

trast of good, as shade is but the contrast of light. Evil can be overcome by each individual, as he realizes his own solemn duty and the divine will. Its only existence is in the field of morality, where it is a test of man's freedom and power. Evil is within man, and against it he is to wage the battles of life, until his victory signalizes the triumph of the divine in his own nature.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See H. Cohen: *Ethik des reinen Willens*, 282 f., 341 f., 428 f., 593: "Eine Macht des Boesen gibt es nur im Mythos." "Dieser Mythos fuehrt folgerichtig zum mythologischen Gottmenschen." M. Joel, in his article, "Der Mosaismus und das Heidenthum," in *J. B. j. Gesch. u. Lit.*, 1904, p. 49-66, ascribes the belief in demons to Greek influence. He holds that the prophetic teaching of God's unity was the best bulwark against demonology and mysticism.

## CHAPTER XXXII

## GOD AND THE INTERMEDIARY POWERS

1. In addition to the angels who carried out God's will in the universe, the Biblical and post-Biblical literature recognizes other divine powers which mediate between Him and the world of man. The more a seer or thinker became conscious of the spirituality and transcendency of God, the more he felt the gulf between the infinite Spirit and the world of the senses. In order to bridge this gap, the Deity was replaced by one of His manifestations which could appear and act in a world circumscribed by space and time.<sup>1</sup> As we found in prophecy the direct revelation of God giving way to a mediating angel, so either "the Glory" or "the Name" of JHVH takes the place of God himself. That is, instead of God's own being, His reflected radiance or the power invested in His name descends from on high. The rabbis kept the direct revelation of God for the hallowed past or the desired future, but at the same time they needed a suitable term for the presence of God; they therefore coined the word *Shekinah* — "the divine Condescension" or "Presence" — to be used instead of the Deity himself. Thus the verse of the Psalm:<sup>2</sup> "God standeth in the congregation of God," is translated by the Targum, "The divine Presence (*Shekinah*) resteth upon

<sup>1</sup> See Dillmann, l. c., 341-351; Weber, l. c., 177-190; Bousset, l. c., 336, 346; Davidson, l. c., 36-38, 115-120; Schechter, *Aspects*, p. 21-45; Schmiedl, l. c., 35-48; J. E., art. Holy Spirit; Logos; Memra; Metatron; Name of God; *Shekinah*; *Enc. Rel. and Eth.*, I, 308-312.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. LXXXII, 1.

the congregation of the godly." Instead of the conclusion of the speech to Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them,"<sup>1</sup> the Targum has, "And I shall let My Presence (*Shekinah*) dwell among them." Thus in the view of the rabbis *Shekinah* represents the visible part of the divine majesty, which descends from heaven to earth, and on the radiance of which are fed the spiritual beings, both angels and the souls of the saints.<sup>2</sup> God himself was wrapped in light, whose brilliancy no living being, however lofty, could endure; but the *Shekinah* or reflection of the divine glory might be beheld by the elect either in their lifetime or in the hereafter. In this way the rabbis solved many contradictory passages of Scripture, some of which speak of God as invisible, while others describe man as beholding Him.<sup>3</sup>

2. Just as the references to God's appearing to man suggested luminous powers mediating the vision of God, so the passages which represent God as speaking suggest powers mediating the voice. Hence arose the conception of the divine *Word*, invested with divine powers both physical and spiritual. The first act of God in the Bible is that He spoke, and by this word the world came into being. The *Word* was thus conceived of as the first created being, an intermediary power between the Spirit of the world and the created world order. The word of God, important in the cosmic order, is still more so in the moral and spiritual worlds. The *Word* is at times a synonym of divine revelation to the men of the early generations or to Israel, the bearer of the Law. Hence the older Haggadah places beside the *Shekinah* the divine *Word* (Hebrew, *Maamar*; Aramaic, *Memra*; Greek, *Logos*) as the intermediary force of revelation.

Contact with the Platonic and Stoic philosophies led gradually to a new development which appears in Philo. The

<sup>1</sup> Ex. XXV, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ber. 17 a.

<sup>3</sup> See Ber., l. c., Rab's reference to Ex. XXIV, 11.

Word or Logos becomes "the first-created Son of God," having a personality independent from God; in fact he is a kind of vice regent of God himself. From this it was but a short step toward considering him a partner and peer of the Almighty, as was done by the Church with its doctrine that the Word became flesh in Christ, the son of God.<sup>1</sup> In view of this the rabbinical schools gave up the idea of the personified Word, replacing it with the *Torah* or the *Spirit of God*. The older term was retained only in liturgical formulas, such as: "Who created the heavens by His Word," or, "Who by His Word created the twilight and by Wisdom openeth the gates of heaven."<sup>2</sup>

3. As has been shown above,<sup>3</sup> Wisdom is described in the Bible as the first of all created beings, the assistant and counselor of God in the work of creation. Then we see that Ben Sira identifies Wisdom with the *Torah*.<sup>4</sup> Thus the *Torah*, too, was raised to a cosmic power, the sum and substance of all wisdom. In fact, the *Torah*, like the Logos of Plato, was regarded as comprising the ideas or prototypes of all things as in a universal plan. The *Torah* is the divine pattern for the world. In such a connection *Torah* is far from meaning the Law, as Weber asserts.<sup>5</sup> It means rather the heavenly book of instruction which contains all the wisdom of the ages, and which God himself used as guide at the Creation. God is depicted as an architect with His plan drafted before He began the erection of the edifice, — a conception which avoids all danger of deifying the Logos.

4. Several other conceptions, however, do not belong at all to the intermediary powers, where Weber places them.<sup>6</sup> This applies to *Metatron* (identical with the Persian Mithras),<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John I, 1-6.

<sup>2</sup> Singer's *Prayerbook*, p. 96, 292.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. XXII. See Prov. VIII, 22.

<sup>4</sup> XXIV, 9 f.

<sup>5</sup> Weber, l. c., 197 f.

<sup>6</sup> L. c., 178 f.

<sup>7</sup> See Kohut: *Jued. Angelologie*, 36-38; Schorr: *He Halutz*, VIII, 3; J. E., art. *Merkabah*.

whom the mystic lore calls the charioteer of the heavenly throne-chariot, represented by the rabbis as the highest of the angels, leader of the heavenly hosts, and vice-regent of God. That no cosmic power was ascribed to him is proved by the very fact of his identification with Enoch, whom the pre-Talmudic Haggadah describes as taken up into heaven and changed into an angel of the highest rank, standing near God's throne.<sup>1</sup>

5. The only real mediator between God and man is the *Spirit of God*, which is mentioned in connection with both the creation and divine revelation. In the first chapter of Genesis the Spirit of God is described as hovering over the gloom of chaos like the mother bird over the egg, ready to hatch out the nascent world.<sup>2</sup> God breathed His spirit into the body of man, to make him also god-like.<sup>3</sup> The prophet likewise is inspired by the spirit of God to see visions and to hear the divine message.<sup>4</sup> Thus the spirit of God has two aspects; it is the cosmic principle which imbues primal matter with life; it is a link between the soul of man and God on high. The view of Ezekiel was but one step from this, to conceive the spirit as a personal being, and place him beside God as an angel.

The prophets and psalmists, feeling the spirit of God upon them, considered it an emanation of the Deity. Still, a profounder insight soon disapproved the severance of the Spirit of God from God himself, as if He were not altogether *spirit*. Therefore the accepted term came to be the *Holy Spirit*.<sup>5</sup> In this form, however, his personality became more distinct and his separate existence more defined. Henceforth he is

<sup>1</sup> See Targ. Yer. to Gen. V, 24; J. E., art. Metatron. Comp. Eth. Enoch LXX, 1, and Slav. Enoch III-XXIV.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. I, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. II, 7; VI, 3; Job XXXII, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Num. XI, 17 f.; XXIV, 2; XXVII, 18; Ex. XXVIII, 3; XXXI, 3 f.; Isa. XI, 2; LXI, 1; Ezek. I, 12, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. LXIII, 10; Ps. LI, 13.

the messenger of God, performing miracles or causing them, speaking in the place of God, or defending His people Israel. Nay, more, the Holy Spirit is supposed to have dictated the words of Scripture to the sacred writers, and to have inspired the Men of the Great Synagogue in collecting the sacred writings into a canon.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the workings of the Holy Spirit continued long after the completion of the Biblical canon. All the chief institutions of the Synagogue originally claimed that they were prompted by the Holy Spirit, resting upon the leaders of the community. This claim was basic to the authority of tradition and the continuity of the authority of Jewish lore. It seems, however, that certain abuses were caused by miracle-workers who disseminated false doctrines under the alleged inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the rabbis restricted such claims to ancient times and insisted more strongly than ever upon the preservation of the traditional lore. For a time a substitute was found in the *Bath Kol* ("Echo" or "Whisper of a heavenly voice"), but this also was soon discredited by the schools.<sup>2</sup> Obviously the rabbis desired to avert the deification of either the Holy Spirit or the Word. Sound common sense was their norm for interpreting the truth of the divine revelation. In other words, they relied on God alone as the living force in the development of Judaism.

6. But some sort of mediation was ascribed to several other spiritual forces. First, the *Name* of God often takes the place of God himself.<sup>3</sup> When the name of the Deity was called over some hallowed spot, the worshipers felt that the presence of God also was bound up with the sacred place.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See J. E., art. Holy Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> See J. E. art., Bath Kol.

<sup>3</sup> See Tos. Sota XIII, 2; XXLV, 11; compare Levy: W. B., *Shem*; Geiger: *Urschrift*, 273 f.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. XII, 5, 11; II Sam. XII, 28; Neh. I, 9; Jer. VII, 12, 14.

"My name is in him," says God of the angel whom He sends to lead the people.<sup>1</sup> The invocation of the name was believed to have an actual influence upon the Deity. Furthermore, since God is frequently represented as swearing by His own name,<sup>2</sup> this ineffable name was invested with magic powers, as if God himself dwelt therein.<sup>3</sup> Thus it came to be used as a talisman by the popular saints.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, God is described as conjuring the depths of the abyss by His holy name, lest they overflow their boundaries.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Name, like the Word, or Logos, was regarded as a creative power, so that we are told that before the world was created there were only God and His holy Name.<sup>6</sup> Owing to the introduction of *Adonai* (the Lord) for JHVH, the pronunciation of the Name fell into oblivion and the Name itself became a mystery; therefore its cosmic element also was lost and it dropped into the sphere of mystic and philosophical speculation.

7. Another attribute of God which received some attention, owing to the frequent mention of the omnipotence of God in the Bible, was *ha Geburah* (the Power). A familiar rabbinic expression is: "We have heard from the mouth of the Power," that is, from the divine omnipotence.<sup>7</sup> Two fundamental principles were early perceived in the moral order of the world: the punitive justice and compassion of God. These were taken as the meanings of the two most common Biblical names of God, *JHVH* and *Elohim*. *Elohim*, being occasionally used in dispensing justice,<sup>8</sup> was thought to signify God in His capacity as Judge of the whole earth, and hence as the divine Justice. *JHVH*, on the other hand, meant the divine mercy, as it was used in the revelation of the long-suffering

<sup>1</sup> Ex. XXIII, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. XLIV, 26; Isa. XLV, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Midr. Teh. to Ps. XXXVIII, 8; XCI, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Taan. III, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Prayer of Manasses, 3.

<sup>6</sup> P. d. R. El. III.

<sup>7</sup> See Levy: W. B., *Geburah*.

<sup>8</sup> Ex. XXI, 6.

and merciful God to Moses after the sin of Israel before the golden calf.<sup>1</sup> Thus both the rabbis and Philo<sup>2</sup> often speak of these two attributes, justice and mercy, as though they constituted independent beings, deliberating with God as to what He should do. The Midrash tells in a parable how before the creation of man, Justice, Mercy, Truth, and Peace were called in by God as His counselors to deliberate whether or no man should be created.<sup>3</sup>

8. One Haggadah concludes from the passage about Creation in Proverbs, that there are three creative powers, Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Another derives from Scripture seven creative principles: Knowledge, Understanding, Might, Grace and Mercy, Justice and Rebuke;<sup>5</sup> and seven attributes which do service before God's throne: Wisdom, Judgment and Justice, Grace and Mercy, Truth and Peace.<sup>6</sup> By combining these lists of three and seven this was finally enlarged to ten, which became the basis for the entire mystic lore. Thus the Babylonian master Rab enumerates ten creative principles: Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge, Might and Power, Rebuke, Justice and Righteousness, Love and Mercy.<sup>7</sup> It is hard to say whether the ten attributes of the Haggadah are at all connected with the ten *Sefiroth* (cosmic forces or circles) of the Cabbalah. These last are hardly the creation of pure monotheism, but rather emanations from the infinite, conceived after the pattern of heathen ideas.<sup>8</sup>

9. The assumption of all these intermediaries aimed chiefly to spiritualize the conception of God and to elevate

<sup>1</sup> Ex. XXXIV, 5 f.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. R. XXI, 8; Targ. Ps. LVI, 11, and see Siegfried: *Philo*, 213 f.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. R. VIII, 5, after Ps. LXXXV, 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> P. d. R. El. III; Midr. Teh. Ps. L, 1, ref. to Prov. III, 19-20.

<sup>5</sup> A. d. R. N. XXXVII, ref. to Prov. III, 19 f.; Ps. LXV, 7; LXXXV, 21-22; Job XXXVII, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Ref. to Hosea II, 21-22.

<sup>7</sup> Hag. 12 a.

<sup>8</sup> See J. E., art. *Sefiroth*, the Ten; *Yezirah*, *Sefer*.



Him above all child-like, anthropomorphic views, so that He becomes a free Mind ruling the whole universe. At the same time, it became natural to ascribe material substance to these intermediaries. As they filled the chasm between the supermundane Deity and the world of the senses, they had to share the nature of both matter and mind. Hence the Shekinah and the Holy Spirit are described by both the rabbis and the medieval philosophers as a fine, luminous, or ethereal substance.<sup>1</sup> The entire ancient and medieval systems were modeled after the idea of a ladder leading up, step by step, from the lowest to the highest sphere; God, the Most High, being at the same time above the highest rung of the ladder and yet also a part of the whole.

10. Our modern system of thought holds the relation of God to nature and man to be quite different from all this. To our mind God is the only moral and spiritual power of life. He is mirrored in the moral and spiritual as well as intellectual nature of man, and therefore is near to the human conscience, owing to the divine forces within man himself. Not the world without, but the world within leads us to God and tells us what God is. Hence we need no intermediary beings, and they all evaporate before our mental horizon like mist, pictures of the imagination without objective reality. Ibn Ezra says in the introduction to his commentary on the Bible that the human reason is the true intermediating angel between God and man, and we hold this to be true of both the intellect and the conscience. For the theologian and the student of religion to-day the center of gravity of religion is to be sought in psychology and anthropology. In all his upward striving, his craving and yearning for the highest and the best, in his loftiest aspirations and ideals, man, like Isaiah the prophet, can behold only the hem of God's garment; he seeks God above him, because he feels Him within himself.

<sup>1</sup> See J. E., art. Shekinah; *Cuzari*, II, 4; IV, 3.

He must pass, however, through the various stages of growth, until his self-knowledge leads to the knowledge of the God before whom he kneels in awe. Then finally he feels Him as his Father, his Educator in the school of life, the Master of the universal plan in which the individual also has a place in building up the divine kingdom of truth, justice, and holiness on earth. For centuries he groped for God, until he received a Book to serve as "a lamp to his feet and a light to his path," to interpret to him his longing and his craving. Israel's Book of Books must ever be re-read and re-interpreted by Israel, the keeper of the book, through ages yet to come. Well may we say: the mediator between God and the world is *man*, the son of God; the mediator between God and humanity is *Israel*, the people of God.