

The Lonely Man of Faith



Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

THE LONELY MAN
OF FAITH

WITH A FOREWORD BY

Reuven Ziegler

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*To Tonya
A woman of great courage,
sublime dignity,
total commitment,
and uncompromising truthfulness*

The Lonely Man of Faith

An Introduction*

Reuven Ziegler

IN THIS PENETRATING work, perhaps his best known and most influential, Rabbi Soloveitchik tackles a number of major issues, the central ones being mankind's dual role in the world, and the possibility of religious existence in modern, largely secular, society. Along the way, he offers startling insights into a host of other topics. The book's rich range of ideas makes reading it a challenging and exhilarating endeavor, but at the same time this richness can obscure its main point. *The Lonely Man of Faith* is finely crafted, with a clear structure and progression of ideas. In this essay, I would like to examine closely Rabbi Soloveitchik's introductory comments, where he delineates both

* This essay is adapted from Reuven Ziegler, *Majesty and Humility: The Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (Urim Publications, OU and Maimonides School, 2012), with permission of the publishers. Readers interested in a detailed reader's companion to *The Lonely Man of Faith* can see chapters 11–18 of *Majesty and Humility*.

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the goal and the method of this work. When we understand how Rabbi Soloveitchik himself defines the issue he wishes to address, we can use this understanding to guide our reading of the rest of the book.

ADAM I AND ADAM II

Let me start by doing something unpardonable: trying to sum up the main argument of *The Lonely Man of Faith* in a few short paragraphs. Although perforce this will be oversimplified, I think it will aid us greatly in understanding Rabbi Soloveitchik's characterization of the work.

Rabbi Soloveitchik proposes that the two accounts of the creation of man (in chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis) portray two types of man, two human ideals. One type, termed Adam the first (or Adam I), is guided by the quest for dignity, which is an external social quality attained by control over one's environment. He is a creative and majestic personality who espouses a practical-utilitarian approach to the world. Adam II, on the other hand, is guided by the quest for redemption, which is a quality of the inner personality that one attains by control over oneself. He is humble and submissive, and yearns for an intimate relationship with God and with his fellow man in order to overcome his sense of incompleteness and inadequacy. These differences carry over to the type of community each one creates: the "natural work community" (Adam I) and the "covenantal faith community" (Adam II).

God not only desires the existence of each of these personality types and each of these communities, but actually bids each and every person to attempt to embody *both* of these seemingly irreconcilable types. One must attempt to pursue both dignity and redemption. This analysis of the two basic tasks of man leads to two important conclusions. First, Adam I's existence

is willed by God and therefore his majestic and creative actions have religious value. Rabbi Soloveitchik, accordingly, has a positive attitude towards the extension of human dominion through general scientific and technological progress, the spreading of culture and the development of civilization. However, one must also give Adam II his due, which leads to the second conclusion: Adam II and his quest for redemption have independent value, regardless of whether they aid Adam I's quest for majesty. Faith (the realm of Adam II) is not subservient to culture (the creation of Adam I); it is a primordial force that has no need to legitimize itself in other terms.

The demand to be both Adam I and Adam II leads to a built-in tension in the life of each person responsive to this dual call; and because one lives with a constant dialectic, a continual oscillation between two modes of existence, one can never realize fully the goals of either Adam I or Adam II. Unable to feel totally at home in either community, man is burdened by loneliness. Since this type of loneliness is inherent in one's very being as a religious individual, Rabbi Soloveitchik terms it "ontological loneliness" ("ontological" relating to being or existence). In a sense, this kind of loneliness is tragic; but since it is willed by God, it helps man realize his destiny and therefore is ultimately a positive and constructive experience.

The contemporary man of faith, however, experiences a particular kind of loneliness, one which is not a built-in aspect of human existence but rather the product of specific historical circumstances; this "historical loneliness" is a purely negative phenomenon. Modern man, pursuant to his great success in the realm of majesty-dignity, recognizes only the Adam I side of existence, and refuses to acknowledge the inherent duality of his being. Contemporary society speaks the language of Adam I, of cultural achievement, and is unable or unwilling to understand

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the language of Adam II, of the uniqueness and autonomy of faith. Worse, contemporary Adam I has infiltrated and appropriated the realm of Adam II, the world of religion; he presents himself as Adam II, while actually distorting covenantal man's entire message.

A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

We are now in a position to understand Rabbi Soloveitchik's characterization of *The Lonely Man of Faith* in its opening paragraphs. First, from its very title, it is evident that the essay's message is universal. *The Lonely Man of Faith* refers to any religious faith, not just Judaism; the dilemma of faith in the modern world applies to all religions (or at least to Western religions, which were Rabbi Soloveitchik's concern). It should also be noted that *The Lonely Man of Faith* addresses men and women equally; nowhere in the book does Rabbi Soloveitchik distinguish between them. The word "man" in the title, and indeed throughout the work, should therefore be understood as "person."

The essay's universalistic bent is further expressed in the choice of the text that stands at its center: the story of the creation of Adam and Eve, the parents of humankind. Significantly, references to Judaism and Jewish sources appear almost exclusively in the footnotes. Finally, it is worth mentioning that *The Lonely Man of Faith* originated in a lecture to Catholic seminarians and in a series of lectures, sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health, delivered to Jewish social workers of all denominations.¹

1. When *The Lonely Man of Faith* was first published (*Tradition* 7:2, Summer 1965), it offered no information about its origins. However, when it appeared as a book in 1992, a note at the beginning stated: "The basic ideas of *The Lonely Man of Faith* were formulated in Rabbi Soloveitchik's lectures in the 'Marriage and Family' program of the National Institute of Mental Health at Yeshiva University

A PERSONAL DILEMMA

In the book's opening sentence, Rabbi Soloveitchik informs the reader that he will not address the intellectual challenges that modernity poses to faith, but rather something much more basic: the challenge modernity poses to the *experience* of faith. He will focus on "a human life situation in which the man of faith as an individual concrete being... is entangled" (p. 1). In this sense, *The Lonely Man of Faith* is not a work of abstract speculation but rather "a tale of a personal dilemma," whose power derives from the fact that it is based on "actual situations and experiences with which I have been confronted" (ibid.). In a striking characterization of the work, Rabbi Soloveitchik concludes:

Instead of talking theology, in the didactic sense, eloquently and in balanced sentences, I would like, hesitantly and haltingly, to confide in you, and to share with you some concerns which weigh heavily on my mind and which frequently assume the proportions of an awareness of crisis. (Ibid.)

Furthermore, he later confesses that he does not have a solution to the problem he will pose, "for the dilemma is insoluble" (p. 6). Why, then, does he bother to present the problem at all? He offers two reasons:

1. "All I want is to follow the advice given by Elihu the son of Berachel of old, who said, 'I will speak that I may find relief' (Job 32:20); for there is a redemptive quality for

in New York City." Rabbi Walter Wurzburger, a disciple and close associate of Rabbi Soloveitchik, added in a 1994 essay (reprinted in his *Covenantal Imperatives* [Jerusalem, 2008]) that *The Lonely Man of Faith* "was first presented as an oral lecture at a Catholic seminary in Brighton, Massachusetts" (p. 146).

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an agitated mind in the spoken word, and a tormented soul finds peace in confessing” (p. 2).

2. “...the defining itself [of the dilemma] is a worthwhile cognitive gesture which, I hope, will yield a better understanding of ourselves and our commitment” (p. 6).

Why is the dilemma insoluble? Let us first consider Rabbi Soloveitchik’s definition of the dilemma, and then we will return to this question.

BEING LONELY AND BEING ALONE

The nature of the dilemma can be stated in a three-word sentence. I am lonely. (p. 3)

Here we must distinguish between being alone and being lonely. Aloneness means lacking love and friendship; this is an entirely destructive feeling. Loneliness, on the other hand, is an awareness of one’s uniqueness, and to be unique often means to be misunderstood. A lonely person, while surrounded by friends, feels that his unique and incommunicable experiences separate him from them. This fills him with a gnawing sense of the seemingly insurmountable gap that prevents true communion between individuals. While painful, this experience can also be “stimulating” and “cathartic,” since it “presses everything in me into the service of God,” the Lonely One, who truly understands the lonely individual.

As mentioned above, loneliness – the sense of the uniqueness and incommunicability of one’s inner life – can have two possible causes: ontological and historical. These two forms of loneliness, while stemming from the same basic dichotomy in the human personality, are experienced differently and must be addressed separately.

**ONTOLOGICAL LONELINESS:
EXPERIENCING INNER CONFLICT**

The ontological loneliness of the man of faith derives from the very nature of his religious experience. In a phrase that may seem surprising at first, Rabbi Soloveitchik describes the religious experience as “fraught with inner conflicts and incongruities”; he also calls it “antinomic” and “paradoxical” (pp. 1–2).²

This portrayal of the religious experience initially strikes one as odd because modern man often equates religious belief with tranquility and peace of mind. However, bearing in mind the earlier summary of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s argument, it should be clear why Rabbi Soloveitchik totally disagrees with the “peace of mind” approach. In his view, God demands of man to live in two seemingly incompatible modes of existence – that of Adam I and that of Adam II. Thus, one who heeds God’s dual demand lives a life full of dialectical tension.

NO ENCHANTED ISLAND

However, it is important to understand that this tension does not derive only from the requirement to be both Adam I and Adam II, but is inherent within Adam II himself, within “Religious Man” and the religious realm proper. Religious Man himself, and not only the compound persona of Majestic Man and Religious Man, is an antithetical character. He constantly grapples with dichotomous concepts and experiences located

2. “Antinomic” means contradictory, or, in our context, self-contradictory. This is not to be confused with “antinomian,” which denotes refusal to recognize the authority of moral law. (In theology, “antinomianism” is the position that salvation is attained through faith alone, not through obedience to a moral or religious code.) While Rabbi Soloveitchik loved a good antinomy (i.e., a dichotomy or paradox), he hated antinomianism, which espoused rejection of Halakhah.

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at the heart of religious existence: “temporality and eternity, [divine] knowledge and [human] choice (necessity and freedom), love and fear (the yearning for God and the flight from His glorious splendor), incredible, overbold daring, and an extreme sense of humility, transcendence and God’s closeness, the profane and the holy, etc.” (*Halakhic Man* [Philadelphia, 1983], p. 142).

Many contemporary popularizers of religion portray faith as offering ready comfort and easy inner harmony to believers, providing a refuge from the discord, doubts, fears and responsibilities of the secular realm. From his earliest writings until his latest, Rabbi Soloveitchik took umbrage with this shallow and false ideology, which he found to be particularly prevalent in America.³ Religion does not provide believers with instant tranquility, but rather forces them to confront uncomfortable dichotomies; it is “a raging, clamorous torrent of man’s consciousness with all its crises, pangs, and torments” (ibid.). Religion is not less demanding than secularity, but rather more so. It does not offer an escape from reality, but rather provides the ultimate encounter with reality. It suggests no quick fixes, but rather demands constant struggle in order to attain spiritual growth. As Rabbi Soloveitchik so memorably put it, “*Kedushah* (sanctity) is not a paradise but a paradox” (“Sacred and Profane,” *Shiurei Harav*, p. 8).

HISTORICAL LONELINESS: THE CONTEMPORARY CRISIS

Thus far we have discussed the ontological loneliness of the man of faith, the crises and tensions inherent in religious existence. However, Rabbi Soloveitchik informs the reader that in

3. Rabbi Soloveitchik’s two classic treatments of this theme are found in “Sacred and Profane” (reprinted in *Shiurei Harav* [Hoboken, 1994]) and footnote 4 of *Halakhic Man*. This footnote is a small jewel of an essay in its own right.

this essay his “prime concern” is not ontological loneliness but rather the man of faith’s experience of historical loneliness, in which “a highly sensitized and agitated heart, overwhelmed by the impact of social and cultural forces, filters this root awareness [of ontological loneliness] through the medium of painful, frustrating emotions” (pp. 4–5). Rabbi Soloveitchik does not wish to focus on a general, timeless theological issue, but instead to address the predicament of the *contemporary* man of faith who, “due to his peculiar position in our secular society... lives through a particularly difficult and agonizing crisis” (p. 5). A sharp and prescient social critic, Rabbi Soloveitchik is here keenly sensitive to the changes society has undergone and to the need to reassess the role of the man of religion within it:

Let me spell out this *passional*⁴ experience of contemporary man of faith.

He looks upon himself as a stranger in modern society, which is technically minded, self-centered, and self-loving, almost in a sickly narcissistic fashion, scoring honor upon honor, piling up victory upon victory, reaching for the distant galaxies, and seeing in the here-and-now sensible world the only manifestation of being. What can a man of faith like myself, living by a doctrine which has no technical potential, by a law which cannot be tested in the laboratory, steadfast in his loyalty to an eschatological vision whose fulfillment cannot be predicted with any degree of probability... – what can such a man say to a functional, utilitarian society which is *saeculum*-oriented⁵ and whose practical reasons of the

4. *Passional* = expressing suffering.

5. “*Saeculum*” is an Augustinian term denoting the world of human life within time.

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mind have long ago supplanted the sensitive reasons of the heart? (Ibid.)

Rabbi Soloveitchik is certainly not anti-intellectual, nor is he opposed to technological advances. What he is asserting here is the autonomy of faith. Modern society speaks in pragmatic and utilitarian terms, and expects religion to justify itself in these categories. But the value of religion, Rabbi Soloveitchik believes, is independent of its practical utility, its usefulness in helping man attain dignity and majesty. Rather, faith is a response to a divine summons, a call to submit oneself to God. Its meaning and value far exceed justification by the human intellect.

However, pragmatic modern man – whether secular or religious – works only with categories of the intellect, not realizing their limited purview. He adopts religion to the extent that he deems it as being useful and comprehensible to him. His is a religion of convenience, not commitment; it is geared to suit his own needs, not to serve God's will. He does not comprehend the meaning of total devotion and does not sense the need for redemption, which constitute the essence of faith. The danger, then, is not just that secularists have ceased to understand the man of faith; it is that adherents of religion have ceased to understand themselves and their commitment.

We can now appreciate the true import of the concluding sentences of Rabbi Soloveitchik's introduction:

If my audience will feel that these interpretations are also relevant to their perceptions and emotions, I shall feel amply rewarded. However, I shall not feel hurt if my thoughts will find no response in the hearts of my listeners. (pp. 6–7)

Rabbi Soloveitchik is not being coy or diffident here. Rather, as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks points out, this is “an expression characteristic of the man of faith in the modern world. He no longer speaks the shared language of society...How then is he to communicate? Simply by speaking out of his inner situation and hoping to find an echoing response in his audience.”⁶ Thus, the man of faith’s uncertainty about his ability to communicate lies at the very heart of his problem.

THE INSOLUBLE PROBLEM

Returning now to the question of why the dilemma this essay poses is insoluble, we must offer a dual response.

(A) In terms of ontological loneliness, the answer should be clear. An essential dichotomy is woven into the very fabric of the religious experience. As such, this basic dialectic is not subject to “solutions”; it is part of the very definition of religious existence.

(B) There is no a priori reason why there should not be a solution to the problem of historical loneliness. This feeling does not stem from any inherent qualities or basic definitions of religiosity. Rather, it is the product of the confrontation of the man of faith with specific historical and cultural circumstances. Therefore, as you read *The Lonely Man of Faith*, keep in mind the following questions: What are the possible solutions to the problem of the man of faith’s historical loneliness? Is it perhaps insoluble? Even if the problem admits of no solution, one must still respond to it somehow. What course of action

6. *Tradition in an Untraditional Age* (London, 1990), p. 41. To be sure, any depiction of inner human experience is necessarily subjective and therefore it is difficult to convey; but the man of faith’s alienation from contemporary society makes it even less likely that his words will strike a responsive chord in his listeners.

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does Rabbi Soloveitchik advocate? Consider these questions especially when reading the end of the book.

THE LONELY MAN OF FAITH TODAY

Beyond the question of how Rabbi Soloveitchik himself understood the historical loneliness of the man of faith when he wrote this work approximately fifty years ago, there is the question of its contemporary relevance. Is today's man of faith lonely in the same way? Is the dialectical balance Rabbi Soloveitchik advocates challenged more by an ascendant Adam I or by an overreaching Adam II? At the time he wrote *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Rabbi Soloveitchik was concerned with Adam I's encroachment upon Adam II, but other situations would call for ensuring that the reverse does not occur.

In fact, over the course of his career Rabbi Soloveitchik himself shifted the emphasis of his concern. Early in his career, he took issue with those who saw man only as a spiritual being; later in his career, he took issue with those who saw man solely as a natural being. Although the dialectical tensions presented in *Halakhic Man* and in *The Lonely Man of Faith* are not identical, it is noteworthy that in the former, Rabbi Soloveitchik's main dispute is with the otherworldliness of *homo religiosus*, while in the latter his major dispute is with Adam I's despiritualization of man. When one espouses a dialectical philosophy, changing circumstances may demand a changing emphasis, but nevertheless it is critical that one keep in mind the dialectic in its fullness. Thus, in applying Rabbi Soloveitchik's thought, one must reassess which side of the dialectic he posits requires strengthening today. It may turn out that it is the same element Rabbi Soloveitchik felt the need to highlight in his time and place, or it may turn out that it is the opposing element; in either case, the dialectical

whole, and the value system it expresses, retains its cogency and significance.

* * *

A READING GUIDE

To assist the reader in following Rabbi Soloveitchik's argument, I would like to conclude by presenting two outlines of the book, one briefly tracing its overall structure and the other detailing the contents of each chapter.

THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK:

Introduction – I.A	The problem
I.B	Biblical framework
I.C–II, IV.A	Contrasts between Adam I and Adam II
III, IV.B–VII	Contrasts between communities formed by Adam I and Adam II
VIII	Ontological loneliness
IX	Historical loneliness
IX.D, X	Conclusion(s)

THE CONTENTS OF EACH CHAPTER:

Introduction
I. The issue: loneliness
A. Ontological and historical loneliness
B. The Biblical framework: Genesis 1 and 2
C–D. Adam I
II. Contrasts between Adam I and Adam II
III. Adam I's community (natural work community)
IV. A. Dignity vs. redemption (more on Adam I vs. Adam II)
B–C. Adam II's community (covenantal faith community)
V. God as a member of the Adam II community
VI. The cosmic encounter with God

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- VII. Prayer and prophecy communities (Adam II)
- VIII. Ontological loneliness – Adam I/Adam II oscillation
 - A. Man's tragic destiny; the role of Halakhah
 - B. Man must be both Adam I and Adam II
 - C. Complete redemption is impossible
- IX. Historical loneliness
 - A. Contemporary dilemma
 - B. Religion of Adam I
 - C. Autonomy of faith (Adam II)
 - D. Implications of A–C (Conclusion #1)
- X. Conclusion (#2)

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IT IS NOT the plan of this essay to discuss the millennium-old problem of faith and reason. Theory is not my concern at the moment. I want instead to focus attention on a human life situation in which the man of faith as an individual concrete being, with his cares and hopes, concerns and needs, joys and sad moments, is entangled. Therefore, whatever I am going to say here has been derived not from philosophical dialectics, abstract speculation, or detached impersonal reflections, but from actual situations and experiences with which I have been confronted. Indeed, the term “lecture” is, in this context, a misnomer. It is rather a tale of a personal dilemma. Instead of talking theology, in the didactic sense, eloquently and in balanced sentences, I would like, hesitantly and haltingly, to confide in you, and to share with you some concerns which weigh heavily on my mind and which frequently assume the proportions of an awareness of crisis.

I have no problem-solving thoughts. I do not intend to suggest a new method of remedying the human situation which

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I am about to describe; neither do I believe that it can be remedied at all. The role of the man of faith, whose religious experience is fraught with inner conflicts and incongruities, who oscillates between ecstasy in God's companionship and despair when he feels abandoned by God, and who is torn asunder by the heightened contrast between self-appreciation and abnegation, has been a difficult one since the times of Abraham and Moses. It would be presumptuous of me to attempt to convert the passionate, antinomic faith-experience into a eudaemonic, harmonious one, while the Biblical knights of faith lived heroically with this very tragic and paradoxical experience.

All I want is to follow the advice given by Elihu the son of Berachel of old, who said, "I will speak that I may find relief" (Job 32:20); for there is a redemptive quality for an agitated mind in the spoken word, and a tormented soul finds peace in confessing.

I

A.

THE NATURE OF the dilemma can be stated in a three-word sentence. I am lonely. Let me emphasize, however, that by stating “I am lonely” I do not intend to convey to you the impression that I am alone. I, thank God, do enjoy the love and friendship of many. I meet people, talk, preach, argue, reason; I am surrounded by comrades and acquaintances. And yet, companionship and friendship do not alleviate the passional experience of loneliness which trails me constantly. I am lonely because at times I feel rejected and thrust away by everybody, not excluding my most intimate friends, and the words of the Psalmist, “My father and my mother have forsaken me” (27:10), ring quite often in my ears like the plaintive cooing of the turtledove. It is a strange, alas, absurd experience, engendering sharp, enervating pain as well as a stimulating, cathartic feeling. I despair because I am lonely and, hence, feel frustrated. On the other hand, I also feel invigorated because this very experience of loneliness presses everything in me into the service of God. In my “desolate, howling solitude” (Deut. 32:10) I experience

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a growing awareness that, to paraphrase Plotinus's apothegm about prayer, this service to which I, a lonely and solitary individual, am committed is wanted and gracefully accepted by God in His transcendental loneliness and numinous solitude.

I must address myself to the obvious question: why am I beset by this feeling of loneliness and being unwanted? Is it the Kierkegaardian anguish – an ontological fear nurtured by the awareness of non-being threatening one's existence – that assails me, or is this feeling of loneliness solely due to my own personal stresses, cares, and frustrations? Or is it perhaps the result of the pervasive state of mind of Western man who has become estranged from himself, a state with which all of us as Westerners are acquainted?

I believe that even though all three explanations might be true to some extent, the genuine and central cause of the feeling of loneliness from which I cannot free myself is to be found in a different dimension, namely, in the experience of faith itself. I am lonely because, in my humble, inadequate way, I am a man of faith for whom to be means to believe, and who substituted "*credo*" for "*cogito*" in the time-honored Cartesian maxim.¹ Apparently, in this role, as a man of faith, I must experience a sense of loneliness which is of a compound nature. It is a blend of that which is inseparably interwoven into the very texture of the faith gesture, characterizing the unfluctuating metaphysical destiny of the man of faith, and of that which is extraneous to the act of believing and stems from the ever-changing human-historical situation with all its whimsicality. On the one hand, the man of faith has been

1. This is, of course, a rhetorical phrase, since all emotional and volitional activity was included in the Cartesian *cogitatio* as *modi cogitandi*. In fact, faith in the existence of an intelligent *causa prima* was for Descartes an integral part of his logical postulate system, by which he proves the existence of the external world.

a solitary figure throughout the ages, indeed millennia, and no one has succeeded in escaping this unalterable destiny which is an “objective” awareness rather than a subjective feeling. On the other hand, it is undeniably true that this basic awareness expresses itself in a variety of ways, utilizing the whole gamut of one’s affective emotional life, which is extremely responsive to outward challenges and moves along with the tide of cultural and historical change. Therefore, it is my intent to analyze this experience at both levels: at the ontological, at which it is a root awareness, and at the historical, at which a highly sensitized and agitated heart, overwhelmed by the impact of social and cultural forces, filters this root awareness through the medium of painful, frustrating emotions.

As a matter of fact, the investigation at the second level is my prime concern since I am mainly interested in contemporary man of faith who is, due to his peculiar position in our secular society, lonely in a special way. No matter how time-honored and time-hallowed the interpenetration of faith and loneliness is, and it certainly goes back to the dawn of the Judaic covenant, contemporary man of faith lives through a particularly difficult and agonizing crisis.

Let me spell out this passional experience of contemporary man of faith.

He looks upon himself as a stranger in modern society, which is technically minded, self-centered, and self-loving, almost in a sickly narcissistic fashion, scoring honor upon honor, piling up victory upon victory, reaching for the distant galaxies, and seeing in the here-and-now sensible world the only manifestation of being. What can a man of faith like myself, living by a doctrine which has no technical potential, by a law which cannot be tested in the laboratory, steadfast

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in his loyalty to an eschatological vision whose fulfillment cannot be predicted with any degree of probability, let alone certainty, even by the most complex, advanced mathematical calculations – what can such a man say to a functional, utilitarian society which is saeculum-oriented and whose practical reasons of the mind have long ago supplanted the sensitive reasons of the heart?

It would be worthwhile to add the following in order to place the dilemma in the proper focus. I have never been seriously troubled by the problem of the Biblical doctrine of creation vis-à-vis the scientific story of evolution at both the cosmic and the organic levels, nor have I been perturbed by the confrontation of the mechanistic interpretation of the human mind with the Biblical spiritual concept of man. I have not been perplexed by the impossibility of fitting the mystery of revelation into the framework of historical empiricism. Moreover, I have not even been troubled by the theories of Biblical criticism which contradict the very foundations upon which the sanctity and integrity of the Scriptures rest. However, while theoretical oppositions and dichotomies have never tormented my thoughts, I could not shake off the disquieting feeling that the practical role of the man of faith within modern society is a very difficult, indeed, a paradoxical one.

The purpose of this essay, then, is to define the great dilemma confronting contemporary man of faith. Of course, as I already remarked, by defining the dilemma we do not expect to find its solution, for the dilemma is insoluble. However, the defining itself is a worthwhile cognitive gesture which, I hope, will yield a better understanding of ourselves and our commitment. Knowledge in general and self-knowledge in particular are gained not only from discovering logical answers but also from formulating logical, even though unanswerable, questions.

The human *logos* is as concerned with an honest inquiry into an insoluble antinomy which leads to intellectual despair and humility as it is with an unprejudiced true solution of a complex problem arousing joy and enhancing one's intellectual determination and boldness.

Before beginning the analysis, we must determine within which frame of reference, psychological and empirical or theological and Biblical, our dilemma should be described. I believe you will agree with me that we do not have much choice in the matter; for, to the man of faith, self-knowledge has one connotation only – to understand one's place and role within the scheme of events and things willed and approved by God, when He ordered finitude to emerge out of infinity and the Universe, including man, to unfold itself. This kind of selfknowledge may not always be pleasant or comforting. On the contrary, it might from time to time express itself in a painful appraisal of the difficulties which man of faith, caught in his paradoxical destiny, has to encounter, for knowledge at both planes, the scientific and the personal, is not always a eudaemonic experience. However, this unpleasant prospect should not deter us from our undertaking.

Before I go any further, I want to make the following reservation. Whatever I am about to say is to be seen only as a modest attempt on the part of a man of faith to interpret his spiritual perceptions and emotions in modern theological and philosophical categories. My interpretive gesture is completely subjective and lays no claim to representing a definitive Halakhic philosophy. If my audience will feel that these interpretations are also relevant to their perceptions and emotions, I shall feel amply rewarded. However, I shall not feel hurt if my thoughts will find no response in the hearts of my listeners.

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B.

We all know that the Bible offers two accounts of the creation of man. We are also aware of the theory suggested by Bible critics attributing these two accounts to two different traditions and sources. Of course, since we do unreservedly accept the unity and integrity of the Scriptures and their divine character, we reject this hypothesis which is based, like much Biblical criticism, on literary categories invented by modern man, ignoring completely the eidetic-noetic content of the Biblical story. It is, of course, true that the two accounts of the creation of man differ considerably. This incongruity was not discovered by the Bible critics. Our sages of old were aware of it.² However, the answer lies not in an alleged dual tradition but in dual man, not in an imaginary contradiction between two versions but in a real contradiction in the nature of man. The two accounts deal with two Adams, two men, two fathers of mankind, two types, two representatives of humanity, and it is no wonder that they are not identical. Let us just read these two accounts.

In Genesis 1 we read: “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. And God blessed them and God said unto them: Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the heaven, and over every living thing that creepeth over the earth.”

In Genesis 2, the account differs substantially from the one we just read: “And the eternal God formed the man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. And the eternal God planted a garden eastward in Eden....And the eternal God took the

2. Vide *Berakhot* 61a; *Ketuvot* 8a; Nachmanides, Genesis 2:7; *Kuzari*, 1v.

man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it.”

I want to point out four major discrepancies between these two accounts.

1. In the story of the creation of Adam the first, it is told that the latter was created in the image of God, **בצלם אֱלֹהִים**, while nothing is said about how his body was formed. In the account of the creation of Adam the second, it is stated that he was fashioned from the dust of the ground and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

2. Adam the first received the mandate from the Almighty to fill the earth and subdue it, **מלאו את הארץ וכבשה**. Adam the second was charged with the duty to cultivate the garden and to keep it, **לעבדה ולשמרה**.

3. In the story of Adam the first, both male and female were created concurrently, while Adam the second emerged alone, with Eve appearing subsequently as his helpmate and complement.

4. Finally, and this is a discrepancy of which Biblical criticism has made so much, while in the first account only the name of E-lohim appears, in the second, E-lohim is used in conjunction with the Tetragrammaton.

c.

Let us portray these two men, Adam the first and Adam the second, in typological categories.

There is no doubt that the term “image of God” in the first account refers to man’s inner charismatic endowment as a creative being. Man’s likeness to God expresses itself in man’s striving and ability to become a creator. Adam the first, who was fashioned in the image of God, was blessed with great drive for creative activity and immeasurable resources for the realization of this goal, the most outstanding of which is the intelligence,

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the human mind, capable of confronting the outside world and inquiring into its complex workings.³ In spite of the boundless divine generosity providing man with many intellectual capacities and interpretive perspectives in his approach to reality, God, in imparting the blessing to Adam the first and giving him the mandate to subdue nature, directed Adam's attention to the functional and practical aspects of his intellect through which man is able to gain control of nature. Other intellectual inquiries, such as the metaphysical or axiologico-qualitative, no matter how incisive and penetrating, have never granted man dominion over his environment. The Greeks, who excelled in philosophical noesis, were less skillful in technological achievements. Modern science has emerged victorious from its encounter with nature because it has sacrificed qualitative-metaphysical speculation for the sake of a functional duplication of reality and substituted the *quantus* for the *qualis* question.

Therefore, Adam the first is interested in just a single aspect of reality and asks one question only – “How does the cosmos function?” He is not fascinated by the question, “Why does the cosmos function at all?” nor is he interested in the question, “What is its essence?” He is only curious to know how it works. In fact, even this “how” question with which Adam the first is preoccupied is limited in scope. He is concerned not with the question per se, but with its practical implications. He raises not a metaphysical but a practical, technical “how” question. To be precise, his question is related not to the genuine functioning of the cosmos in itself, but to the possibility of reproducing the dynamics of the cosmos by employing quantified-mathematized media which man evolves through postulation and creative thinking. The conative movement of

3. Vide *Yesode ha-Torah*, 1v, 8–9; *Moreh Nevukhim*, 1, 1.

attraction which Adam the first experiences toward the world is not of an exploratory-cognitive nature. It is rather nurtured by the selfish desire on the part of Adam to better his own position in relation to his environment. Adam the first is overwhelmed by one quest, namely, to harness and dominate the elemental natural forces and to put them at his disposal. This practical interest arouses his will to learn the secrets of nature. He is completely utilitarian as far as motivation, teleology, design, and methodology are concerned.

D.

What is Adam the first out to achieve? What is the objective toward which he incessantly drives himself with enormous speed? The objective, it is self-evident, can be only one, namely, that which God put up before him: to be “man,” to be himself. Adam the first wants to be human, to discover his identity which is bound up with his humanity. How does Adam find himself? He works with a simple equation introduced by the Psalmist, who proclaimed the singularity and unique station of man in nature: “For Thou made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with honor (dignity) and glory” (8:6).⁴ Man is an honorable being. In other words, man is a dignified being

4. As a matter of fact, the term *kavod* has a dual meaning in Hebrew: (1) majesty, as in the phrase מלכותו כבוד; (2) dignity, as in the Halakhic phrase כבוד הבריות. That dignity is a criterion by which the worth of an individual is measured can be demonstrated by the Halakhah that *bezuyim*, self-abased persons, are disqualified from giving testimony. In particular, the phrase האוכל בשוק הרי זה דומה לכלב, “Whoever eats in the market [or at any public place] acts like a dog,” used by both the Talmud (*Kiddushin* 40b) and Maimonides (*Mishneh Torah, Eduk* x1, 5), is characteristic of the attitude of the Halakhah toward a man who has lost his sense of dignity. Likewise, I wish to point out the law that the principle of human dignity overrides certain Halakhic injunctions: vide *Berakhot* 19b. See also Nachmanides, Leviticus 19:1 (the description of the quality of sanctity).

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and to be human means to live with dignity. However, this equation of two unknown qualities requires further elaboration. We must be ready to answer the question: What is dignity and how can it be realized? The answer we find again in the words of the Psalmist, who addressed himself to this obvious question and who termed man not only an honorable but also a glorious being, spelling out the essence of glory in unmistakable terms: “Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet” (8:7). In other words, dignity was equated by the Psalmist with man’s capability of dominating his environment and exercising control over it. Man acquires dignity through glory, through his majestic posture vis-à-vis his environment.⁵

The brute’s existence is an undignified one because it is a helpless existence. Human existence is a dignified one because it is a glorious, majestic, powerful existence. Hence, dignity is unobtainable as long as man has not reclaimed himself from coexistence with nature and has not risen from a non-reflective, degradingly helpless instinctive life to an intelligent, planned, and majestic one. For the sake of clarification of the double equation humanity = dignity and dignity = glory-majesty, it is necessary to add another thought. There is no dignity without responsibility, and one cannot assume responsibility as long as he is not capable of living up to his commitments. Only when man rises to the heights of freedom of action and creativity of mind does he begin to implement the mandate of dignified

5. It might be pointed out that in the Septuagint the word *kavod* is here given an intellectualistic coloring, being rendered as *doxē*. The Vulgate had the more literal *gloria*. In other contexts in which the term *kavod* signifies the human personality rather than honor, it is variously translated. See, e.g., Psalms 16:9, לְכֵן שִׂמְחָה לְבִי וּיְגַל, where כְּבוֹדִי is rendered *hē glossa mou* and *lingua mea*, respectively; and Psalms 30:13, לִמְעַן יִזְמְרֶךָ כְּבוֹד, where כְּבוֹד is translated as *hē doxa mou* and *gloria mea*.

responsibility entrusted to him by his Maker. Dignity of man expressing itself in the awareness of being responsible and of being capable of discharging his responsibility cannot be realized as long as he has not gained mastery over his environment. For life in bondage to insensate elemental forces is a non-responsible and hence an undignified affair.⁶

Man of old who could not fight disease and succumbed in multitudes to yellow fever or any other plague with degrading helplessness could not lay claim to dignity. Only the man who builds hospitals, discovers therapeutic techniques, and saves lives is blessed with dignity. Man of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who needed several days to travel from Boston to New York was less dignified than modern man who attempts to conquer space, boards a plane at the New York airport at midnight and takes several hours later a leisurely walk along the streets of London.⁷ The brute is helpless, and, therefore, not dignified. Civilized man has gained limited control of nature and has become, in certain respects, her master, and with his mastery he has attained dignity as well. His mastery has made it possible for him to act in accordance with his responsibility.

Hence, Adam the first is aggressive, bold, and victory-minded. His motto is success, triumph over the cosmic forces. He engages in creative work, trying to imitate his Maker (*imitatio Dei*). The most characteristic representative of Adam the first is the mathematical scientist who whisks us away from

6. Vide Nachmanides, Genesis 1:24: כדכתיב וכבוד והדר תעטרו והוא מגמת פניו בחכמה וברעת וכשרון המעשה “As it is written, ‘and [Thou] hast crowned him with honor and glory,’ which refers to his (i.e., man’s) intelligent, wise, and technically resourceful striving.”

7. It is obvious that this essay refers to Adam the first as a type representing the collective human technological genius, and not to individual members of the human race.

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the array of tangible things, from color and sound, from heat, touch, and smell, which are the only phenomena accessible to our senses, into a formal relational world of thought constructs, the product of his “arbitrary” postulating and spontaneous positing and deducing. This world, woven out of human thought processes, functions with amazing precision and runs parallel to the workings of the real multifarious world of our senses. The modern scientist does not try to explain nature. He only duplicates it. In his full resplendent glory as a creative agent of God, he constructs his own world and in mysterious fashion succeeds in controlling his environment through manipulating his own mathematical constructs and creations.

Adam the first is not only a creative theoretician. He is also a creative aesthete. He fashions ideas with his mind, and beauty with his heart. He enjoys both his intellectual and his aesthetic creativity and takes pride in it. He also displays creativity in the world of the norm: he legislates for himself norms and laws because a dignified existence is an orderly one. Anarchy and dignity are mutually exclusive. He is this-worldly-minded, finitude-oriented, beauty-centered. Adam the first is always an aesthete, whether engaged in an intellectual or in an ethical performance. His conscience is energized not by the idea of the good, but by that of the beautiful. His mind is questing not for the true, but for the pleasant and functional, which are rooted in the aesthetical, not the noetic-ethical, sphere.⁸

In doing all this, Adam the first is trying to carry out the mandate entrusted to him by his Maker who, at dawn of the

8. It is worthwhile to note that Maimonides interpreted the story of the fall of man in terms of the betrayal of the intellectual and the ethical for the sake of the aesthetic. The Hebrew phrase עץ הרעה טוב ורע (Gen. 2:17) was translated by Maimonides as “the tree of experiencing the pleasant and unpleasant” (*Moreh Nevukhim*, 1, 2).

sixth mysterious day of creation, addressed Himself to man and summoned him to “fill the earth and subdue it.” It is God who decreed that the story of Adam the first be the great saga of freedom of man-slave who gradually transforms himself into man-master. While pursuing this goal, driven by an urge which he cannot but obey, Adam the first transcends the limits of the reasonable and probable and ventures into the open spaces of a boundless universe. Even this longing for vastness, no matter how adventurous and fantastic, is legitimate. Man reaching for the distant stars is acting in harmony with his nature which was created, willed, and directed by his Maker. It is a manifestation of obedience to rather than rebellion against God. Thus, in sum, we have obtained the following triple equation: humanity = dignity = responsibility = majesty.