

• Review Article

The Revelation According to the Doctrine of Judaism: A Criterion S. L. Steinheim, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1990

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SUMMARY

Modern Judaism's foremost treatment of divine revelation, the 2000-page four-volume work by the German Jew S. L. Steinheim (1789–1866) titled *Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge, ein Schiboleth* (Frankfurt am Main, 1835) has until now not been widely known outside its German orbit. Translation of the first volume into English by Joshua O. Haberman, rabbi-emeritus of Washington (D.C.) Hebrew Temple under the title *Philosopher of Revelation. The Life and Thought of S. L. Steinheim* rectifies that neglect at an important time of theological debate over the nature of divine revelation.

Steinheim defends revelation as supernatural and as objectively given, as conceptual and doctrinal, and moreover as biblical. The Torah-preserved revelatory messages are the foundation of faith.

Steinheim rejects philosophical reasoning as the method of arriving at revealed truth. Equally insistently he rejects fideism; he refuses to raise revelation above human understanding. He propounds a criterion for disqualifying both natural religion and natural theology which, like the pagan myths and secular philosophy, he attributes to conjecture. They are disqualified as revelation by the test of logical contradiction. Reason thus retains a capacity for judgment on the truth of revelation.

Divine revelation is historically given, but transcends both universal human consciousness and evolutionary development. It points up the inadequacy of unaided human wisdom. It contradicts assertions of reason even about revelation, and affirms its own superior truth.

Steinheim is disinterested in the phenomenology of revelation. His primary objective is to dethrone human reasoning as the source of revelation.

Revelation is not merely of intellectual importance, but calls for spiritual rebirth and involves the whole meaning and worth of life. Steinheim insists that the truth of revelation can be known by unbelievers. It is accredited by objective criteria shared by all humans of integrity. Revelation captures reason rather than replacing or destroying it.

Steinheim writes at times as if revelation necessarily contradicts reason, without carefully distinguishing philosophical reasoning from reason as an instrument for recognizing truth. He seems at times to

imply that revealed truth not only compels a recognition of its formal validity, but also constrains personal assent and appropriation. The Reformation view that faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and not only that the Spirit uses truth as a means of persuasion, is missing. Steinheim also ignores the role of general revelation and the Reformation emphasis that belief in God is prephilosophical.

The central revelatory doctrines, he declares, are the unity of God, the freedom of God, and divine creation *ex nihilo*. Reason did not introduce these emphases, yet it is constrained to approve them. The superior truths of revealed religion and faith are evident from a rational comparison with other truth-claims. Non-revelatory views embrace a multiple of gods, have an incoherent view of origins, and affirm human determinacy that erodes responsibility.

Steinheim's reflection of traditional Jewish theology has novel nuances. He affirms the authority of the Torah but treats Torah law as non-revelatory. Other departures are noted by the reviewer.

Steinheim's critique of Christianity is quite unsparing. He makes no contact with the claim that Jesus Christ fulfils the Old Testament. He considers Christianity an amalgam of revelation and paganism: trinitarianism assertedly annuls the unity of God, original sin implies that matter is evil and undermines God's freedom. The Apostle Paul is said to teach that the Torah is a cause of evil. Steinheim caricatures the New Testament doctrine of atonement as an indulgence in slaughter to promote justice. The doctrine of hell he considers a pagan carry-over. Revelation, he contends, is silent on immortality; confidence in eternal life (for the godly, that is) rests on trust in the Creator (the wicked supposedly are annihilated).

Much as Steinheim brushes aside Christianity and is reductive of his own tradition, the avoidance of a merely evolutionary explanation of religion (to which he nonetheless assimilates humanity's primal history) and of a merely existential reconstruction is noteworthy. The insistence on rational and propositional revelation and on the role of reason as a test of truth, and on the superior consistency of biblical theism, is specially significant in an era when European neo-orthodoxy and its excessively qualified role for reason has largely run its course.

RÉSUMÉ

L'ouvrage majeur, deux mille pages en quatre volumes, du juif allemand S. L. Steinheim (1789-1866) sur la révélation divine dans le judaïsme moderne, *Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge, ein Schiboleth* (Francfort-sur-le-Main, 1835) est resté peu connu jusqu'à nos jours, hors d'Allemagne. La traduction en anglais du premier volume, par Joshua O. Haberman, rabbin honoraire du Hebrew Temple de Washington (D.C.), intitulée *Philosopher of Revelation. The Life and Thought of S. L. Steinheim*, corrige cette négligence à un moment important du débat théologique sur la nature de la révélation divine.

Steinheim défend la thèse suivante sur la révélation: elle est surnaturelle, donnée sur un mode objectif, conceptuelle et doctrinale, et, en outre, biblique. Les messages de révélation conservés dans la Torah constituent le fondement de la foi.

Steinheim exclut le raisonnement philosophique comme méthode pour parvenir à la vérité révélée. Avec une égale insistance, il rejette le fidéisme; il refuse d'élever la révélation au-dessus de la compréhension humaine. Il propose un critère pour disqualifier la religion naturelle et la théologie naturelle – qu'il impute aux conjectures humaines, à l'instar des mythes païens et de la philosophie séculière. Elles sont disqualifiées, en tant qu'elles prétendent révéler, par l'épreuve de la contradiction logique. Ainsi la raison garde une certaine capacité de jugement quant à la vérité de la révélation.

La révélation divine se communique historiquement, mais transcende à la fois la conscience humaine universelle et le développement évolutif. Elle fait ressortir l'insuffisance de la raison humaine non assistée. Elle contredit certaines assertions de la raison, même sur la révélation, et affirme sa vérité supérieure.

Steinheim se désintéresse de la phénoménologie de la révélation. Son objectif principal est de détrôner le raisonnement humain comme source de révélation. La révélation n'importe pas seulement au plan intellectuel, mais exige une renaissance spirituelle, et engage totalement le sens et la valeur de la vie. Steinheim insiste sur le fait que la vérité de la révélation peut être connue des incroyants. Elle est accréditée par des critères objectifs partagés par tous les humains intègres. La révélation s'empare de la raison plutôt qu'elle ne la remplace ou ne la détruit.

Steinheim s'exprime parfois comme si la révélation était nécessairement en contradiction avec la raison: sans distinguer avec assez de soin entre le raisonnement philosophique et la raison en tant qu'instrument pour reconnaître la vérité. Il semble parfois supposer que la vérité révélée n'oblige pas seulement à la

reconnaissance de sa validité formelle: qu'elle contraint aussi au consentement et à l'appropriation personnels. L'idée de la Réforme, que la foi est le don du Saint-Esprit, celui-ci ne se bornant pas à employer la vérité comme moyen de persuasion, est absente. Steinheim ignore également le rôle de la révélation générale, et le caractère préphilosophique de la foi, sur lequel insistaient les Réformateurs.

Les doctrines centrales de la révélation, déclaratif, sont l'unité de Dieu, la liberté de Dieu, et la création divine *ex nihilo*. La raison n'a pas introduit ces points importants, mais elle est pourtant forcée de les approuver. Les vérités supérieures de la religion révélée et de la foi sont évidentes par comparaison rationnelle avec les autres conceptions prétendant à la vérité. Celles-ci, qui ne partent pas de la révélation, admettant une multitude de dieux, ont des vues incohérentes sur les origines, et affirment une détermination des conduites humaines qui exténue la responsabilité.

La pensée de Steinheim reflète la théologie juive traditionnelle, mais avec des notes originales. Il affirme l'autorité de la Torah, mais, pour lui, la loi dans la Torah ne relève pas de la révélation. L'auteur du présent article a remarqué d'autres écarts.

Steinheim critique le christianisme sans ménagement. Il ne touche pas la thèse selon laquelle Jésus-Christ accomplit l'Ancien Testament. Il considère que le christianisme amalgame révélation et paganisme: la doctrine de la Trinité annule, d'après lui, l'unité de Dieu, le péché originel implique que la matière est mauvaise et sape la liberté de Dieu. L'apôtre Paul, prétend Steinheim, enseigne que la loi est une cause du péché. Steinheim caricature la doctrine néotestamentaire de l'expiation, autorisation du crime dans l'intérêt de la justice. La doctrine de l'enfer est, pour lui, un apport païen. La révélation, soutient-il, garde le silence sur l'immortalité: l'assurance de la vie éternelle (pour les fidèles) repose sur la confiance dans le Créateur (les méchants sont censés être annihilés).

Alors que Steinheim écarte le christianisme et opère une certaine réduction sur son propre héritage, il est remarquable qu'il évite l'explication purement évolutionniste de la religion (tout en s'y conformant, néanmoins, pour les débuts de l'histoire humaine), de même que toute reconstruction purement existentielle. Qu'il insiste sur la révélation rationnelle et propositionnelle, sur le rôle de la raison dans l'épreuve de vérité, et sur la cohérence supérieure du théisme biblique, revêt un surcroît de signification à une époque où la néo-orthodoxie européenne, elle qui ne laissait à la raison qu'un rôle mineur, a pratiquement achevé sa carrière.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die bedeutendste Abhandlung der göttlichen Offenbarung im modernen Judentum, das 2000-seitige vierbändige Werk des deutschen Juden S.L. Steinheim (1789–1866) mit dem Titel *Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge, ein Schiboleth* (Frankfurt am Main, 1835), war bisher außerhalb des deutschsprachigen Raumes wenig bekannt. Mit der Übersetzung des ersten Bandes ins Englische von Joshua O. Haberman, Rabbi emeritus des Washington (D.C.) Hebrew Temple, unter dem Titel *Philosopher of Revelation. The Life and Thought of S.L. Steinheim*, wird diesem Mangel zu einem wichtigen Zeitpunkt der theologischen Debatte über die Natur der göttlichen Offenbarung Abhilfe geschaffen.

Steinheim verteidigt die göttliche Offenbarung als übernatürlich und objektiv gegeben, als konzept- und lehrmäßig und darüber hinaus als biblisch. Die in der Tora überlieferten Offenbarungsbotschaften bilden die Grundlage des Glaubens.

Steinheim lehnt die philosophische Argumentation als Methode zur Erkenntnis der Offenbarungswahrheiten ab. Genauso nachdrücklich lehnt er den Fideismus ab; er weigert sich, die göttliche Offenbarung über die menschliche Vernunft zu erheben. Er nennt ein Kriterium zur Disqualifizierung sowohl der natürlichen Religion als auch der natürlichen Theologie, die er für Mutmaßungen analog den heidnischen Mythen und der säkularen Philosophie hält. Durch die Bewährungsprobe des logischen Widerspruches scheiden sie als göttliche Offenbarung aus. Der Vernunft wird dabei ein Urteilsvermögen über die Wahrheit der göttlichen Offenbarung zugeschrieben.

Göttliche Offenbarung ist historisch gegeben, aber sie transzendiert sowohl das universale menschliche Bewußtsein als auch die evolutionäre Entwicklung. Sie verdeutlicht die Unzulänglichkeit der alleinigen menschlichen Weisheit. Sie widerspricht Behauptungen der Vernunft selbst hinsichtlich der göttlichen Offenbarung und bekräftigt ihre eigene überlegene Wahrheit.

Steinheim interessiert sich nicht für die Phänomenologie der göttlichen Offenbarung. Sein Hauptziel besteht darin, die menschliche Vernunft als Offenbarungsquelle zu entthronen.

Göttliche Offenbarung sei nicht nur von intellektueller Bedeutung, sondern fordere auch zur geistlichen Wiedergeburt auf und umfasse den ganzen Lebenssinn und Lebenswert. Steinheim besteht darauf, daß die Wahrheit der Offenbarung von Ungläubigen erkannt werden kann. Sie wird durch objektive Kriterien bestätigt, die alle intellektuell redlichen Menschen teilen. Offenbarung nehme die Vernunft eher gefangen als sie zu ersetzen oder zu zerstören.

Zuweilen schreibt Steinheim, als ob Offenbarung

der Vernunft widersprechen müßte, ohne daß er dabei einen genauen Unterschied zwischen philosophischer Argumentation und der Vernunft als Mittel zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit macht. Manchmal scheint er zu implizieren, daß offenbarte Wahrheit nicht nur zur Anerkennung ihrer formalen Gültigkeit zwingt, sondern auch persönliche Bejahung und Aneignung fordert. Die Sicht der Reformation, daß der Glaube Gabe des Heiligen Geistes sei, und daß der Geist die Wahrheit nicht nur als Mittel der Überzeugung gebraucht, fehlt bei Steinheim. Er ignoriert auch die Rolle der allgemeinen Offenbarung und die Betonung der Reformatoren, daß der Glaube an Gott präphilosophisch sei.

Er behauptet, die Einheit Gottes, die Freiheit Gottes und die göttliche Schöpfung aus dem Nichts seien die zentralen Offenbarungslehren. Diese Schwerpunkte werden nicht von der Vernunft her abgeleitet, aber die Vernunft muß sie billigen. Die überlegenen Wahrheiten der offenbarten Religion und des offenbarten Glaubens sind offensichtlich, wenn man sie mit anderen Wahrheitsbehauptungen rational vergleicht. Ansichten, die nicht von einer göttlichen Offenbarung ausgehen, umfassen eine Vielfalt von Göttern, haben einen unklaren Standpunkt hinsichtlich der Ursprünge und bekräftigen einen menschlichen Determinismus, der die menschliche Verantwortung untergräbt.

Steinheims Darstellung der traditionellen jüdischen Theologie hat neuartige Nuancen. Er bekräftigt zwar die Autorität der Tora, aber er betrachtet das Gesetz der Tora nicht als Offenbarung. Andere Abweichungen werden vom Rezensenten festgestellt.

Die von Steinheim am Christentum geübte Kritik ist absolut schonungslos. Er befaßt sich überhaupt nicht mit der Behauptung, daß Jesus Christus die Erfüllung des AT sei. Das Christentum betrachtet er als eine Mischung von göttlicher Offenbarung und Heidentum: die Trinitätslehre sei die Auflösung der Einheit Gottes, die Lehre der Erbsünde impliziere, daß die Materie böse sei und untergrabe die Freiheit Gottes. Dem Apostel Paulus wird die Lehre unterstellt, die Tora sei eine Ursache des Bösen. Steinheim karikiert die neutestamentliche Lehre des Sühnopfers als ein Schwelgen in Blut, um Gerechtigkeit herzustellen. Die Lehre von der Hölle sei ein Relikt des Heidentums. Die göttliche Offenbarung schweige über die Unsterblichkeit; die Gewißheit ewigen Lebens (zumindest für die Gottgefälligen) beruhe auf dem Vertrauen in den Schöpfer (die Bösen werden angeblich vernichtet werden).

So sehr Steinheim das Christentum verwirft und seine eigene Tradition reduktiv auslegt, ist die Tatsache bemerkenswert, daß er sowohl einen bloße evolutionäre als auch eine existentielle Erklärung der Religion meidet (allerdings sieht er die Urgeschichte der Menschheit im evolutionären Rahmen). Das Bestehen auf rational erkennbarer

Offenbarung, auf der Rolle der Vernunft als Prüfstein der Wahrheit und auf der überlegenen Schlüssigkeit des biblischen Theismus ist von besonderer Bedeutung zu einer Zeit, in der die europäische Neo-Orthodoxie mit ihrer übermäßigen Einschränkung der Rolle der Vernunft ihre Überzeugungskraft größtenteils verloren hat.

Recent translation from the German of one of S. L. Steinheim's four volumes (comprising modern Judaism's fullest treatment of divine revelation) foretokens new theological discussion of that important theme. Confusion regarding the doctrine of revelation is more pernicious than in the case of many other doctrines, since it conditions the whole spectrum of religious belief.

Steinheim (1789–1866) has been called the foremost Jewish philosopher of revelation in the modern era. A gifted physician who abandoned religion for philosophy, and then almost converted to Christianity, Steinheim distanced himself from the then-emerging Reform, Orthodox and Conservative factions, only to offer a system intended to validate Judaism's doctrinal essence. The first volume of his *Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge, ein Schiboleth (The Revelation According to the Doctrine of Judaism. A Criterion)* (Frankfurt am Main, Sigmund Schmerber, 1835) has been rendered along with analytical comments by Joshua O. Haberman, the well-known rabbi-emeritus of Washington Hebrew Congregation, under the title *Philosopher of Revelation. The Life and Thought of S. L. Steinheim* (Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society, 1990).

Steinheim's work is dramatically significant for several reasons. He defends revelation as supernatural and objectively given, as conceptual and doctrinal in content, and moreover as biblical (Torah). The Scripturally preserved divine messages are the foundation of faith. No less importantly, Steinheim proffers a criterion for disqualifying natural religion and speculative philosophy about God as non-revelatory, while he insists that revealed religion by contrast can be validated without doing violence to reason.

Steinheim sweeps aside as unworthy

every effort to justify revelational doctrine on the ground merely of fideism, and every effort also to affirm it on the ground of philosophical reasoning, including natural law or natural theology. While this reviewer has been previously unfamiliar with Steinheim's work, it is noteworthy that, although there are significant differences, many of Steinheim's emphases are found also in the reviewer's multi-volume *God, Revelation and Authority* (Word Books, 1976–83) and his recently published Rutherford Lectures (*Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, Crossway Books, 1990).

Natural religion, speculative philosophy and the pagan myths, Steinheim says, all arise from the same conjectural mental activity, and cannot stand before critical thinking which exposes their inconsistencies and contradictions (pp. 224 f.). The ancient pagan world naively accepted and perpetuated multiple religious claims about gods and their activities. The non-revelational views taken together are 'a beautiful convolution of nonsense and contradiction, decorated with the tinsel of honey-sweet talk and intellectual astuteness' (p. 225). Because man's human comprehension is limited (p. 226), theoretical knowledge simply does not grasp the full reality (p. 228).

By contrast, the Abrahamic covenant offered a divine revelation that dispute all other views as untrue (p. 111). Most biblical theists, however, have been content to distinguish true from false religion merely by asserting the credibility of the Scriptural documents and appealing to faith as the way of knowing. Steinheim contends that revelation aggressively contradicts the assumptions of reason about revelation itself. Yet revelation is borne out *a posteriori* (by subsequent evidence) as superior truth (p. 112), as reason is driven to confess that its own achievement was 'emptiness or even contradiction' (p. 114).

Divine revelation, for Steinheim, points up the inadequacy of unaided human wisdom; its content differs from anything that human consciousness can attain on its own. Revelation cannot be identical with what humans could themselves discover without it; it is not identical with the inner spirit of man or with our own immediate religious

consciousness but is distinct from everyone's consciousness (or virtually everything could pass for revelation). He flees Schleiermacher's notion that 'inner feeling' is the essence of revelation. Revelation is historically given – and not an aspect of universal consciousness – yet it is not evolutionary but transcendent. Revelation is a divine act of free communication, created as it were *ex nihilo*, whereby God audibly reveals himself without cause-and-effect necessity. More narrowly, revelation is the codex Sacred Scripture which in word and writing conveys God's communication.

Steinheim is disinterested in phenomenology of revelation and prophecy; hardly a line of his 2000-page multi-volume exposition deals with experiential or psychological aspects, even in respect to the theophany at Sinai. His primary concern is the dethronement of human reason as the source of revelation, that is, the displacement of rationalistic pretensions that conceal revelation's divine origin and context. God is personally its sole and free source. There is 'no other true source of knowledge regarding the real God besides the revelation in the canon of the Old Testament.' This revelation is 'given' for man's acceptance.

No issue is today more important in presenting the case for supernatural revelation than that of a criterion by which such a claim is to be validated and discriminated from counterfeit claims. There is no need, Steinheim insists, to recast the basic revelatory truths in the idiom and image either of ancient nonbiblical religions or of modern philosophies in order to make them acceptable.

Steinheim wants no part in a mindless leap of faith (such as European neo-orthodoxy enthusiastically approved in the century after his death). As Haberman notes, Steinheim 'disavows an orthodoxy of blind faith that tries to raise revelation above all possible criticism by removing it from all human understanding' (p. 52). The view that reason is to exercise no judgment on matters of faith – or that reason at most should simply accept the deliverances of faith – opens a wide door to superstition and encourages mental decline by abandoning logic to credulity, or it encourages skepticism and

unbelief. Blind authority and blind faith are no answer to blind unbelief.

At the same time Steinheim rejects the somewhat related view that divine revelation is credible only to those who are spiritually reborn, and that apart from such transformation humans although reading or hearing the revelation are incapable of recognizing and understanding it. Were that the case, revelation addressed to unbelievers would be a superfluous divine effort, and external validation would be irrelevant. If the only thing one can say is 'God changed my life through this book' then no objective distinction remains for deciding between revelation and non-revelation (p. 168).

Steinheim seeks to provide a shibboleth, a criterion, that distinguishes revealed doctrines from natural religion and speculative philosophy. Revelation, he emphasizes, can be grasped by any person of common sense, and is not reserved for academicians (p. 273). Revealed truths call for exhibition of their validity. Truth which claims to be the Word of God requires criteria. For Steinheim, as for this reviewer, that criterion is mental – not emotional (the feelings), or imaginative, or a matter of immediate human consciousness. God designed human reason for spiritual perception; it enlists reason 'in accord with its divinely-intended function.'

Reason is a divine gift that raises mankind above the animal world. Reason retains its divine judgment on truths, including the truths of revelation. Revealed truth can be examined critically; revelatory beliefs can stand the test of comparative examination. Faith can offer a criterion of compelling persuasiveness. If God gives a revelation, one must assume that he had equipped mankind by creation to receive it and to establish its authenticity by reliable indicators. This is precisely what the Scriptures teach. Revelation is accredited by objective criteria shared by all humans of integrity.

Validation involves a twofold movement of reason, one preliminary and critical, the other climactic and affirmative. Revelation 'bursts upon the scene' and 'captures reason' rather than replaces it.

At times Haberman represents Steinheim's view as affirming that revelation 'contra-

dicts reason' (p. 52, 83). Steinheim's emphasis on revelational antithesis does in fact lead him now and then to exaggerate the difference between non-revelatory and revelatory thought, as when he says that 'the doctrine of the unity (of God) stands diametrically opposed to the doctrine of reason; regardless, it forces reason to acknowledge it as true so that reason sees itself compelled to reject as lie and deception its own doctrine, as it is by itself and as compared with the doctrine of unity' (p. 239). The case for a real revelation, he remarks, requires proof that what is revealed contradicts a merely rational construction and is generated by the true God (p. 108). This suggests that revelation must clash with pure reason, yet compels reason on strictly rational grounds to acknowledge revelation as the superior truth. 'The data of revelation, if they are to be acknowledged as authentic, must . . . contradict in form and content' all rationalistic dogma 'and yet compel reason to acknowledge them as true' (p. 229). In Haberman's words, the doctrine revealed to Israel 'defies all logic and reason yet must be recognized as an absolute certainty by every person deep down in his innermost being' (p. 300).

Yet in larger context Steinheim when using such language seems to be speaking not of reason as an instrument of knowing but of philosophical reasoning, that is, the intellectual reconstruction of reality and a regard for reason as the source of all knowledge and reflection of the Absolute (p. 53).

The first movement of reason in relation to revelation is to disqualify natural religion and philosophical speculation on the ground of their internal contradictions. The dogmas of reason are not to be confused with revelation. 'If reason subjects its own conclusions to rational critique, it will discover their inadequacy' (p. 87). Reason tears down more than it builds up; the law of contradiction demolishes one view after another, exposing self-destructive inconsistencies. Rational critique unmasking invalidity. Reason is the critical probing organ of the mind, but not its constructing and expounding function (p. 301). Its own productions are invalid and contradictory and open the way to contravention by revelation.

The second movement of reason lies in its

being 'captured' (but not destroyed) by revelation. We have a duty to rationally examine revealed doctrine. 'Only the force of a thought or the power of truth can restrain reason' (p. 87). Revelation requires cognitive consent. The superior truths of faith are evident from a rational comparison of the findings of reason and those of revealed religion (p. 87).

The prime revelatory doctrines are the unity of God, the freedom of God, and divine creation *ex nihilo* which implies human free will since man bears the *imago Dei*. These doctrines strikingly oppose the conflicting and contradictory alternatives of natural religion and speculative philosophy which affirm a variety and plurality of gods, the eternity of nature in some form, and human determinism. Although paganism speaks of the unity of God, the notion reduces to an abstract concept of collectivity (p. 232), a unification embracing all antitheses. Even when pagans worship deity as one deity they do not think of God as exclusively God, but have multiple gods. Jewish monotheism repudiates all plurality.

Reason did not and cannot itself propound the revelatory alternatives. It could not conceive of these doctrines yet is compelled to recognize their truth. Faith captures reason, not by suppressing it, but by contradicting reason's achievements (p. 89) and by confronting them with declarations more in accord with our nature, and eliciting greater consent (p. 90). It negates reason yet wins its approbation in the form of faith that holds reason captive (p. 90).

Reason's critical functions are not annulled, but its dogmatic operations are taken hostage. After examining the revealed doctrines reason is 'compelled' to recognize their truth, in sharp contrast to the inconsistencies and contradictions of the mythical pagan projections which change with the mood and mentality of their devotees in different times and places.

There is at this point a noteworthy contrast between Steinheim's outlook and that of this reviewer. Both agree that logical consistency is a negative test that disqualifies speculative truth-claims; logically inconsistent and self-contradictory views are neither valid nor true. But whether revealed truth

compels not only actual recognition of formal validity, but also personal assent and appropriation as divine truth, may well depend upon the volitional hostility of the hearer. The Holy Spirit assuredly uses truth as a means of persuasion, and the case for biblical theism – the logical framework of compositional postulates – is as intelligible to an atheist and skeptic as to a polytheist. But an awareness of logical consistency is not of itself a salvific personal appropriation of revealed truth. Faith is a gift of God, a matter of supernatural grace, and not a human achievement.

Steinheim writes that in spiritual rebirth one's consciousness 'feels . . . compelled' to acknowledge the existence of what it had disputed *a priori*. Yet, more consistently, he says that 'man cannot escape the power of the syllogism' (p. 148, *ital. Sup*). But might that claim reflect something more Greek than biblical, namely, that if one knows the truth one will appropriate it? Does it adequately reflect the role of a renegade volition? Is it unthinkable that God might harden the heart and blind the eyes of a persistently seditious moral rebel?

Much as Steinheim's view provides a welcome corrective of recent existential alternatives, the adequacy of his definition of revelation must be questioned even by theologians who concur in his insistence that revelation is a mental act and that Scripture gives us revealed truths or doctrines. In his view, revelation confronts its human recipients always as totally novel. Any coinciding with our own consciousness would totally disqualify a revelation claim. 'The revelation, if not a fallacy or fraud, should teach us something entirely new about God and His works, it should instruct us about the way all things came into existence and about their inner connection' (pp. 101f.). On what basis, we wonder, does Steinheim gain this *a priori* knowledge of the content of revelation?

To be sure, the content of revelation must not be identified with our own 'higher religious consciousness'; information gained by our own intellectual ingenuity is not revelation (p. 137). Revelation must be corrective of our personal convictions as finite and wayward creatures. But Steinheim's

wholly justifiable repudiation of idealistic philosophies that regard man's mind as an aspect of the Absolute mind, and his proper insistence that special revelation is historical, needlessly cancels an ongoing role for universal revelation on the basis of original divine creation. In this respect Steinheim's approach somewhat anticipates Karl Barth's views, although Barth assigned to history and to Scripture a more tenuous relationship to revelation than does Steinheim. Yet, besides shunning natural religion and secular philosophical systems as 'the religion of reason,' Steinheim ignores also a general revelation in nature (Psalm 19) and also in the *imago Dei* that mankind universally bears, albeit in a sullied manner. Steinheim thinks revelation through nature would connect revelation with the lawfulness of nature at the expense of the freedom of the Creator (pp. 131, 135).

Steinheim rules out what was important to Calvin, that human belief in the living God is prephilosophical, and that while the Fall cancels the possibility of natural theology, it does not destroy true consciousness of the living God which preserves universal accountability to him. Steinheim rules out the doctrine of the Fall and original sin as a Christian paganization of the Torah in deference to the speculative notion of eternal and inert matter.

Steinheim holds that the earliest humans lacked any notion of God. Natural religion, as he sees it, was a response only to the forces of nature (pp. 177), which mankind soon deified in polytheistic respectfulness and then kept developing by reflecting – first internalizing this response in human consciousness, and then shaping a dualistic world view in which good and evil are in combat.

In Steinheim's exposition no contact point whatever seems to exist for special revelation in the mind of Abraham in whose time special revelation is held to originate. Although special revelation is indeed the disclosure of what human beings do not originate or imagine, it nonetheless, as the Protestant Reformers see, addresses its recipients as those who have creation-ties to the sovereign, holy Creator, and once it is objectively given becomes in Scripture a

permanently recognizable and cumulative content that does not on that account lose its revelatory nature.

Steinheim's presentation of Scripturally-attested revealed doctrine is not without notable inconsistencies. In contrast to the ancient Near Eastern religion, the Scriptural revelation of Yahweh's *word* and *will* in particularized detail has traditionally been considered distinctive of Hebrew religion. But Steinheim treats Torah law as non-revelatory. His dismissal of general revelation, already mentioned, runs counter to Amos's insistence that Israel's pagan neighbour-nations have revelatory light that renders them guilty. He rejects divine fore-ordination, but nonetheless insists on the divine spiritual election of Israel, and is certain of the final triumph of righteousness. He declares that revelation is silent on immortality (p. 201); it rests wholly on trust in God, he says, who created humanity in the divine image (p. 267). He does not grapple with such passages as Job 19:26 and Daniel 12:2, or the fact that the Pharisees as the theologically orthodox party in Paul's day held to the tradition of the resurrection of the body (Acts 24:15). The comment that immortality is not to be regarded as essential to virtue is beside the point, since Christianity teaches that moral behaviour is both intrinsically and instrumentally good. Moreover, Steinheim subscribes to the future eternal life of the righteous, but to the annihilation of the wicked.

Steinheim commendably stresses that the concern of revelation is not merely intellectual, for the whole meaning of life is at stake. Amid disavowal or distortion of its factuality, our culture has deteriorated to a level of contemptible degradation and gross ungodliness that threatens the eclipse of humane civilization. In its very history the world has evidence of what happens when a society approaches or withdraws from the claims of revealed religion in contrast to those on behalf of natural religion. The Hebrews became the carriers and champions of the most enriching truths known to mankind. But through disrespect and then contempt for their ancient faith they became strangers to their own history and entered into alliances with naturalistic and other

pagan alternatives. The speculative philosophies cannot escape an overarching determinism that erodes a sense of human responsibility.

Revelation calls for human transformation and spiritual rebirth. The revelation 'will either swallow philosophy or be swallowed by it' (p. 275). That revelation first and foremost conveys fundamental truths more than legislation; Moses taught the Hebrews to think of God as free Creator of the world *ex nihilo*. The Sabbath consequently was obligatory not as a legal institution but as 'a teaching device' reinforcing revelation's key truths about God and man. Yet doctrine is not an end-in-itself; it exhibits principles regulative of the creation and governs human purpose and practice, with a view to national life and the conduct of all mankind (pp. 287f.). The divine word will ultimately triumph as the world-religion: 'revelation in its pure, unadulterated original form will complete its triumph over paganism' (p. 273). The present resistance is due to contempt for its custodians (p. 274), to the accommodation of pagan beliefs and activities, and a utilitarian way of life by unrebored camp-followers given to cultural accommodation.

Mention should now be made of Steinheim's critique of Christianity, which he considers an illegitimate wedding of the Torah to rationalistic perversion, in short, an amalgam of revelation and paganism. Christianity, Steinheim thinks, opposes the unity of God by its trinitarianism, annuls the freedom of God in that its doctrine of original sin reflects indebtedness to pagan views that matter is evil, and denies human free will (pp. 213f.). Steinheim seems unaware of the distinction between free choice and free will, and does not seriously grapple with the consequences for a doctrine that stresses as does Judaism the salvific importance of consistent character and works, of the notion that man must at any and every moment be wholly free to do the opposite of what he does. The deviation of some Christian scholars from *ex nihilo* creation he considers a sign of Christianity's conspiracy with paganism, although one may cite Spinoza and other Jews as well to attest that Christianity is not alone in such decline.

Gratuitously Steinheim depicts Paul as

teaching that the Torah is a cause and consequence of evil (p. 18). The Christian doctrine of hell, he writes, is a pagan carryover inconsistent with a God of love (p. 260). Other misunderstandings might be mentioned.

Steinheim rightly criticizes mediating theological rationalists who hold that all biblical doctrines are implicit in consciousness, or that they reflect an inner manifestation of God that we are left to articulate by subjective inspiration, and who thereby make revelation a wax nose twisted in many ways, or exchange real revelation for a conveniently crafted alternative. He is hostile to early church fathers and to others who regard philosophy (e.g., Plato's or Aristotle's) as a preparation for revelation, or as an undeveloped and incomplete revelation – rather than clearly declaring speculative philosophy self-contradictory from the standpoint of revelation, and a denial of the real need of revelation. They concessively substitute vague and impermanent alternatives, he writes, for the Bible as the depository of God's revelation (p. 165). Yet Steinheim would not have had to look far in his own century to find Jewish scholars whose serious compromises of biblical theism treated the Torah much as some Christian scholars did the whole Bible. Routinely Steinheim relies on Pierre Bayle, the French sceptic, for indications of contradictions in religious and philosophical views, but he abandons the appeal where Bayle would in principle assail traditional Judaic beliefs.

In Steinheim's second and third volumes, from which Haberman includes excerpts, Steinheim voices respect for the religion of Christ but expresses contempt for 'paganized' Christianity. In principle orthodox Christians might agree with the distinction, although dissenting from the applications that Steinheim develops. The religion of Christ, he avers, is outlined in Mark's Gospel. Paganized Christianity, he says, is taught in systematic textbooks of Christian theology, which he describes as a mishmash called Christianity, 'a pollution of the pure concept of revelation' (p. 282). Do not call the latter revelation of the teaching of Christ, he says (p. 282); it leads not to Moses, but to the pagans. Yet this verdict rests on critical

theories about the narratives which, if consistently applied, would be equally devastating for the Old Testament. Is the heart of the religion of Christ and the simplicity of Mark's Gospel really reducible, we must ask, to what Steinheim identifies as the 'three pillars', important as they are, on which revealed religion must rest (p. 282)?

It is not surprising that Steinheim's references to the Protestant Reformers depict them as more allied in spirit with Tertullian than with Augustine: they rejected reason as the arbiter of revelation, he says (p. 117), whereas the Scholastics accepted revelation only on condition of its agreement with unaided reason (p. 118). An adequate Christian response to this appraisal of Christianity will not flee the demands of logic but will press them with greater consistency than does Steinheim.

Much of Steinheim affirms the authority of the Torah, he does not hesitate to compromise it in deference to theological selectivity, and therefore to philosophical compromise akin to what he elsewhere deplores. He rejects as pagan speculation (*à la Fichte*) a primordial revelation in Eden, because it requires a hostile definition of revelation. This confusion is not unrelated to his quite unsystematic treatment of the *imago Dei*, which Steinheim often invokes only in passing.

Steinheim grants that the Scriptural revelation demands a total rebirth and inner transformation, a new person reclaimed for God (p. 268). But he isolates this from its New Testament emphasis (e.g., in John 3) on a crucified Saviour typified by the Mosaic sacrifices and pledged by the prophets. Steinheim deplores, even caricatures, the Christian doctrine of the atoning suffering servant, as if justice 'requires a human sacrifice ... a god-man' who had to be slaughtered to 'satisfy' God's justice. 'On whose side is justice, where is mercy?' (p. 284) he asks. He cites Exodus 34:6–7 and Deuteronomy 5:9–10 as uniting divine justice and love without substitutionary atonement. A key element in his alternative is his regard for Hebrew ritual and ceremonial law, in contrast with doctrine, as part of historically-conditioned Jewish social and cultural history.

Steinheim not only detaches ceremonial

and ritual law from divine revelation, but in addition gives only qualified support to the Decalogue, declaring it primarily and essentially a proclamation of faith. The Sabbath, that is, is basically an ongoing reminder of creation. The Sabbath and the dietary laws are given universal significance, although Steinheim does not justify the latter on the utilitarian ground that they provide a sound system of hygiene but rather links them to the inner spiritual purification of observants. Particulars of Sabbath observance are not discussed. Here one cannot but contrast Steinheim's exposition of Hebrew revelation and law with that of Mendelssohn, who viewed commandments and ritual alike as divinely revealed as Sinai, but regarded the doctrines as insights of universal reason.

Steinheim's emphasis on revelation in terms of divine truths presages a two-dimensional discussion: one over the validity of claims for the singular uniqueness of Hebrew revelation, and the other over the legitimacy of the Christian claim that Jesus of Nazareth fulfils the Old Testament. Christianity affirms not merely a problem-

atical future immortality, but that by faith in the crucified and risen Christ penitent humans may assuredly share in eternal life *now* and in a beneficent bodily resurrection later. Steinheim's statement even of Hebrew core-beliefs is reductive. But what he writes is nonetheless of immense significance for Jew and Christian alike. The uniqueness of the Old Testament as objectively revealed doctrine, he insists, rests not on blind faith but has rational credibility. The alternatives fail the test of rational consistency, Steinheim stresses, whereas the content of the revelation-claim, heard on its own merits, co-opts all open-minded critics. That is a staggering claim, but Steinheim holds that only by a sacrifice of rational consistency can it be resisted. If today's humanistic knowledge-élite would once again accord revealed religion an academic hearing, Steinheim's work throws down a gauntlet too insistent to be ignored.

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