the divine overflow. Soloveitchik believed that one had to demonstrate personal worthiness during life to merit Divine providence and thereby have the image of God, and Augustine believed that Divine providence operated through grace, choosing in whom it would change the fallen and blurred image of God into the restored true image.

Augustine’s fallen humanity approaching nothingness is confronted by Soloveitchik’s humanity with the creative will and power which reflects the Divine. Augustine occasionally spoke of the capacities for righteousness which was available to humanity through Divine grace and strength but his theology never approximates the notion of creative power residing in human will. Augustine believed that the blurred

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<sup>49</sup> *HM*, p. 109.

<sup>50</sup> *HM*, p. 126.

image of God in humanity had the capacity for God (*eius capax est*)<sup>51</sup> and that this was the only reason we could participate in God. However, Augustine seemed to confine this “capacity” to the neo-Platonic sense of a passive, reflected capability and he did not build it into a theology of human responsibility.

Soloveitchik did not believe in any progressively transmitted effects on human nature from the first disobedience and had a very different interpretation of Adam and Eve from that of Augustine. Humanity in its created state as described by Soloveitchik<sup>52</sup> appears to be no different from humanity in its present state.

Having the benefit of hundreds of years more Scripture research and exegesis available to him than Augustine did, Soloveitchik noted that in the Bible there were two accounts of the creation of humanity, and the accounts exhibited basic differences which Soloveitchik interpreted typologically. The first description of the creation of humanity had the creation of humanity almost as an afterthought, mentioning the creation of humanity in “in one breath” with that of the animals.<sup>53</sup> The second account was exclusively concerned with humanity. The first account spoke of ‘man and woman’ which is a biological description, and the second account spoke of ‘husband and wife’ which is a social or ethical description.

The first account in Genesis was concerned with the inorganic and organic cosmos. Humanity in this account is described because we constitute part of the created universe and share a common biology with the animals. This type of man Soloveitchik

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<sup>51</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity*, XIV, viii, 11.

<sup>52</sup> “Adam and Eve,” Synopsis of a lecture given by R. Soloveitchik to a joint audience of YC and Stern College on December 22, 1971, in *Shiurei Ha-Rav*, op. cit., pp.137-142.

<sup>53</sup> “Adam and Eve,” *ibid.*, p.137.

called “natural man.”<sup>54</sup> Naturalness is an integral part of humanity and is not to be despised since biological existence is not a curse but a challenge. In natural man there is “potential for greatness which can only be actualized by man.”<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately, Soloveitchik observed, although endowed with the opportunity and ability to develop himself, natural man usually prefers declining this challenge since he “prefers a nonreflective existence to a self-conscious one.”<sup>56</sup> The capacity for development hinges on self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is not the end but the beginning—albeit a very important beginning—of the journey of development for natural man, in Soloveitchik’s thought. This differs from the *Zohar*, for instance, which in its interpretation of Isaiah 26:9 identified “my soul” with “my God.”<sup>57</sup> One might also recall Augustine’s words about the real disobedience in sin being disobedience to oneself, and one might wonder whether true self-consciousness in Augustine also would be identified with God-consciousness. Like Augustine’s Adam and Eve, Soloveitchik’s humanity in its created state of natural man have a naïve nature and their “existence is limited by natural laws with mathematical boundaries.”<sup>58</sup>

While simplicity of his created state is preferable to the complexity of his developmental journey for the natural man, it is not so for the humanity described in the second account of creation. There, Soloveitchik believed, man is viewed “as a self-conscious being, about to give birth to himself.”<sup>59</sup> Man can now reflect on his

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<sup>54</sup> “Adam and Eve,” *ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>55</sup> “Adam and Eve,” *ibid.*, p. 138

<sup>56</sup> “Adam and Eve,” *ibid.*, p.

<sup>57</sup> *Zohar*, III, 67a.

<sup>58</sup> “Adam and Eve,” *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>59</sup> “Adam and Eve,” *op. cit.*, p. 138.

environment and Soloveitchik commented wryly that the man in the first account could not do that because of the constraining fact that he was part of it. In the second account, man struggles to free himself from the anonymity of merely being one member of a species and wrestles with the challenge of trying to be unique; to be an individual. Only those who challenge the cosmos can have the relationship with God mentioned in the second account, Soloveitchik argued, for there man relates to God as a person and God befriends man as a stranger and likes his companionship.<sup>60</sup> This type of man, Soloveitchik termed “metaphysical man” who “reaches for the infinite and yearns for happiness.”<sup>61</sup> The driving restlessness of metaphysical man can be compared to the unproductive complacency of natural man. At no time in his discussion of the types of humanity at the creation did Soloveitchik give the impression that they were of a more exalted nature than we presently are. In a lecture “On the Nature of Man,” Soloveitchik explicitly rejected the view that sin after creation resulted in a change of original nature. He thought that classical and Christian views hold that the ideal state of humanity is of existential monism and the duality within humanity is the result of sin after creation. In other words, Soloveitchik rejected the Christian thought that the Fall led to two aspects of humanity struggling against one another in the present and must be resolved to achieve our original unity.

This certainly appears to be a generally accurate depiction of humanity in Augustine, except for the concept of duality. Augustine firmly believed that all nature

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<sup>60</sup> “Adam and Eve,” op. cit., p.139.

<sup>61</sup> “Adam and Eve,” op. cit., p.139.

was good in its essence and sin, which was nothingness, rendered human nature fallen and imperfect. However, in Augustine there is a struggle in the will to do the good which we find we cannot because of the impulse of ingrained, sinful, fallenness. This struggle is located in the will, however, and not in the nature. It is not a duality because that would mean that the good and the evil had equal power which for Augustine was not at all true since the good is assured of ultimate triumph.<sup>62</sup>

Soloveitchik held that the spiritual duality of humanity was stamped upon the very nature of our creation: we were created with two souls.<sup>63</sup> The spiritual duality in each individual was therefore stamped upon us in the nature of creation. Each person has the capacity to exist as subject or object. God is exempt from this dichotomy since He knows His true being as He is and God's knowledge and life are an indivisible One. Human beings, however, have an internal estrangement between object and subject, which affects their thinking and experience because it influences logic, behavior and emotions.

The "man-object"<sup>64</sup> has only a surface existence and his activity consists of responding to the system; working, producing, and interrelating to other elements of the system. The "man-object"<sup>65</sup> by contrast is spiritual as opposed to sensual, impatient with details but sensitive to the grandeur of the whole, visionary and willful and his "logic" is seen by Soloveitchik to be "voluntaristic rather than rational."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> For instance, *COG*, XXII:30.

<sup>63</sup> "On the Nature of Man," op. cit., pp.143-144.

<sup>64</sup> "On the Nature of Man," op. cit., p.144.

<sup>65</sup> "On the Nature of Man," op. cit., p.145.

<sup>66</sup> "On the Nature of Man," op. cit., p.145.

The result is an “antithetical character” and an experienced “ontological dialectic.”<sup>67</sup> Outside humanity there is a system that is served by and serves us. Inside, there is the fact that humanity can experience reality either as subject or object. The choice is ours, Soloveitchik declares, and is contextually determined. In some areas of life, we should act as the subject and in other areas as the object. It depends not only on us but on the requirements of the community in which we live and the system. As the classic example of how the dialectic can be practical, Soloveitchik pointed out that the inner human dialectic is “transformed into the dialectic history of the Jewish people and is personified by Joseph, the great organizer and executive and yet still the great dreamer.”<sup>68</sup> Even in maturity, Soloveitchik argued, Joseph did not lose the dreamer-trait of his personality.

A significant flaw of Soloveitchik’s depiction of the dual natures in humanity and in their ongoing struggle is that he never clearly connected what he said about the two characters in man (subject and object) with his predicating statement about two *souls*. Apart from the polemic value of asserting the uniqueness of what he was proceeding to declare as opposed to the beliefs of prevailing classical and Christian thought, there seems to be inadequate foundation for his statement that there were two souls bestowed into humanity at creation. The souls, as souls that originate in God and share in the attribute of immortality, are not described. What Soloveitchik described here was two means of knowledge. Unless he wished to contend that each pattern of

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<sup>67</sup> “On the Nature of Man,” op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>68</sup> “On the Nature of Man,” op. cit., p. 146.



knowledge necessitates a separate soul for its undertaking, his doctrine of two souls in humanity is superfluous to all of his discussion. He could have said that each individual has a split personality because it was personality and not soul that occupied his thought.

Soloveitchik believed that the placement of humanity in the Garden of Eden was for a set Divine purpose. God had now “tempted man to be stimulated and to challenge his environment.”<sup>69</sup> Even in Eden, the formation of humanity was incomplete and there were challenges to tackle.

There are two major fears which plague metaphysical man, Soloveitchik explained, and these are death and ignorance. The two trees which God planted in the Garden were the antidotes to those fears. In a classic interpretation, Soloveitchik forwarded, “Had man been patient, he would have been allowed to eat from those trees (why else were they created?) but man was impatient and forever lost his chance.”<sup>70</sup>

Soloveitchik’s reasoning for the creation of the trees in Eden cannot be controverted. Unless the Almighty is prone to executing eternal temptation, the suggestion that He would have eventually permitted the human inhabitants of the garden to eat the fruit in front of them makes sense, since the fruit by its nature could hardly have been reserved for another entity. However, Soloveitchik like Augustine had to end his discussion about the possibilities in Eden by noting that the chance for discovering what might have been is lost forever.

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<sup>69</sup> “Adam and Eve,” op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>70</sup> “Adam and Eve,” op. cit., p. 140.

It is possible that Augustine thought that God might have allowed eventual consumption of the forbidden fruit. In the final book of *City of God* when Augustine described the fulfillment of his vision, he noted that in that final time, we shall be still and know that the Lord is God. We shall know that it is He who we aspired to be like when we fell away from Him by obeying the voice of the seducer who said that we would be as gods and we “so abandoned God, who would have made us as gods, not by deserting Him, but by participating in Him.”<sup>71</sup> Even our knowledge shall be perfected in that day when we perfectly know that He is God, Augustine maintained. This surely indicates that God would have allowed Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree one day. As it is, in the eschatological fulfillment of Augustine’s theology the perfect knowledge of God seems to describe in this instance what would have occurred if the fruits not been forbidden and if consumption of them led only to positive results.

It was necessary for God to limit the boundless curiosity of humanity, Soloveitchik explained, so the placement in Eden is accompanied by the command not to eat from the forbidden tree. For Soloveitchik, this seemed to have three implications. The first was that God “commanded man concerning man.”<sup>72</sup> This command did not concern any other beings, activities or the earth. This was the nascent establishment of the regulation of personal behavior under Divine jurisdiction.

The second implication is that the progress of humanity is called to a halt by a confrontation with the will of God. Humanity was beginning to respond to the

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<sup>71</sup> *COG*, XXII:30.

<sup>72</sup> “Adam and Eve,” *op. cit.*, p.140.

stimulating challenges in Eden, but their responses could potentially contradict the Divine will. Unlike the indisputably sovereign Divine will in Augustine which moves onward through the centuries accomplishing its design with unchallenged and unchallengeable power, the human will in Soloveitchik can accomplish progress in the wrong direction, against the wishes of God who intervenes and lets His will be known and occasionally confronts humanity with its enforcement.

The third implication of this command is that the first people are told that they “cannot exist without a moral imperative.”<sup>73</sup> The Kantian influence on Soloveitchik can be readily discerned at this juncture. Soloveitchik himself acknowledged his dependence on Kant in *Halakhic Man* and declared that “the moral law gives man the strength to stand before the overpowering cosmic drama without losing his own selfhood.”<sup>74</sup>

It is not the vagaries of self-consciousness or the abstractness of the Divine which constitutes the moral law standing outside us and yet grasped as true and authoritative. It is the halakhah “which represents God’s will”<sup>75</sup> that sounded the call for humanity to retreat. Ignoring the command and eating from all trees would be natural man, the type of person who caters to all desires. Natural man at this point sounds like Augustine’s depiction of the unrighteous. In Soloveitchik the natural man gratifies every desire because of the choices which characterize and become his nature.

It is unclear in Soloveitchik whether the two types of humanity- the natural and the metaphysical, represent two groups of people or two possible inclinations which can

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<sup>73</sup> “Adam and Eve,” op. cit., p.140.

<sup>74</sup> *HM*, p.78.

<sup>75</sup> “Adam and Eve,” op. cit., p.140.

coexist in an individual mind. Considering how Soloveitchik's categories seem to be depicted in this instance and seem to function, the first option seems more likely. In that case, humanity's present situation, which is not so far removed from its original state as in Augustine, incorporates the natural and the metaphysical classes of people.

In the discourse on "Adam and Eve" Soloveitchik mentioned several points occurring in his earlier work "The Lonely Man of Faith."<sup>76</sup> I believe that in the later "Adam and Eve" he refined and clarified his position. In "The Lonely Man of Faith" his major thrust was to state his personal loneliness and to explain why he thought that there was an "interpenetration of faith and loneliness" which "goes back to the dawn of the Judaic covenant."<sup>77</sup> The nature of this loneliness was explained by Soloveitchik by presenting two typological categories, Adam I and Adam II which he traced to the two accounts of the creation of humanity. Adam I is the "natural man" who hates being alone but can never be lonely as long as the cosmos exists. He achieves dignity and majesty by the control of the environment, in the dimensions of law and beauty as well as nature. In a telling statement, Soloveitchik declared that natural man manifests in these activities "obedience to rather than rebellion against God."<sup>78</sup>

This statement indicates that for Soloveitchik, the first type of individual in Eden underwent no change of nature because he did not have any existential dilemma posed to him. Also, the first man was, and presumably still is, obedient rather than rebellious, and this is not perceived by Soloveitchik as a benefit. The social and behavioral Adam I

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<sup>76</sup> "The Lonely Man of Faith," *Tradition* 7, 2, Summer, 1965, pp.5-27.

<sup>77</sup> "The Lonely Man of Faith," *ibid.*, pp.7-8.

<sup>78</sup> "The Lonely Man of Faith," *ibid.*, p.16.

accomplishes only what he can with his “surface personality” and “confronts mute nature—a lower form of being—in a mood of defiance.” By contrast, Adam II approaches the world with the “intrinsic, existential quality” of redemption that is attained through control over oneself rather than nature “when humble man makes a moment of recoil and lets himself be confronted and defeated by a Higher and Truer Being.”<sup>79</sup>

The language Soloveitchik used here demands exploration. He used “redemption” to indicate a self-imposed necessity on the part of Adam II. Redemption indicated a better alternative than the achievement of dignity and is attained not in obedience but in confrontation. The kind of confrontation described as redemptive is also fascinating, because it seems to me to require of present human existence the acceptance of a higher morality and the imitation of God in initiating a personal *tzimtzum*. Soloveitchik believed that present human existence has two moralities, one of victory and triumph and another of withdrawal and defeat.<sup>80</sup> In his adoption of many of the ideas of the Lurianic Kabbalah regarding *tzimtzum*, Soloveitchik accepted the belief that God “created the world by engaging in a movement of recoil.”<sup>81</sup>

Humanity has the capacity to imitate the Divine in creation. As God contracted Himself to make room for the universe, creating the world in a movement of recoil, so humanity is called to self-creation in a strikingly similar pattern. We are called to explore the dimensions of the universe of our “in-depth personality” and it appears as

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<sup>79</sup> “The Lonely Man of Faith,” *ibid.*, pp.18-19, 23-24.

<sup>80</sup> Soloveitchik, “Majesty and Humility,” cited in *Confrontation*, *op. cit.*, p.97.

<sup>81</sup> Cited by Kolitz, in “Majestas Dei and Humilitas Dei,” in *Confrontation*, *op. cit.*, p.97.

though God cannot enter our personal space unless we allow Him. Thus, a movement of recoil is required of us as well. However, even as we have the capacity to defeat God, God reserves the right to defeat us, and when we let Him into our personal space we open the door to confrontation and justified defeat by the Divine.

Soloveitchik cautioned that it is God's will that humanity participate in the communities of Adam I as well as that of Adam II. The "staggering dialectic" which ensues, he believed, assured the birth of "The Lonely Man of Faith" who is incapable of settling in either community. This further guaranteed that "complete human redemption be unattainable in this world."<sup>82</sup> The personal confrontation with the One to whom we owe our being is nevertheless its initiation.

Although Augustine's and Soloveitchik's characterization of humanity in its present condition is almost diametrically opposed, what Soloveitchik stated that humanity *does* with its freedom and creativity is in keeping with Augustine's trend of thought. For Soloveitchik, freedom creates a new mode of being that is destined for the heavens to cleave to the divine overflow.<sup>83</sup> Like Augustine, our hearts are restless until they rest in God. When freedom is attained, the Divine is either given (as in Augustine) or reached (as in Soloveitchik). This does not minimize the distinction that in Augustine, humanity is incapable of attaining God through our own efforts, while in Soloveitchik our own efforts are essential to our life enterprise.

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<sup>82</sup> "The Lonely Man of Faith," op. cit., pp.50-55.

<sup>83</sup> *HM*, p.137.

Like Augustine's conception of humanity, Soloveitchik's conception of humanity has come under attack. Jerome Epstein<sup>84</sup> has made several sharp criticisms, all of which seem to have been founded on his conviction that "Soloveitchik's widespread favouritism toward Adam II weakens his humanism and religiousness as well as leads to error."<sup>85</sup> In regard to Soloveitchik's portrayal of the knowledge of the Adams, Epstein has argued that Soloveitchik's view of the purity of the knowledge that is possessed by Adam II is "meaningless" and the knowledge of both Adams is contextual and perspectival. Sometimes we would prefer the knowledge of one Adam, sometimes of the other but neither is superior.<sup>86</sup> Apart from the equality of both Adams, Epstein wondered about the validity of the characteristics ascribed to them, and he noted that Soloveitchik restrictively and unjustifiably attributed all the negative qualities to Adam I and all the positive one to Adam II. The qualities themselves did not differ in degree of superiority, Epstein maintained.<sup>87</sup>

Epstein made the valuable point that the ingredients in Soloveitchik's types do not always appear to be consistent with the initial intention. However, I think that Epstein was not sufficiently familiar with Soloveitchik to understand his method or appreciate his theology.

Soloveitchik's method demonstrated at certain times the tendency to create types. These types were sometimes for the purpose of illuminating tendencies inherent in an

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<sup>84</sup> Jerome Epstein, "Between Dignity and Redemption: A Critique of Soloveitchik's Adam I and Adam II," in *Essays in Judaism and Religion in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Solomon Frank*, ed. Howard Joseph et al, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, 1983, pp.121-136.

<sup>85</sup> Epstein, op. cit., p.125.

<sup>86</sup> Epstein, op. cit., pp.124-125.

<sup>87</sup> Epstein, op. cit., pp.125-126.

individual, sometimes for the purpose of describing groups of people. In every instance, however, the types are presented to highlight conclusions already drawn.

Soloveitchik's theology in its conceptions of God and humanity was frustrating to Epstein who openly stated his ignorance concerning Soloveitchik's sources and questioned the definition and employment of concepts such as humanity's defeat, God as "Truer and Higher Being," and the "surface" and "in-depth" personality. At this juncture in his discussion, Epstein is driven to wonder how the loneliness of the man of faith is "essentially different from the loneliness of a sensitive man who has sadly lost faith."<sup>88</sup> In general, Epstein's criticisms reveal less of the weaknesses, and more of the need for a careful understanding, of Soloveitchik.

Soloveitchik had a clear doctrine of sin. In *Halakhic Man* this might not be readily evident because of Soloveitchik's remarks that "One must not waste time on spiritual self-appraisal, on probing introspections, and on the picking away at the 'sense' of sin."<sup>89</sup> As Soloveitchik went on to explain, such "psychic analysis" can do nothing to lead the individual to the fear and love of God or the knowledge and cognition of the Torah. The entire "psychic being" of the individual should be "committed to the regime of the cognition of the Halakhah."<sup>90</sup> The reality of sin should not plunge us into an obsession with the extent of its sway in or around us.

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<sup>88</sup> Epstein, op. cit., pp.129-131.

<sup>89</sup> *HM*, p.74. This was a different focus and therefore a very divergent view from that expressed by Soloveitchik when he exhaustively examined the "sense of sin" as nausea and repulsion which leads to repentance by compulsion and not free choice in *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., pp.134- 184, especially p.150.

<sup>90</sup> *HM*, p.74.



Soloveitchik's most frequent metaphor for sin and repentance was "illness and cure." Even the first sinner, Adam, felt the symptoms of the illness of sin before knowing about the illness itself, Soloveitchik contended. Adam hid himself. Had he known he had sinned or had he an awareness of sin, he would not have hidden or provided excuses, but "would have turned to Him who excels in forgiveness and asked to be forgiven."<sup>91</sup> Soloveitchik inferred that ignorance and not pride (as in Augustine) precluded the repentance of Adam. Soloveitchik's Adam is without the fullness in knowledge of God which characterized Augustine's Adam. Soloveitchik also assumed that the awareness of sin would have led to repentance instead of the compounded sin of avoiding God.

In the spiritual evolution from Adam to present humanity, Soloveitchik would hold that we would have no excuse for not seeking Divine forgiveness since that element of the will of God has been revealed to us. Sin still is existence in contemporary humanity. Soloveitchik regarded sin as an organic creation which needed an environment in which it could bud, flower, bear fruit and take root. Cleaving to God in bondage to Him releases us from all other forms of bondage into which we place ourselves and which are all sinful.<sup>92</sup> This notion of sin as bondage and our escape as cleaving to God is familiar to one who has read the views Augustine expressed. Soloveitchik also believed that "Sin pushes man far away" from God and impels the return to God with the personal appeal, "Restore me to where I was before."<sup>93</sup> Augustine

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<sup>91</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p.148.

<sup>92</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., pp.57, 220-225.

<sup>93</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p.83.

also believed in the distance separating us from God and in the redemption which brought with it restoration. Only God by his grace pardons the sinner in the thought of both Augustine and Soloveitchik.<sup>94</sup>

Soloveitchik differed radically from Augustine in the belief that our sin has a terrible impact on the Divine Presence. Not only does sin push us away from God and not only do we create a distance between our sinful state and God, but “when one sins, one drives away the hapless *Shekinah*.” Soloveitchik could even declare that “It is as if the sinner actually harms the *Shekinah* and inflicts a loss on her.”<sup>95</sup>

Augustine had been careful to argue that our sin damages us but does not affect God in the slightest degree. Soloveitchik, however, contended that humanity, even in its present condition outside the boundaries of Eden, holds significant responsibility for the Divine Presence. The destiny and condition of the *Shekinah* is intimately connected to human conduct.

Sin requires repentance. Soloveitchik believed that the halakhah introduced the force, splendor, and every dimension of the concept of creation into the commandment of repentance. Repentance in Soloveitchik’s *Halakhic Man* “is an act of creation— self-creation.”<sup>96</sup> The insight into repentance as a form of creation heightens the process of repentance. Repentance is linked to creation, a noble activity of the divine. Soloveitchik’s high view of self-consciousness and of creation are twinned in the concept of repentance to produce a truly exalted idea. Repentance in Soloveitchik’s thought

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<sup>94</sup> For instance: for Augustine: *COG*, XXI:27; Soloveitchik, *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, p.55.

<sup>95</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p.82.

<sup>96</sup> *HM*, p.110.

might begin with self-loathing as the self recoils from its sin<sup>97</sup> but in *Halakhic Man* it has the noble result of creating the self anew. Repentance is a task that takes time and is not so much an act as a process. That conviction alone has led to a recent and influential Christian theologian commenting that the Christian theology of repentance and forgiveness can learn a lot from Soloveitchik.<sup>98</sup> Christianity too often has rested in the opinion that there is an ease with which movements of cosmic spiritual significance such as repentance can be and should be quickly discharged.

Repentance involves “severing one’s psychic identity” with the previous “I” and the creation of a new “I.” This new “I” possesses a new consciousness, a new heart and spirit, different desires, longings and goals. This, Soloveitchik stated, was the meaning of repentance made up of regret for the past and resolve for the future.<sup>99</sup> With this depiction of repentance, it is hardly surprising that Soloveitchik thought that repentance was very similar to conversion.<sup>100</sup> Repentance re-enacts and restores the covenant that God has with each individual Jew.

At this point it is easy to indicate a similarity Soloveitchik had with Augustine. Although Augustine did not demonstrate a clear theology of repentance in *City of God* he had a thoroughly developed theology of justification and deification which has, as a key feature in common with Soloveitchik’s theology of repentance, the belief that the

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<sup>97</sup> For instance, see *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, pp.148, 196.

<sup>98</sup> L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*, Grand Rapids, William Eerdmans, 1995, p.159.

<sup>99</sup> *HM*, p.110.

<sup>100</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, p.218.

repentant individual is renewed and transformed. Augustine would even add that the individual, “being deified, may cleave to the perpetual and unchanging Truth.”<sup>101</sup>

Soloveitchik believed that there was a contradiction in Maimonides which pointed to a complex duality in repentance. On the one hand, Maimonides’ *Laws of Repentance* 1:1 stated that verbal confession is an indispensable part of the act of repentance. On the other hand, Kiddushin 49b and the codification of this law in Maimonides’ *Laws of Marriage* 8:5<sup>102</sup> suggested that only the thought of repentance is adequate.

This contradiction indicated for Soloveitchik that the halakhah had two distinct principles regarding the repentance and its function. The first principle was that repentance “may serve to divest the sinner of his status as a *rasha*, a wicked man.” The second principle was that repentance “may serve as a means of atonement like other means of atonement— sacrifices, the Day of Atonement, afflictions, death, and such like.”<sup>103</sup> The absence of verbal confession will divest the sinner of his status as a *rasha* but will prevent repentance from serving as a means of atonement. Repentance in itself does not require verbal confession, Soloveitchik declared, but the obtaining of atonement does. Soloveitchik repeatedly saw repentance as regret for the past and resolve for the future. This can be done inwardly, but the “bestowal of atonement” which consists of the termination of a negative personality requires the verbal confession.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Augustine, *Sermons*, 166, 4, 4.

<sup>102</sup>The statement considered here is: “If a man says to a woman: ‘Be thou betrothed to me on condition that I am righteous,’ even if he is absolutely wicked she is betrothed, for he may have had thoughts of repentance in his heart.”

<sup>103</sup> *HM*, pp.110-111.

<sup>104</sup> *HM*, pp.112-113.

In Augustine also, there was a distinction between the change of status and the obtaining of the blessings of atonement. However, the order was reversed to that of Soloveitchik. Atonement preceded the status-change. The death of Christ communicated the forgiveness of sin as the blessing of the atonement Christ procured for us and thereafter the door was open to a change of status from unrighteousness to righteousness. As long as we are on earth, Augustine believed, our propensity for sin dictates that we must always seek that change of status by seeking forgiveness.<sup>105</sup>

When his views on repentance are reviewed, Soloveitchik had an unusual perspective on the role of sin. He saw the role of sin in the light of “contrast” by which he understood that “Sin reveals to man the beauty of good.”<sup>106</sup> This must have been taken from Soloveitchik’s occasional conceptual borrowing from Plato<sup>107</sup> and thus had a largely similar origin to Augustine’s identical views which are even expressed with the usage of the term the ‘good’ to designate that which at its highest is God.<sup>108</sup> Sin therefore, for both Augustine and Soloveitchik exhibits the goodness of God by showing the evil of sin.

For Soloveitchik, however, there was a radically different possibility. Misdeeds can be transposed into great ideas and heroic accomplishments for an individual or a nation. This means that humanity can not only conquer sin but exploit its creative power, and, at the ultimate level, sanctify it. In repentance, the future dominates the past, Soloveitchik believed, so even “Sin, as a cause and as the beginning of a lengthy causal

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<sup>105</sup> *COG*, X:32, XXII:23.

<sup>106</sup> Soloveitchik, “Sacred and Profane,” in *Shiurei HaRav*, op. cit., p.28.

<sup>107</sup> Soloveitchik, “Sacred and Profane,” op. cit., p.26.

<sup>108</sup> *COG*, XII:3.

chain of destructive acts, can be transformed, underneath the guiding hand of the future, into a source of merit and good deeds, into love and fear of God.”<sup>109</sup>

Although the cause for the change of behavior and attitude might be located in the past (in the sin) the direction of its development is determined by the future. To defend this view of the future transposition of sin Soloveitchik presents the reader with the views of Spinoza and Nietzsche who derided the notion of repentance, and the laws of causality of Galileo, Newton and Aristotle. Against this formidable array of thinkers, Soloveitchik made two very crucial statements about his own theology. The first statement is that “there is a future that is not hidden behind a thick cloud, but reveals itself now in all its beauty and majesty.”<sup>110</sup> Spinoza and Nietzsche had asserted that it is impossible to repent since that would involve making decisions about the future, and Soloveitchik demonstrated here his own belief that the future is not an indeterminable mystery but confronts us together with our present and past. The second statement Soloveitchik made against the views of the Aristotle, Galileo and Newton was that “the creative gesture, of which man is capable, cannot be reconciled with the scientific concept of causality.”<sup>111</sup> Cause and effect can be transformed by the power of the creative self-consciousness. This means that even if a sinful act had been committed, it does not follow that mechanically established wheels are set in motion to grind out a horrible effect. Instead, effects are not preset by the cause, Soloveitchik believed, and there can be changes in the direction of influence.

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<sup>109</sup> *HM*, p.116.

<sup>110</sup> *HM*, p.114.

<sup>111</sup> *HM*, p.116.

This theology of sin is also a concomitant theology of hope. It leaves each option open to the individual and does not decide that there are automatic eternal consequences for any particular action, whether for Adam and Eve or any of their descendants. Humanity is given at each moment in life the opportunity for choices. With each choice there is abundant open-endedness so that even if something is meant for evil, the direction of its influence can be changed by the creative actions of the human agents involved, and it can be transmuted into the service of good. This reminds one of the episode of Joseph meeting his brothers in Egypt, because the lesson he taught them is that they might have plotted evil but God meant it for good. (Gen.45:4-8)

Apart from the repentance of those who attain sanctity through “acts of conquest,” Soloveitchik also believed that there was another type or path of repentance. This is the path taken by those who “attain sanctity by inspiration received from the Shekinah.”<sup>112</sup> This is a brilliant ingredient in Soloveitchik’s thought; that there is the sanctity attained by choosing to repent and embarking on a path of penitence, and distinct from the chosen path of humanity, there is the chosen path of God. Where the Shekinah chooses to dwell is sanctified, as are those who are inspired by the Shekinah to repent. Despite the strong emphasis on the human dimension in Soloveitchik, he never overlooked the Divine. In fact, had Soloveitchik omitted the Divine in the realm of repentance it would have restricted God’s freedom, since it would have appeared that humanity has the choice of repentance but God has no choice at all. However, God has the choice of stirring to repentance those chosen by the Shekinah.

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<sup>112</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p.317.

It is interesting that, when Soloveitchik spoke about the means of atonement other than repentance, he listed **sacrifices** along with the Day of Atonement, afflictions and death.<sup>113</sup> The Talmud (Yoma 86a) and Maimonides *Laws of Repentance* 1:4 only gave four means of atonement depending on the gravity of sin one has committed; repentance, Day of Atonement, suffering and death. Soloveitchik, however, had a theology of sacrifice.

In Leviticus 16:6 when the High Priest would make an acquittal from sin Soloveitchik observed that the sages wondered whether the acquittal was by the blood of the sacrificed animal or by the words of the High Priest. Soloveitchik answered this question by noting that the animal was not yet killed when the words were spoken, so he concluded that here confession was transformed into a sacrifice. For us, Soloveitchik extrapolated, "Confession which is not merely the perfunctory verbalization of a set formula, but is bound up with tribulations of the soul and pangs of conscience, shall be deemed a sacrifice."<sup>114</sup>

This was a profound realization. It enabled Soloveitchik to add to his theology the requirement of sacrifice. We are called by God to experience the fact of our sin and not to escape from it, but to seize and transform its influence. The suffering which Soloveitchik believed was an integral part of genuine human existence in consciousness of sin and longing for God was the life expressed by the words of confession and constituting sacrifice.

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<sup>113</sup> *HM*, p.111.

<sup>114</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., pp.92-93.



Augustine and Soloveitchik had views on sacrifice that were remarkably akin to each other. Drawing from Psalm 51 Augustine declared that God “desires the sacrifice of a contrite heart.” Again, Augustine explained that God calls for a “heart contrite and humbled by penitent sorrow.”<sup>115</sup> Since both Augustine and Soloveitchik saw penitence as a lifestyle and not as a solitary act, one might safely presume that for both of them, sacrifices were an ongoing part of spiritual existence by the individual and the community.

Soloveitchik believed that liberty was attained through self-sacrifice and stated that “Total and unreserved offering of soul and body— that is the foundation of Judaism.”<sup>116</sup> The entire being is given to God. Religious experience thus begins with the sacrifice of essence but ends with its discovery. “Indeed, man cannot discover himself without the sacrifice,” Soloveitchik declared.<sup>117</sup> God does not demand offerings from humans but demands the humans themselves. In the drama of the universe, what Soloveitchik described in *Halakhic Man* as the “ontic beauty and perfection”<sup>118</sup> does not merely exist within us, but in the outside macrocosm which is God, it beckons us to self-surrender. Present human existence is therefore, in Soloveitchik’s thought, asked to embark on a difficult journey of twinned self-denial and discovery in the free bondage to God who is our Liberator, and in the sacrifice of our lives to God who returns them

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<sup>115</sup> *COG*, X:6

<sup>116</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, p.17.

<sup>117</sup> “On the Love of Torah and the Redemption of the Soul of the Generation,” cited by Peli in *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, p.17.

<sup>118</sup> *HM*, p.109.

restored and renewed. Humanity begins by sacrificing themselves and they discover God in the process and at the end.

Augustine also saw a high goal as our self sacrifice to God. Looking at the words of the apostle Paul, Augustine noted that Christians are commanded to present themselves as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service. In fact, Augustine argued, self-sacrifice is the true sacrifice. “How much more does the soul itself become a sacrifice when it offers itself to God, in order that, being inflamed by the fire of His love, it may receive of His beauty and become pleasing to Him,”<sup>119</sup> Augustine exclaimed. He believed that self-sacrifice led to “being remoulded in the image of permanent loveliness.”<sup>120</sup>

For both Augustine and Soloveitchik, sacrifice was required even now of humanity. The sacrifice of penitence in words and life was the beginning of the career of self-sacrifice in which demands our entire being. Augustine and Soloveitchik treated this phenomenon with admiration and sympathy. Admiration because God would want sinners like us to completely give ourselves to him, and sympathy because it was such a counter-intuitive thing to do. The non-spiritual world would not comprehend how complete surrender could result in complete freedom. Nevertheless, in both systems, self-sacrifice was met by self-fulfillment beyond what humanity expected or deserved. Soloveitchik here used the category of “essence” to describe what was found while Augustine opted to describe the rediscovery of the self in God through the path of self-

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<sup>119</sup> *COG*, X:6.

<sup>120</sup> *COG*, X:6.

sacrifice in terms of “beauty” and the “perfect loveliness” accruing to the soul undertaking this journey.

In contrast to Soloveitchik’s exhaustive treatment of the subject of repentance, the lack of a corresponding discussion in Augustine might at first appear disappointing. It does indicate the source of what L. Gregory Jones observed was a weakness in Christian behavior in repentance. Many “unrepentant Christians” assume that all-powerful forgiveness can be received at any cost.<sup>121</sup> In Augustine, the cost is all borne by God. Even the righteousness which impels self-sacrifice is meant by Augustine to be a gift from God to the redeemed, although his portrayal of penitent self-sacrifice can be interpreted as so inextricably intertwined with the knowledge of God that it might be the precursor of the experience of redemption. What Augustine had in place of a theology of repentance was a theology of grace.

Grace, for Augustine, was how God chooses to operate with those He chooses. What Soloveitchik saw as the attaining of sanctity by the inspiration of the Shekinah is not far removed from the Augustinian concept of grace. Grace was the loving gift of God and Christ “who became a partaker of our mortality that He might make us partakers of His divinity.”<sup>122</sup> Grace infuses us with the strength to fight against sin, Augustine argued, and he noted that although the war is arduous, evil desires can be overcome and subdued.

Closely related to Augustine’s doctrine of God’s direct grace was his belief in the sacramental system. Baptism and the Eucharist were the sacraments most often

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<sup>121</sup> L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, op. cit., p.159.

<sup>122</sup> *COG*, XXI:16.

mentioned by him, and these have an effect not unlike repentance in Soloveitchik.

Augustine described the sacraments as erasing the effects of sin and producing “spiritual regeneration.”<sup>123</sup>

The grace of God as given directly in the strength to win the battles of life and in the sacraments is vital to Christianity, as is the emphasis on the atoning death of Christ. However, an excessive tendency to draw upon these doctrines when individual or corporate sin is discussed can have the paradoxical effect of trivializing sin. Since it is eliminated without any effort on our part in the *City of God* people are prey to the peril of thinking that their status as the atoned means that they can act in any manner which captures their fancy and not have to repent. The sacramental means of grace might have been faithfully administered and the atonement of the death of Christ accepted, but this does not necessarily translate into a changed life until the process of repentance begins.

This seems to be a structural weakness in Augustine’s system. In affirming the greatness and goodness of God, he may have produced a system that seems to eradicate the need for repentance. As is well known, Augustine believed that out of the mass of humanity, only a very few would receive salvation.<sup>124</sup> The limited power or goodness of such a God has been criticized frequently. Even one of Augustine’s admirers allows his readers to feel “surprise and regret that the great Doctor of Love should have felt constrained to limit the operation of the Divine charity to so small a part of humanity.”<sup>125</sup> However, the result of this doctrine would be that those who consider themselves part of

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<sup>123</sup> *COG*, XXI:16.

<sup>124</sup> *COG*, XXI:12.

<sup>125</sup> Gerald Bonner, “Augustine’s Doctrine of Man,” op. cit., p.514.

the saved few would never have the urge to repent. Even though they were going to be destined to cleave to the Most High, the assurance of salvation would surely dull the desire to repent. As Macquarrie has indicated, anyone who would feel that they are among the few chosen of the human race makes one of the most arrogant claims ever.<sup>126</sup> One might wonder if the arrogance of feeling chosen is better or worse than the despair over feeling damned. This large remainder of humanity would have no reason to repent, since their status is fixed and immutable and not even perfect repentance could bring redemption.

Etienne Gilson has competently explored some of the contradictions inherent in Augustine's theology of predestination. One of them is that "future merits cause grace although grace is the only conceivable cause of merit."<sup>127</sup> God chooses the people who are going to be saved because they are going to be good. This does appear to be a paradox, but it is a familiar one, for the same paradox prevailed in Soloveitchik's view that sin can be elevated and sanctified when the future is thrust upon the past. This is the nature of the causality operating in the realm of the spirit and of time grounded in eternity, Soloveitchik had declared.<sup>128</sup> Augustine seemed to have had the same belief about time and Divine causality when he built his doctrine of predestination. Time itself is seen as a creature and thus, like humanity, is under the design of the Creator. The sanctification of the past by repentance or grace can therefore, in Divine logic, be determined by the future merits of the repentant and redeemed. This is because the

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<sup>126</sup> Macquarrie, op. cit., p.44.

<sup>127</sup> Gilson, op. cit., p.155. Augustine, for instance, *COG*, X:5.

<sup>128</sup> *HM*, p.115.

Divine stands outside of the confines of time, the creature, although the Divine doubtless engages in some form of dynamic partnership with time, as the Divine does with humanity.

In this regard, humanity in Augustine's system, as in Soloveitchik's, instead of being filled with arrogance or gripped by despair has the potential for the excitement of creativity. Future merit is yet unseen by us as is the operation of the grace generating it but we ourselves can live in the challenge of the repentant, creative task of ensuring that the merit shall be there.

One might even suggest that in Augustine, there was the incipient belief in what Soloveitchik explicitly stated was the sanctification of evil. Since in Augustine's system the righteous are redeemed and sanctified by grace based on future merit, and since this redemption involves no removal of a nature or any part of a nature, it stands to reason that when the sinful is healed and restored the evil is sanctified in this upheaval.

Augustine and Soloveitchik both had a view of humanity in the individual and corporate realities. The human being exists alone and also in community and this feature of existence necessarily found its way into their theology. This can only be mentioned briefly here since the communities of each type of person will be explored in further sections of this thesis.

Augustine's belief in spiritual and physical monogenesis led him to place a great deal of importance on the choice made by Adam, since we were all present in Adam. Individual existence was consequently of immense significance to Augustine because through the centuries, the two children of Adam and Eve (Cain and Abel) were to

produce children and each would either be a citizen of the city of earth or the city of heaven.<sup>129</sup> Each of us join either one or the other. Augustine examined the instances in the Bible of the patriarchs and Job and this led him to value individual designations and calls by God. Above even this was Augustine's reigning belief that all of humanity perished by the fault of one man (Adam) and can only be rescued from eternal perdition by another man (Jesus Christ).

Augustine's very use of the term 'city' to describe human spiritual existence points to his belief in fellowship and that 'like attracts like.' Augustine believed that apart from the nation of Israel "there was no other people who were specially called the people of God" but there were perhaps those in other places who God called individually to be citizens of the "heavenly Jerusalem."<sup>130</sup>

Soloveitchik had equivalent beliefs in the individual and the community. He frequently spoke about the types of individuals, and even (as we have seen) invented types to illustrate various aspects of human reality. These types were not exclusively individual, however, because community was an automatic aspect of their existence. Adam I belonged to the "majestic community" that includes religious communities. The "covenantal faith community" is Soloveitchik's ideal but "The Lonely Man of Faith" cannot abide even there but must be on the move.<sup>131</sup>

Even though Epstein called Soloveitchik's majestic community the "majestic city" the typological communities in "The Lonely Man of Faith" and other works do not

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<sup>129</sup> *COG*, XV:1.

<sup>130</sup> *COG*, XVIII:47.

<sup>131</sup> "The Lonely Man of Faith," *op. cit.*, pp.50-58.

lend themselves to equation with Augustine's cities. However, Soloveitchik's concept of *Knesset Israel* is virtually identical with Augustine's concept of the City of God.

Even though Soloveitchik contended that he was using the term *Knesset Israel* "in its practical connotation and not as it is used in the *Kabbala* or in mystical thought"<sup>132</sup> his usage of the term bordered on the mystical and thus was identical to the City of God, which for Augustine was the true Church.

For Soloveitchik, *Knesset Israel* was an independent body in its own right and not the cumulative total of the individuals who comprise it. The personal share of each Jew in the land of Israel derives from personal membership in *Knesset Israel*. The "unequivocal and total identification" with the "metaphysical entity" of *Knesset Israel* leads to claims to rights in the land of Israel<sup>133</sup> Soloveitchik stated.

In this respect, the land of Israel as a physical entity was equivalent to the Church on earth which for Augustine was mostly but not entirely equal to the City of God. The *Knesset Israel* as a "metaphysical entity" was equivalent to the heavenly city itself to which each member of Christ belonged, and to which rights of mutual ownership flowed.

In another place, Soloveitchik admitted that *Knesset Israel* was a "mystical entity."<sup>134</sup> Through membership in this mystical body, we share in the acquittal of sins, because for Soloveitchik it was very probable that an individual could not enter into the presence of the Almighty but in the union of *Knesset Israel* all individuals who were members could find forgiveness directed toward that totality.

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<sup>132</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p.103.

<sup>133</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p.104.

<sup>134</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p.105.



In a statement strongly reminiscent of Augustine's depiction of the Church, Soloveitchik declared that, "Through our identity with *Knesset Israel*, into which we have been integrated and smelted together into one body, are we able to benefit...."<sup>135</sup> Augustine believed that the Church on earth was so composed that "we, who are many, are one body" for we have been joined and compacted together by Christ.<sup>136</sup>

The atonement offered on the Day of Atonement is an atonement for every individual Jew and for the whole of *Knesset Israel*, Soloveitchik explained. The High Priest acted in the name of all Israel. The sacrifice of the scapegoat was to atone for the sins of each member of the people of Israel who adheres to *Knesset Israel* and remains inseparably linked to it by an unseverable bond."<sup>137</sup> As one mystical body, all the sins of the community were forgiven in the atonement achieved by the death of the scapegoat.

Christianity adopted the above imagery to describe the effects of the death of Christ upon the Church which is Christ's body, so it is unsurprising to discover this metaphor in Augustine. Augustine also noted that for the Christian, Christ was both the atoning sacrifice and the High Priest.<sup>138</sup>

The views of Augustine and Soloveitchik on the human condition were not identical, but certainly demonstrate thematic and even theological similarities. The differences anticipated abound and some of these are irreconcilable. In the views about the original state and the present state of humanity Augustine saw original purity corrupted and communicated throughout the ages while Soloveitchik saw the tendencies

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<sup>135</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>136</sup> *COG*, XXII:18. Augustine quotes from 1 Corinthians 10:17 and Ephesians 4:10-16.

<sup>137</sup> *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>138</sup> *COG*, X:6, XVII:5.

in existence today. It can be argued that Augustine saw human potential in his day as evidencing an evolution since the Fall, and this would narrow his distance from Soloveitchik.

Both thinkers grappled with the reality of sin and its removal. Both saw the solution as ultimately residing in self-sacrifice which is not only repentance but commitment to the Divine. The individual and the community occupied their thoughts since both required redemption and God best poured that redemption onto the community. Augustine and Soloveitchik both described the mystical community of their faith to which the individuals belonged.

### Chapter Three: Humanity's Negative Alternatives

This chapter shall examine the views of Augustine in *City of God* and Soloveitchik in *Halakhic Man* on the negative alternatives possible to humanity. Within the identified negative options there were variations and sometimes there were slight divergences within the systems of Augustine or Soloveitchik wherein a particular section of humanity existed outside of the positive reality upheld by either thinker, but not precisely within the framework of the specified negatives. All options outside the positive ones— the city of God for Augustine and halakhic man for Soloveitchik— shall be considered here.

#### (i) Augustine:

Augustine was engaged in the task of defining the Christian view against other world-views prevailing in his time. Consequently, he cited and refuted the thought of many of them. Augustine firmly believed that all earnest human thinkers engaged in the search to identify the supreme good and the supreme evil so that they might pursue the one and avoid the other. Drawing from Marcus Varro's *De Philosophia*<sup>1</sup> Augustine noted that some sects located the supreme good in the soul, some located it in the body and some in both. From this tripartite distinction, Augustine noted that Varro was able to easily distinguish 288 sects.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Not extant. We have only Augustine's references to this work.

<sup>2</sup> COG, XIX:1

Varro discarded the differences which were secondary questions and did not form sects and thereby arrived at three modes of life; the contemplative, the active and a mixture of the two. It was the mixture Varro believed to be the best way of life since humans were not either body or soul but both together. This life should be engaged in the pursuit of virtue because virtue makes a good use both of itself and of the other goods in which lies human happiness. "For life is not the same thing as virtue, since not every life, but a wisely regulated life, is virtue."<sup>3</sup>

For Augustine, the effort of Varro seemed to be representative of the best that the philosophical quest had to offer. It indicated a "natural insight" that prevented a wandering too far away from the truth but simultaneously revealed its "shallowness."<sup>4</sup> For Augustine firmly believed, in defiance of the philosophers, that the supreme good was God and therefore there was only one negative alternative: the avoidance of God.<sup>5</sup>

A path for the avoidance of God has been created from the dawn of eternity, Augustine explained. At the beginning, all was created good but not unchangeably so. The Light of God illumined all, including every pure angel "that he might light not in himself, but in God."<sup>6</sup> This light was not of an eternal nature in them, however, because "if an angel turn away, he become impure" and the angels who turned away and followed the devil in his rebellion are "no longer light in the Lord, but darkness in themselves, being deprived of the participation of Light eternal."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In *COG*, XIX:3.

<sup>4</sup> *COG*, XIX:1, 4.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, *COG*, X:25.

<sup>6</sup> *COG*, XI:9

<sup>7</sup> *COG*, XI:9.

Even the slightest deviation from the way of the Lord resulted in the complete deprivation of good in the nature of the creature. This led to Augustine's belief in the origin of evil: "For evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name 'evil.'"<sup>8</sup> This was the origin of evil and of the path of the avoidance of God which became established as the earthly city.

It is noteworthy in Augustine that humanity is effectively deprived of the capacity to have generated, and therefore to have created, any city. The city of God, as its name implies, was created by God. However, the earthly city was instituted by the fallen angels and was thus also in existence long before humanity was created. Humanity is inserted into a cosmic order already in existence in its ongoing course. The foundation of the earthly city, however, has a dual nature in Augustine since it was founded by the fallen angels and then humanity made the free choice to found its own. Humanity's choice merely joined their community of pride to the cosmic pattern. Without even being aware of it since they are blinded by the same pride, humans in the earthly city share the lot of the fallen angels.

Augustine noted that the designations of the community of those who rebel against God as the earthly city and that of those faithful to God as the city of God were "mystical."<sup>9</sup> When outlining the course of the two cities, Augustine emphasized human choices. In his introduction to them, Augustine appeared to suggest that anyone could belong to either. The "two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love

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<sup>8</sup> "Mali enim nulla natura est: sed amissio boni, mali nomen accepit." *COG*, XI:9.

<sup>9</sup> *COG*, XV:1.

of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.”<sup>10</sup> The love forming the basis of thought and action was the element that built up the cities, and the love of self was pride. Pride had been the downfall of the angels and now was to be the downfall of that part of the human race opting to subject themselves to serve it. This self-love constituted the foundation and the building blocks of the earthly city.

Augustine noted that in the earthly city there were rulers, princes and people acclaimed as wise. The rulers and princes subdued the nations by their love of ruling and delight in their own strength. The wise sought to profit themselves,

and those who have known God “glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise”— that is, glorifying in their own wisdom, and being possessed by pride— “they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”<sup>11</sup>

It is striking that in the community which is defined by its opposition to the Divine, there would be those “who have known God” and abandoned Him. Augustine wrote from the perspective of a bishop who had seen and heard about many lifestyles in the Church and doubtless some of the depictions of the earthly city are conditioned by his experiences. Vanity invaded the wise and turned away their chief joy from God to themselves. One can also observe that Augustine also interpreted the rise of images and the worship of other gods to arise from the basic, erroneous choice to abandon the true

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<sup>10</sup> *COG*, XIV:28.

<sup>11</sup> *COG*, XIV:28. Augustine cited Romans 1:21-25.

God. In so going, the wise became foolish and attempted in their foolishness vanity to exchange the exalted, glorious image of God for that of a creature.

The founder of the earthly city, from the human standpoint, was Cain. In the human race, Augustine grimly declared, all people originate evil and carnal and become good only afterwards. Cain is recorded in Genesis 4:17 as having built a city, Augustine noted, and that building was because he had no part of the heavenly city.<sup>12</sup> In “each individual,” Augustine believed, “there is first all that is reprobate, that from which we must begin, but in which we need not necessarily remain.”<sup>13</sup> Human destiny places each person in the earthly city upon birth as part of the heritage from Adam as condemned stock but inherent in the placement is the opportunity to escape to the city of God which anyone can by “advancing, attain.”<sup>14</sup>

The first founder of the earthly city was Cain, whose deed was paralleled by the founder of Rome- fratricide. Cain slew Abel and Romulus killed Remus. Augustine used the word “archetype” to highlight that Cain and Romulus and Remus were archetypes of the earthly city. The founder of the first city on earth, Cain, committed a deed which found its correspondence in the crime in the foundation of the city “destined to reign over so many nations.”<sup>15</sup> Rome, the ‘eternal city’ to Jerome and other Church leaders, was portrayed in the bleakness of its gory history by Augustine.

Although the act of fratricide was the same the motivation for it was different, Augustine noted, and pointed to two characteristics of the earthly city. Romulus and

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<sup>12</sup> *COG*, XV:1.

<sup>13</sup> *COG*, XV:1.

<sup>14</sup> *COG*, XV:1.

<sup>15</sup> *COG*, XV:5.

Remus had been quarreling over who would have the glory of the founding of the Roman republic. Both wanted to rule without sharing power with another. So, Remus was killed and “by this crime the empire was made larger indeed, but inferior, while otherwise it would have been less but better.”<sup>16</sup> For Augustine, this illustrated how “the earthly city is divided against itself”<sup>17</sup> and the wicked war with the wicked.

Cain and Abel, by contrast, “were not animated by the same earthly desires”<sup>18</sup> and Abel had no inclination to rule in the city Cain constructed so there was no collision of ambitions. In this instance, however, Cain “was moved by that diabolical, envious hatred with which the evil regard the good.”<sup>19</sup> The basis of this hatred is the evil nature of those occupied in hating, and the goodness of those despised and envied. Augustine believed if both characters in either situation had been good there would not have been any problem. Goodness does not have its possession diminished by sharing with either a temporary or permanent partner but on the contrary, the possession of goodness is increased in direct proportion to the concord and charity of those who share it. The episode of Cain and Abel demonstrated to Augustine how the good and wicked war with each other.

Augustine did not limit the lesson of Cain and Abel to the war of the wicked against the good, but extended it to a mutually launched battle. Although Augustine believed that “perfectly good men cannot war” he thought that those “going on towards perfection” war to the extent that they resist others in those points in which they resist in

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<sup>16</sup> *COG*, XV:5.

<sup>17</sup> *COG*, XV:5.

<sup>18</sup> *COG*, XV:5.

<sup>19</sup> *COG*, XV:5.



themselves.<sup>20</sup> Thus the ‘spiritual lusting’ of one can be opposed to the ‘carnal lusting’ of another and thus there can be war. Or, Augustine added, the carnal desires of two who are “good but not yet perfect” contend together until the eventual triumph of the goodness of grace.

All humanity lives in the context of this progressive battle, Augustine believed, and he pointed to the texts in Scripture which urge cooperation and mutual interdependence as the means through which “the soul is converted from its own evil and selfish desires.”<sup>21</sup> Through admonition, the opportunity is constantly provided to abandon the earthly city.

Augustine stated that God used this technique in dealing with Cain. God spoke to Cain in that form by which He chose to “accommodate Himself to our first parents and converse with them as a companion.”<sup>22</sup> The obstinacy of those who rebel meant that even the words of the Divine failed to have any influence on that founder of the earthly city. The precise nature of the inadequacy of Cain’s offering Augustine tried hard to determine. He declared that a sacrifice is “rightly offered” when it is offered to the one true God to whom alone we must sacrifice. A sacrifice can be “not rightly distinguished” when there is a difficulty with the “places or seasons or materials of the offering, or the person offering, or the person to whom it is presented, or those to whom it is distributed for food after the oblation.”<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to determine in which of these particulars the

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<sup>20</sup> *COG*, XV:5.

<sup>21</sup> *COG*, XV:6.

<sup>22</sup> *COG*, XV:7.

<sup>23</sup> *COG*, XV:7.

first citizen of the earthly city displeased God, Augustine concluded and insightfully added that Cain “gave to God something of his own but kept himself to himself.”<sup>24</sup>

This is the hallmark of the earthly city, Augustine stated. Those who do not follow God’s will but their own, those who live with crooked hearts yet boldly offer to God gifts through which they presume will entice God to assist them in “gratifying their evil passions.”<sup>25</sup> The wicked, one might say, constantly attempt to manipulate God into doing their will. The earthly city “worships God or gods” who may aid it in reigning peacefully in earth not through love of doing good, but through lust of rule.<sup>26</sup> The city based on its own desires will worship any entity that sides with it. God is treated not as authoritative over their existence but as an appendage to their ambitions. Some of the earthly city do not believe that God exists or, if existing, takes an interest in human matters. These citizens are “at a much lower level” than even those whose goal is to enjoy the world by harnessing God into their service, Augustine maintained.<sup>27</sup> At least the latter recognize that there is a God.

Augustine believed that implicit in the words of God to Cain was the “health giving medicine of penitence, and the fit plea for pardon.”<sup>28</sup> The holy, just and good God does not completely abandon even the builder of the earthly city and offers him at every juncture the chance for repentance. This choice is always open and these opportunities available to us. Our flesh, Augustine explained, is to be healed because it belongs to

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<sup>24</sup> *COG, XV:7.*

<sup>25</sup> *COG, XV:7.*

<sup>26</sup> *COG, XV:7.*

<sup>27</sup> *COG, XV:7.*

<sup>28</sup> *COG, XV:7.*

ourselves. We should not think that the flesh is to be abandoned to destruction “as if it were alien to our nature.”<sup>29</sup> Cain received the words of God with a spirit that did not wish to amend but was filled with the vice of envy, culminating in the first murder.

It was necessary to Augustine’s line of reasoning to defend the fact that Cain built a city at a time when the Scriptural record might indicate that only four people lived on earth, and of these only three were left after Cain’s murder of one-quarter of the race. He reasoned that the recorder of Scripture did not find it necessary to name all those on earth at the time but only those suiting the design of Scripture.<sup>30</sup> The city of Cain was established so that many could come to it, not just the remaining three persons of the Biblical account.

In the two generations listed, one from Cain and one from Seth, Augustine saw the two cities. The earthly city descended from Cain, and it “gapes after earthly joys, and grovels in them as if they were the only joys” while the heavenly city of the line of Seth “sojourns on earth.”<sup>31</sup> The earthly city engages in “iniquitous persecution” of the heavenly as foreshadowed by the killing of Abel by Cain, so those who love their earthly happiness still practice the fruits of this act.

One of Augustine’s main contentions was that the earthly city, when established at the dawn of creation by the rebellion of the angels and at the dawn of human existence by the murder of Abel by Cain, always needed the heavenly city within the earth for contrast and as the positive alternative to which anyone could belong. A difficulty arises

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<sup>29</sup> *COG*, XV:7.

<sup>30</sup> *COG*, XV:8.

<sup>31</sup> *COG*, XV:15.

for Augustine in distinguishing the two cities after Cain and until the time of Noah. The “earthly city needs for its population only generation, the heavenly city needs also regeneration to rid it of the taint of generation.”<sup>32</sup> Whether there was a visible sign of regeneration (such as circumcision as was introduced at the time of Abraham) or not Augustine did not know.

Augustine noted that the name of Cain’s son “Enoch” means “dedication” and he surmised that the earthly city is dedicated in the world in which it is built since its aims and aspirations are confined to the earth and it is satisfied with temporal peace and happiness.<sup>33</sup>

At the flood, the “whole stock of the earthly city was destroyed, but repaired by the sons of Noah.”<sup>34</sup> The deluge eliminated the inhabitants of the world who were obsessed with themselves and gave not thought to God. After the flood, however, the sinful line re-entered the course of human history to remind humanity that “the earthly city and community will never fail until the end of this world.”<sup>35</sup>

The wickedness of earthly city does not detract from Augustine’s observation that often the earthly city resembles the heavenly. In keeping with Augustine’s general trend here, motivation was the distinctive factor. Augustine did not believe so much that certain patterns of life were more preferable than others unless those lifestyles were instituted and inspired by God. Sexual abstinence was only a good thing, for example, when practiced in the service of God. Among what Augustine considered heresies were

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<sup>32</sup> *COG*, XV:16.

<sup>33</sup> *COG*, XV:17.

<sup>34</sup> *COG*, XV:20.

<sup>35</sup> *COG*, XV:20.

the “gymnosophists” in India who of the earthly city “are its citizens; and they abstain from marriage.”<sup>36</sup> There was no inherent benefit to a certain abstinence or practice if the true God was not worshipped. The defining characteristic of the earthly city was its avoidance of the true God springing from its rebellion against Him.

Augustine never properly tackled the question of how people could rebel against One about whom they have never heard. In Augustine’s day, the “gymnosophists” were *said* to exist<sup>37</sup> and behave in the manner described. Augustine in this context exhibited his rather grim view that “those who have erred from the faith” and “live according to man and not according to God”<sup>38</sup> could have done so without their knowledge of the possibility of the city of God and participation therein. By descent from Adam, all humanity unless otherwise identified were considered the citizens of the earthly city. This introduced considerable tension in Augustine’s thought as he simultaneously spoke of the universal opportunity to advance from the earthly to the heavenly cities, then denied that opportunity to most of humanity. As Macquarrie among other modern Christian theologians has commented, “St. Augustine went too far” and produced rigid views that “are incompatible with a genuinely personal being in man.”<sup>39</sup> Augustine’s system would restrict most of humanity to lives of utter futility and ignorance. Since they would be unknown to the inhabitants of the heavenly city, their purpose in existence could not even be for contrast because there would be none in proximity to afford that contrast. They might pursue goals and ends that might have been good in one context but

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<sup>36</sup> *COG*, XV:20.

<sup>37</sup> *COG*, XV:20.

<sup>38</sup> *COG*, XV:20.

<sup>39</sup> Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, op. cit., p.297.

were rendered useless in another. This condemnation to lives of meaninglessness is a rather bleak part of the Augustinian landscape.

When Augustine traced the generations from Adam, he noted that Lamech is set down as the seventh from Adam and “there were named, in addition, as many of his children as made up this number to eleven, which is the number signifying sin.”<sup>40</sup> The Decalogue (ten) symbolized the Law and eleven symbolized going beyond, or transgressing the Law and Lamech’s three sons and daughter readily made up that number.

This had two significances for Augustine. Eleven always represented sin, Augustine explained, and it was for this reason that “eleven veils of goat’s skin were ordered to be hung in the tabernacle of the testimony which served in the wanderings of God’s people as an ambulatory temple.”<sup>41</sup> The skins were hung to remind people of the confession of sins as though prostrating themselves in haircloth, and in later years, to remind them of the words of the psalmist that “My sin is ever before me.” (Psalm 51:3) In the progeny of Adam through Cain, the sinful city was spelt out in numbers. Nor was it any coincidence to Augustine that a woman was the final person forming the eleventh, and therefore the ultimate in the series. The second significance was that it was “by the same sex that beginning was made of sin by which we all die.”<sup>42</sup> This point, regardless of its dubious exegetical merit today, is not helpful to Augustine’s argument since he did not appear to count Eve as one of the earthly city. Even if sin did enter the world through

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<sup>40</sup> *COG*, XV:20.

<sup>41</sup> *COG*, XV:20.

<sup>42</sup> *COG*, XV:20.

Eve, Augustine did not think that sin was established by her. Sin was the birthmark and property of the city “beginning with a murderer and ending in a murderer”<sup>43</sup> because Lamech confesses to his wives that he, too, committed the deed of Cain. (Genesis 4:23-24).

The lines of Cain and Seth were carefully described by Augustine. The naming of Cain’s city “Enoch” deserved attention and Augustine interpreted it in the light of Psalm 49:11: “They have called their lands after their own names.”<sup>44</sup> At every occasion where an opportunity arose where praise and honor might have been given to God, the citizens of the earthly city chose to bestow it on themselves. Only earthly possessions mattered and the son of Cain was assured of a name in the earthly city built in his name. Augustine believed that such behavior would “incur what is written in another psalm; “Thou, O Lord, in Thy city wilt despise their image.”<sup>45</sup> The city founded in the fleeting pleasures of this world valued the honors of a famous name and this typifies the behavior of those who alienate themselves from God.

Each age had the choice of behavior, and the will was usually exercised for the evil side and for the immediate gratification of pleasure. If the Creator is truly loved, Augustine believed, then He Himself is loved and not something in His place. God cannot be “evilly loved; for love itself is to be ordinally loved.”<sup>46</sup> The love of God makes us live well and virtuously and therefore it appeared to Augustine that a “brief but true definition” of the virtue which dominated the thoughts of the philosophers would be

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<sup>43</sup> *COG*, XV:21.

<sup>44</sup> *COG*, XV:21.

<sup>45</sup> *COG*, XV:21.

<sup>46</sup> *COG*, XV:22.

that virtue “is the order of love.”<sup>47</sup> In the events described in the opening verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis, Augustine perceived that the “order of this love” had been contravened when the “sons of God” forsook God and were enamoured with the “daughters of men.” In the nomenclature, Augustine saw indications that these were children of the two cities who were commingling. The “sons of God” were “children of men” by nature who “had come into possession of another name by grace.” The “daughters of men” on the other hand, were those who had been of corrupt manners from the very start and who, like Eve, precipitated a calamity. Unlike Eve, they were not betrayed and they did not lead the men to sin, Augustine believed, but caused them to pursue the paltry good of their bodily beauty.<sup>48</sup>

The men who abandoned the city of God to pursue the beauty of the women of the earthly city seemed to have possessed very little spiritual stamina. One might wonder whether it would have been justifiable, if blame was to be attributed, to blame the men since the act of their departure from the heavenly city created the confusion of the two in the participation in a common iniquity. It is noteworthy that Augustine carefully announced that there was no sin in this situation, merely the abandoning of one good for another. However, his explanation of this episode raised a point in Augustine that he did not elaborate in much detail; it appears to be possible not only to cross from the earthly to the heavenly cities but from the heavenly to the earthly. This was precisely what the “sons of God” did according to Augustine who eschews explanation why this act was not

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<sup>47</sup> *COG*, XV:22.

<sup>48</sup> *COG*, XV:22.



a sin since it was qualitatively identical to the one generating the expulsion from Eden. There is nothing innately wrong with eating fruit from a tree unless that would transgress the “order of virtue” which in this case it did since it defied the Divine command. When the “sons of God” actually undertook to defect to the earthly city to seek the bodily beauty of the women there, this appears to be also a violation of the “order of virtue.” Augustine explicitly stated that these members of the heavenly city “sunk” into the earthly city “when they forsook righteousness.”<sup>49</sup>

Augustine defended his view that the “sons of God” were humans and not any other entities such as angels or the offspring of angels. Had the “sons of God” been other than human that would have grievously upset the Augustinian scheme of the nature of the created order and of the earthly city because that would have meant that angels and humans could mate, and thus the earthly city, perhaps to this day, would have an angelic element interlaced with the human. This is something the city of God would not have possessed because of the obedience of its citizens. It also would have threatened the view Augustine had of the bodily resurrection, since there would have been no accounting for where and how the offspring of an angelic-human relationship would be resurrected. What kind of soul such offspring would have in the present or in the future would also have been troubling, as one can see from the energy Augustine expended in having to deal with the question about whether the bodies of giants were descended from the angelic-human union. Augustine forcefully answered this question in the negative, pointing to the twinned reasoning that people in the early days of Biblical history were

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<sup>49</sup> *COG*, XV:23.

bigger and, even in Augustine's own day, giants existed. The giants mentioned then were viewed as inhabitants of the earthly city. One can see this from Augustine's citation of Baruch 3:26-28:

These were the giants, famous from the beginning, that were of so great stature, and so expert at war. Those did not the Lord choose, neither gave He the way of knowledge unto them; but they were destroyed because they had no wisdom and perished through their own foolishness.<sup>50</sup>

Noah and his family were spared from the deluge that consumed everything else on the earth. Of Noah's three sons, Ham was of the city of the earth. He represented to Augustine all those openly separated from the Church and all who glory in the name of Christ but dishonor Christ in their lives.<sup>51</sup>

Augustine believed that the giant Nimrod was the founder of Babylon, and therefore the chief architect and force behind the tower of Babel. The impious futility of erecting the tower of Babel to reach God made Augustine question; "What did these vain and presumptuous men intend? How did they expect to raise this lofty mass against God, when they built it above all the mountains and the clouds of the earth's atmosphere?"<sup>52</sup> Augustine concluded that spiritual and material elevation cannot hurt God and the safe and true way to heaven is by humility which lifts the heart up to God and not against him. Nimrod and his ilk were punished accordingly. As the tongue was the instrument of domination, in its pride was punished. People refused to listen to God when He issued His

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<sup>50</sup> *COG*, XV:23.

<sup>51</sup> *COG*, XVI:2.

<sup>52</sup> *COG*, XVI:4.

commands and now would be misunderstood when they gave orders. Thus the conspiracy of the earthly city was disbanded.

In the prevailing situation in his day, Augustine found ample evidence of the earthly city. Even in the furthest reaches of the earth, there were two features which represent typical humanity; firstly, there was a certain fellowship in the bond of common nature and secondly, the society of mortals “is yet for the most part divided against itself.”<sup>53</sup> The strong oppressed the weak, all followed their own interests and lusts, and society, the city of this world, was divided. To explain the prevailing situation, Augustine examined the historical factors creating it.

In history, Augustine believed that of all famous civilizations, Assyria and Rome outgrew all others in strength and importance in the eras in which their respective empires existed. Augustine’s theology never lost its historical element. The events of Scripture and the events of the world were believed to be in one accord with one another in that both testified to realities. The reality of Scripture pointed to the events of the world and the events of the world fulfilled Scripture in minute and precise detail. Augustine embarked on detailing the course of the city of the world and the city of God in tandem from the time of Abraham to his present and into the eschatological fulfillment. The Greek and Latin kingdoms in particular constituted the city of the earth but Assyria was like a “first Rome”<sup>54</sup> so from them all Augustine chose to draw his descriptions.

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<sup>53</sup> *COG*, XVIII:2.

<sup>54</sup> *COG*, XVIII:2.

There are several features in common with all the detailed historical material which Augustine provided. There is the predominance of evil behavior in the earthly city. About the time when God told Abraham that he would be made into a great nation, the son of Ninus reigned in Assyria after his mother “who is said to have been put to death by him for attempting to defile him by incestuously lying with him. Some think that she founded Babylon, and indeed she may have founded it anew.”<sup>55</sup>

In Augustine’s depictions, there is also the apparently inexhaustible tendency to create new gods as the occasion arises, depending on who is available as a model. At the time of Isaac and Jacob, for instance, Greece increased in fame by the institution of certain laws and judges. “On the death of Phoroneus, his younger brother Phegous built a temple at his tomb, in which he was worshipped as God and oxen were sacrificed to him.”<sup>56</sup>

Peter Brown rightly observed that “Sarcasm had always been Augustine’s most formidable weapon”<sup>57</sup> and it is best displayed in the review of the past given here in *City of God*. Reasoning why Phoroneus was worshipped, Augustine suggested that it was because in part of the kingdom he had founded chapels for the worship of various gods and had taught the measuring of time. People who were “still uncultivated, admiring him for these novelties, either fancied that he was, or resolved that he should be made, a god after his death.”<sup>58</sup> In the case of Isis, who ruled extensively and justly and instituted for

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<sup>55</sup> *COG*, XVIII:2.

<sup>56</sup> *COG*, XVIII:3.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, op. cit., p.309.

<sup>58</sup> *COG*, XVIII:3.

her subjects “letters and many useful things” such divine honor was given her that, after her death, if anyone said she had been human, it was a capital crime.<sup>59</sup>

Humanity demonstrates an innate tendency to deify those admired. Augustine railed against this much earlier in *City of God*. Explaining that the honor poured out by humanity was like smoke that has no weight and human honor should not be held in too high a value, Augustine exclaimed “Take away outward show, and what are all men after all but men?”<sup>60</sup>

The characteristic of Assyria which brought it close to Rome was its expansion and subjugation of many different nations.<sup>61</sup> This enabled Augustine to declare boldly that successful pirates who can impose taxes with impunity were not robbers but emperors.<sup>62</sup>

Scholars observe that the Assyrian empire would not have been considered by the Romans a worthy comparison to Rome.<sup>63</sup> Like the Assyrians, Rome was accused of the “lust for domination”<sup>64</sup> common to all states as a product of evil inclinations. This lust disturbs and consumes all of humanity. “By this lust Rome was overcome when she triumphed over Alba, and praising her own crime, called it glory.”<sup>65</sup> The two nations had at one time been friendly and related, and three twin brothers from each army, the Horatii from Rome and the Curiatii from Alba fought. Two of the Horatii were killed but the

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<sup>59</sup> *COG*, XVIII:3.

<sup>60</sup> *COG*, V:17.

<sup>61</sup> *COG*, IV:7.

<sup>62</sup> *COG*, IV:4.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Brown, *op. cit.*, p.309, Marthinus Versfeld, *A Guide to The City of God*, *op.cit.*, p.62.

<sup>64</sup> *COG*, III:14.

<sup>65</sup> *COG*, III:14.

remaining Horatius killed the three Curiatii. The sister of the Horatii had been engaged to one of the Curatii and, when she saw her brother wearing the spoils of the Curiatii she burst into tears and was killed by her own brother in anger. While she had been wailing over the death of her betrothed by her brother's hand, Rome was rejoicing in its devastation and victory.

The words "glory" and "victory" in military conquest thus became justifiably distasteful to Augustine who demanded "Tear off the disguise of wild delusion, and look at the naked deeds."<sup>66</sup> When this was done and "naked deeds" were exposed and remembered, one could see that the flaw of sin was the foundation of Rome, and not the grandeur of its inherent splendor. The earthly city was manifest even in the "eternal city" that had been sacked. Its "lust for sovereignty"<sup>67</sup> was vulnerable to that of another.

There was a curious paradox in Augustine's attitude to Rome and therefore to the earthly city. Quite probably it was the paradox of realism. He condemned Roman pretentiousness but did not fail to praise Roman virtues. The most honest and faithful of the Roman historians from whom Augustine derived many of the episodes and illustrations was Sallust. Sallust mentioned some of the "blemishes" in the history but had still unreservedly praised Rome. This for Augustine was understandable for "he had no other city to praise."<sup>68</sup>

Augustine criticized Rome but recognized some virtues therein. He believed that by these merits the ancient Romans had grown to deserve their empire.<sup>69</sup> The earthly city

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<sup>66</sup> *COG*, III:14.

<sup>67</sup> *COG*, III:14.

<sup>68</sup> *COG*, III:17.

<sup>69</sup> *COG*, V:12.

was not helped by any of their false gods, but their merit had not escaped the attention of the one true God who rewarded them. The passion for glory which was prized above everything else was a good lesson in striving for the one thing that is important. The desire for glory had taught the repression of all others in its service and had produced many great deeds, although the motive for them was the glory of the producer. Their love for liberty was noble but later became corrupted by the lust for domination. Virtue and honor were important but had to be sought and were thus corrupted.

The love of praise was a vice but it suppressed other vices such as the desire for wealth and personal safety overriding the concern of others. Therefore this vice was reckoned a virtue and earned the assistance of God.<sup>70</sup> However, Augustine was certain to explain that this did not mean that the Romans were holy, only less base. These Romans were in the earthly city so “what else but glory should they love, by which they wished even after death to live in the mouths of their admirers?”<sup>71</sup>

The Roman section of the earthly city was eminently successful. Its inhabitants put the affairs of the republic first so it prospered, its treasury resisted avarice, they imposed the good laws of their land upon other nations, and in literature and history they were the most highly esteemed of all nations. Augustine noted that in Matthew 6:2 concerning those who do good to receive human glory; it is said “they have received their reward.” This phrase was to be Augustine’s explanation for the blessing of the earthly city. It has many things to teach the citizens of the heavenly but is not to be confused

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<sup>70</sup> *COG*,V:13.

<sup>71</sup> *COG*,V:15.

with that city of God. Citizens of the earthly city have sometimes made greater sacrifices than those of the heavenly. Brutus even put to death his own son, which no citizen of the heavenly city would ever be compelled to do. In this instance the earthly city had far more difficult requirements than the heavenly, Augustine observed.<sup>72</sup>

Some might have wondered whether those who did these great deeds did not deserve a place in the city of God, but Bonner accurately notes that Augustine quotes “with supreme irony the Dominical words: *They have received their reward.*”<sup>73</sup> This is supreme irony, because as Bonner noted, when Augustine was writing in private to a friend he “did not hesitate to express his regard for the pagans whom he was obliged to disparage for the sake of controversy.”<sup>74</sup>

There is, however, the clever route within the earthly city which could be of consolation to its inhabitants. Augustine had contended that the virtues of the Romans were regarded as merit by God and earned His favor. One might wonder whether virtues on the part of those who are not of the heavenly city might have been, and might still be regarded as merit. Obviously since God blessed the Romans in the sovereignty of his providence, it would be ludicrous to assert that God completely neglected them, since he blessed them with earthly success. In Augustine’s system, however, earthly success is of such little value that one might wonder whether even in the writing of *City of God* and not just in the letter to his friend, he was being careful to construct his theology so that those he admired would indeed have “received their reward” from the one true God who

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<sup>72</sup> *COG*, V:18.

<sup>73</sup> Bonner, “The Christian Humanism of St. Augustine,” op. cit., p.20.

<sup>74</sup> Bonner, “The Christian Humanism of St. Augustine,” op. cit., p.20.



is faithful and just and does not fail or forsake those who it is His pleasure to choose. One of the anticipated features of a proper theory of Divine predestination is that it automatically must preclude the human right to decide exactly who is where in the system designed by heaven.

The earthly city is thus composed of a bewildering variety of people. From the “gymnosophists” in India to the cruel and barbarous rulers, to the philosophers and nobles of ancient Rome. Augustine admitted that not all in the earthly city were evil. Their fault was the defect of the good. This *privatio boni* meant that they lacked grace. There is a strange tension in Augustine’s system when the matter of the membership of the earthly city is considered. Each human begins existence as a member of the earthly city. In Augustine’s system, the failing of any creature to attain the good intended for them was a flaw, and this flaw seemed to be more evident in some sections of humanity than in others. This does mean that people commence life with the odds severely stacked against them and despite what Augustine might contend about the “justice” of the true and supreme God, the inability of free will to conceptualize reaching for God is an innate element of unfairness.<sup>75</sup> “Man’s reach must exceed his grasp or what’s a Heaven for?” were words not written for an Augustinian tune.

There was also considerable tension in this view of the earthly city when the views of those who seemed to know about God were discussed. As was mentioned, Augustine consigned all including those whose deeds were noble, the wise and the philosophers who did not know Christ to the earthly city. However, when Augustine

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<sup>75</sup> COG,V:15.

spoke about the philosophers, he declared that, “With respect, however, to that wherein they agree with us we prefer them to all others”<sup>76</sup> since many philosophers believed in “one God, the author of this universe, who is not only above every body, being incorporeal, but also above all souls, being incorruptible— our principle, our light, our good.”<sup>77</sup> Augustine believed, “All philosophers, then, who have had these thoughts concerning God... agree with us.”<sup>78</sup> Augustine wondered how Plato had been able to approximate Christian thought so closely. Burleigh, decides<sup>79</sup> far too rashly, one might think, that Augustine has some rather forced analogies between the cosmology of Genesis and that in Plato’s *Timaeus*. Augustine was intent on proving that Plato borrowed from Moses and on suggesting that perhaps Plato encountered and was influenced by the Jews.

Plato’s approximation to the theology deemed true could not, for Augustine have been accomplished solely by the employ of his intellect and free will. There must have been an encounter with the people of the city of God. Since Augustine found none that he could prove, the conundrum about the source of Plato’s truth remained. To this conundrum the careful reader can detect another— after all this, is Plato still a member of the earthly city or has he achieved promotion based on proximity? Augustine demonstrated in this instance that it is impossible for any human to rule on the possession of truth since there are those from whom it should have been excluded from it but who appear to have had it longer and more eloquently than we do. Not everything in the

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<sup>76</sup> *COG*, VIII:10.

<sup>77</sup> *COG*, VIII:10.

<sup>78</sup> *COG*, VIII:10.

<sup>79</sup> Burleigh, *The City of God: A Study of St. Augustine’s Philosophy*, op. cit., pp.81-82.

school of Plato and his students was identical to the teachings of the Scripture, but the core features of the belief in the one true God were sufficiently similar to raise doubts about these philosophers. “This is the God whom Varro, the most learned of the Romans, supposed to be Jupiter, though he knows not what he says.”<sup>80</sup> In his learning, Varro believed that God existed, and was the most supreme. “In fine, He is God whom Porphyry, the most learned of the philosophers, though the bitterest enemy of the Christians, confesses to be a great God.”<sup>81</sup> The philosophers worshipped the truth without knowing it. This is identical to Augustine’s thought about the Jews as mentioned earlier. Christ was believed to be “truly spoken out of the mouths of the Jews”<sup>82</sup> since the Law and Prophets testified to him, so the Jews worshipped not only the one true God but Christ also, albeit unintentionally and unknowingly. At this juncture, one is reminded of Rabbenu Tam’s ruling that Christians were not to be considered *akum* (Gentiles) in the sense of the Talmud since they worshipped the God of heaven and earth although they associate another person with Him.<sup>83</sup>

Even by the stringent standards of Augustine’s system, one is forced to conclude that when it came to the philosophers and the Jewish people, their citizenship would appear to be uncertain. Perhaps they would have been among the people shuffled out of the earthly city at its end.

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<sup>80</sup> *COG*, XIX:22.

<sup>81</sup> *COG*, XIX:22.

<sup>82</sup> *COG*, XVI:37.

<sup>83</sup> As noted by Eliezer Berkovits, “The Centrality of the Halakhah,” in *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism: From Talmudic to Modern Times*, ed. Jacob Neusner, New York, Ktav Publishing, 1974, pp.65-66.

The “end” of the earthly city (as well as the heavenly) meant for Augustine both the conclusion of its career and also its goal to which it is directed.<sup>84</sup> The earthly city seeks the blessings of the earth and avoids faith. It seeks “an earthly peace” and well-ordered concord of civic obedience and rule to help people attain the things helpful in this life.<sup>85</sup> The peace thus created is futile because it is transient but the righteous use it and highly esteem it. No good use is made of the peace by the earthly city.<sup>86</sup>

The eschatological conclusion of the career of the earthly city occurs where it receives the payment of eternal war as the price of alienation from God. War is a “mutual opposition and conflict” and the “grievous and bitter war” that is the end of the earthly city is one in which “the will is so opposed to passion, and passion to the will, that their hostility can never be terminated by the victory of either.”<sup>87</sup> In addition to the distress of the mind, there will also be distress “in which the violence of pain so conflicts with the nature of the body that neither yields to the other.”<sup>88</sup>

Augustine maintained that the judgment upon the earthly city will not just be rendered upon communities. The judgment of God will have a universality of scope “condemning the entire race of devils and the race of men to be miserable on account of the original sin of these races.”<sup>89</sup> There will also be an individual focus as God will judge the “voluntary and personal acts of individuals.”<sup>90</sup> This is entirely in keeping with

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<sup>84</sup> *COG*, XIX:1.

<sup>85</sup> *COG*, XIX:17.

<sup>86</sup> *COG*, XIX:26.

<sup>87</sup> *COG*, XIX:28.

<sup>88</sup> *COG*, XIX:28.

<sup>89</sup> *COG*, XX:1.

<sup>90</sup> *COG*, XX:1.

Augustine's prevailing trend of thought about the act of Adam and Eve which plunged the human race into the sin transmitted to each child at conception, and the sin of Cain which established on earth the city defined by rebellion against the Divine. Coupled with inherited sin was the principle of free will, so both the transmitted and the chosen varieties of sin had to be judged for both prevail.

For some, there would be the temporary punishment of purgatory. This was viewed by Augustine as a purifying punishment which would cleanse from unrighteousness and transform people into "sacrifices of complete and perfect righteousness."<sup>91</sup> They would be acceptable offerings themselves to God and would offer themselves to Him. After a while, those in purgatory are, therefore, delivered from it. Augustine admitted his ignorance about many matters about purgatory such as the kind of life that would lead to it and what sins might prevent the attainment of the kingdom of God but allow the intercession of the saints.<sup>92</sup> This deliverance might be effected by one's own prayers or the intercession of holy people and assures that the individual in purgatory does not go to hell. It does not rescue those already in hell, Augustine differentiated.<sup>93</sup>

Purgatory is therefore an intermediate and distinct state. Years after Augustine, the poet Dante placed virtuous non-Christians in the state of purgatory or limbo. Dante's assignment has been seen as a placement "in the spirit of Augustine."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *COG*, XX:25.

<sup>92</sup> *COG*, XXI:27.

<sup>93</sup> *COG*, XXI:27.

<sup>94</sup> Bonner, "The Christian Humanism of Augustine, op. cit., p.20.

For Augustine, most of humanity was destined for hell as a *massa damnata*. All of the earthly city, together with the rebellious angels who had become demons, and the devil himself were to burn in the lake of fire until the resurrection of the body and the uniting of body and soul when there would be a re-assignment. Some would be sent back to hell, but to some “mercy shall be accorded, and acquittal from the punishment of eternal fire.”<sup>95</sup> There are some sins, Augustine explained, that cannot be remitted in this life but can be remitted and absolved in the life to come.

Even hell seemed to be variable. Augustine announced that he could not deny that “even the eternal fire will be proportioned to the deserts of the wicked.” This meant that to some it would be more painful than to others. Augustine admitted that he was not quite sure whether this meant that there would be “a variation in the temperature of the fire itself, graduated according to everyone’s merit” or if instead “the heat remains the same, but that all do not feel it with equal intensity of torment.”<sup>96</sup>

Augustine saw some punishments in this life as purgatorial, calling people out of the earthly city. He believed that “temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then.”<sup>97</sup> The idea of eternal punishment evidently bothered him also, so he ensured that there were several escape routes available and a few Divine reviews of the situation in this life and the next. This fills his theological viewpoint with hope, since the Almighty, even in the most dismal moments of Augustine’s system, is always just and loving. In the present, humanity

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<sup>95</sup> *COG*, XXI:24. Also XXI:13.

<sup>96</sup> *COG*, XXI:16.

<sup>97</sup> *COG*, XXI:13.

battles onward with ignorance and sin. Even if there were no hope of eternal reward, Augustine maintained, it was better to “endure the hardness of the conflict” than yield to the dominion of evil.<sup>98</sup>

(ii) Soloveitchik :

The negative alternatives possible to humanity were principally the cognitive man and the religious man. Within these there were variations and outside of these, there were other worldviews that were also inadequate. Both the cognitive and religious approaches themselves were extremes and the halakhic man embodied their best characteristics and was the highest stage in the evolution of the human personality. This presents the student of Soloveitchik’s thought with the disadvantage of occasional uncertainty concerning the characteristics of the extremes and the lower rungs of the ladder of spiritual development that would be singled out as positive, until the theological disposition of the halakhic man is comprehended and the favourable stages come to light. By this light, the negative alternatives are exposed.

The first introduction the reader has to the cognitive approach is Soloveitchik’s statement that this approach is “prosaic.”<sup>99</sup> Prosaic because transcendence was excluded from consideration in this view, and prosaic because there is consequently no mystery. Nothing that the mind cannot grasp is allowed to enter the realm of the cognitive man. Soloveitchik also called this the “theoretical and scientific man.”<sup>100</sup> This individual

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<sup>98</sup> *COG*, XXI:15.

<sup>99</sup> *HM*, p.3.

<sup>100</sup> *HM*, p.5.

makes the choice that all reality must be subject to his interpretation. When he observes and scrutinizes the exalted cosmos, his one ambition is the comprehension of its features. The one driving desire of the cognitive man is to “uncover the secret of the world and to unravel the problems of existence.”<sup>101</sup> Not just human existence, but all existence has its core of being probed and prodded by the cognitive approach to ascertain its secrets. When the cognitive man peers into the cosmos, the one powerful yearning filling all his frame is that he undertake a search for clarity and resolutions.

There are problems inherent in the limitations of cognition itself. One cannot easily pretend that everything can be processed by the physical senses or apprehended by the mind whose aim is dissection. The cognitive approach does not tolerate an end in mystery but must solve the riddle of the universe and therefore subjects the universe to scientific inquiry. Exact observation, analytical experimentation and reasoning are the tools employed by the cognitive man in his search for absolute truth. The cognitive man nevertheless longs to solve these problems of the cognitive approach’s grasp of reality.

Over creation, order prevails. The cognitive man discerns this. One might even suppose that the cognitive man envisages far more order than actually exists. There is a problem faced by the cognitive man, however. Over the “order of phenomena and events” there “hangs darkly” a “cloud of mystery.”<sup>102</sup> This cloud of mystery cognitive man longs to disperse. No obscurity can be tolerated, nor any “oblique allusions and undeciphered secrets.”<sup>103</sup> All must be understood and solved. Nature occasionally

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<sup>101</sup> *HM*, p.5.

<sup>102</sup> *HM*, p.5.

<sup>103</sup> *HM*, p.5.



makes oblique references to its Creator, and one must presume that this would be beyond the grasp of the cognitive man. The universe has secrets locked up in its vast expanses and bewildering variety of planets and stars. The cognitive man zealously engages in solving these.

To fulfill his worldview, the cognitive man wishes to “establish fixed principles, to create laws and judgments, to negate the unforeseen and the incomprehensible, to understand the wondrous and sudden in character.”<sup>104</sup> The cognitive man is therefore not at all lazy. In fact, his very denial of the transcendent gives him additional responsibilities. Not only must he be engaged in the task of establishment and creation but he must also destroy. All the laws and principles must reign alone and be controverted by none.

The cognitive man develops a cosmic order. Soloveitchik identified this cosmic order with that of the Platonist and Aristotelian schools. Both developed cosmic orders characterized by necessity and lawfulness. Phenomena not subject to the rule of order was relegated to the realm of nonbeing and nothingness in Plato or to the realm of hylic matter in Aristotle.<sup>105</sup>

This was the legacy of Greek philosophy to all the “cognitive and scientific men,” Soloveitchik believed. They, like the Greek philosophers, regarded “the alpha and omega of existence” as lawfulness.<sup>106</sup> The random and particular were denied existence

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<sup>104</sup> *HM*, p.5.

<sup>105</sup> *HM*, p.5.

<sup>106</sup> *HM*, pp.5-6.

and condemned to remain in the realm of chaos and the void. Cognitive man displays to the unique an attitude of disdain and contempt.

All the attempts at devising a comprehensive theory of lawfulness were seen by Soloveitchik as the triumphs of cognitive man, and these were listed as follows: Throughout the Middle Ages, the Aristotelian approach prevailed and the notion of lawfulness was identified with the “immanent teleological process” of the “idea” or the “forms.” In the physics of Galileo and Newton, the world received the laws of mechanical causality. Most recently for Soloveitchik was the “modern metaphysical school” which was concerned with the absolute and espoused a neo-Aristotelian concept of the lawfulness of the “essences.”<sup>107</sup>

Regardless of the terms employed, the patterns discerned by cognitive man reveal the search for causality. The basic tendency of the cognitive approach is its search for the ordered and fixed in existence. When reality unfolds, science has a parallel search unfolding which peers into the events to find their determining factors and underlying structure. The cognitive man “is profoundly engaged in rendering an accounting of the world”<sup>108</sup> and the manifestation of this task is the charting of a structured plan of reality enclosed in boundaries of order and law. The boundaries of order and law in the mind of the cognitive man have undeniable status as the criteria for defining what is real, and as the means for controlling the reality that is so defined.

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<sup>107</sup> *HM*, p.6.

<sup>108</sup> *HM*, p.6.

The act of cognition for this individual consists of discovering the buried secret of universal reality through the knowledge and application of the scientific pattern. In summation, Soloveitchik offered, “the act of cognitive man is one of revelation and disclosure.”<sup>109</sup>

This is startling. The reader is presented with the summation of the basic act of the cognitive man in words that indicate precisely where his strengths and weaknesses lie. The explanatory key is the mystical concept of *tzimtzum*, the contraction of the Divine glory for the sake of the existence of the world. *Tzimtzum* was seen as a movement of withdrawal and disclosure. The Divine had to withdraw so that the universe could exist and in the movement of withdrawal thereby disclosed a fraction of the Divine glory.<sup>110</sup>

Humanity in the imitation of God, can do no less than to follow the pattern set in withdrawal and disclosure. Cognitive man appears to defy this pattern by engaging entirely in disclosure. Although it prizes understanding, the cognitive approach lacks the understanding of when to withdraw. This lack of understanding springs from a preoccupation with the means of human revelation. In focusing on revelation and disclosure, the cognitive man not only neglects the withdrawal of the Divine and its incorporation into his own existence, but he appropriates to himself the act of revelation. The act of revelation is the province of God. As Emil Fackenheim explained, “No

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<sup>109</sup> *HM*, p.6.

<sup>110</sup> For instance, *HM*, pp.49-52, 63, 70.

religious doctrine is more baffling than that of revelation; yet none is more essential.”<sup>111</sup> Revelation is an act of God that can be apprehended by humanity, and the failing of cognitive man to realize this meant, for Soloveitchik, that the reality of cognitive man is simple and “candid” because it is always concerned with only its revealed aspect. The very nature of the law would appear to cognitive man to be, like the phenomenon of cognition by which he understands this, “an open book.”<sup>112</sup>

No reality outside the realm of lawfulness interests cognitive man who also avoids relationship with any mode of being beyond empirical reality and scientific understanding. The law is his goal and lawfulness is always discovered and restricted within the context of concreteness, Soloveitchik maintained, and noted that Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* established the bounds of space and time as the limits of comprehension.<sup>113</sup> Cognitive man pays no attention to any world above the rule of empirical reality. Only the physical and psychical reality are of importance.

The cognitive approach has within it a dual relationship to reality, Soloveitchik believed. The first was the empirical, a posteriori approach and the second was the a priori approach. The continuing debate between empiricists and rationalists centered around this distinction. When the cognitive man “scrutinizes God’s world”<sup>114</sup> and through his critical probing aims to determine its nature, he arrives at two different decisions.

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<sup>111</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, “An Outline of Modern Jewish Theology,” in *Understanding Jewish Theology: Classical Issues and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Jacob Neusner, New York, Ktav Publishing, 1973, p. 158.

<sup>112</sup> *HM*, p. 9.

<sup>113</sup> *HM*, p. 13.

<sup>114</sup> *HM*, p. 18.

The first decision of the cognitive man is to delve into the swirling void of reality in order to contemplate its appearance so that he might understand its essence and structure. There are no preconceived programs accompanying him and there had been no elaborate preparations before his journey. The cognitive man is amazed by two features in the realm of reality; the plethora of phenomena and the chaos which prevails in this domain. Eventually he stumbles across the repetition of events in a certain order, “which he had dimly sensed to begin with”<sup>115</sup> and he can construct rules as a lamp for his travels through the cosmos. This was the doctrine of the positivists, Soloveitchik observed, from David Hume to Ernst Mach, Richard Avenarius and the many pragmatists around William James.

The second approach was the one that appealed more to Soloveitchik so he dwelt longer on it. This was the approach in which cognitive man fashions an ideal, a priori creation that pleases and does not worry him. The ideal cannot elude or hide itself from him. Whenever the cognitive man wishes to orient himself to reality he superimposes “his a priori ideal system upon the realm of concrete empirical existence.”<sup>116</sup> The merit of this approach depends on the value of that ideal structure, one can see. The cognitive man in this instance does not wish “to passively cognize reality”<sup>117</sup> as it is in itself but is interested in the correspondence between the ideal construct and existing reality. This is the approach of mathematics and the natural sciences, Soloveitchik thought.

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<sup>115</sup> *HM*, p.18.

<sup>116</sup> *HM*, p.18.

<sup>117</sup> *HM*, p.18.

In the second system, precise parallelism is not required for its validity and truth because all that reality can ever offer is an approximation. The ideal, unified system has a necessity which flows from its very nature. The belief that there “exists an ideal world and a concrete one”<sup>118</sup> was the idealist understanding of the process of cognition, identified by Soloveitchik as based in classical rationalism and expressed by the school of Kant to Hermann Cohen and his disciples.<sup>119</sup>

In his generalization, Soloveitchik overlooked the fact that the concept of an ideal and a concrete world was most famously articulated by Plato who also noted that precise parallelism was impossible between the world of ideas and existing reality. That was the difference between the conditions of ‘being’ and ‘becoming.’ Plato was perhaps a greater influence on Soloveitchik’s description of the ideal and the real than was acknowledged at this point since Plato also insisted that if a discrepancy occurred between the ideal and the real, it demonstrated a flaw in the real and did not entail the construction of a new paradigm.<sup>120</sup>

Cognitive man for Soloveitchik was basically “secular.”<sup>121</sup> The motivation by secular goals means animation by secular desires and this deprives the cognitive man of God for he chooses to ignore the existence of God. Soloveitchik greatly admired cognitive man, however, and used him as the first step in the building of halakhic man.

Soloveitchik devoted more energy to discrediting the negative alternative of the religious man, *homo religiosus*. This was most probably because the religious man was

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<sup>118</sup> *HM*, pp.18-19.

<sup>119</sup> *HM*, p.146.

<sup>120</sup> For instance, Hakim, *Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, op. cit., pp.56-63.

<sup>121</sup> *HM*, pp.40-41

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<sup>119</sup> *HM*, p. 146.

<sup>120</sup> For instance, Hakim, *Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. 56-63.

<sup>121</sup> *HM*, pp. 40-41

more prevalent a type in Judaism as well as in Christianity. Soloveitchik was an opponent of much of the mystical tradition in Judaism, as well as an opponent of Christianity as a whole.<sup>122</sup> The religious man in both faiths, but especially in his native Judaism, was contrasted with the halakhic man and was sharply criticized by Soloveitchik.

Religious man also has a “noetic stance”<sup>123</sup> Soloveitchik adduced. The mind of the religious individual also gazes upon reality and generates a worldview. When the religious man beholds the myriads of events and phenomena occurring in the cosmos he is not gripped with the desire to transform the secrets embedded in the work of the Almighty into equations comprehensible to humanity. Instead, the religious man is fascinated by the mystery of existence and seeks to emphasize that mystery.

Soloveitchik believed that there was a “dynamic relationship that exists between the subject-knower and the object-known” but in the religious man this is not expressed in either desire or ability of the subject to comprehend the object. Rather, the relationship is one of accepting the intriguing, “eternal mystery that envelops the object.”

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It might appear that the religious man would thereby be constantly confronted with a disorganized and chaotic world since no order is imposed. However, this is not so. The similarity between the cognitive and the religious outlook is that both search for the lawful, fixed and necessary. The religious man unlike his cognitive counterpart finds that

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<sup>122</sup> See, for instance, Kolitz, *op. cit.*, pp.xv-xvi for mysticism, and Mozeson, *op. cit.*, pp.280-282 for Christianity.

<sup>123</sup> *HM*, p.144.

<sup>124</sup> *HM*, p.7.



“the revelation of the law and the comprehension of the order and interconnectedness of existence only intensifies and deepens the problem.” While the cognitive man subjects the world to the dominion of his law, the religious man reflects that the concept of lawfulness itself is the “deepest of mysteries.”<sup>125</sup> The law becomes not an instrument to be developed and employed but an indecipherable cryptic text that delimits and bounds the universe. The conundrum that cannot be made solvable is the very nature of the law itself. In summation, Soloveitchik observed that the cognitive act of the religious man “is one of concealment and hiding.”<sup>126</sup>

Soloveitchik intended this to be related again to the imitation of God in *tzimtzum*. While the cognitive man engaged only in revelation and disclosure, the religious man is at the opposite end of the spectrum and practices the concealment and hiding he witnesses in the universe. In so doing, he neglects the disclosure of God by misinterpreting and misrepresenting the content and design of Divine revelation. In the obsession with concealment and hiding, the religious man deprives himself of the fullness that his God has made available. The Divine has opted for revelation as well as disclosure but the religious man will never see the dimensions of this revelation because his perception of the universe prevents it. This also precludes the religious man from participating fully in the imitation of God since only one extreme of the pattern of Divine movement enters his consciousness.

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<sup>125</sup> *HM*, p.7.

<sup>126</sup> *HM*, p.8.

The religious man therefore is seen by Soloveitchik as clinging to a reality that has virtually removed itself from him and barred the intellect from all access to it. The religious man has surrendered to a cosmos permeated by divine secrets and eternal mysteries. The law is closed to him. The religious consciousness “is overflowing with questions that will never be resolved.”<sup>127</sup>

One might wonder at this point whether in Soloveitchik’s caricaturization of the religious consciousness there is a contradiction. The religious mind would surely not be overflowing with unresolved questions because the surrender to Divine mystery would obviate the need to ask any questions at all. The acceptance of reality as tremendously unknowable would eliminate curiosity and the desire to investigate given reality. Soloveitchik explicitly stated that, so the portrayal of the perplexed religious mind does not appear to fit into his overall description.

The religious man “scans reality and is overcome with wonder, fixes his attention on the world and is astonished.” This overwhelming astonishment is not a “prod to stimulate metaphysical curiosity” Soloveitchik explained, but is the “ultimate goal and crowning glory” of the religious man.<sup>128</sup> With this lack of curiosity, there would be no questioning. Unlike Aristotle who thought that astonishment could excite action and be the means of achieving an end, the astonishment of the religious mind represents the end of the search.

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<sup>127</sup> *HM*, p.10.

<sup>128</sup> *HM*, p.10.

Soloveitchik also thought that “the ultimate goal of religious man is the question, Dost thou know?”<sup>129</sup> Soloveitchik described the religious mind as aiming for complete cognition of being, which Soloveitchik justly held was an impossible aim. This trend of thought appears not to have been conceived by Soloveitchik to describe people but schools of philosophy. Since the cognitive mind cannot speak about the “absolute” which for Kant was *Das Ding an sich* (the thing in itself) the absolute must be the product of the religious mind expressing its futile search in cognitive fashion. Cohen omitted the absolute from his philosophy while the neo-Kantian school sets it as its goal. However, Soloveitchik differentiated between his religious man and the neo-Kantians who thought that the problem did not express itself in concealing and hiding but in revealing and creating.<sup>130</sup> Both the problem itself and the unending task of humanity were seen by the neo-Kantians as constituting an essential part of the process of the unfolding and “creation” of the logos because they believed that there was no existence without cognition. The religious man, on the other hand, “senses” that a problem exists externally to cognition and was not created by the logos.<sup>131</sup>

The result is that the religious consciousness is dominated by a movement of disclosure and hiding. The religious man “discloses in order to hide, reveals in order to conceal.”<sup>132</sup> All that is capable of being known points to the inherent uselessness of the search for knowledge and of the vast realm of the unknown. Having described the undergirding of the outlook of religious man, Soloveitchik was in a position to draw two

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<sup>129</sup> *HM*, p. 10.

<sup>130</sup> *HM*, p. 144-145.

<sup>131</sup> *HM*, p. 145.

<sup>132</sup> *HM*, p. 10.

positive conclusions. First, the religious man does not rebel against the objectivity of knowledge or against the truth of the cognitive act. Second, the religious man does not accept what Soloveitchik called the “exaggerated and distorted position of Tertullian” which was identified by Soloveitchik as “*credo quia absurdum est*” (I believe because it is absurd).<sup>133</sup> That was seen by Soloveitchik as a tenet “born out of the bitter despair and terrible disillusionment of a man who, with his intellect, knocks upon the gates of the universe that stand shut before him.”<sup>134</sup> Soloveitchik admitted that he could not find this statement in any of Tertullian’s writings but thought that it “excellently” represented Tertullian.<sup>135</sup>

Unfortunately, Soloveitchik’s depiction of the negative alternatives was beginning to suffer from similar weaknesses as Augustine’s system. The assumptions and connections at the foundation of the system were too flawed to support the negative alternatives built upon it. In this instance, Soloveitchik misinterpreted Tertullian and also introduced another contradiction into the frame of the religious man. Tertullian never explicitly stated *credo quia absurdum est* but this is “a theological maxim derived from a passage in Tertullian’s *De Carne Christi*.”<sup>136</sup> The passage itself was directed against the gnostics, those who excessively spiritualized the content of the religion defended by Tertullian. Pedersen noted that the principle assumes “faith’s

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<sup>133</sup> *HM*, p. 10-11.

<sup>134</sup> *HM*, p. 11.

<sup>135</sup> *HM*, p. 145.

<sup>136</sup> Jorgen Pedersen, “Credo quia absurdum,” in *Theological Concepts in Kierkegaard*, Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana, vol. 5, eds. N. and M. Thulstrup, Copenhagen, C.A. Reitzels Boghandel, 1980, p.117.

independence and transcendence in relation to cognition.”<sup>137</sup> This principle is not one of despair but of cheerful acknowledgment of faith as the highest means of cognition.

Soloveitchik’s assertion that the religious man is “eager to cognize natural phenomena and understand them”<sup>138</sup> is a contradiction to the religious man who was delineated as devoid of interest in understanding the hidden workings of the universe. Soloveitchik’s apologetic interests evidently led to this contradiction which is certainly a facet of the positive aspect of the religious man adopted by the halakhic man.

The conclusion attained by the religious man after examining the world, however, is not that of the halakhic man. The religious man attempts to find in this world traces of the higher worlds which are wholly good and eternal. “This world is a pale image of another world”<sup>139</sup> for the religious man. One wonders why this is the conclusion derived from exploration of the universe and could not have proceeded more directly from cognition. Soloveitchik’s description of the religious man is of mind and actions engaged in an unending exercise in bewildered futility.

Soloveitchik saw the aspirations of the religious mind making itself heard in the world of knowledge and science. The longing for a higher existence was detected by Soloveitchik in the world of ideas of Plato as the paradigm of true being and the realm of phenomena as the shadows of being. Soloveitchik also detected this echo of longing in Aristotle’s ontological doctrine of ascent from hylic matter to pure form, in the noetic cosmos in Philo, the concept of emanation and the multiplicity of worlds proceeding

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<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *HM*, p.11.

<sup>139</sup> *HM*, p.13.

from one another in the neo-Platonic school, in Spinoza's view of the infinite substance consisting of infinite attributes and the simultaneous attributes of extension and thought known to us, in the phenomena and noumena (the absolute) in Kant. Even in the revival of the dualism of essence and existence from Arabic philosophy and Christian Scholasticism in Husserl and Scheler, the modern metaphysics which Soloveitchik interpreted as trying to penetrate to absolute being, and in "epistemological idealism which subjects existence to thought and consciousness"<sup>140</sup> in varied forms from Berkeley to Hermann Cohen was the search for the infinite noted.

These systems only have in common the concept of an absolute. Soloveitchik appeared to have believed that any search for an absolute was a manifestation of the search for transcendence which could be transformed into an ethical principle. Somehow, this search had as its result for Soloveitchik the desire to extricate existence from the bonds of this world. This yearning for extrication from the real to plunge into the ideal took on varied and sometimes contradictory forms throughout the experience of religious man. Sometimes it was demonstrated by asceticism that withdrew from the world, sometimes by "affirmation of the world and approval of reality."<sup>141</sup> Such an affirmation of the world would seem to be the denial of the ideal and the embrace of the real, and how it could show the desire of the religious man to extract himself from the world is difficult to envisage. Even if plunging oneself into the real world is undertaken to merit a heavenly, the proximate goal of immersion in the real world eliminates the

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<sup>140</sup> *HM*, p. 14.

<sup>141</sup> *HM*, p. 15.

withdrawal from it. When Soloveitchik attempted to conclude the issue by suggesting that the “common denominator” was that religious man “longs for a refined and purified existence”<sup>142</sup> this appears to add to the confusion since this is the longing of every type. The cognitive man longs for the triumph of his cognition and the halakhic man for the triumph of halakhah. Each of them perceives his own victory as the refinement and purification of existence. However, Soloveitchik noted that for religious man there was a “riddle in existence” and an “eternal problem that hovers over the face of being” which serves to lead the religious man “beyond the bounds of concrete reality.”<sup>143</sup> Those are his distinguishing marks.

The religious man is seen by Soloveitchik as basically “a romantic who chafes against concrete reality and tries to flee to distant worlds.”<sup>144</sup> In these distant worlds the religious hope to find restoration of the spirit with the purity and pristine clarity available there. The religious man (the mystics in this context are identified with the religious man) desire to free themselves and the Shekinah from entrapment in the visible world which is imprinted with the stamp of the supernal.<sup>145</sup>

Unfortunately, Soloveitchik noted, the final destination of the religious might be the “green pastures” of Psalm 23 but not the road leading to it. The road to that place, Soloveitchik observed sympathetically, was for the religious man filled with regret and despair. The yearning for God would be twinned with the flight from His glorious splendor, transcendence would be combined with God’s closeness and this would

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<sup>142</sup> *HM*, p. 16.

<sup>143</sup> *HM*, p. 16.

<sup>144</sup> *HM*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>145</sup> *HM*, pp. 50-51.

produce a condition of “spiritual crisis” because the path that leads to the final destination, Soloveitchik explained, was not “the royal road but a narrow, twisting footway.”<sup>146</sup>

Soloveitchik believed this because he drew on the dialectical philosophies of Heraclitus and Hegel regarding the course of existence in general and Kierkegaard, Barth and Rudolf Otto regarding the religious consciousness in particular.<sup>147</sup> There was the pattern of existence, that which threatened existence, a painful conflict expressed in suffering and crisis, and a solution forged in the fires of the tribulation. As much as the religious man might demand that religion be an escape, genuine religion would be a struggle.

Soloveitchik believed that religious man was “suspended between two giant magnets”<sup>148</sup> of love and fear, desire and dread, longing and anxiety. The religious man is highly subjective and longs to merge with that which terrifies him. Drawing from Otto, Soloveitchik noted that fascination and repulsion constitute the two fundamental experiences of the religious man.<sup>149</sup> Otto had said that the God who is holy entices those who admit their unworthiness to be in his presence.<sup>150</sup> For Soloveitchik, this meant that the religious man constantly questions his worth, and imposes pain on himself by the search for cognition that deepens the wonder, then cherishes the pain as the harbinger of eternity. Soloveitchik believed that the “emotion of fear, the sense of lowliness” and

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<sup>146</sup> *HM*, p. 142.

<sup>147</sup> *HM*, p. 4.

<sup>148</sup> *HM*, p. 67.

<sup>149</sup> *HM*, p. 67.

<sup>150</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: The Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, London and New York, Oxford University Press, 1923.



“melancholy” were typical of religious man, as were “self-negation, constant self-appraisal, the consciousness of sin, self-lacerating torments.”<sup>151</sup> The ultimate end of the earthly career of religious man is that his will “gradually wanes to nothingness, and his selfhood is inexorably extinguished” in direct correlation with his yearning to achieve the “*unio mystica*”<sup>152</sup> and immerse himself in the Infinite. On earth he wavers between ecstasy and depression as he feels as though he has grasped or has lost touch with transcendence.

The religious man, for Soloveitchik, would regard repentance only from the perspective of atonement, as a “wholly miraculous phenomenon made possible by the endless grace of the Almighty.”<sup>153</sup> He would neglect the creative capacity inherently possible in that action.

Although one might conclude that Soloveitchik presented several choices to humanity, this is not the case in *Halakhic Man*. There was only one choice which Soloveitchik believed was demanded of humanity in fulfilling its destiny. “Species man or man of God, this is the alternative which the Almighty placed before man.”<sup>154</sup> Every other deviation from the path of halakhic man was a wandering away from the full potential available to humanity. Soloveitchik depended on Kierkegaard for the construction of spiritual stages on which this hypothesis is predicated.

Soloveitchik agreed with Kierkegaard that individual human evolution could be divided into stages. Kierkegaard himself drew inspiration from Augustine’s three stages

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<sup>151</sup> *HM*, p. 74.

<sup>152</sup> *HM*, p. 78.

<sup>153</sup> *HM*, p. 113.

<sup>154</sup> *HM*, p. 125.

of creation, fall and new creation.<sup>155</sup> Kierkegaard also developed three stages: the esthetic, the ethical and the religious. They were seen as inescapable for all of humanity. In the esthetic stage (esthetic meaning ‘pertaining to the sense,’) there is no conscious acceptance of an ideal and no responsibility for one’s God-given self, and the individual acts only out of pleasure, impulse and emotion. Despair leads to the ethical stage in which the individual attempts to conquer the dispersion of life by the primacy of duty and obedience to the moral. The encounter with God propels the individual to the final stage in which there is commitment to God and a “leap from time to eternity, from the finite to the infinite.”<sup>156</sup>

That Soloveitchik believed in these stages can be seen from his reference to the “esthetic man”<sup>157</sup> of emotion and to the “conative individual”<sup>158</sup> who wills and strives to do what is right. The esthetic man was used in exactly the same manner as in Kierkegaard. In the esthetic there was seen to be “emotional dynamic and turbulent passion.”<sup>159</sup> This dynamic and passion was without depth, however. The conative individual was the same who progressed throughout the arduous journey of reality striving to do what was right. This kind of person had the potentiality to achieve the final stage in Kierkegaard.

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<sup>155</sup> Robert J. Widenmann, “The Concept of Stages,” in *Some of Kierkegaard’s Main Categories*, Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana, vol. 16, eds. N. and M. Thulstrup, Copenhagen, C.A. Reitzels, 1988, p. 121.

<sup>156</sup> Hakim, op. cit., p. 543.

<sup>157</sup> *HM*, p. 84.

<sup>158</sup> *HM*, p. 44.

<sup>159</sup> *HM*, p. 84.

In other works, Soloveitchik spoke of the “natural man” or “Adam I”<sup>160</sup> These represented humanity in its created, naïve state, while the negative alternatives examined here seemed to be those paths taken as lifestyles and worldviews. It cannot be denied, however, that implicit in the depiction of the natural man and of Adam I there is the understanding that the created state was equivalent to the present. For many people, there was no development beyond the natural man and Adam I. This can be also evinced from the references to “species man” in *Halakhic Man*.

The “species man” was for Soloveitchik the random example of the biological species, just like every other example of every other species on the earth. He is passive to the extreme and creates nothing. By the absence of creation and creativity on his part, Soloveitchik believed that the species man does not ever justify his existence. He continues to exist in the realm of images and shadows. Here Soloveitchik sounded exactly like Plato or Aristotle. Soloveitchik declared that species man “is just one more example of the species image in its ongoing morphological process (in the Aristotelian sense of the term).” The species man is a “spiritual parasite”<sup>161</sup> who is entirely under the influence of other people and their views.

One can occasionally wonder whether the cognitive and religious man end as species men. Sometimes this can appear to be the case. The cognitive approach ignores God in reality and the religious approach severs God from reality. Both of these attitudes engender a worldview that is conducive to becoming a “spiritual parasite.” The

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<sup>160</sup> For instance, “The Lonely Man of Faith,” op. cit., and “Adam and Eve,” op. cit.

<sup>161</sup> *HM*, p.127.

eschatological destination of the species man is that of being cut off and perishing like the beasts. Soloveitchik cited Sanhedrin 62b to support his view that the species man is “cut off” in this world and in the next. The soul which has separated from its body in this world does not attain life in the world to come but is also “utterly cut off” from future life in the world to come.<sup>162</sup>

There were only two alternatives for Soloveitchik. The choice of being a species man or evolving out of that state into the halakhic man who was the man of God was before everyone. This gives to the cognitive and religious attitudes an inherent futility, since many of their negative traits can be recognized in species man. Some of the positive traits in the cognitive and religious approaches have the latent capacity to pull their captives out of such futile ways of existence and “faceless mediocrity.” If they carry on their course without diverting to the correct path, the cognitive or the religious man can remain a species man who “bequeaths nothing to future generations, but dies without a trace of his having lived. Empty-handed he goes to the grave, bereft of *mitzvah* performances, good deeds and meritorious acts.”<sup>163</sup> The cognitive and religious approaches can easily be bereft of such acts since they lack the “sense of historical responsibility” and “ethical passion”<sup>164</sup> that motivate these acts. Like Augustine, Soloveitchik was also interested in the motivation, the root cause of the deed. The characters of the cognitive and the religious are suddenly exposed to the reader as

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<sup>162</sup> *HM*, p.162.

<sup>163</sup> *HM*, p.127.

<sup>164</sup> *HM*, p.127.

blatantly self-centered. So concerned are they with discovery or wonder that they have no room in their lives for others. Their insularity prevents expansion.

Soloveitchik was aware that Christianity believed pride was the elemental sin, and advised reading of Maimonides *Laws of Moral Dispositions* 1:1-5 and R. Bahya ibn Pakuda's *Duties of the Heart*, "On Humility" to prove that pride was not so regarded in Judaism. However, the excessive introspection of the cognitive man who only wishes to subject reality to a law of his devising, and of the religious man whose energy is concentrated in escaping this world prevent them from bothering with the "practical and ethical."<sup>165</sup>

Of the two, the religious man is in the worse predicament since he is subject to the vice of hypocrisy, one that particularly irked Soloveitchik. The universal religious man frequently demarcates between the domain of the transcendent and that of the earthly, so that one does not interfere with the other. This can lead to the spectacle where the religious man:

praying in his house of worship, prostrated on the cold stone floor, repeating over and over the old litany *non mea voluntas sed tua fiat*— not my will be done, only Thine— is not at that moment a this-worldly man, possessor of riches and chattels, estates and factories, who drives his impoverished workers ruthlessly, and whose hands are often stained with the blood of the outcast and the ill-gotten gain wrung from the hands of the unfortunate. For him the world of prayer and the world of reality have nothing to do with each other. He enters the sanctuary humble and contrite, in a mood of submission and humility. In this religious atmosphere filled with the thick clouds of incense and the echoes of the hymns of angels and seraphim, he divests himself of his arrogance, of his rigid, unbending character, and becomes the very model of meekness, self-effacing and bowed down. And he leaves the same way he entered, humble and submissive.... However, no sooner does he step outside into the noisy, clamorous street that he reverts to his original persona, to his previous haughty and conceited self-centeredness.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> For instance, *HM*, p. 121.

<sup>166</sup> *HM*, pp. 92-93.

The arrogance motivating the cognitive man to subject all reality to his system assumes tragically hypocritical implications in the religious man for the main reason that one would have been inclined to hope that the religious should know, and therefore act better than this “spiritual schizophrenia.” To emphasize that atrocity by religious men was not an empty abstraction, Soloveitchik remarked that there were “many noblemen” who “bowed down before the cross in a spirit of abject submission and self-denial, confessed their sins with scalding tears and bitter cries” and immediately upon departure from “the dim precincts of the cathedral, ordered that innocent people be cruelly slain.”<sup>167</sup>

In this respect, both the cognitive and the religious man deny God. The cognitive man excludes the very existence of God from any consideration in his perspective. The religious man undertakes a denial that can have far more sinister consequences. The religious man yearns to be united to God but effectively denies God entrance into this world. God must remain outside so that the mystical aspiration for fusion with the Divine is not confused with any demands the Divine might deign to make of humanity. Cognitive man neglects the Creator, religious man yearns for the Creator but ignores his personal responsibility for creation, and his calling to create.

It is little wonder, then, that the worldview of any other than halakhic man is fatally flawed. Both the cognitive and the religious share the properties of the “natural man” or “Adam I” expressed in *Halakhic Man* as “species man.” They are both

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<sup>167</sup> *HM*, p.93.

representative of the individual who has not evolved outside the confines of existence. They are born involuntarily, and for that reason they live until they involuntarily die. Neither is capable of fulfillment because neither can attain the blend of the transcendence outside with the immanence of their existence. Cognitive man opts to hide from that transcendence and reveal the laws of this world. Religious man wants to join that transcendence so he is careless about this world.

Unless the cognitive man and the religious man are led out of their conditions, the paradoxical nature of their choice of attitudinal perspective means that they have denied themselves of the fullness available. Their attitudes cause both to miss the truth of life. As Abraham Heschel explained, all of life is sacred and saintliness itself is an “attitude bound up with all actions, concomitant with all doings, accompanying and shaping all life’s activities.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Abraham J. Heschel, *The Earth is the Lord's*, New York, Henry Schuman, 1950, p.20.

## Chapter Four: Humanity's Positive Alternatives

Augustine and Soloveitchik both saw only one positive alternative which dominated their thinking and in both instances formed the title of their book.

### (i) Augustine: The City of God.

Augustine's positive alternative was the city of God. He derived this city from Biblical and classical sources and applied it enthusiastically to human experience. From Psalm 87 Augustine received the words "Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God." Although these words were originally spoken of the earthly Jerusalem, as were the words of Psalms 46 and 48 which he also used, Augustine followed the example of the apostle Paul<sup>1</sup> in using Jerusalem to refer to the heavenly city.<sup>2</sup> It was observed by Burleigh<sup>3</sup> that Augustine has been accused of taking Plato's *Republic* and Christianizing it so that the perfect republic becomes the city of God. As Burleigh also noted, this was an exaggerated accusation. Augustine remarked that Plato had framed an ideal republic from which poets were justifiably banned for their strange tales of the gods but Augustine also noted that Plato's intentions were political.<sup>4</sup>

There are, however, a few similarities between Augustine and the philosopher he regarded as close to the true God. Like Plato, Augustine regarded justice as an indispensable aspect of government and condemned politics based on power. Perhaps the greatest resemblance of Plato to Augustine would be Plato's usage of the term "city of God" which occurs in *The Laws* 713 A where Plato noted that the true state should not

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 4:21-31.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, *COG*, XV:2.

<sup>3</sup> Burleigh, *The City of God: A Study of St. Augustine's Philosophy*, op. cit., pp.155-156.

<sup>4</sup> *COG*, II:14.



be designated a tyranny, aristocracy or democracy since these refer only to the dominant power within the state. The true state should be called the “City of God” for there God rules rational individuals.<sup>5</sup>

Augustine also drew selectively upon Scipio’s definitions in Cicero’s *De Republica*. Augustine examined whether a republic was a commonwealth— an assemblage of people who are joined together by a community of interest and a shared acknowledgment of what is right. Cicero had argued that many societies are not properly established since common loyalty and justice are absent. Augustine carried this to the conclusion that no society except for the city of God can fulfill that definition, especially since true justice is incomplete without giving honor to the one true God.<sup>6</sup>

The city of God was founded by God who “has inspired us with a love which makes us covet its citizenship.”<sup>7</sup> Eugene TeSelle thought that Augustine probably derived the concept of the city as the assemblage drawn and bound by love from Varro<sup>8</sup> but this suggestion appears rather farfetched. The love of God is the basic principle of His city.

The City of God existed from before the beginning of humanity and prior to the creation of time.<sup>9</sup> The angels belonged, and those angels who remain with God still belong to it. Augustine believed that the angels invite us to join their society and “desire us to become fellow-citizens with them in this city.” He immediately stated that the angels do not want us to worship them as gods, but to participate with them in

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<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Burleigh, op. cit., pp.156-157.

<sup>6</sup> *COG*, II:21, XIX:23-28.

<sup>7</sup> *COG*,XI:1.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, op. cit., p.271.

<sup>9</sup> *COG*, XI:5-6.

worshipping the one true God. Neither do the angels want us to sacrifice to them but instead, together with them, to become a sacrifice to God. The “blessed and immortal spirits” do not envy us (that would eliminate their blessedness) but “love us, and desire us to be as blessed as themselves” and they “look on us with greater pleasure and give us greater assistance” when we make their God ours, than if we were to worship them, Augustine contended.<sup>10</sup> One might wonder why the angels would help at all if we were to worship them. As creatures of holiness, surely they would regard that as blasphemy and withdraw from us. Whatever the case, the holy people and holy angels have “the love of God” that is “shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them.” Holy people and angels are urged to draw near to God. Those who have this good in common, Augustine explained, have with God and with one another “a holy fellowship, and form one city of God— His living sacrifice and His living temple.”<sup>11</sup> They move out of the confines of individuality and into the genuine solidarity of those of the city of God. No longer would egocentricity be their motivation and earthly pleasures their aspiration, but the love of God would be their focus and their bond. Augustine defended his view that the city of God was fundamentally social by arguing that the “city” could neither begin nor develop unless the life of the saints who comprise it was inherently social.<sup>12</sup>

On earth, the founder of the city of those who live according to God was Abel. In Abel, Augustine called his readers to observe that we all begin life as members of the

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<sup>10</sup> *COG*, X:25.

<sup>11</sup> *COG*, XII:9

<sup>12</sup> *COG*, XIX:5.

reprobate but “afterwards is that which is well-approved” and any could advance and attain it. Abel was “the stranger in this world” chosen by grace to be “a citizen above.”<sup>13</sup>

When Abraham and Sarah could not have children, it symbolized to Augustine the nature of the human race which deserves no “future felicity.” Yet God gave them Isaac, “the child of the promise” who typifies the “children of grace, the citizens of the free city, who dwell together in everlasting peace, in which self-love and self-will have no place.” Instead of the reign of pride, there is “a ministering love that rejoices in the common joy of all, of many hearts makes one, that is to say, secures a perfect concord.”<sup>14</sup>

For the life of the city of God on earth, there are precepts by which the city must live in harmony. None of these precepts can be obeyed without the grace of the Almighty, however, because no good can be done or conceived without His guidance.<sup>15</sup> The citizens of heaven obey these precepts and laws and use the world that they might enjoy God.<sup>16</sup>

Very often in Augustine’s thought there are parallels between the actions enjoined upon the city of God on earth and those operating in heaven itself. In this respect, one might note that while the righteous obey the laws on earth, “unchangeable truth” reigns unchallenged “in the court of heaven” as the “eternal law” and it governs the ways of the angels themselves.

Sometimes Augustine was prone to attribute far too much neo-Platonism to the inhabitants of the city of God. When defending his view that the “sons of God” in

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<sup>13</sup> *COG*, XV:1.

<sup>14</sup> *COG*, XV:3.

<sup>15</sup> *COG*, XV:6.

<sup>16</sup> *COG*, XV:7.

Genesis 6 were those of the city of God, Augustine explained that, “they begat children to God, not to themselves.” As in many instances, Augustine differentiated the situation from the motivation he perceived impelled the action. Here he went on to say, that these sons of God were “not moved by the lust of sexual intercourse, but discharging the duty of propagation, intending not to produce a family to gratify their own pride, but citizens to people the city of God.”<sup>17</sup> Even as God has only “unchangeable reason” instead of emotion,<sup>18</sup> so in imitation of God (or in neo-Platonic reflection of the true form) do the citizens of the city of God. This belief appears unnecessary both to Augustine’s general trend and to his theology as a whole.

Augustine studied the Scriptures to investigate which of the people therein belonged to which city— the earthly or the heavenly. He traced the heavenly city from Abel down to Noah and Japheth, but “chiefly in the eldest son Shem.”<sup>19</sup> This identification is unusual. Augustine followed the text of Scripture in highlighting Shem but then is at a loss on how to appropriately distinguish him from Japheth. Either one belongs to the city of God or one does not, so it verges on the amusing when Augustine rightly noted that Japheth and Shem are both blessed, but Shem more highly blessed. Augustine then had to assign Shem to a position of higher blessing than Japheth, but there is no higher gradation than being a member of the city of God, compelling Augustine to say that Shem was “chiefly” in the city of God compared to Japheth, his less-blessed brother. This might introduce degrees of rank in Augustine’s system of positive alternatives equivalent to his gradations in the negative alternatives when some

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<sup>17</sup> *COG*, XV:23.

<sup>18</sup> *COG*, XV:25.

<sup>19</sup> *COG*, XVI:9.

people might be assigned to purgatory for different lengths of time, to proceed thereafter to heaven while the ‘more’ reprobate were sent directly to the hell whose intensity is also modulated according to their iniquity.

In the genealogy of Shem, Augustine saw evidence that the city of God was preserved until the time of Abraham. Before the flood, the city of God was “exhibited” in the line of Seth. Until the time of the building of the tower of Babel, only the city of God appeared to be mentioned in Scripture, leading Augustine to wonder whether the wicked city was non-existent or disguised during this time.<sup>20</sup> He settled for the opinion that it existed but was of no consequence, in keeping with his trend of thought that the existence of evil occasions the brighter shining of the good.

The city of God not only included Abraham but also descended from him. Augustine rejoiced in the promise to Abraham about the multitude of his descendants, noting that the city of God would be assured of inhabitants greater in number than the dust of the earth. These citizenry, the seed of Abraham, was “not only that pertaining to the nation of Israel, but also that which is and which shall be according to the imitation of faith in all nations of the whole wide world.”<sup>21</sup>

Augustine was graciously expansive here in his depiction of the composition of the city of God. All who loved and served the one true God belonged by His choice and by their own desire to be in the multitude counted as the very seed of Abraham. Israel was chosen first, then the Gentiles were added by the “imitation of faith.” All nations of the earth had those who rejoiced in the knowledge of the truth of the one God who had

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<sup>20</sup> *COG*, XVI:10.

<sup>21</sup> *COG*, XVI:21.

chosen them to know Him and to walk in His ways, following the precepts by which His people are guided in the earthly segment of their journey, as they continued advancing by Divine grace to attain the fullness of eschatological fulfillment. Occasionally Augustine would let his narrower view of the restrictively predestined grace prevail, such as in his interpretation of Zephaniah 3:9-12 where he noted the vividness of the imagery of the remnant. Augustine concluded that although “the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.” This remnant would be the few “of that nation who have believed in Christ.”<sup>22</sup> The expanse of redemption was bounded by the grace of Christ.

In the city of God Augustine found all the good people of the Bible, who could not have achieved righteousness had not grace been prevenient. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and the good kings and prophets belonged there. It was easy to ascertain their assignment. More perplexing to Augustine was an Erythrean or Cumean sibyl who probably prophesied during the reign of “the best and most pious king” Hezekiah.<sup>23</sup>

This sibyl seemed to Augustine to speak of Christ in a poem in which the initial letters of each line spelt “Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour.” Augustine reported that “we might even think she ought be reckoned among those who belong to the city of God,”<sup>24</sup> and he offered to his readers her poem and some prophecies of another sibyl who seemed also to speak of Christ. Augustine deliberately did not comment on the sibyls, but his favorable language indicated approval of their citizenship.

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<sup>22</sup> *COG*, XVIII:33. Augustine drew upon Isaiah 10:22 and Romans 9:27 to derive his conclusion

<sup>23</sup> *COG*, XVIII:22.

<sup>24</sup> *COG*, XVIII:23.

Whether there were people born outside of Israel and not received into the canon of Scripture who were members of the city of God was an area of interest to Augustine. He noted that it was not incongruous with the particularity of God to assume that in other nations there may have been people to whom the mystery was revealed and who were then impelled to proclaim it.<sup>25</sup> Augustine admitted ignorance regarding the possibility of such foreigners to the faith partaking in the same grace available to human experience after the incarnation, and to the possibility of the foreigners having been taught by “bad angels,” who, Augustine believed, “even confessed the present Christ.”<sup>26</sup> However it might have come to pass, Augustine believed that there were certainly people in the past who were not of the earthly Israel but were citizens of the heavenly.

Job was the textbook case for Augustine. Job was neither a native Israelite nor a proselyte to Judaism. He was “of the Idumean race” but is singularly praised in Scripture. No contemporary of Job was placed on the same level of “justice and piety.”<sup>27</sup> From the example of Job, Augustine concluded that it was “divinely appointed” that readers of the text know that in other nations there might be those “pertaining to the spiritual Jerusalem who have lived according to God and pleased Him.”<sup>28</sup>

At this juncture, Augustine faced the problem that the inherent righteousness of Job, independent of the grace accorded to the nation of Israel and contained in a life prior to the incarnation, had been reckoned as sufficient to attain entrance into the city of God. Augustine therefore developed a pronouncement to explain the theological dilemma.

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<sup>25</sup> *COG*, XVIII:47.

<sup>26</sup> *COG*, XVIII:47.

<sup>27</sup> *COG*, XVIII:47.

<sup>28</sup> *COG*, XVIII:47.

Christ was still upheld as the only source of goodness for those in his city, so the citizenship that was granted to Job must have been based on the Christ revealed to him. Every one who is in the city of God prior to the coming of Christ in the flesh, Augustine maintained, must have had a divinely appointed revelation.<sup>29</sup> Christ was pre-announced to the saints of old and is now proclaimed in the Church but Job was outside the domain where the Scriptures could logically have reached him, so his case must have been one of special dispensation.

Augustine observed that in the prophetic portions of Scripture, there were sections that pertained to the earthly Jerusalem as well as to the heavenly, and some portions pointed to both.<sup>30</sup> This enabled Augustine to develop in *City of God* what Peter Brown accurately noted was a theology whose recurrent theme was “our business in this common mortal life.”<sup>31</sup> Augustine noted that the prophet Nathan was sent to convict David of a sin and to predict what punishments would ensue. This pertains to the “terrestrial city” in a public and private manner. Publicly, this is for the “safety or help of the people” and privately, “there are given forth utterances whereby something of the future may be known for the use of temporal life.”<sup>32</sup> All statements in the Scripture were taken seriously as indications of the city of God in the future or as instructions to that city at present.

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<sup>29</sup> *COG*, XVIII:47. See also the discussion of Plato and the Jewish people in the previous chapter. In Augustine’s system Plato and the Jewish people would not have been redeemed, but there seems to be a hidden capacity in Augustine’s reckoning, if not his intentions, that would allow for their eventual advance to the city of God.

<sup>30</sup> *COG*, XVII:3.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, op. cit., p.324.

<sup>32</sup> *COG*, XVII:3.



Augustine regarded Christ as the focus and ruler of the heavenly city.

Occasionally he seemed to regard the Church as co-extensive with the city of God, but scholars have cautioned that for Augustine there was the true Church that was the city of God which included the patriarchs, prophets and others. There was also the Church on earth which had the evil commingled with the good.<sup>33</sup> When Hannah rejoiced in the birth of Samuel, Augustine believed that through Hannah, “the very Christian religion, the very city of God, whose king and founder is Christ” was being prophesied and celebrated so that “the Church of Christ, the city of the great King, full of grace, prolific of offspring”<sup>34</sup> could later adopt and offer the words of Hannah.

The hypocrisy of some within the Church was of concern to Augustine who explained that a glaring discrepancy between words and actions demonstrated that those people were never part of the city of God. Augustine recommended that the words of the hypocrites be accepted but their deeds be shunned, for “the passion of Christ is only externally and verbally professed by the reprobate, for what they profess they do not understand.”<sup>35</sup> The intellect separated humanity from the beasts, so the intellect was considered the area of failing in the reprobate who “do not understand” and therefore are incapable of righteous living. In each citizen of the true city of God there is an inward transformation absent from the lives of others.

At the same time, Augustine faced the problem of ubiquitous unrighteousness confronted by the city of God within as well as around it. Therefore it is the task of the

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<sup>33</sup> For instance, R.H. Barrow, *Introduction to St. Augustine The City of God*, London, Faber and Faber, 1950, p.155. See *COG*, XIX:17, 23-25.

<sup>34</sup> *COG*, XVII:4. Hannah’s praise is in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

<sup>35</sup> *COG*, XVI:2.

city of God to subject evil to themselves and “make a skillful use” of the reprobate. Augustine identified two benefits accruing from this accomplishment. The city of God can use the wicked for the exercise of patience or for advancement in wisdom.<sup>36</sup> The virtue of endurance can be practiced by all who are members of the city of God “whether they be kings, princes, judges, soldiers, or provincials, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female.”<sup>37</sup> The city of God was seen to have all conditions of humanity and Augustine believed that the poorer and less educated were frequently chosen to show the glory of God. The disciples Christ chose on earth were “of lowly birth, unhonoured and illiterate” for the deliberate purpose that “whatever great thing they might be or do,” Christ would have been the one being and doing it in them.<sup>38</sup> Augustine firmly held that all types of people could be accepted into the city of God and have the opportunity to practice the noblest virtues to their only worthwhile end.

Augustine believed that the city of God was endued with tremendous power. This was because of the conjunction of “what we do” and “what we receive.”<sup>39</sup> What we can do is so much greater because of the latter enabling the former. Augustine interpreted the power of the city of God in the contexts of the temporal and the cosmic dimension. In the temporal dimension, earthly life, all citizens of the city of God, like the angels, become “fellow-labourers with God.”<sup>40</sup> They are not left to ponder the inscrutable workings of the universe until they are exempted from it. In sharp contrast to

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<sup>36</sup> *COG*, XVI:2.

<sup>37</sup> *COG*, II:19.

<sup>38</sup> *COG*, XVIII:49.

<sup>39</sup> *COG*, XVII:4.

<sup>40</sup> *COG*, XVI:5. To support his view Augustine quoted 1 Corinthians 3:9; “For we are fellow-labourers with God.”

the philosophies that advocated uninterrupted withdrawal from the earthly matters pressing on humanity, Augustine worked out what Peter Brown called a theology of “being otherworldly in the world.”<sup>41</sup> God fully acts in the world and is everywhere, as one might presume His angels also are. So, his people who are dispersed everywhere, by participating in the fullness of the Divine, participate fully in the course of this world.

In the cosmic dimension, the power of the city of God was evidenced in its triumph over evil authorities. When God begins to possess each citizen of the city, the chief one who had been the adversary of the city of God (here one can safely assume that Augustine referred to the devil) becomes the adversary of God. Therefore, the city of God exerts the power given by grace and that adversary “is conquered by us; but not by our own strength.”<sup>42</sup>

This power is twinned with the trials of the present journey of the Church, Augustine believed. The present world was viewed as the domain of evil and the Church “measures her future loftiness by her present humility.”<sup>43</sup> Humility for Augustine was one of the greatest strengths so this statement supported and did not detract from his earlier expressed position that the Church was endowed with the infused power of her omnipotent Master. The Church was “exercised by goading fears, tormenting sorrows, disquieting labours, and dangerous temptations.”<sup>44</sup> Yet for Augustine this life was not entirely painful. The Church now “soberly rejoices.”<sup>45</sup> With the same unwillingness to commit herself to the force of passion that the “sons of God” also displayed, the Church

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<sup>41</sup> Peter Brown, *op. cit.*, p.324.

<sup>42</sup> *COG*, XVII:4.

<sup>43</sup> *COG*, XVIII:49.

<sup>44</sup> *COG*, XVIII:49.

<sup>45</sup> *COG*, XVIII:49.

neither bemoans her sorry lot nor engages in riotous rejoicing that she is the “queen” described in Psalm 45 who has tremendous power by the grace of her “great Husband.”<sup>46</sup> Instead, there is a slight inflection of emotion as the Church rejoices in the present in the sure and certain hope secured for her. This is very similar to Soloveitchik’s description of the halakhic man who is characterized by a “festive dignity” or “attitude of solemnity.”<sup>47</sup> Both Augustine and Soloveitchik preferred reason to emotion and believed that the depth of a life was evinced in the tranquillity displayed in the modulation of feeling.

The grace of God was given so that the commandments could be kept by those of His city, Augustine believed. He cited the trend of thought in Ecclesiastes leading up to chapter 12, verses 13-14. The command to fear God and keep His commandments was so impressive that Augustine exclaimed rhetorically:

What truer, terser, more salutary enunciation could be made? “Fear God,” he says, “and keep His commandments: for this is every man.” For whosoever has real existence, is this, a keeper of God’s commandments; and he who is not this, is nothing.<sup>48</sup>

Augustine had a high view of the eternal moral law of God, given to His city as a gift. Augustine noted that the very fact that God chose to reveal Himself in the Law was wonderful. The law was given “not to one man or a few enlightened men, but to the whole of a populous nation.” Such an occasion warranted “awe-inspiring signs, great marvels”<sup>49</sup> accomplished before the multitude when the law was given through one man.

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<sup>46</sup> *COG*, XVII:16.

<sup>47</sup> *HM*, p.76.

<sup>48</sup> *COG*, XX:3.

<sup>49</sup> *COG*, X:13.

The law commanded the people to worship the one God and to know that the Creator could use creation to promulgate His law.

Augustine's positive view of the law survived and was even expanded in later Christian tradition. John Calvin forwarded a refinement of Augustine's position which became authoritative in many mainline Protestant Christian traditions. Calvin maintained that the Law was not only given to reveal and convict us of sin and to restrain public unrighteousness but above all else, as a guide to the redeemed.<sup>50</sup>

Since the city of God has nothing that it has not received, for grace is its primary property and the grace of Christ is received, none of its citizens should ever boast.<sup>51</sup> Augustine used the example of Rome as a corrective to any inclination that the Christian might have to boast. The goals of liberty and human glory impelled the Romans to do astounding deeds for their city, many of which were admirable. Augustine cited, among many other examples, that of Camillus who was condemned by those who envied him even though he had delivered his country from their bitter enemies the Veientes and then again delivered his ungrateful country from the Gauls. This prevented any Christians who defended the Church and not had abandoned her from boasting, since Camillus remained with his country and the Christian has no choice since there is no other true Church. Even the Christian martyrs should not carry themselves too proudly on their way to martyrdom, Augustine cautioned, although they should do so with love for their fellowship for whom their blood is shed but also for their enemies by whom it is shed. This was not an inherently meritorious act, for the Romans had the Decii who dedicated

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<sup>50</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, op. cit., II:7:6-15.

<sup>51</sup> A frequent lesson of Augustine. See for instance *COG*, V:18.

themselves to death, consecrating themselves to being killed to pacify the wrath of the gods and deliver the Roman army.<sup>52</sup>

For Augustine no act was inherently good. The city of God was established by the only One who could inspire goodness. All other activities were futile, the virtues of other lifestyles were empty.

In the city of God, however, Augustine allowed an immense amount of freedom. Returning to the subject of Varro and his three modes of life— the contemplative, the active and the mixture— Augustine declared that it was of absolutely no difference in the city of God whether people who adopt the faith that brings them to God adopt “one dress and manner of life or another” as long as all they do is “in conformity with the commandments of God.”<sup>53</sup> Consequently, when people who had a distinctive manner of dress and lifestyle, such as the philosophers in Augustine’s time, became a Christian, those philosophers would be obliged to relinquish their teachings but not their attire and lifestyle.

Specifically regarding Varro’s three modes of life, Augustine noted that the fact that any of them could be chosen without detriment to “eternal interests” did not eliminate the claims of “truth and duty.”<sup>54</sup> No life of contemplation is right that permits anyone to forget in the ease of that life the service to neighbour. The “charm of leisure” must never be allowed to become “indolent vacancy of mind, but the investigation or

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<sup>52</sup> *COG*, V:18.

<sup>53</sup> *COG*, XIX:19.

<sup>54</sup> *COG*, XIX:19.

discovery of truth.”<sup>55</sup> This would enable people to make solid attainments without grudging that others do the same.

Likewise, Augustine added, no life of action is right that neglects the contemplation of God. The life of action must not be the desire for honor and earthly power, but the utilization of the honorably attained positions in this life for the common welfare and good. Augustine used the example of the Church. The title of “bishop” is the title of a work, not of an honor, so anyone who “loves to govern rather than to do good is no bishop.”<sup>56</sup> This may have been a self-directed admonition, but it also serves as a reminder that Augustine perceived in the Church there were many who were not of the city of God.

Augustine’s belief in predestination meant that the city of God was in the Divine mind even before the foundation of the world. When Saul was told by Samuel that the kingdom would not continue for him and the Lord would seek “a man after his own heart”<sup>57</sup> Augustine saw the explanation of the operation of the eternal kingdom of God. The kingdom of Israel would endure forever, Augustine explained, but not through Saul who was naturally incapable of reigning forever and who sinned. So, the Lord “will seek Him a man” was interpreted to mean “David or the Mediator of the New Testament.”<sup>58</sup> However, the Lord’s search as recounted by a man meant for Augustine that the Divine seeks humanity. Augustine explained that both to God and Christ “we had already been known already even as so far as to be chosen before the foundation of the world.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *COG*, XIX:19.

<sup>56</sup> *COG*, XIX:19.

<sup>57</sup> 1Samuel 13:13-14, in *COG*, XVII:6.

<sup>58</sup> *COG*, XVII:6.

<sup>59</sup> *COG*, XVII:6.

There is a logical difficulty since if we were known in Him before the foundation of the world, the language of “seeking” might not seem necessary. God cannot “seek” for the known if He knows *who* and presumably *where* they are. A less active verb might be more appropriate in the context of Augustine’s system, but he was firm in his use of Biblical language, even when it sometimes prevented the neat categorization of God as Platonically unmoved and unmoveable.

Augustine redefines the seeking of the lost, however, to return the status of God and humanity to a more neo-Platonic footing. “He will seek him,” Augustine explained, meant that “He will have His own.” It would have been just as if God had said that whom “He has already known He will show to others to be His friend.”<sup>60</sup> Thus the friends of God were known to Him before the foundation of the world and are manifest to others. This contradicts what Augustine had said about the possibility of anyone becoming a member of the city of God by their decision to join in the course of their earthly existence. If those who are of the city of God had always been members, then why do some fall away (as in the “sons of God” who departed to mingle with the “daughters of men”). Augustine’s answer, that some were never really of the city of God, is unsatisfactory because it assumes a warped nature from the choice of a particular course of action and severely undermines his theology of repentance. One might wonder whether all who depart from the path of righteousness automatically demonstrate that they were never actually of the city of God, and what their rights of return are.

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<sup>60</sup> *COG*, XVII:6.



Augustine dealt with the matter of repeated offenses when he spoke of the heretics within the city of God who are moved by the devil to resist Christian doctrine. Augustine indicated that they obviously cannot “be kept in the city of God indifferently without any correction” otherwise the city would degenerate into the philosophers’ “city of confusion.”<sup>61</sup>

Those, therefore, in the Church of Christ who savour anything morbid and depraved, and, on being corrected that they may savour what is wholesome and right, contumaciously resist, and will not amend their pestiferous and deadly dogmas, but persist in defending them, become heretics, and, going without, are to be reckoned as enemies who serve for her discipline.<sup>62</sup>

Even in this, Augustine asserted, the true Church of Christ is benefited since God makes a good use of the wicked. Following the words of Christ, Augustine suggested that, “if these enemies are loved”<sup>63</sup> they stimulate the benevolence and beneficence of the Church. The true Church, the city of God on earth, does not suffer from these attacks, Augustine explained, since through adversity and prosperity the Church has consolation and trials so that she might not be broken by the hard times or corrupted by the days of ease. Nevertheless, the false ones who are merely *called* Christians do hinder people from joining the Church and also provide material to those who attack the life and teachings of the city of God, Augustine admitted.<sup>64</sup> Because of this, the city of God always endures persecution from outside and inside, but the grief which arises in the hearts of the true citizens is even profitable to them, Augustine maintained, for it must proceed from the concern over the well-being of their persecutors and those they hinder

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<sup>61</sup> *COG*, XVIII:51.

<sup>62</sup> *COG*, XVIII:51.

<sup>63</sup> *COG*, XVIII:51. The words of Christ to love one’s enemies can be found in Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27.

<sup>64</sup> *COG*, XVIII:51.

from coming to the truth. The greatest consolation of all for Augustine was his firm belief in predestination. The will of God was seen as “immutable” so none could ever perish who God knows and holds, who shall be conformed to the image of the Son.<sup>65</sup>

Predestination introduced a rigidity in the determination of the membership of the city of God. Augustine tried to reconcile predestination with free choice. Abel had chosen to worship correctly. So, in Augustine’s theology, God seeking humanity must be matched by humanity’s search for God. God searches for humanity in Christ and humanity searches for God by grace. When the grace of Christ is present, the city of God was, for Augustine, plainly evident.<sup>66</sup> The only higher gift than grace was the bodily presence of Christ itself on earth which had manifested that grace and broadcast it to all nations, Augustine believed, and every aspect of the incarnation pointed to a lesson that the city of God should learn from Christ.

When Christ “suffered, died and rose again”<sup>67</sup> Augustine saw the teaching in the passion of what the citizen of the city of God should be willing to suffer for the truth. In the resurrection, the city of God could learn what could be hoped for in the midst of adversity. Even when the disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and spoke simultaneously in many languages at once, Augustine saw the lesson of the unity of the Church which “would embrace all nations, and would in like manner speak in all tongues.”<sup>68</sup> For Augustine, the city of God never was bereft of teaching from the Scriptures or the life and continued work of Christ. The city of God always was in the

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<sup>65</sup> *COG*, XVIII:51. Augustine drew upon Romans 8:29.

<sup>66</sup> For instance, *COG*, XVII:7.

<sup>67</sup> *COG*, XVIII:49.

<sup>68</sup> *COG*, XVIII:49.

truth and had the true teachings constantly presented in a variety of ways. It was always endowed with a variety of powers, expressed in the capacity of its faithful to suffer for the sake of the truth they loved, or even as the “signs and wonders”<sup>69</sup> of spectacular miracles.

The purpose of all these was the building up of the city of God which was the Church, the body of Christ, Augustine explained. The Church first began in Jerusalem, then spread herself abroad. When many in Judea and Samaria had believed, “she also went into other nations by those who announced the gospel.”<sup>70</sup> Augustine used a favorite metaphor of his, light,<sup>71</sup> to describe those who carried the message of Christianity. The gospel of Christ was then preached in the whole world by the successors of the original witnesses to the resurrection. This was done amid “horrible persecutions” and “diverse torments” which God allowed so that the people of the nations might “venerate with Christian love” the blood of the martyrs, and even the rulers who had opposed the gospel by legalized oppression might become subject to the heavenly Ruler.<sup>72</sup>

Augustine wrote with profound sensitivity regarding the multiculturalism of the Church. In the city of God, there are people from all countries of varied “manners, laws, and institutions.” These differences should not be abolished by the city of God which should “preserve and adapt” them as long as the worship of the one true God is not hindered.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *COG*, XVIII:50. Also XXII:8-9.

<sup>70</sup> *COG*, XVIII:50.

<sup>71</sup> For Augustine’s affection for light, see his *Sermons* 88:15. Peter Brown has explored the theme, noting that the only piece of genuine poetry possessed of Augustine is a poem in praise of the Easter Candle (footnote 81). See Peter Brown, *op. cit.*, pp.325-326.

<sup>72</sup> *COG*, XVIII:50.

<sup>73</sup> *COG*, XIX:17.

Augustine wrote against the philosophers<sup>74</sup> who believed that either the supreme good and evil could be located in this life (following Epicurus, or the Stoics for example) or that the supreme good and evil could not be so located and therefore this life was of no consequence (such as some forms of Manicheanism). This was quite similar to the trajectory of Soloveitchik,<sup>75</sup> who wrote against the worldviews of the “cognitive” and the “religious” which often resemble those of the philosophers in Augustine’s time.

The city of God existed in contradistinction to all the schools of philosophy, Augustine contended, for it was capable of judging the matter by what God has revealed. The city of God believed that “life eternal is the supreme good, death eternal the supreme evil, and to obtain one and escape the other we must live rightly.”<sup>76</sup> Living rightly, Augustine hastened to add, meant living entirely reliant upon the grace that gives faith and help. The number and variety of philosophers who believed that the supreme good began and ended in this life, or that this life was itself the supreme good, entailed lengthy refutation of this notion by Augustine who noted that the material, physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and even familial aspects of this life can— and in fact will ultimately— fail. Only an eternal possession can endure.<sup>77</sup>

Since only an eternal possession can endure, the “faithful worshippers of the one true God” long for that day when created nature becomes good and eternal, when the spirit would be fully healed by wisdom and the body by resurrection.<sup>78</sup> In the present, their search and striving for what is better is aroused and exerted, Augustine believed. In

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<sup>74</sup> For instance, *COG*, XIX:1-4.

<sup>75</sup> For instance, *HM*, pp.1-29.

<sup>76</sup> *COG*, XIX:4.

<sup>77</sup> *COG*, XIX:1-10.

<sup>78</sup> *COG*, XIX:10.

this state of anxiety, the faithful are never at rest. They make the best of the blessings of the earth as fellow-labourers with the Divine in the partnership of discharging their duties on this world, but the deceit around them and the temptations make them pilgrims on earth.

Harmony was one of the features of the city of God, characterizing it on earth as the dim reflection of the concord in heaven. Augustine believed that harmony was always to be sought by the Church. "The peace of the celestial city is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God."<sup>79</sup> The citizens, therefore, have the Divine as their supreme enjoyment which is the corollary to their love of Him. One can see, however, that 'like is attracted to like' in Augustine's theology and the peace of the celestial city includes as an essential component each citizen's delight in the others. Love, for Augustine, could never be inwardly directed: That would be pride. Love that is genuinely targeted to God encompasses all, and delights in the company of those who share that love. Love, peace, tranquillity and order were all identified in their fulfillment with the city of God, which in heaven also has perfect liberty.

Those people who live by faith use the "advantages of time and earth as do not fascinate and divert them from God."<sup>80</sup> They use them, Augustine believed, to endure with greater ease the stresses of this life and to keep the needs of the body from weighing upon the soul. The concept of the goodness of the created order which can incite diversion from God was an important one for Augustine, as can be seen from the poem he wrote in praise of beauty:

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<sup>79</sup> *COG*, XIX:13.

<sup>80</sup> *COG*, XIX:17.

*Those things are Yours, O God. They are good because You created them.  
None of our evil is in them. The evil is ours if we love them  
At the expense of Yourself— these things that reflect Your design.*<sup>81</sup>

On some occasions when speaking about the heavenly city, Augustine reminded his readers that he referred only to that part of it presently on earth.<sup>82</sup> The living human part of the city of God was inseparably linked to celestial reality and had the privilege of participating in a cosmic drama which included those who had died and were now with God, as well as the angels themselves, all guided and upheld by God and Christ.

While on earth, the city of God obeys the laws of the earthly city. Augustine noted that this ensured that the necessary things for the maintenance of this mortal life are administered and also engendered peace between the two cities.<sup>83</sup> Here he obviously meant the relation of Church and State. Augustine noted that the conflict about gods has compelled the heavenly city to dissent from the earthly in this essential matter and has thereby precipitated the anger, hatred and persecutions by the earth. Nevertheless, Augustine declared, the city of God continues to blossom and call citizens from all nations to its society, and makes earthly peace reflect the peace of heaven. Only heaven has the true and lasting peace but the heavenly city possesses this peace by faith<sup>84</sup> and, by the grace that strengthens that faith, it can introduce that harmony into earthly life. Every good action toward God and humanity constitutes one more step toward achieving that peace. The city of God on earth has a goodness, tranquillity and peace that appears to be infectious.

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<sup>81</sup> *COG*, XVII:15.

<sup>82</sup> For instance, *COG*, XIX:17

<sup>83</sup> *COG*, XIX:17.

<sup>84</sup> *COG*, XIX:17.

In this life, however, although there might be moments when it would be appropriate to call it blessed, still the blessedness is not so much in reality as in hope, Augustine explained.<sup>85</sup> The city of God is still the only venue for true virtue, however, since only where there is true religion can there be true virtues or a true justice which alone makes a true city.<sup>86</sup> All that is virtue or blessedness cannot originate in humanity but must have a Blessed and celestial source.

The only reason that Augustine sometimes appears to disparage life on earth is that heaven was his constant comparison. The peace of the earthly city was “not to be lightly esteemed”<sup>87</sup> but in the light of the peace of heaven it appeared as “the solace of our misery.”<sup>88</sup> Even the righteousness of the holy city yet in this life represented more the “remission of sins” instead of the “perfecting of virtues.” Those who earnestly repent and endeavor to live as best as they can, praying always for forgiveness, do receive that for which they pray but still have to continue that prayer as long as they are in the pilgrim stage in earth.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout this earthly life but not consummated until heaven is the growth of the citizens of the city of God in resemblance to Christ. The citizens of the holy city are made children of God by grace by the one who was Son of God by nature, Augustine explained. Just as the sin of one man caused the Fall, the righteousness of one who is man and God brings the city to “a blessedness inconceivably exalted.”<sup>90</sup> Christ partook

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<sup>85</sup> *COG*, XIX:20.

<sup>86</sup> *COG*, XIX:20-25.

<sup>87</sup> *COG*, XIX:26.

<sup>88</sup> *COG*, XIX:27.

<sup>89</sup> *COG*, XIX:27.

<sup>90</sup> *COG*, XXI:15.

of our humanity so that humanity could partake in his divinity by his grace. This has been described as “deification”<sup>91</sup> and is the ultimate destiny of the redeemed.

Augustine also believed that the sacraments were means of grace, and if a child who had received them died, that child would go directly to heaven, “having been translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ.”<sup>92</sup> The sacraments of the Mediator, Augustine explained, dispensed grace to the child too young to understand the duties of righteousness. To those who were old enough, they should not only be baptized but justified in Christ so that they “in truth pass from the devil to Christ.”<sup>93</sup> Augustine never reconciles the difficulty in his theology that allowed a fallen angel to have automatic hold over all of humanity. God chooses only a few and the devil maintains a grip over the vast majority. This system of Augustine inevitably credits the devil with far too much power. It emerges that the hold of the devil over humanity is stronger than that of God.

The city of God consequently has to engage in active prayer for the majority of the earth. At present, “she prays for her enemies among men, because they have yet opportunity for fruitful repentance.”<sup>94</sup> She will not, however, pray for the devil and the wicked angels because the secret predestination of God has not been revealed to her on earth about any persons but the destiny of the devil and wicked angels is known. In an interesting epithet, Augustine accused those who longed for the liberation of the devil and his angels of harboring “perverse compassion.”<sup>95</sup> Augustine recommended seeking

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<sup>91</sup> Bonner, “Augustine’s Doctrine of Man,” *op. cit.*, pp. 512-514. See *COG*, XXI:16.

<sup>92</sup> *COG*, XXI:16.

<sup>93</sup> *COG*, XXI:16.

<sup>94</sup> *COG*, XXI:24.

<sup>95</sup> *COG*, XXI:24.



the “sweetness” of God which is perfected to those who hope in Him not to those who despise and blaspheme Him. In a statement with philosophical overtones, Augustine noted that when this life is over it would be futile to seek for what someone “has neglected to provide while in this life.”<sup>96</sup> In this, Augustine was in harmony with the Zohar which states that people wear in eternity the garments they have sewn in their lifetime.

The “saints,” by which Augustine meant the earthly citizens of the city of God, desire and pray for many things that never happen, such as the salvation certain individuals destined for destruction.<sup>97</sup> They are motivated by love and by the holy will of God which Augustine commended.

In this instance there is an evident discrepancy between what humanity is called to do and even is motivated to do by goodness and enjoined by Christ to do, and between what will actually occur regardless of the best of intentions and actions. There is a worrisome divergence here between what God commands and what He ordains. The righteous on earth might be in harmony with the motives of God, but the inscrutability of the Divine mind places an odd futility upon their actions for the ungodly. This system means also that God is finally portrayed as more unloving than humanity. If people can find within the depths of their earthly depravity to pray for their enemies, bless those who persecute, and to pray for the salvation of the lost, one might expect the God described as perfect in His love to be able to effect those requests. If the requests are vain in their very nature, then it makes no sense to pray them.

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<sup>96</sup> *COG*, XXI:24.

<sup>97</sup> *COG*, XXII:2.

The eschatological fulfillment of the city of God is eternal blessedness. This would be no surprise to anyone reading Augustine, since that was the force which lifted up the head of the Church when downcast by the trials of this world. Augustine argued against the Platonists who had maintained that an earthly body could not inhabit heaven.<sup>98</sup> Augustine asserted that with God all things are possible, but he corrected the views of those who thought that in the resurrection all who arose would have the same corporeal dimensions as Christ's physical body. Conformity to Christ's image meant that they would then be perfectly conformed to his image having been transformed by his grace, Augustine explained.<sup>99</sup>

Augustine believed that the conformity to the image of Christ in the resurrection of the body meant that all deformity and defect shall be removed by the Creator without destroying the "integrity of the substance." Most striking of all will be the brightness, Augustine suggested, a conspicuous radiance where "the just shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father"<sup>100</sup> This radiance was in the glory of the resurrected Christ.

The employment of the celestial city of God, or repose, Augustine admitted was beyond his bodily senses, or the understanding of his mind. It will be a peace that passes all understanding except that of the Divine.

(ii) Soloveitchik: Halakhic Man:

The positive alternative for Soloveitchik was halakhic man. The halakhic man was regarded as both a pure ideal type and as a living reality. Soloveitchik undertook a

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<sup>98</sup> *COG*, XXII:11.

<sup>99</sup> *COG*, XXII:15-16.

<sup>100</sup> *COG*, XXII:19. Augustine drew from Matthew 13:43.

description of the “ideal halakhic man” and bid his readers note that the real halakhic men would approximate the ideal to varying degrees “each in accordance with his spiritual image and stature.”<sup>101</sup> The degree of spiritual image and stature would also affect to what extent the real individuals were hybrid types.

Within the spirit of the halakhic man, there were two disparate images embodied, Soloveitchik explained. While not being a cognitive or religious man the halakhic man shared many of their traits. Soloveitchik immediately distanced halakhic man from the terms and categories that descriptive psychology and philosophy of religion employ in categorizing the religious personality. Halakhic man could not therefore escape the label of “strange” because of the unfamiliarity of students of religion to this type.<sup>102</sup>

The halakhic man is an unusual type for a dual reason. First, he carries in “the deep recesses of his personality”<sup>103</sup> the spirit of religious man. This itself is a spirit of contradictions, struggling with the anguish of the opposites of affirmation and negation, approbation and denigration wherein the soul pines for higher vistas and simultaneously feels unworthy of them. Secondly, the halakhic personality also incorporates that of cognitive man, a prosaic being grounded in reality whose focus and strivings are diametrically opposed to that of the religious man.

Soloveitchik argued that in halakhic man, these two opposing outlooks which struggle in the single halakhic being are not destructive or disjunctive. That would have meant that the halakhic man, far from being the apex of being was an “unstable

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<sup>101</sup> *HM*, p.139.

<sup>102</sup> *HM*, p.3, 17.

<sup>103</sup> *HM*, p.3.

hybrid.”<sup>104</sup> The halakhic personality, however, is forged in the fires of those antinomies and contradictions to be “a radiant, holy personality.”<sup>105</sup> The cognitive and the religious approaches cannot begin to search for the radiance and holiness attained by the halakhic man. The halakhic soul has been “purified in the furnace of struggle and opposition” and has also been “redeemed in the fires of the torments of spiritual disharmony.”<sup>106</sup> The religious man cannot come near to the extent of the purification and redemption of halakhic man, Soloveitchik explained. (It might be added that, given Soloveitchik’s repeated use of ‘fire and furnace’ imagery, few could safely come near to halakhic man!)

From Avot 5:23, Soloveitchik noted that “In accordance with the suffering is the reward,” and he extended the application of that teaching to the inmost tension in the halakhic personality and declared that “in accordance with the split the union!”<sup>107</sup> The fusion of the cognitive and the religious approaches is not on the surface but reaches down to the depths of being of the halakhic man. Soloveitchik disliked personalities and dispositions that existed only on the “surface”<sup>108</sup> so the changes occurring in the ideal type would hardly be anywhere close to the surface. The changes, like the personality itself, would be of immense depth.

The depth of the personality was equated in Soloveitchik’s thinking with the depth of resources available to that individual. If the halakhic man had only mildly accepted the inclinations of the cognitive and religious approaches to life, then the

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<sup>104</sup> *HM*, p.4.

<sup>105</sup> *HM*, p.4.

<sup>106</sup> *HM*, p.4.

<sup>107</sup> *HM*, p.4.

<sup>108</sup> Consider, for instance, “The Lonely Man of Faith,” op. cit., where Adam I is depicted with a “surface personality.”

resources and positive abilities of these personalities would be impossible. However, the struggles and tensions within the halakhic personality would be dramatically reduced. Only when one is prepared to undergo the suffering entailed in the full adoption of these contrasting worldviews can the halakhic personality exist, since the full adoption and struggle empowers the halakhic man in the cognitive and religious dimensions.

The deep split of the soul prior to its unification can "raise a man to the rank of perfection" out of the grasp of the "simple, whole personality."<sup>109</sup> The simple personality has never suffered because its compositional simplicity engineers it for only one purpose. The complex drive of halakhic man, however, necessarily flows from a personality that has endured severe spiritual discord. This personality is united while differing from the constituent elements and therefore suffers much from its existential *gestalt*.

It is interesting to note that a philosopher who did a biographical sketch of Augustine observed that there was the struggle and union Soloveitchik described of halakhic man in Augustine himself who "typifies the anxiety endured by one who is torn by the appeal of God's revelation and fidelity to his own intellect."<sup>110</sup> Soloveitchik undoubtedly derived the inspiration for the halakhic man from his own illustrious family of halakhic masters but the similarity to the personality of this Christian sage merits attention.

The halakhic approach to reality diverges sharply from that of the cognitive or religious approaches. Not motivated by baseless curiosity as the cognitive man or by the "anxiety of nonbeing" as one might assume is characteristic of the religious man, the

halakhic man instead “orients himself to reality through a priori images of the world.”<sup>111</sup>

Unlike the arrogance of the philosophers whose a priori images of the world are constructed by themselves and exist in the formulae they devise and produce on paper, the halakhic man carries his a priori image in the deep reservoirs of his soul. The a priori image he so carries as his compass for orientation is the Sinai-given Torah.<sup>112</sup>

Fixed statutes and principles are the a priori material. They comprise the “corpus of precepts and laws” whose purpose when given to halakhic man is to lead him “along the path leading to existence.”<sup>113</sup> When the halakhic man confronts the world, then, he does not come with the investigative outlook of the cognitive man or the stupefied wonder of the religious man. In contrast, he comes with his a priori relation to reality already established. The halakhic “approach begins with an ideal creation and concludes with a real one.”<sup>114</sup>

Although Soloveitchik had declared boldly that the halakhic worldview at the outset is “devoid of any element of transcendence”<sup>115</sup> the reader can see that transcendence comes with the vocation. The indispensable element in the constitution of halakhic man is the halakhah. The halakhah, Soloveitchik affirmed, “was received from God”<sup>116</sup> and its essence consists in the twofold task of creating an ideal world and in cognizing the relationship between that ideal and the one in which we live. Since the halakhah was designed by God and was bestowed on humanity, one should immediately

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<sup>111</sup> *HM*, p. 17.

<sup>112</sup> *HM*, p. 19.

<sup>113</sup> *HM*, p. 19.

<sup>114</sup> *HM*, p. 19.

<sup>115</sup> *HM*, p. 17.

<sup>116</sup> *HM*, p. 19.

note that transcendence was introduced into the personality and outlook of halakhic man. The appellation of “halakhic man” cannot apply merely to a personality type but must apply to the personality possessing the halakhah. This is why the halakhic man is not called the cognitive-religious man. He is not just the fusion of the best of their qualities, but is that fusion combined with the Divine infusion of the halakhah into all of his existence. Soloveitchik never states this explicitly, but it is the background of his portrait of halakhic man.

All the visible manifestations of reality and all the underlying structures on which the world is based are subject to the intense scrutiny of halakhic man. This scrutiny is not for the purpose of inductive reasoning, aimless curiosity or amazement, but is undertaken because there “is no phenomenon, entity or object in this concrete world which the a priori Halakhah does not approach with its ideal standard.”<sup>117</sup> The ideal Halakhah depicts how the world should be structured so the halakhic man has an ideal world set before him, and the governance of life is potentially his.

Soloveitchik offered the example of the halakhic man encountering a spring bubbling quietly. He does not cogitate on the spring “as it is in itself.”<sup>118</sup> One might notice that this separates the halakhic man from the Kantian school of thought who believed that it was an inescapable part of the endeavor for knowledge to posit *Das Ding an sich*.<sup>119</sup> The fact that the halakhic man is not inclined to cognize the thing in itself does not mean that he is devoid of an a priori concept of the spring. He does not have to

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<sup>117</sup> *HM*, p.20.

<sup>118</sup> *HM*, p.20.

<sup>119</sup> For instance, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. J.M.D. Meiklejohn, London, Everyman, 1978, or “Kant,” in Hakim, op. cit., pp.440-447.

cognize the spring in itself because the Halakhah furnishes his mind with the character of the spring as an ideal construct. The requirements for possible functions of the spring come from the statutes of Halakhah and the halakhic man's encounter with the spring can be used to formulate normative law. The concern of halakhic man is to "coordinate the a priori concept with the a posteriori phenomenon."<sup>120</sup>

Other sights the halakhic man may witness and his reaction to them which illustrates something else of his character is the rising or setting of the sun. The arrival of sunset or sunrise "imposes upon him anew obligations and commandments."<sup>121</sup> Dawn and sunrise bring the obligations of the recitation of the morning *Shema*, *tzitzit*, *tefillin* and "make the time fit" for certain halakhic practices to be undertaken such as Temple service, acceptance of testimony and conversion. Sunset brings the nightly obligations of evening *Shema*, and the counting of the *omer*. Soloveitchik observed that the sunset on Sabbath and holiday evenings sanctifies the day, so "the profane and the holy are dependent upon a natural cosmic phenomenon."<sup>122</sup> Holiness enters human life if humanity is attentive. The halakhic man is finely attuned to the presence of the holy because he has in his heart of hearts the guide of Halakhah. The seasons and festivals are regulated by the passing of time, and the progressive celebration of time allows halakhic man to regularly 'build a cathedral in time' as Heschel said.

All of earthly life is subordinated to the Halakhah. Soloveitchik listed the mountains which are related to the measurements determining a private domain; the trees, plants and animals which are classifiable according to their species and genera and

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<sup>120</sup> *HM*, p.20.

<sup>121</sup> *HM*, p.20.

<sup>122</sup> *HM*, p.20-21.



relate to those laws of classification; colors are related to the laws regarding vaginal blood and skin affections. The halakhic approach even comes to “existential space with an a priori yardstick.”<sup>123</sup> Every imaginable part of gritty, daily existence is subject to the Halakhah, Soloveitchik emphasized.

The Halakhah gives a fixed, clear perspective on each entity in life. The abnormal and the normal of biological and social life are included. The state and the relations of individuals within a communal context, the determination of the character of individuals, and groups are there contained. Soloveitchik described the Halakhah itself in the words of Job; “the measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.”<sup>124</sup>

The Halakhah has a detailed relationship to all of reality. The halakhic man orients himself to the entire cosmos and tries to understand it with the explanatory tool of the Halakhah “which he hears in his halakhic consciousness.”<sup>125</sup> He has, one might say, internalized the Halakhah and therefore through its ideal world, he looks at reality. Soloveitchik believed that the viewpoint and task of halakhic man in this respect was identical with the task of the mathematician. Both observe the empirical from the higher vantage point of the ideal, and both are motivated by the question of the correspondence of the ideal with the real.<sup>126</sup>

Here the influence of Herman Cohen’s neo-Kantianism, in which Soloveitchik had been immersed in his doctoral thesis, is evident. Cohen identified science with

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<sup>123</sup> *HM*, p.21-22.

<sup>124</sup> Job 11:9, in *HM*, p.23.

<sup>125</sup> *HM*, p.23.

<sup>126</sup> *HM*, p.23.

mathematics and believed that it was one of the three areas in which the human mind operated, the other two being ethics and esthetics. This had been a Kantian distinction but Cohen imbued it with his own pigment when he articulated his method of correlation in which the certainty of the ethical and the mathematical worlds are outlined, and both are seen as outlining what will happen. Mathematics describes the rational outcome of known factors, and the rationality which is the property of human consciousness leads to an chosen inevitability in ethical striving. The boundaries of the ethical possibilities open to humanity increase with the growth of knowledge. Knowledge itself, for Cohen, increases like differential calculus in which continued finite operations can be extended to infinity so that we can come to know a technically limitless number.<sup>127</sup>

This idealistic perspective could explain why Soloveitchik believed that after halakhic man's scrutiny of his surroundings, the knowledge that the real world does not "correspond"<sup>128</sup> with the halakhic concepts does not produce distress. Halakhic man is engaged in a paradoxical task in life. He is fiercely committed to a corpus of practical laws and statutes but his "deepest desire is not the realization of the Halakhah but rather the ideal construction which was given to him from Sinai."<sup>129</sup> Soloveitchik cited Sanhedrin 71a to prove his point that the purpose for which the law was written was its exposition. The ideal construction "exists forever" Soloveitchik noted, so the pillar of halakhic thought is "not the practical ruling but the determination of the theoretical Halakhah."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Eva Jospe, *Reason and Hope: Shorter Writings of Hermann Cohen*, Norton, 1971.

<sup>128</sup> *HM*, p.23.

<sup>129</sup> *HM*, p.23.

<sup>130</sup> *HM*, p.23-24.

To say the least, Soloveitchik's contention here at first seems bizarre. The very practicality of the Halakhah had been lauded and was now dismissed as not only inferior, but virtually worthless. Laws about the idolatrous city, leprous house and rebellious son exist to be proclaimed and debated, not implemented. The halakhic man is not troubled that the ideal may never be realized.<sup>131</sup> This was because of the mysticism pervading Soloveitchik's thought and rendering the practical subservient to the realm of knowledge.

Many of the great halakhic men, Soloveitchik explained, always avoided serving in rabbinical positions, preferring to be in the group of those reluctant to make practical decisions. Soloveitchik had a high view of necessity, since following the Halakhah itself is an obligation. If the force of necessity, then, compelled the great halakhic men to make decisions, it never interfered with "the center of their concerns."<sup>132</sup> They preferred to lecture and write books and they studied laws that had no relation to existing reality. All this was undertaken for the sake of study and the pursuit of the ideal Halakhah.

Returning to the example of mathematics Soloveitchik noted that the mathematician is unconcerned that the "ideal, irrational number" does not correspond to the real. So, too, the halakhist lives in "an ideal realm" and enjoys the "radiance" therein.<sup>133</sup>

The Halakhah itself is an ideal world into which those who earnestly desire can enter. As the revelation of the will of God, the purpose of the Halakhah would be trivialized were it restricted to the realm of the practical. To support his view, Soloveitchik invoked R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady who had stated:

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<sup>131</sup> *HM*, p.23-24.

<sup>132</sup> *HM*, p.24.

<sup>133</sup> *HM*, p.25.

When a person understands and grasps any halakhah in the Mishnah or Gemara fully and clearly... And now this halakhah is the wisdom and will of the Holy One, blessed be He, for it is His will that in case Reuben pleads thus, for example, and Simeon thus, the decision should be thus; and even if such a case involving these particular pleas never came before a court and will never come, nevertheless, since it has been the will and the wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He... therefore, when a person knows and grasps with his intellect this decision... he thereby comprehends, grasps, and encompasses with his intellect the will and wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He, whom no thought can grasp....<sup>134</sup>

The Day of Atonement and the Passover, for instance, are ideal concepts for Soloveitchik who saw in them the “resplendent image” of the times when the Temple stood and there were high priests and sacrifices. Every celebration was only a “pale image” of that ideal given on Sinai.<sup>135</sup> Soloveitchik believed that the present time was devoid of the holiness and glory which prevailed in an earlier time and therefore halakhic man has a “yearning” to “actualize the ideal idea.”<sup>136</sup> In support of this, Soloveitchik quoted Maimonides *The Laws of Hametz and Matzah* 8,1 which appear to be directed at those who would have been living in ancient Jerusalem rather than in the modern diaspora, Soloveitchik indicated.<sup>137</sup>

This might at the onset appear to be a contradiction of Soloveitchik’s earlier contention that the halakhic man does not grieve over the disparity perceived between the ideal and the real. However, this air of contradiction is immediately clarified when one appreciates Soloveitchik’s distinction and fusion of the pursuit of the ideal and the actualization of the real. This could be seen in Maimonides who wrote about the Passover celebrations, for instance, rapturously gilding his descriptions with the life of

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<sup>134</sup> *Likkutei amarim* of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, I, chapter 5, pp.9a-b, cited in *HM*, p.25-26.

<sup>135</sup> *HM*, p.26.

<sup>136</sup> *HM*, pp.26, 148

<sup>137</sup> *HM*, pp.26-28.

ancient Jerusalem. Yet Maimonides in that flight of fancy occasionally “bestirs himself from his ideal dream and romantic vision” and realizes that he exists in “an exile filled with nightmares and terrors, with physical oppression and spiritual degeneration.”<sup>138</sup> The force of the present reality disturbed the reverie of the halakhic man and the obligations of necessity bring him to face the existing present.

For Soloveitchik, however, the ideal was the real. If there was a discrepancy between existence and the Halakhah, it derived from flawed existence which the Halakhah could potentially repair by its implementation. Consequently, when there was a divergence between the idealized past and the painful present, the idealized past pointed to a glorious future. As Soloveitchik explained, “the present time is only a historical anomaly in the ongoing process of the actualization of the ideal Halakhah in the real world.” So even though the present is very important because it is the dimension in which we live and can accomplish this actualization, the present was still regarded by Soloveitchik as a “temporary aberration that has seized hold of our historical existence.” Nor should we worry, since the Halakhah is unharmed by its neglect and “remains in full force.” In Soloveitchik’s theology here the Halakhah was supreme over the world, enduring as the absolute whether or not it was universally recognized as such. In this instance, therefore, the work of God is unharmed by human scorn or neglect. The responsibility of the faithful in this context was limited to the fact that “we hope for and eagerly await the day of Israel’s redemption when the ideal world will triumph over the profane reality.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *HM*, p.28.

<sup>139</sup> *HM*, p.28.

There is a contradiction in Soloveitchik's thought, however, which stemmed from the refined sensibilities of the halakhic man. Although the halakhic man's chief desire is to subject all reality to the "yoke of the Halakhah" he is not disappointed in the impossibility of this goal, "nor does he reflect at all concerning the clash of the real and the ideal"<sup>140</sup> in the opposition between the ideal Halakhah and the actual deed, indicating a conflict between law and life. This lack of reflection would be a weakness in halakhic man if it were possible at all. The very recognition of the clash between the ideal and the real is a reflection on the matter, and was the depiction offered by Soloveitchik. This clash of the ideal Halakhah with imperfect reality leads to the yearning for the ideal which is the driving force of the halakhic outlook and, as Soloveitchik himself notes, the essence of Judaism.<sup>141</sup> It is only reasonable then, that reflection on the clash would be essential to formulating strategies to overcome it. The ideal Halakhah cannot triumph if the fact that it is in contradiction with present existence is not recognized and evaluated. The yoke of the Halakhah cannot be placed if the halakhic man is uncertain about where to place it due to his lack of reflection.

The ultimate goals of halakhic man are for "national redemption, for the coming of the Messiah, and for the building of the eternal Temple."<sup>142</sup> These are grounded upon the longings for the full realization of the ideal world in the midst of existential reality, "for that era when the Halakhah will shine in all its majesty and beauty"<sup>143</sup> for the benefit of all life.

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<sup>140</sup> *HM*, p.29.

<sup>141</sup> *HM*, p.148.

<sup>142</sup> *HM*, pp.28-29.

<sup>143</sup> *HM*, p.29.

Since the Halakhah was created for earthly realization, the present life is very important to halakhic man. The ideal world which is his “deepest desire, his darling child”<sup>144</sup> can pass from potentiality to actuality only in this sphere. A guiding principle of Soloveitchik’s theology and the “watchword of the halakhist” is Avot 4:17 which stated “Better is one hour of Torah and *mitzvo*t in this world than the whole life of the world to come.”<sup>145</sup>

The halakhic man is therefore infused with a love of life. It is in this world that eternal life is acquired. The Halakhah to which he is resolutely committed caters to this life, so halakhic man does likewise. In the Halakhah, humanity has received the *tzimtzum* of the Shekinah, the Divine Presence, which the halakhic man tries to restore to earth. While the religious man “starts out in this world and ends up in supernal realms” the halakhic man “starts out in supernal realms and ends up in this world.”<sup>146</sup> The Halakhah is both the origin and the destiny of the halakhic man, and having received transcendence, the occupation to which he is devoted is making that transcendence immanent, to bring it down into “this valley of the shadow of death” and transform it into the land of the living. The halakhic method is the purification of this world, not the flight from it.

Soloveitchik was convinced that the earthly struggle of halakhic man makes him “fight against life’s evil” as he “struggles relentlessly with the wicked kingdom and with all the hosts of iniquity in the cosmos.” Halakhic man is characterized by a tenacity in

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<sup>144</sup> *HM*, p.30.

<sup>145</sup> *HM*, p.30.

<sup>146</sup> *HM*, p.40.

his personality, a “powerful stiff-neckedness and stubbornness.”<sup>147</sup> He is also immediately recognized by his attention to the things of this world and he avoids the hypocrisy of the religious man by caring for the destitute and oppressed. Nothing, Soloveitchik asserted, is as “physically and spiritually destructive as diverting one’s attention from this world.”<sup>148</sup> Halakhic apprehends the transcendence that cognitive man cannot, and with which religious man desires only to merge. This transcendence transforms him and through him, transforms the world.

The viewpoint of halakhic man is never self-focused, Soloveitchik believed, but was always “exoteric.”<sup>149</sup> As the Torah was given to the Jewish people as a whole, so the face of the halakhic man is always turned toward his people in study or practice. All of Judaism is obliged to live according to the Torah. The exoteric focus of the halakhic man leads to a disapproval of any system that counters the democracy the Halakhah guarantees. Anyone can approach God directly and any reference of belief in special intercession was to be shunned. For example, Soloveitchik stated, the great halakhic men viewed certain prayers as deviations from “legitimate halakhic prayer” because they pleaded for some other entity’s intercession with God. Prayers such as *Ezkerah Elohim* in the Ne’ilah service on the Day of Atonement, for instance, include “Divine attribute of mercy, intercede for us! Present our supplication before the Lord.” This prayer and the piyyut “Angels of Mercy” are skipped by halakhic man. Many halakhic scholars also disapproved of the “cult of the *tzaddik* in the Hasidic world.”<sup>150</sup> The halakhic men, in

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<sup>147</sup> *HM*, p.41.

<sup>148</sup> *HM*, p.41

<sup>149</sup> *HM*, p.42.

<sup>150</sup> *HM*, p.44.



their earnest zeal for the Halakhah had no tolerance for prayers, piyyut or practices that appeared to contradict the fundamental halakhic principle of egalitarianism.

Holiness, in the halakhic view, was the “descent” of God.<sup>151</sup> God came down on Sinai and gave humanity the prescription for holiness. God also set the precedent that only God can descend to us, and we cannot ascend to Him. God is holy and the individual has the capacity to be holy “through actualizing the Halakhah in the empirical world.”<sup>152</sup> Holiness is not an impossible quality which humanity is condemned to desire from afar but is identified by Soloveitchik with the life ordered and arranged in accordance with the Halakhah. Humanity is given the capacity to create holiness. We can sanctify space and make a sanctuary for the Creator, exulted Soloveitchik.<sup>153</sup>

In the concept of the appropriation of the Halakhah into the individual consciousness, Soloveitchik brilliantly escaped the perils of describing the religious life as either entirely objective or subjective. The religion of the halakhic man was not completely objective since the transcendent reality of the Halakhah was incorporated into his very consciousness and completed the transformation of his personality which was also prepared by the fusion of the cognitive and religious mindsets. The halakhic man wants to worship God and “has never accepted the ruling of Maimonides opposing the recital of piyyutim.”<sup>154</sup> In his songs and poems the halakhic man witnesses the Divine Presence winking from behind the rays of the setting sun and bearing in its smile forgiveness and pardon, and he helps weave a “royal crown” of praise for the Ancient

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<sup>151</sup> *HM*, p.46.

<sup>152</sup> *HM*, p.46.

<sup>153</sup> *HM*, p.47.

<sup>154</sup> *HM*, p.58.

One. The Halakhah completes his desires as it “translates subjectivity into objectivity, the amorphous flow of religious experience into the fixed pattern of lawfulness.”<sup>155</sup>

In this area, Soloveitchik expressly adopted the views of Plato and Aristotle against those of Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard. Plato and Aristotle had asserted that existence meant the established order. So too, Soloveitchik believed, the Halakhah declares that “any religiosity” that failed to lead to “determinate actions” and “chiseled and delimited laws and statutes will prove sterile.”<sup>156</sup>

The objectivity of the Halakhah would have been sufficient to discard the views of Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard. Soloveitchik had often poured contempt on Schleiermacher’s distinctive identification of religion as a “feeling of absolute dependence.” One might wonder, however, whether Schleiermacher’s definition of faith as “God-consciousness” would not have been amenable to Soloveitchik’s system. Soloveitchik is also vague about what “Experience” it is that has shown the destructiveness of the consequences of subjective religion. It is unusual that the Kierkegaardian ideology could have been identified with destructive consequences when so much of Kierkegaard’s thought, although predicated on experience, spoke of the need for the highest foundation for life and action, and depicted an advancement toward the highest stage in terms used by Soloveitchik.

The commandments were the focus of Soloveitchik’s thought and therefore the modern, liberal Christian philosophies of Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard were of little use to his aim which was to highlight that the Halakhah was so vital that even the

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<sup>155</sup> *HM*, p. 59.

<sup>156</sup> *HM*, p. 59.

occasional mechanical performance of a commandment, one lacking in intention was necessary and was good. If only the desire to discharge one's obligation existed, the performance of the commandment was valid, Soloveitchik argued.<sup>157</sup> The Halakhah was an essential guard against religion veering into the unwarranted realms of the esoteric. All commandments were straightforward and even if the intention has to be present, the intention required is simply desiring to do one's duty. The intention and the deed are objective and the consciousness of the Halakhah is subjective, so there is a concord in the activities of the halakhic man.

The halakhic man performs all commandments with aplomb. Soloveitchik's favorite was that the reaction of the halakhic man to the sounding of the *shofar* on Rosh Ha-Shanah is identical to his reaction of taking the *lulav* at Sukkot.<sup>158</sup> On one occasion, a Habad Hasid knowledgeable in the teachings of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady began to weep after sounding the *shofar* in the synagogue. Soloveitchik's father rebuked him for weeping and reminded him that both the taking of the *lulav* and the sounding of the *shofar* were commandments of God. The mystics regard sounding the *shofar* as moaning over the infinite distance that separates us from the *Ein-Sof* while the taking of the *lulav* affirms the beauty of the world which reflects the glory of God who encompasses all worlds.

Halakhic man, however, is completely immersed in the cosmos whether on Rosh Ha-Shanah or Sukkot and does not destroy the objectivity of the commandments by infusing them with his own subjectivity. One is reminded of Augustine's view of the

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<sup>157</sup> *HM*, pp.59-60. Soloveitchik observed that Maimonides was unclear on this point.

<sup>158</sup> For example, *HM*, pp.60-62.

emotions subject to reason while the “sons of God” discharged their duty to produce children. It appears that Soloveitchik had as low a view of human emotion. The halakhic man is always unfazed by the world around him and unmoved by the performance of the commandments. In Soloveitchik’s system, one might think that it is unfair to assume that the emotional reaction to a season necessarily infuses more subjectivity into the performance of a connected commandment than does the consciousness of the halakhic man himself who performs the commandments out of an outlook saturated in the Halakhah. The mind cannot be so separate from the emotions that the reasoning given by Soloveitchik’s father to the mystic would not represent subjectivity while the emotion would. Otherwise, this would mean that the reflection upon a commandment is better than the performance itself, since the performance necessarily induces some sort of emotion even if that emotion is that satisfaction of duty completed.

Halakhic man “cognizes the world in order to subordinate it to religious performances.”<sup>159</sup> Cognition is for the purpose of doing, Soloveitchik contended, and cited Kiddushin 40b “Great is study, for study leads to action.”<sup>160</sup> Even this is more ideal than real, Soloveitchik explained, because the action of halakhic man means mostly determining the Halakhah, the ideal norm, rather than implementing that norm in the real world. This means that halakhic man is more like the religious man. Like the religious view, the halakhic perspective “hears the norm forthcoming from every aspect of creation.” Like the religious man, the halakhic man exclaims “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament reciteth His handiwork.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *HM*, p.63.

<sup>160</sup> *HM*, p.63.

<sup>161</sup> *HM*, p.64. Psalm 19:2.

All of existence is a loud call to halakhic man to order his life according to the will of the Almighty. Traces of the norm are “hidden within reality” and the halakhic man seeks them. He has no temptations, but the commandments of the Halakhah are what his soul “passionately desires” and therefore constitute the existential law of his very being.<sup>162</sup> The real world has no hold on him because of the strength of the ideal. The real world does not compel anything new. Spiritual freedom and intellectual independence are his and it seems to him that the ideal Halakhah is his own creation. Soloveitchik quoted Avot 6:2, “The only free man is he who occupies himself with Torah.”<sup>163</sup>

Soloveitchik saw the religious man “entangled in the thicket of two contradictory verses.” One verse proclaims the creation of the universe and asks, “What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou thinkest of him?” The other verse asserts that, “Yet Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.”<sup>164</sup> There is need for a third harmonizing verse, Soloveitchik maintained, and while the religious man has yet to find it, the halakhic man has — the Halakhah. The deep spiritual split of the lowliness and loftiness of humanity is mended by the Halakhah.

On the day of Atonement, the halakhic man can stand and reason the fact that he has been called to be a partner in the creation of worlds by the actualization of the ideal Halakhah, he “has been elected by God at the very inception”<sup>165</sup> and is worthy to stand

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<sup>162</sup> *HM*, p.65.

<sup>163</sup> *HM*, p.66.

<sup>164</sup> *HM*, p.68. Psalm 8:4-7 was cited.

<sup>165</sup> *HM*, p.71.

before him. The Halakhah resolves the tension between the verses of Psalm 8, the verses that mean that humanity stands before God confronted with “sin and iniquity” and yet called to repent. The longing for God justifies the place of humanity in this world and the study of Torah means that halakhic man can see himself “reaching out to my lover and beloved.”<sup>166</sup> Repentance itself is an inherently creative act and can itself harmonize the two verses.

Halakhic man is endowed with great power and is a ruler in the kingdom of spirit and intellect. Soloveitchik recounted the Talmudic episodes in Bava Metzvia, where the Holy One and the heavenly academy were debating a case regarding a leper. The Holy One ruled that he was clean while the academy ruled that he was unclean. R. bar Nahmani was the arbiter— mortal man decides between the Holy One and the heavenly academy. When the heavenly voice declared in the dispute over the purity of the oven of Aknai, “Why do you disagree with R. Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the Halakhah is in accordance with his ruling?” R. Joshua arose and said, quoting Deuteronomy 30:12, “ ‘It is not in heaven’ for the Torah has already been given from Mount Sinai and we pay no attention to a heavenly voice.” Then the Holy One smiled and commented, “My children have defeated Me, My children have defeated Me.”<sup>167</sup>

These are the possibilities open to halakhic man. Even the prophet cannot contradict the sages. Yet no personality is more exalted than the prophet, Soloveitchik maintained.<sup>168</sup> God Himself, as Soloveitchik saw it, has “handed over His imprimatur”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> *HM*, p.70.

<sup>167</sup> *HM*, p.80.

<sup>168</sup> For instance, *HM*, p.90, 128.

<sup>169</sup> *HM*, p.80.

so it is even as if the Holy One has to abide by human decisions in matters of the Torah. From the esteem in which the halakhic man is held, Soloveitchik concluded that no other discipline has “woven crowns” for its heroes as has the realm of Torah. “The glorification of man here reaches the peak of splendor.” The halakhic man is never a passive recipient but is a “partner with the Almighty” in creation.<sup>170</sup>

The halakhic man has an intellectual love of God. The God for whom he fervently longs is the living God and the approach to God is “made possible by the Halakhah.”<sup>171</sup> This appears to be a development of what Soloveitchik had maintained about the approach to God being without the need for extra intercession. However, the will of God is revealed in the Halakhah which is most probably why the halakhic men to whom this was their prime joy should object to the piyyut to angels of mercy. The Halakhah revealed all that is necessary and has bestowed on humanity such powers that it would be impertinent to ask for more. No more powers are desired by the halakhic man and no further abilities are probably available to humanity than those to which the halakhic man has access.

The presence of God attends the study of Halakhah. Soloveitchik quoted approvingly the declaration of R. Hayyim Volozhim that when a person studies the Halakhah, the study itself is for the unification of the Holy One, and when a person exerts himself to understand a halakhic matter clearly, “then it is certain that the *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, rests upon him at the very moment he is studying.”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> *HM*, p.81.

<sup>171</sup> *HM*, p.85.

<sup>172</sup> *HM*, p.89.

This is reminiscent of what was said of the great scholar Franz Rosenzweig by a colleague, Nahum Glatzer, who admired that Rosenzweig needed no theological theory “when life itself, lived under the law, testified to the presence of the Divine.”<sup>173</sup> When the Shekhinah abides on the one who studies, then she does not wish to be cast away from the earth but advocates the study of the Halakhah for her own return to earth. Those who study have in their power the condition and location of the Shekhinah. This is a mighty responsibility.

The path charted by the Halakhah is clear. Humanity starts with repentance consisting of regret over the past and resolve for the future, and the creative powers latent in repentance are exercised in “searching for individual providence” which will single out the individual himself as an independent personality, and the cycle is consummated in the level of prophecy.<sup>174</sup> One might notice that humanity in Soloveitchik’s thought begins with repentance and does not climax there as Peli thought.<sup>175</sup> The activities of creation are in the capabilities dormant in repentance which is the beginning of the calling of the halakhic man. For the halakhic man to become a “man of God”<sup>176</sup> there is still a road to travel as he tries to fulfill the command residing in the gift of providence.

The beginning of each person is as pure potentiality. Passivity must be transformed into “spontaneity, actuality, action, renewal, aspiration and daring.”<sup>177</sup> This is possible through the use of the active intellect which can move a person to become an actor who also causes others to act. This responsibility is not solely the province of the

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<sup>173</sup> As recorded in Kolitz, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>174</sup> *HM*, p. 131.

<sup>175</sup> Peli, *Soloveitchik on Repentance*, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-26.

<sup>176</sup> For instance, *HM*, p. 128.

<sup>177</sup> *HM*, p. 131.



entire Jewish community, but also the individual.<sup>178</sup> The theology of creativity described by Soloveitchik is the grandest part of his depiction of halakhic man.

The great paradox in the life of halakhic man is in his attitude to death. On the one hand, Soloveitchik described the halakhic man who has a “complete and resplendent” view of time. He is grounded in the early history of his people and anticipates the eschatological fulfillment of the hopes and ambitions in which he has participated. The very consciousness of halakhic man is not just his own but encompasses the “entire historical existence of the Jewish people.” Soloveitchik elegantly declared that the “beginning and end” of his consciousness is “everlasting life.”<sup>179</sup> Throughout the *masorah*, the process of transmission, the halakhic man lives in the midst of the likes of Maimonides and R. Akiva and is able to share their joys and sorrows. “Eternity and immortality reign here in unbounded fashion,” Soloveitchik explained, because there can be no death among the company of the sages.

On the other hand, halakhic man, who is portrayed as afraid of nothing, dreads death.<sup>180</sup> Death was not the gateway into a welcoming world, although the halakhic man believes that there is a pure and exalted life after death. Death was instead the end of the opportunity to carry out the Divine commandments on earth. The Halakhah was so valuable that to be deprived of its possession was sorrowful, even if that deprivation was upon the entry into a blessed life. In that blessed life there was no opportunity to fulfill the Halakhah and bring the ideal Halakhah to actualization on earth.

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<sup>178</sup> *HM*, pp.122, 131.

<sup>179</sup> *HM*, p.122.

<sup>180</sup> *HM*, pp.35, 73-75 for halakhic man's fear of death, while on p.89, he fears nothing.

Even contact with death brings defilement, Soloveitchik noted.<sup>181</sup> The High Priest and Nazarite cannot defile themselves even for their relatives but only for those who have no relatives to take care of their burial. The Halakhah has no positive view of death and burial whatsoever. Death was the most intense defilement so those whose holiness was highest had to stay furthest from death. The receiving of the reward in the life to come is not a religious act, so the halakhic man prefers this world where he can create, act and accomplish while in the world to come he is powerless. The completely good and eternal does not need our existence and help.

Soloveitchik believed that death and holiness constitute two contradictory verses and the reconciling third “has yet to make its appearance.”<sup>182</sup> His own distinguished ancestors never visited cemeteries because it would have distracted them from their study of Torah. It is in the context of these teachings and habits that the halakhic man’s one fear, that of death,<sup>183</sup> is to be understood. Suddenly upon the halakhic man the fear of death produces “the oppressive weight of a soul-shattering melancholy.”<sup>184</sup>

When the fear of death gripped the halakhic men, Soloveitchik explained, they would plunge themselves into the study of their “sole weapon wherewith to fight this terrible dread,” the Halakhah. When this was done, death was objectified and the “subject rules over the object, the person over the thing.”<sup>185</sup> Study can subjugate anything to the student except God, to whom the student subjects himself more and more

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<sup>181</sup> *HM*, pp.30ff.

<sup>182</sup> *HM*, p.36.

<sup>183</sup> *HM*, p.36.

<sup>184</sup> *HM*, p.36.

<sup>185</sup> *HM*, p.73.

as his studies increase.<sup>186</sup> This claim of Soloveitchik's is untrue, because the external study of an experience can never allow the one who studies to master that experience. Existential experience is not just different in degree from the subject of study, it is different in kind. Of all experiences, the one from which we do not return is the one from which little can be learned from study.

In the "ongoing battle with the evil impulse"<sup>187</sup> (which one wonders if the halakhic men ever actually endure since they are portrayed with such integrity of character that they do not seem to waver) the battle can be won by the invocation, in ascending order, of the good impulse, the study of Torah, or reminding oneself of the day of death. The inevitability of death makes life even more precious to the halakhic man and spurs him onward to be continually working with God and transforming himself into a "man of God," freely creating new worlds from the ideal as he "dreams about the complete realization of the Halakhah in the very core of the world"<sup>188</sup> and the kingdom of God "contracting" itself and appearing as the Shekhinah returns.

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<sup>186</sup> *HM*, pp.73-74, 154.

<sup>187</sup> *HM*, p.75.

<sup>188</sup> *HM*, p.137.

## CONCLUSION: The Curious Closeness

Augustine and Soloveitchik exhibited some of the differences expected of thinkers who came from different theological and philosophical traditions. Nevertheless, their common articulation of what they perceived as the truth has several common intersections. By the principle of “dynamic equivalence,” even some of their contrasting concepts can be viewed as functionally similar. Dynamic equivalence as a theological principle refers to the fact that, although the terminology and framework may be different, the theological thrust may be identical. This principle has long been in use in Biblical translation, and it may be time that theology kept apace of Scripture.

In philosophy, Augustine’s assumptions about the world and the nature of the reality to which he was exposed were derived mostly from Plato and the neo-Platonic school. He knew of many other philosophers and their views but Augustine believed, as some modern scholars do,<sup>1</sup> that Plato was a monotheistic believer and his general outlook was compatible with true religion. Soloveitchik was also aware of many competing and mutually exclusive philosophies furnishing a comprehensive worldview and he drew selectively from several. When it came to devising a view of “existence” however, Soloveitchik found in Plato a supportive ally for regarding the world of religion as that of physics, governed by fixity and order.<sup>2</sup> Singer and Sokol correctly contend that Soloveitchik also used neo-Kantianism to make talmudism more palatable to the reader. “It is a matter, so to speak, of presenting the old Jewish wine in new Westernized

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, A.E. Taylor. For a discussion of this matter, see Burleigh, *op. cit.*, pp.67ff.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, *HM*, p.59.

bottles.”<sup>3</sup> Order for both Augustine and Soloveitchik was considered the essence of heaven. Platonism gave both the terminology to construct the relationship of the temporal to the eternal.

Bonner noted of Augustine that, “Temporal creation is good; but in respect of eternity it is nothing.”<sup>4</sup> Soloveitchik also believed in the blessedness of eternal life but also believed in the eternity of the obligation to actualize Halakhah on earth.<sup>5</sup> Soloveitchik’s contention was that temporal life is transformed into eternal life by the eternal holiness of obedience to a commandment. It can be easily overlooked that this can be directly equated with Augustine’s belief that “Already in this world, a change is taking place”<sup>6</sup> and the reign of Christ has begun in this life and will continue into the next. John Figgis also observed that for Augustine, “The millennial kingdom is already in existence.”<sup>7</sup> Eternal life has begun. The life according to the acceptance of Halakhah or Christ leads to a permanent alteration of one’s orientation to the cosmos. This permanency begins in the present.

If order was the essence of heaven, love was considered the etiquette. Through love, God revealed and continues to reveal the agency of His operation and to that agency the portion of humanity to whom this agency is given responds in love. For Augustine, this agency was Christ, and for Soloveitchik, the Halakhah. Augustine saw the response to Christ consisting of human acceptance of his grace and consequent arrangement of

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<sup>3</sup> David Singer and Moshe Sokol, op. cit., pp.237-238.

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Bonner, “Augustine’s Thoughts on This World and Hope for the Next,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin supplement*, vol. 3, 1994, p.87.

<sup>5</sup> Consider for instance, *HM*, p.35.

<sup>6</sup> Bonner, “Augustine’s Thoughts...” Op. cit., p.102.

<sup>7</sup> John N. Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine’s City of God*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1921, pp.72-73.

lives. For Soloveitchik, the rearrangement of life in obedience to law occurs after the acceptance of the yoke of the Halakhah.

The change effected in that section of the human race who accept God's way is a fundamental ontological shift with a cosmic reorientation. No longer is that individual ever the same. Now, the human has become Augustine's citizen of the city of God, or Soloveitchik's halakhic man. The naming has been eternally altered to reflect that they belong to the agent of God. They have internalized this agency and increasingly embody it. A new dimension has been added to their existence. This could make someone a member of the body of Christ, the Church which is the city of God. Or, this could give someone the Halakhah and transform him into a halakhic man. The source of their existence and the root of their experience was directed by this new agency.

For Augustine, acceptance of Christ and participation in the sacraments, particularly the eucharistic celebration in Mass, provided the opportunity to internalize the grace of Christ. For Soloveitchik, study led to the internalization of the Halakhah so that the halakhic man is never swayed by the matters of this world.

The transcendence that enters and transforms life continually exerts its transformative power. Soloveitchik spoke about how the halakhic giants were never tempted or distracted, but he also mentioned how his grandfather, to escape the fear of death, would plunge into the Halakhah.<sup>8</sup> Augustine recounted how the righteous who live in submission to the grace of Christ constantly depend on his strength to face the tribulations they encountered.<sup>9</sup> The potentiality available to the people of God is fulfilled

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<sup>8</sup> *HM*, pp.73-75.

<sup>9</sup> *COG*, I:29, XV:6.

in the Halakhah or Christ. From those sources they are constantly renewed and reinvigorated.

Augustine and Soloveitchik both demonstrate a tension in their systems between expansiveness and restrictiveness. At some times, either system is open to all people and moves flexibly and at other times the marked rigidity of both is intimidating.

Modern followers of Augustine and Soloveitchik have wondered whether the citizen of the city of God must be Christian and whether the halakhic man must be a Jew. Fredriksen observed that Augustine himself was “uncharacteristically tolerant”<sup>10</sup> to the Jewish people. In the *City of God* Augustine believed that the Jews were a “protected witness people”<sup>11</sup> who had “witlessly preserved the original prophecies to Christ and thereby testified to Christian truth.”<sup>12</sup> Augustine had certain convictions similar to Jewish interpreters in his belief in the God who works and has worked throughout history in relationship with humanity, and in his acceptance of the religious validity of the Law and the historical integrity of events in the biblical past.

Modern Christian theologians have focused on the irrevocable nature of covenantal relationships established between God and His people, which would mean that Christians are a late addition to the spiritual Israel. As the Apostle Paul observed, the Christian Church represents branches from a wild olive tree grafted into one already

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<sup>10</sup> Paula Fredriksen, op. cit., p.299.

<sup>11</sup> Paula Fredriksen, op. cit., p.320.

<sup>12</sup> Paula Fredriksen, op. cit., p.300.

cultivated.<sup>13</sup> This has been reflected in official Christian teaching such as that of Pope Pius XI who declared that “spiritually, we are all Semites.”<sup>14</sup>

Soloveitchik believed that “The religious act must be accessible to every member of the human race” and whatever might be “the *telos* of religion, be it salvation, perfection or ontological redemption, it is the dispensation of all mankind.”<sup>15</sup> When Soloveitchik described the fulfillment of religion in the halakhic man, however, this was a route of specialized spiritual achievement open only to a Jewish male.

For most scholars, the possibility of the halakhic man not necessarily being a Jew can rest either on the similarity of personality types or on the attitude to the Halakhah. Borowitz tried to identify similarities of the halakhic man with several personality types found in Catholicism. He argued that “one may point to the Jesuits, whose emphasis on intellectuality and observance is akin to *halachic* piety.”<sup>16</sup> Kolitz found this suggestion absurd since it overlooked the Halakhah itself. In “Must the Halakhic Man Necessarily Be a Jew,”<sup>17</sup> Kolitz therefore chose to answer the question about a non-Jew being a halakhic man by evaluating C.S. Lewis and apprising the reader of Lewis’ admiration for the joy expressed in Psalm 119 and conclusion that “if we cannot share in this experience we shall all be losers.” The Christian C.S. Lewis recognized that the psalm was written by a “soul ravished by moral beauty,” and perception of the enchanted obedience to the

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<sup>13</sup> Romans 11:17-24.

<sup>14</sup> Pope Pius XI, noted in Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989, p.19.

<sup>15</sup> *The Halakhic Mind*, op. cit., p.80. Note, however, that Soloveitchik was outlining the preserve of religion, and in this context attacking the “aristocracy” of introspective, subjective religion.

<sup>16</sup> Borowitz, *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought*, op. cit., p.239.

<sup>17</sup> in Kolitz, op. cit., pp.161-162.



Law<sup>18</sup> represented to Kolitz the beginning of the halakhic man in this great Christian thinker.

Shapiro handled the matter of the non-Jewish halakhic man in an interesting fashion, admitting his ignorance about Roman Catholic religious personalities but noting that the Roman Catholic Church has introduced and developed its own halakhic forms “with rigorous demands and insistence on precision, both in the performance of its sacraments and in its directives for conduct in various phases of life.”<sup>19</sup> Shapiro was, in the final analysis, unconcerned about the adoption of halakhic practices in Christianity, recognizing that they are most probably vestiges of Jewish influence, as in the case of such features in Islam.

This apparently provides us with three possibilities for the non-Jewish halakhic personality. The similarity of personality type, the love of Halakhah, and the tradition of Halakhah as a derivative of Judaism.

Neusner has examined the city of God in Judaism for the purpose of rendering a comparison of Augustine with the sages of Judaism. Neusner’s guiding focus was the social order so the resemblances he observed between Augustine and the sages were that both carried “the fundamentally same messages about the correspondence of the individual’s life to the social order, the centrality of relationship, the rule of God, and the response of God to what transcended all rules.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kolitz, *ibid.*, referred to C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*.

<sup>19</sup> Shapiro, *Studies in Jewish Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp.122-123.

<sup>20</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The City of God in Judaism and Other Comparative and Methodological Studies*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1991, p.162.

Neither Augustine nor Soloveitchik could be classified as a mystic, although both selectively extracted from mysticism what would support the historical faith they outlined.<sup>21</sup> Although both occasionally ventured to suggest that there was an apprehension of God directly attainable outside the rational or the physical senses (which can be accepted as the definition of a mystic) they firmly grounded a reasoned explication of the faith in historical reality and Biblical teachings. When one interprets their teachings at the mystical level,<sup>22</sup> however, Christ and the Halakhah live and achieve the same purposes. It is mainly at this level that the curious closeness is readily identifiable. Christ and the Halakhah are revelations from God and are internalized by faithful recipients. These revelations are also the a priori gifts of God by which chosen humanity apprehend the world and their relation to it. Christ and the Halakhah also are mediators. As David Hartman has explained, the perceptions of Soloveitchik's halakhic man are "mediated" through the "normative prism" of the Halakhah.<sup>23</sup> Augustine's title of choice for Christ was that of mediator.<sup>24</sup>

One might even note that in both systems, the mediator is needed to remove the difficulty of our epistemic distance from the Divine. We have no knowledge or at best, distorted knowledge and consequently a flawed experience of God without the interposition of the mediating power that God has given. In this context, the mediating

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<sup>21</sup> For instance, Augustine: *COG*, XV:1; Soloveitchik: *HM*, p.151, n.54. Soloveitchik has never been labeled a "mystic" nor has Augustine on the basis of *COG*. For a maverick view (based on the *Confessions*) that Augustine was truly a mystic, see C. Butler, *Western Mysticism*, London, Constable, 1927, p.46.

<sup>22</sup> The method of reading at the mystical level can be seen, for instance, in the Zohar, which "may abandon the literal sense of a verse, or conversely, employ the technique of mystical literalness, reading hyperliterally." Daniel Chanan Matt, tr. and intro., *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment*, New York, Paulist Press, 1983, p.31.

<sup>23</sup> David Hartman, "The Halakhic Hero," op. cit., p.256.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, *COG*, IX:17.

grace of Christ is directly comparable to obedience to the Halakhah. Working toward the actualization of the Halakhah is functionally equivalent to living the life of grace and striving for righteousness. In both systems, the repentant people of God pray for forgiveness and continue anew. Sin is ultimately defined in the comparison of the failure to meet the standard set by the Divine. The Halakhah and Christ present humanity with the perfection available. The halakhic man or the one who is conformed to the image of Christ has achieved this stage. Macquarrie adopted the term of some Christian theologians in speaking of the human possibility of “christhood”<sup>25</sup> which corresponds to Soloveitchik’s halakhic man. The stage of christhood is the one exemplifying the radical obedience of Christ to the will of God in his dutiful fulfillment of the Law. Soloveitchik pointed out that the halakhic man was necessarily a pure ideal type, and Augustine reminded his readers that the conformity to the image of Christ could not be completed on earth.

The Halakhah and Christ are authoritative and exist in the flexible relationship of superordination and partnership. The brilliant theologian Helmut Thielicke who defended his Christian beliefs in the face of Nazi Germany explained the correlation between “authority and autonomy” by suggesting that in the relationship of the human to the Divine, there was “the overlapping of two dimensions of human reality.” These dimensions he identified as “the dimension of principle, which has *a priori* validity, and the other is the dimension of experience, which has *a posteriori* validity.”<sup>26</sup> Thielicke could have been representing Soloveitchik rather than being a theological descendant of

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<sup>25</sup> Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, op. cit., pp.449-450.

<sup>26</sup> Helmut Thielicke, “The Question of Man,” in *The Hidden Question of God*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977, p.100.

Augustine. Thielicke noted that human personality and autonomy are not destroyed but fulfilled when we exist in an acknowledgment of the validity of both our experience and of authority. Outer authority can be transmuted into inner authority, Thielicke stated, and the inner authority is never tyranny so the human person then embodies and desires that which would be authoritatively deemed correct.<sup>27</sup> Creative tension is the condition in which such fulfilled people exist, for the authority to which they willingly choose to internalize “allows those subject to it the freedom of either criticizing or affirming it in virtue of their direct relation to the ultimate norm which makes it normative.”<sup>28</sup> For both Augustine and Soloveitchik there were the inner and outer spheres. When principle and experience are one, when human lives are lived in accordance with the Halakhah or Christ, then the norm of the universe which has its own enduring external truth is incorporated into our existence and humanity has the power of participation in that norm and actualizing its reign. This makes humanity partakers of divinity, by the grace of Christ or by their creative powers employed in the imitation of God.

Just as the halakhic man works for the actualization of the ideal Halakhah, so the citizen of the city of God lives in the ongoing reign of Christ until the Kingdom of Christ is perfected in his *parousia* (second coming). The halakhic man and the Christian live and anticipate the day when reality is finally subject to the liberating yoke of their mediator. Augustine and Soloveitchik lived in societies where the religion they practiced was in the minority, and both directly acknowledged that their faith would be viewed as unusual to the dominant culture. Both emphasized being “otherworldly in this world” by

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<sup>27</sup> Helmut Thielicke, “The Question of Man,” in *The Hidden Question of God*, op. cit., pp.98-106.

<sup>28</sup> Helmut Thielicke, “The Question of Man,” op. cit., p.106.

the self-imposition of God's agent on the lives of followers in this world. It cannot be denied that Soloveitchik saw the fulfillment in earthly existence while Augustine believed that heaven was the fullness of Elysium. However, Augustine as well as Soloveitchik interpreted this world as a temporary aberration in which we struggle to hasten the day when heaven and earth are united by the triumph of the Divine will. The union of the realms in the day of fulfillment renders the precise location of that fulfillment irrelevant. The domain of the Divine encompasses all worlds, and on this earth the final day can be accomplished and heaven and earth made one.

The eschatological fulfillment inherent in each system does differ in the important feature that in Soloveitchik's thinking, humanity shared more responsibility for the timing than in Augustine's conception of events. For Augustine, the world moved rather inexorably onward, with the responsibility of dating the future the province of God who guides and upholds the future. In the post-holocaust era, some theologians have wondered whether Christian theology should adopt a higher view of human responsibility<sup>29</sup> since the relegation of the unfolding of events to the unquestionable Sovereign will unfairly relieves humanity from their responsibility as forces in the cosmic drama of history and redemption. Other theologians have seen the evils perpetrated by humanity as the indication that we desperately need "a grace far greater than our human possibilities"<sup>30</sup> since only a strong grace could save people from

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, John B. Cobb, Jr., who spoke of Christ as "Creative Transformation" and "responsive love," and defined faith as "a mode of existence" so that human responsibility is uppermost in salvation. See John B. Cobb, Jr., "Christ Beyond Creative Transformation," in *Encountering Jesus*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1988, p.143; and John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1976, pp.31-32.

<sup>30</sup> Robert S. Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1960, p.244.

themselves. This outlook contends that to trust in human capacity is to misplace trust that should be focused on an everlasting reality.

The true Church, the city of God, has the same role in Augustine as the Jewish people and *Knesset Israel* have in Soloveitchik's theology. As Soloveitchik saw a continuum of the past, present and the future so that the halakhic man walks and talks with the great masters of the past, so too Augustine portrayed the cosmic reality of the fellowship of the past, present and future followers of Christ. Augustine liked Rome but did not idolize it, but praised instead the heavenly Jerusalem, the refuge God prepared for His people. Soloveitchik noted that the state of Israel had its problems but, in his vantage point in history, saw Israel as vested with the full sanctity of the Holy Land and regarded its very existence as God's post-holocaust concern for His people.<sup>31</sup>

The presence of the Halakhah and of Christ assured God's people of the endurance and vividness of the Divine presence. As long as obedience was maintained to the mediator, the relationship to God was secure. Augustine no less than Soloveitchik believed that the people of God live within the context of a covenant. This covenant defined them as distinct and had to be upheld. Humanity always had need of repentance but this need of repentance in no way indicates that God removes Himself from His people. As Abraham Heschel explained:

If at the moment of doing a *mitzvah* once perceived to be thus sublime, thus Divine, you are in it with all your heart and with all your soul, there is no great distance between you and God. For acts of holiness uttered by the soul disclose the holiness of God hidden in every moment of time. And His holiness and He are one.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> As noted, for instance, by David Singer and Moshe Sokol, op. cit., p.252.

<sup>32</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Meaning of Observance," in *Understanding Jewish Theology: Classic Issues and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Jacob Neusner, 1973, p.100.

The enactment of mitzvot ensures that the people of the Halakhah are never far from God. The distance from God becomes small when the commandments are rightly performed. Holiness is ushered into the world.

In the spirit of Augustine, Tridentine Catholicism declared that:

For although during this mortal life, men, however holy and just, fall at times into at least light and daily sins... they do not on that account cease to be just, for that petition of the just, *forgive us our trespasses*, is both humble and true... For God does not forsake those who have once been justified by His grace, unless He be first forsaken by them.<sup>33</sup>

God does not abandon unless humanity chooses to abandon the partnership and abdicate the assigned role as God's people. Grace continues to be the justifying force in the life of the Church. This grace is received upon the acceptance of Christ and can be revitalized when the sacraments are administered so that the merits of Christ replenish the grace that was lost. The life of grace in the view of Trent cannot denote a lifestyle of uncontrolled license but is rather a life of obedience to what has been termed by Shapiro the "Roman Catholic halakhah"<sup>34</sup>

In this increasingly secular age, there are competing paths to human fulfillment. Harvey Cox who theorized about the world as a "secular city" recently observed that in the midst of this chaotic secular world, the individual "thirsts for mystery, meaning, community and even for some sort of ritual."<sup>35</sup> No discovery can be as fulfilling as the espying and pursuit of the paths set by the Divine. This thesis explored that humanity in the path of the Halakhah or in the path of Christ exhibit the similarities of discovering

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<sup>33</sup> "Decree of Justification," chapter 11, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, tr. H.J. Schroeder, St. Louis, B. Herder, 1941.

<sup>34</sup> Shapiro, *Studies in Jewish Thought*, op. cit., p.122.

<sup>35</sup> Harvey Cox, cited in John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harrisburg, Morehouse, 1992, p.3. See also Harvey Cox, *The Feast of Fools*, London, Oxford University Press, 1970.

that God has provided a historically grounded revelation through which and in which we can have access to the Divine ways. We can be transformed and have a transforming impact on the cosmos, participating in the life and work of the Creator until creation itself is one with the will of heaven.