THE MODERN PERIOD

TORAH AND CULTURE: H. RICHARD NIEBUHR'S *CHRIST AND CULTURE* AFTER FIFTY YEARS: A JUDAIC RESPONSE*

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Does culture express or defy the religious imperative? Do the patterns of the social order realize the divine plan, or do they represent that from which religion must separate itself, upon which religion stands in judgment? Fifty years ago, a thoughtful and profound theological analysis of the relationship, in Christianity, between religion and culture, H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951: Harper), formed of Christian theological language and traditions a highly systematic response to that question. The inquiry pertains in particular to religions engaged in constructing norms for the social order of the faithful. That matter, then, concerns, in the language of the respective faiths, the relationship between the generative symbol of a religion. and the ambient culture that forms the framework in which that religion constructs its holy society. Does culture form a medium of religion or an obstacle thereto—thus Christ and culture?

Religions that speak to, make provision for, communities of the faithful respond to the issue. They further mediate relationships between those communities and the ambient universe beyond their limits—that is, all religions that rise above the utterly idiosyncratic and private[1]—must address the same issue. Niebuhr defines the issue succinctly:

> Christians living with Christ in their cultures . . . are forever being challenged to abandon all things for the sake of God; and forever being sent back into the world to teach and practice all the things that have been commanded them (p. 29).

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[1] We know the social from the solipsistic by reference to the language rules that prevail. One can say, "My Judaism," meaning, one's private belief and practice, called, idiosyncratically, "Judaism," which is not uncommon, and "My Torah," which in most contexts of Judaic society would constitute an oxymoron. One can say, "the Torah of Moses," or "the Torah of Rabbi Aqiba," but the only "my" that works with "Torah" in Hebrew, the sole language that is native to Judaism, is God's, as in "It is My Torah, do not abandon it," of the governing liturgy.

> Given these two complex realities—Christ and culture—an infinite dialogue must develop in the Christian conscience and the Christian community. In his single-minded direction toward God, Christ leads men away from the temporality and pluralism of culture . . . Yet the Son of God is himself child of a religious culture and sends his disciples to tend his lambs and sheep, who cannot be guarded without cultural work (p. 39).

That is, Christ is represented as distinct from culture and in opposition to the world, or he is represented as engaged by culture. In Niebuhr's picture Judaism finds itself represented as an exception, because Judaism is not a "mere religion" but is characterized as "the same thing" as culture, ethnicity, nationalism. Judaism, unlike Christianity—so we are told—cannot differentiate matters of culture from those of religious faith. We should then not anticipate finding a counterpart issue in the native categories of Judaism. When Niebuhr characterizes what he calls "Judaism," it is only to explain why "Judaism" does not enter into consideration. Whether and how that is so remains to be seen.

Quite what people mean, with reference to both Judaism and Christianity, by such allegations is not self-evident.[2] True, unlike Pauline Christianity but like Islam, Judaism does not differentiate law from religion (a.k.a., Torah from salvation and justification), and the Torah legislates for areas of ordinary life deemed secular or neutral by Christianity. The question fits Christianity, with its rich tradition of differentiation between components and institutions of culture and faith, e.g., between emperor and pope or between church and state. But, as I shall presently show, the issues with which Niebuhr struggles work for Judaism. Properly framed, they prove susceptible to translation into the context and circumstances of "the Torah," which functionally and structurally corresponds to Christianity's "Christ." That is not only because "the Torah" certainly knows the difference between holy and profane, religious and secular. It is because the very points of dialectic and tension to which Niebuhr points in Christianity prove comparable to issues native to Judaism. But, it goes without saying, the doctors of the Torah sort out the issues in

[2] Perhaps a subtle response to Niebuhr, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion; A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York, 1963) argued that distinguishing religion from culture is never plausible. His case is drawn from Islam, but Judaism would supply an equally probative set of examples. Neither religious tradition has a word for "religion" that refers to "religion/not culture."

the Torah's own terms and categories. The challenge, accordingly, is to identify counterparts, in Judaism and its category-formations, to those of Christianity as Niebuhr expounds matters. To begin with, can I show that the dialectics—Torah as embodiment of culture, Torah as critique of culture—adumbrated in the formulation of Niebuhr pertains to Judaism?

I. *Torah and Culture: A Contemporary Debate in the Torah Camp*

Before turning to a brief reprise of Niebuhr's typology, let me set forth a single demonstration that the issue is native to Judaism and not particular to "Christ and culture," even now as—so I shall show in the shank of this paper—it was in the past. How do we know that it faces the faithful, who practice the faith, and is not a merely theoretical issue of theological speculation?

The contemporary question may be framed very simply. It is [1] "Torah along with secular learning" as against [2] "Torah but no secular learning," and that issue is framed in the world of the Orthodox Yeshivot. Proof-texts for both sides derive from the canonical writings of normative Judaism. Indeed, the debate involves Yeshiva University in the U.S.A. and Bar Ilan University in the State of Israel, as against the Yeshiva worlds of Brooklyn and Bene Beraq, respectively: Does the study of Torah prevent the study of any other subject, as the Yeshiva-world maintains, or does the study of Torah encompass all learning, as Yeshiva and Bar Ilan aver? If the former, then the Torah stands in opposition to, in judgment upon, secular sciences, and if the latter, then the Torah represents the apex and realization of all learning. As to the conflict, between Torah and secular learning, it may be framed very simply. Is it permitted for a pious Jew to study mathematics, biology, or history or must he devote all of his time and energy to study of the Torah? The curricula of the great Yeshivot, centers of Torah-study, and of the schools that prepare young men for study in those Yeshivot, answer that question. Some accommodate secular studies, others do not.

Now I cannot think of a more blatant formulation of the debate on the interplay of religion and culture than the issue as it is articulated, to begin with, in contemporary Judaic Orthodoxy. In its interior debates on the value of a secular education, the Torah-camp of contemporary Judaism today moreover carries forward a debate that

first came to the surface in the formation, in the nineteenth century, of integrationist Orthodox Judaism, which held that study of Torah does not preclude study of secular sciences, broadly construed, including literature, philosophy, and natural science. Is Torah in conflict with culture, or does Torah infuse culture, so that those who study nature enter into the realm of Torah-learning? From the time of Samson Raphael Hirsch in the nineteenth century to the present time in Yeshiva University and Bar Ilan University, the debate has gone forward on whether or not Israelites faithful to the Torah may devote any amount of time to other-than-Torah-learning. That means in practical terms, may Yeshiva-students participate in instruction in subjects other than the sacred sciences? Integrationist Orthodoxy affirmed, and segregationist-Orthodoxy denied, that proposition. The contemporary debate serves only to show how the basic question addressed by Niebuhr *mutatis mutandis* animates interior debate in the Torah-camp of Judaism. In these corresponding terms, the issue addressed by Christianity is not only *not* alien to, but quite commonplace in the debates of, the continuators of Torah-learning in Judaism. Now to consider matters in greater particularity.

II. *Niebuhr's Framing of the Issue of Religion and Culture*

A work of clarity, deep learning and broad perspective, Niebuhr's book surveyed principal participants in the theological tradition of Christianity. He constructed a typology that situated each in relationship to all others. A survey of the typology that he constructed to solve the problem will open the way to a consideration of comparable responses—ways of thinking about the corresponding issues—in the formative canon of Judaism, specifically, the normative Halakhah of the Mishnah, Tosefta, Yerushalmi, and Bavli. A brief précis of Niebuhr's discussion sets the stage for our work.

What exactly does he mean by culture? A summary follows, which invokes the broad range of constituents of culture:

> What do we mean in our use of this word [culture] to say that the Christian church enduringly struggles with the problem of Christ and culture? What we have in view when we deal with Christ and culture is that total process of human activity and that total result of such activity to which now the name *culture*, now the name *civilization*, is applied in common speech. Culture is the "artificial, secondary environment" which mean superimposes on the natural. It comprises language,

> habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values (p. 32).
>
> It is [first] always social (p. 32), . . . culture, second, is human achievement (p. 33). These human achievements, in the third place, are all designed for an end or ends; the world of culture is a world of values (p. 34).
>
> Further, the values with which these human achievements are concerned are dominantly those of the good for man (p. 35).
>
> Culture in all its forms . . . is concerned with the temporal and material realization of values (p. 36) . . .
>
> Cultural activity is almost as much concerned with the conservation of values as with their realization (p. 37).
>
> The values a culture seeks to realize in any time or place are many in number (p. 38).

So we deal with the continuities of civilization, the givens of the social order. Now the issue presents itself blatantly: how does Christ/Torah relate to the enduring artifacts of human society. Within the framework of the given definition of culture, Niebuhr identifies five answers to the question of the relationship of "Christ and culture;" of these, the first two state the issue in the most acute and radical way, the next three impart nuance thereto:

> 1. The opposition between Christ and culture: "Whatever may be the customs of the society in which the Christian lives, and whatever the human achievements it conserves, Christ is seen as opposed to them, so that he confronts men with the challenge of an 'either-or decision," e.g., "to abandon the 'world' and to 'come out from among them and be separate.'" (p. 40–41)
>
> 2. A fundamental agreement between Christ and culture: "Jesus often appears as a great hero of human culture history; his life and teachings are regarded as the greatest human achievement; in him, it is believed, the aspirations of men toward their values are brought to a point of culmination; he confirms what is best in the past and guides the process of civilization to its proper goal. Moreover, he is part of culture in the sense that he himself is part of the social heritage that must be transmitted and conserved" (p. 41).

So Niebuhr points to the two poles, the segregation of religion from culture, e.g., in monasteries or in Yeshivot, and the integration of religion with culture, e.g., in the very modalities of the social order. He then finds three mediating positions:

> Three other typical answers agree with each other in seeking to maintain the great differences between the two principles and in undertaking to hold them together in some unity. They are distinguished from

each other by the manner in which each attempts to combine the two authorities (pp. 41–42).

3. The third type understands Christ's relation to culture somewhat as the men of the second group do: he is the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society. Yet there is in him something that neither arises out of culture nor contributes directly to it. He is discontinuous as well as continuous with social life and its culture . . . true culture is not possible unless beyond all human achievement. . . . Christ enters into life from above with gifts which human aspiration has not envisioned and which human effort cannot attain unless he relates to men to a supernatural society and a new value-center. Christ is indeed a Christ of culture but he is also a Christ above culture (p. 42).

4. The fourth type: "the duality and inescapable authority of both Christ and culture are recognized, but the opposition between them is also accepted. . . . Christians . . . are subject to the tension that accompanies obedience to two authorities who do not agree yet must both be obeyed. They refuse to accommodate the claims of Christ to those of secular society . . . so they are like the "Christ against culture" believers, yet differ from them in the conviction that obedience to God requires obedience to the institutions of society and loyal to its members as well as obedience to a Christ who sits in judgment on that society. Hence man is seen as subject to two moralities and as a citizen of two worlds that are not only discontinuous with each other but largely opposed. In the polarity and tension of Christ and culture life must be lived precariously and sinfully in the hope of a justification which lies beyond history" (pp. 42–43).

5. The fifth type, and the third of the mediating answers: "There is the conversionist solution. Those who offer it understand with the members of the first and fourth groups that human nature is fallen or perverted, and that this perversion not only appears in culture but is transmitted by it. Hence the opposition between Christ and all human institutions and customs is to be recognized. Yet the antithesis does not lead either to Christian separation from the world as with the first group or to mere endurance in the expectation of a transhistorical salvation, as with the fourth. Christ is seen as the converter of man in his culture and society, not apart from these, for there is no nature without culture, and no turning of men from self and idols to God save in society" (p. 43).

In the shank of the book, Niebuhr identifies various principals of Christian theology with each of these positions. These are arrayed not in historical sequence but phenomenologically, in accord with the logic of the issue at hand, which is realized in cases through time. The first—that one that opposes religion and culture—is represented by monastic orders and sectarian movements, which called on believers

living in what purported to be a Christian culture to abandon the "world" (pp. 40–41). In modern times it is represented by those who "emphasize the antagonism of Christian faith to capitalism and communism, to industrialism and nationalism, to Catholicism and Protestantism." That is the theory that corresponds to the formulation of Torah as against the world that characterizes the Yeshiva-universe, with their monastic stance vis à vis the ambient Jewish community (and, if truth be told, the world of Judaism entirely). The second ("agreement between Christ and culture") is represented by those who identify Christianity and Western civilization, or between Jesus and democratic institutions (or similar antinomies). The Judaic counterpart in contemporary terms has already been identified; but there is a much more subtle corresponding Judaic system, which we shall meet at some length.

What about the mediating positions? The synthetic model ("Christ of culture, Christ above culture") third, is represented by Thomas Aquinas, the fourth ("polarity and tension of Christ and cultural life . . . awaiting a justification which lies beyond history") by Luther, and the fifth ("the conversionist solution") by John Calvin. These are ideal types, to be sure: "The method of typology . . . though historically inadequate . . . has the advantage of calling to attention the continuity and significance of the great motifs that appear and reappear in the long wrestling of Christians with their enduring problem" (p. 44). I would not venture to find Judaic counterparts to these positions, but with some thought they can be identified. Rather, let us turn to the formative age of Rabbinic Judaism, portrayed in the canonical documents of late antiquity, where, as I shall show, the issues of Torah in relationship to culture, to the ambient social world beyond the framework of the Rabbinic system and structure, were worked out in categories native to that system.

III. *Torah and Culture*

How do we compare the Christian with the Judaic framing of what I allege is an issue common to both, each in its own native category-formations? The task is to identify in the normative framework of Judaism in its formative age the native-category-formations that comprehend the same choice as Christianity confronts in the formulation, "Christ and culture." Self-evidently, we cannot translate "Christ" into

the language and category-formations of Judaism, or "Torah" into the language and naïve categories of Christianity. "Torah" is not "Christ," nor "Christ," "Torah," even though a comparison of the terms will show points of congruity in function and even structure. The one tradition simply presents no counterpart in either function or meaning for the use of the key-word of the other. That is proved by the fact that we cannot translate "Torah" with all its meanings, or "Christ" with all its dimensions, from one system's terms and structures to those of the other. For example, "Bible" in Christianity conveys little of the meaning of "Torah" in Judaism. But, it may be asked, does not "Christ" stand for "Messiah?" "Messiah" in normative, Rabbinic Judaism in fact does not compare in systemic centrality and coverage to "Christ" in Christianity.[3] In undertaking the comparison of theological constructions set forth by contiguous religious traditions, the most difficult task requires finding what, within one structure and system, possesses a counterpart within another structure and system.

But what if we adopt the results of Niebuhr's typology? When we use generic language, that is, instead of "Christ," "the sacred," and instead of "culture," "the profane" or "the ordinary," then we find comparisons and contrasts do emerge. And, still more to the point, when we abandon the effort to formulate in word-choices the comparable issues, and look for corresponding structures and formations, then we find ourselves in an authentic, native, Judaic category-formation within which the very issues framed by Niebuhr for Christian turn out to flourish. For by concentrating on what is at stake for culture, we are able to identify even in the heart of the Torah, in the Halakhah, counterparts to the dialectics, "Christ" in opposition to "culture," or "Christ" realized in "culture." Specifically, we find that the paired opposites, the main antinomies identified by Niebuhr, prove paradigmatic for Judaism as well. And having shown that prevailing paradigm in the two religions built on Scripture,

[3] I have shown that fact in my systemic statement of matters: *The Theology of the Oral Torah: Revealing the Justice of God* (Montreal and Kingston, 1999), Chapters Twelve and Thirteen. In the system of Rabbinic Judaism set forth in the Oral Torah's Aggadic documents, "Messiah" is not an irreducible native category at all. And in the Halakhic counterpart, which I lay out in *The Theology of the Halakhah* (Leiden and Boston, 2001), there is no category, Messiah, at all. The Messiah-theme plays a part in both category-formations, the Aggadic and the Halakhic, but it forms a native category, irreducible and generative, in neither.

we confront an analytical problem for Judaism that is suggested by Niebuhr's nuanced relationships, the third through the fifth. But the task of establishing appropriate points of correspondence suffices for the present exercise. But in the present context, I undertake only the fundamental problem of cultural comparison and contrast. I postpone the more subtle exercise of dealing with Judaic counterparts to Niebuhr's nuanced relationships. For the moment, we confront a binary formulation of matters.

IV. *Torah as a Component of Culture as against Torah as the Entirety of Culture*

I shall now show that counterparts to the two positions outlined by Niebuhr at the outset—Christ versus culture, Christ as the realization of culture—take shape within the normative Halakhic framework. There, it is specifically where the role of Torah within the life of man is worked out that the two positions come to articulation. The antinomy is Torah-study versus other demands upon a man's life as against Torah-study encompassing the entirety of man's life.

I can show that the issue is native to Rabbinic Judaism. It is framed in these terms: should a man learn a trade and also study Torah, in which case Torah forms a chapter of life, to be distinguished from other chapters, thus: Torah as a component of culture? Or should he devote his entire life to Torah-study, to the exclusion of all else, thus Torah in opposition to culture? In the former framework, Torah represents a sector of life, differentiated from other sectors, thus Torah and culture, in Niebuhr's terms; in the latter, Torah lays demands upon the whole of life, in opposition to not only making a living but also responsibilities to family and community, thus Torah versus (the rest of) culture, in Niebuhr's typology.

When Torah is a chapter of life, then Torah is integrated into the affairs of the everyday, a component of the whole. When Torah commands the entirety of the human situation, Torah contrasts with all other forms not only of learning but of human engagement. So at issue, as I shall show, is whether Torah is represented as a component of culture, to be sure, hierarchically at the apex of the social order, or Torah is portrayed as the entirety of culture, in competition with the other, competing and also illegitimate demands that culture makes. And the correspondence with the two extremes

of Niebuhr's typology, to review, then is clear: Christ/Torah versus culture or Christ/Torah as harmonious with culture.

What I shall now show is that the categorical conflict is native to Rabbinic Judaism. This I do by demonstrating that the debate between these two positions was carried forward in terms of Torah-study within the social order as against Torah-study in contradiction to the social order—not awfully unlike the contemporary debate within Yeshiva-Orthodoxy. The matter is framed in diverse ways. In normative law, the opposition of Torah and culture comes to concrete expression in the conflict between the natural family and the supernatural relationships brought into being by Torah-study.

One aspect of culture is the social reconstruction of relationships, e.g., family. Everyone knows that Christ rejects family but how does Torah impose itself upon familial ties? One way that the Halakhah finds to express the position that the Torah stands against all other (natural, social) relationships is as follows (M. B.M. 2:11):

2:11
A. [If he has to choose between seeking] what he has lost and what his father has lost,
B. his own takes precedence.
C. . . . what he has lost and what his master has lost,
D. his own takes precedence.
E. . . . what his father has lost and what his master has lost, that of his master takes precedence.
G. For his father brought him into this world.
H. But his master, who taught him wisdom, will bring him into the life of the world to come.
I. But if his father is a sage, that of his father takes precedence.
J. [If] his father and his master were carrying heavy burdens, he removes that of his master, and afterward removes that of his father.
K. [If] his father and his master were taken captive,
L. he ransoms his master, and afterward he ransoms his father.
M. But if his father is a sage, he ransoms his father, and afterward he ransoms his master.

The point is made explicit at G-H, the master takes precedence over the father, because the master has brought him eternal life through Torah-teachings, so the natural relationships of this world are set aside by the contrasting ones of the world to come, family by Torah.

In the next statement of the same view, social relationships—the hierarchy of the castes—are reframed in the same way. Now the castes are at issue, priest, Levite, Israelite, mamzer (an outcaste, e.g., the offspring of a union that violates the law, for instance, of

a married woman and a man other than her husband) and so on down. These are contrasted with disciple of a sage in relationship to one who is not a disciple of a sage but, by contrast, an am ha'ares (in context: ignorant man). Here knowledge of Torah overrides the hierarchy of castes and transcends it (M. Hor. 3:8).

> 3:8
> A. A priest takes precedence over a Levite, a Levite over an Israelite, an Israelite over a mamzer, a mamzer over a Netin, a Netin over a proselyte, a proselyte over a freed slave.
> B. Under what circumstances?
> C. When all of them are equivalent.
> D. But if the mamzer [outcaste] was a disciple of a sage and a high priest was an am ha'ares [unlettered in the Torah], the mamzer who is a disciple of a sage takes precedence over a high priest who is an am ha'ares.

In both contexts, Torah stands over against the social order and disrupts its natural arrangements, both in family and in caste. What about the conflicting responsibilities of devoting time to Torah-study and devoting time to earning a living? The same view predominates when it comes to earning a living: Torah competes with other components of the ambient culture.

Explicit at M. Hor. 3:8 is that knowledge of the Torah does not change one's caste-status, e.g., priest or mamzer or Netin, and that caste-status does govern whom one may marry, a matter of substantial economic consequence. But it does change one's status as to precedence of another order altogether—one that is curiously unspecific at M. Hor. 3:8. Hierarchical classification for its own sake, lacking all practical consequence, characterizes the Mishnah's system, defining, after all, its purpose and its goal! Along these same lines, the premise of tractate Sanhedrin is that the sage is judge and administrator of the community; knowledge of the Torah qualifies him; but knowledge of the Torah does not provide a living or the equivalent of a living. No provision for supporting the sage as administrator, clerk, or judge is suggested in the tractate.

V. *Study a Craft and also Study Torah vs. Study Torah Only*

What about knowledge of Torah as a way of making one's living? Here is a fine occasion on which to say there is knowledge that possesses value but is not part of the Torah. Or only knowledge of

the Torah registers. In the former case, study of Torah represents one component of legitimate learning and livelihood, but there are other things to be learned and to be practiced, and these do not come into conflict with Torah-study. In the latter instance, study of Torah competes with, stands over against, study of all other matters, e.g., of trade or commerce. These represent counterparts to Niebuhr's primary category-formations, Christ within culture as against Christ versus culture. The issue is joined in a systematic way in the Halakhic system, where some authorities recognize the value of studying a trade, while others insist that one should study only Torah, which will provide a livelihood through supernatural means.

Just as Niebuhr shows the diversity of Christian opinion in the interplay of religion and culture, so we see in the normative law more than a single viewpoint. In the list of professions by which men make a living we find several positions. That underscores my basic point: within the framework of Judaism diverse positions register, comparable to the diverse positions outlined by Niebuhr. The issue is common to both traditions, but each frames it in its natural language and category-formations. First is that of Meir and Simeon at M. Qid. 4:14:

> E. R. Meir says, "A man should always teach his son a clean and easy trade. And let him pray to him to whom belong riches and possessions.
> G. "For there is no trade that does not involve poverty or wealth.
> H. "For poverty does not come from one's trade, nor does wealth come from one's trade.
> I. "But all is in accord with a man's merit."
> J. R. Simeon b. Eleazar says, "Have you ever seen a wild beast or a bird who has a trade? Yet they get along without difficulty. And were they not created only to serve me? And I was created to serve my Master. So is it not logical that I should get along without difficulty? But I have done evil and ruined my living."

One's merit makes the difference between poverty and wealth, or one's sinfulness. This simply carries forward the curse of Eden: Adam must work because he has rebelled against God, and that is the human condition. A more practical position is that which follows in the continuation of the passage:

> K. Abba Gurion of Sidon says in the name of Abba Gurya, "A man should not teach his son to be an ass driver, a camel driver, a barber, a sailor, a herdsman, or a shopkeeper. For their trade is the trade of thieves."

L. R. Judah says in his name, "Most ass drivers are evil, most camel drivers are decent, most sailors are saintly, the best among physicians is going to Gehenna, and the best of butchers is a partner of Amalek."

The third view—the counterpart to "Christ versus culture" in Niebuhr's typology, is that of Nehorai, who holds that Torah suffices as a means for making a living, and Torah-study defines all that man should do, in utter rejection of the imperatives of culture, e.g., mastering a trade and earning a living:

M. R. Nehorai says, "I should lay aside every trade in the world and teach my son only Torah.
N. "For a man eats its fruits in this world, and the principal remains for the world to come.
O. "But other trades are not that way.
P. "When a man gets sick or old or has pains and cannot do his job, lo, he dies of starvation.
Q. "But with Torah it is not that way.
R. "But it keeps him from all evil when he is young, and it gives him a future and a hope when he is old.
S. "Concerning his youth, what does it say? 'They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength' (Is. 40:31). And concerning his old age what does it say? 'They shall still bring forth fruit in old age' (Ps. 92:14).
T. "And so it says with regard to the patriarch Abraham, may he rest in peace, 'And Abraham was old and well along in years, and the Lord blessed Abraham in all things' (Gen. 24:1).
U. "We find that the patriarch Abraham kept the entire Torah even before it was revealed, since it says, 'Since Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws' (Gen. 26:5)."

Precisely why Torah works as it does is made explicit at R: "It keeps him from evil when he is young." That is to say, the position of Meir and Simeon is repeated, only in a fresh way. If I know the Torah, I will not sin. Meir and Simeon concur in denying conflict between earning a living and studying the Torah, and Nehorai sees a choice to be made.

The first apologia for the Mishnah, tractate Abot, takes the view that one should not make one's living through study of the Torah. One should both practice a trade and also support himself, and there is no conflict between the one and the other. That is made explicit in Torah-sayings of tractate Abot, where we find explicit rejection of the theory of Torah-study as a means of avoiding one's

obligation to earn a living. Torah-study without a craft is rejected, Torah-study along with labor at a craft is defined as the ideal way of life. No one then concedes that one should do the one and not the other: study the Torah but not practice a trade. The following sayings, M. Abot 2:2 and 3:17, make that point quite clearly:

2:2

A. Rabban Gamaliel, a son of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch says: Fitting is learning in the Torah along with a craft, for the labor put into the two of them makes one forget sin. And all learning of the Torah which is not joined with labor is destined to be null and causes sin."

3:17

A. R. Eleazar b. Azariah says, ". . . If there is no sustenance [lit.: flour], there is no Torah-learning. If there is no Torah-learning, there is no sustenance."

The way of virtue lies rather in economic activity in the conventional sense, joined to intellectual or philosophical activity in sages' sense. The labor in Torah is not an economic activity and produces no solutions to this-worldly problems of getting food, shelter, clothing. To the contrary, labor in Torah defines the purpose of human life; it is the goal; but it is not the medium for maintaining life and avoiding starvation or exposure to the elements. So too, Tosefta's complement to the Mishnah is explicit in connection with M. Gittin 1:7A, "a commandment pertaining to the father concerning the son:" In this regard T. Qid. 1:11E-G states, "It is to circumcise him, redeem him [should he be kidnapped], teach him Torah, teach him a trade, and marry him off to a girl." There clearly is no conception that if one studies Torah, he need not work for a living, nor in the Tosefta's complement to the Mishnah does anyone imagine that merit is gained by supporting those who study the Torah.

Cited in Abot 2:8, Yohanan b. Zakkai speaks of Torah-study as the goal of a human life, on the one side, and a reward paid for Torah study, clearly in a theological sense and context, on the other. That the context of Torah-study is religious and not economic in any sense is shown by Hananiah's saying, which is explicit: if people talk about the Torah, the Presence of God joins them and participates (M. Abot 2:8, 2:16, 3:2):

2:8

A. Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai received [the Torah] from Hillel and Shammai. He would say: "If you have learned much Torah, do not puff yourself up on that account, for it was for that purpose that you were created."

2:16

A. [Tarfon] would say: "It's not your job to finish the work, but you are not free to walk away from it. If you have learned much Torah, they will give you a good reward. And your employer can be depended upon to pay your wages for what you do. And know what sort of reward is going to be given to the righteous in the coming time."

3:2

B. R. Hananiah b. Teradion says, "[If] two sit together and between them do not pass teachings of the Torah, lo, this is a seat of the scornful, as it is said, 'Nor sits in the seat of the scornful' (Ps. 1:1). But two who are sitting, and words of the Torah do pass between them—the Presence is with them, as it is said, 'Then they that feared the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and gave thought to his name' (Mal 3:16). I know that this applies to two. How do I know that even if a single person sits and works on the Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, set aside a reward for him? As it is said, 'Let him sit alone and keep silent, because he has laid it upon him' (Lam. 3:28)."

Do worldly benefits accrue to those who study the Torah? The rabbi cited at M. Abot 4:5 maintains that it is entirely inappropriate to utilize Torah-learning to gain either social standing or economic gain:

B. R. Sadoq says, "Do not make [Torah-teachings] a crown in which to glorify yourself or a spade with which to dig. So did Hillel say, "He who uses the crown perishes. Thus have you learned: Whoever derives worldly benefit from teachings of the Torah takes his life out of this world."

This calls to mind the debate I cited at the outset: May Yeshiva-students study biology or computer science, or does Torah-study constitute the whole of the appropriate curriculum in opposition to secular studies? The contemporary issue, corresponding to the typology constructed by Niebuhr, surfaces in comparable terms here. The counterpart to the position of a harmony between Christ and culture, as I see it, is the instruction at hand, which says, Torah-study forms only a chapter in the proper education of a man. It is the simple fact that the bulk of opinion in the Mishnah and in tractate Abot identifies Torah-learning with status within a system of hierarchical classification, not with a medium for earning a living. And learning a trade and earning a living form harmonious obligations with Torah-study.

Admittedly that is not the only position that is represented. The following seems to me to contrast working for a living with studying Torah and to maintain that the latter will provide a living, without recourse to hard labor (M. Abot 3:15):

> A. R. Nehunia b. Haqqaneh says, "From whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of the Torah do they remove the yoke of the state and the yoke of hard labor. And upon whoever removes from himself the yoke of the Torah do they lay the yoke of the state and the yoke of hard labor."

But the prevailing view, represented by the bulk of sayings, treats Torah-study as an activity that competes with economic venture and insists that Torah-study take precedence, even though it is not of economic value in any commonplace sense of the words. That is explicitly imputed to Meir and to Jonathan at M. Abot 4:9-10:

> 4:9
> A. R. Jonathan says, "Whoever keeps the Torah when poor will in the end keep it in wealth. And whoever treats the Torah as nothing when he is wealthy in the end will treat it as nothing in poverty."
> 4:10
> A. R. Meir says, "Keep your business to a minimum and make your business the Torah. And be humble before everybody. And if you treat the Torah as nothing, you will have many treating you as nothing. And if you have labored in the Torah, [the Torah] has a great reward to give you."

Torah-study competes with, rather than replaces, with economic activity. That is the simple position of tractate Abot, extending the conception of matters explicit in the Mishnah. If I had to make a simple statement of the situation prevailing at ca. 250 C.E., sages contrast their wealth, which is spiritual and intellectual, with material wealth; they do not deem the one to form the counterpart of the other, but only as the opposite.

VI. *Wealth, Material and Spiritual: Real Estate versus Torah*

The rational disposition of scarce resources forms a chapter of culture, which defines what is rational and determines therefore what constitute scarce resources. If we wish to construct a contrast between Torah and culture, then, we should do so by pointing to a choice

between Torah and other valued things and by contrasting two rationalities, that of the Torah and that of other things that people value. Here we have a story that sets the value of Torah into opposition with the value of real estate, which in antiquity was deemed the preferred form of wealth. To be sure, the tale carries forward the view that a man should study Torah to the exclusion of all else, and that action secures his material needs as well. But the conflict between Torah and culture is expressed in more explicit ways here. Wealth in the form of real estate and income derived therefrom, which conventionally defined a secure investment in antiquity, conflict with the value of Torah-study, the source of supernatural riches. So the conflict is between two rationalities, two definitions of what constitute scarce resources. But there is a twist, which I shall point out (Leviticus Rabbah XXXIV:XVI):

1.
B. R. Tarfon gave to R. Aqiba six silver *centenarii*, saying to him, "Go, buy us a piece of land, so we can get a living from it and labor in the study of Torah together."
C. He took the money and handed it over to scribes, Mishnah-teachers, and those who study Torah.
D. After some time R. Tarfon met him and said to him, "Did you buy the land that I mentioned to you?"
E. He said to him, "Yes."
F. He said to him, "Is it any good?"
G. He said to him, "Yes."
H. He said to him, "And do you not want to show it to me?"
I. He took him and showed him the scribes, Mishnah teachers, and people who were studying Torah, and the Torah that they had acquired.
J. He said to him, "Is there anyone who works for nothing? Where is the deed covering the field?"
K. He said to him, "It is with King David, concerning whom it is written, 'He has scattered, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures forever' (Ps. 112:9)."

Instead of defining wealth as land, this story defines land as not-wealth, and something else is now defined as wealth in its place. It would be hard to find a more precise analogy to the antinomy, Christ versus culture, as framed in the Christian monastic tradition, than the very practical counsel attributed to Aqiba.

The transformation from real estate to Torah is made explicit when we are told how we turn real estate into Torah. That transvaluation is worked out, once more quite explicitly, in the statement (Y. Meg. 4:1.

IV.P-Q): "'I can write the whole Torah for two hundred copper coins.' What did he do, he went and bought flax seed worth two hundred copper coins, sowed it, reaped it, made it into ropes, caught a deer, and wrote the entire Torah on the deer hide." The three operative components here are money (capital) converted into land converted into (a) Torah. In context, the ambient culture comes to expression in the definition of real wealth. In the world at large, as I said, that was real estate. So we transform money into land. But then the definition of wealth is shifted, and the symbolic shift is blatant: turn money into real wealth, then real wealth produces the wherewithal of making a Torah. And with that rather stunning symbolic transformation, we find ourselves in a world wholly different from the one in which scarce resources are identified with matters of material, palpable value, and in which economics is the theory of the rational disposition of scarce resources of capital, labor, movables, real estate, and the like. Now Torah is opposed to the regnant rationality of worth, which is real estate, and Torah stands in judgment of real wealth.

Why do I insist on an antimony between Torah and culture, comparable to that between Christ and culture versus Christ vs. culture? The reason is that there are passages that are quite explicit: land is wealth, or Torah is wealth, but not both; owning land is power and studying Torah permits (re)gaining power—but not both. To take the first of the two propositions in its most explicit formulation (Leviticus Rabbah XXX:I.4-5):

4.
A. R. Yohanan was going up from Tiberias to Sepphoris. R. Hiyya bar Abba was supporting him. They came to a field. [Yohanan] said, "This field once belonged to me, but I sold it in order to acquire merit in the Torah."
B. They came to a vineyard, and he said, "This vineyard once belonged to me, but I sold it in order to acquire merit in the Torah."
C. They came to an olive grove, and he said, "This olive grove once belonged to me, but I sold it in order to acquire merit in the Torah."
D. R. Hiyya began to cry.
E. Said R. Yohanan, "Why are you crying?"
F. He said to him, "It is because you left nothing over to support you in your old age."
G. He said to him, "Hiyya, my disciple, is what I did such a light thing in your view? I sold something which was given in a spell of six days [of creation] and in exchange I acquired something which was given in a spell of forty days [of revelation].

H. "The entire world and everything in it was created in only six days, as it is written, 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth' [Exod. 20:11].
I. "But the Torah was given over a period of forty days, as it was said, 'And he was there with the Lord for forty days and forty nights' [Exod. 34:28].
J. "And it is written, 'And I remained on the mountain for forty days and forty nights'" (Deut. 9:9).

5.
A. When R. Yohanan died, his generation recited concerning him [the following verse of Scripture]: "If a man should give all the wealth of his house for the love" (Song 8:7), with which R. Yohanan loved the Torah, "he would be utterly destitute" (Song 8:7). . . .
C. When R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon died, his generation recited concerning him [the following verse of Scripture]: "Who is this who comes up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant?" (Song 3:6).
D. What is the meaning of the clause, "With all the powders of the merchant"?
E. [Like a merchant who carries all sorts of desired powders,] he was a master of Scripture, a repeater of Mishnah traditions, a writer of liturgical supplications, and a liturgical poet.

The sale of land for the acquisition of "merit in the Torah" introduces two principal systemic components, merit and Torah.[4] For our purpose, the importance of the statement lies in the second of the two, which deems land the counterpart—and clearly the opposite—of Torah.

Now one can sell a field and acquire "Torah," meaning, in the context established by the exchange between Tarfon and Aqiba, the opportunity to gain leisure to study Torah. That the sage has left himself nothing for his support in old age makes explicit the material meaning of the statement, and the comparison of the value of land, created in six days, and the Torah, created in forty days, is equally explicit. The comparison of knowledge of Torah to the merchandise of the merchant simply repeats the same point, but in a lower register. So too does the this-worldly power of study of the

[4] In a well-crafted system, of course, principal parts prove interchangeable or closely aligned, and that is surely the case here. But the successor-system is far more tightly constructed than the initial one, in that the politics and the economics flow into one another, in a way in which, in the initial, philosophical system, they do not. The disembedded character of the Mishnah's economics has already impressed us.

Torah make explicit in another framework the conviction that study of the Torah yields material and concrete benefit, not just spiritual renewal. Thus R. Huna states (Pesiqta deRab Kahana VI:III.3.B), "All of the exiles will be gathered together only on account of the study of Mishnah-teachings."

I portray the opposition as a matter of culture, expressed through economic theory. But the conflict between Torah-study and all else cuts to the bone. For the ultimate value—Torah-study—surely bears comparison with other foci of value, such as prayer, using money for building synagogues, and the like. It is explicitly stated that spending money on synagogues is a waste of money, while spending money supporting Torah-masters is the right use of scarce resources. Further, we find the claim, synagogues and school houses—communal real estate—in fact form the property of sages and their disciples, who may dispose of them just as they want, as any owner may dispose of his property according to his unfettered will. In Y. Sheqalim we find the former allegation, Y. Megillah the latter:

Y. Sheqalim 5:4.II:
A. R. Hama bar Haninah and R. Hoshaia the Elder were strolling in the synagogues in Lud. Said R. Hama bar Haninah to R. Hoshaia, "How much money did my forefathers invest here [in building these synagogues]!"
B. He said to him, "How many lives did your forefathers invest here! Were there not people who were laboring in Torah [who needed the money more]?"
C. R. Abun made the gates of the great hall [of study]. R. Mana came to him. He said to him, "See what I have made!"
D. He said to him, "'For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces'! (Hos. 8:14). Were there no people laboring in Torah [who needed the money more]?"

Y. Sotah 9:13.VI:
C. A certain rabbi would teach Scripture to his brother in Tyre, and when they came and called him to do business, he would say, "I am not going to take away from my fixed time to study. If the profit is going to come to me, let it come in due course [after my fixed time for study has ended]."

Y. Megillah 3:3:V.
A. R. Joshua b. Levi said, "Synagogues and schoolhouses belong to sages and their disciples."
B. R. Hiyya bar Yose received [guests] in the synagogue [and lodged them there].
C. R. Immi instructed the scribes, "If someone comes to you with some slight contact with Torah learning, receive him, his asses, and his belongings."

D. R. Berekhiah went to the synagogue in Beisan. He saw someone rinsing his hands and feet in a fountain [in the courtyard of the synagogue]. He said to him, "It is forbidden to you [to do this]."
E. The next day the man saw [Berekhiah] washing his hands and feet in the fountain.
F. He said to him, "Rabbi, is it permitted to you and forbidden to me?"
G. He said to him, "Yes."
H. He said to him, "Why?"
I. He said to him, "Because this is what R. Joshua b. Levi said: 'Synagogues and schoolhouses belong to sages and their disciples.'"

Not all acts of piety, we see, are equal, and the one that takes precedence over all others (just as is alleged at M. Peah 1:1) is study of the Torah. But the point now is a much more concrete one, and that is, through study of the Torah, sages and their disciples gain possession, as a matter of fact, over communal real estate, which they may utilize in any way they wish; and that is a quite concrete claim indeed, as the same story alleges.

No wonder, then, that people in general are expected to contribute their scarce resources for the support of sages and their disciples. Moreover, society at large was obligated to support sages, and the sages' claim upon others was enforceable by Heaven. Those who gave sages' disciples money so that they would not have to work would get it back from Heaven, and those who did not would lose what they had as Y. Sotah 7:4.IV makes clear:

F. R. Aha in the name of R. Tanhum b. R. Hiyya: "If one has learned, taught, kept, and carried out [the Torah], and has ample means in his possession to strengthen the Torah and has not done so, lo, such a one still is in the category of those who are cursed." [The meaning of "strengthen" here is to support the masters of the Torah.]
G. R. Jeremiah in the name of R. Hiyya bar Ba, "[If] one did not learn, teach, keep, and carry out [the teachings of the Torah], and did not have ample means to strengthen [the masters of the Torah] [but nonetheless did strengthen them], lo, such a one falls into the category of those who are blessed."
H. And R. Hannah, R. Jeremiah in the name of R. Hiyya: "The Holy One, blessed be he, is going to prepare a protection for those who carry out religious duties [of support for masters of Torah] through the protection afforded to the masters of Torah [themselves].
I. "What is the Scriptural basis for that statement? 'For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money'" (Qoh. 7:12).
J. "And it says, '[The Torah] is a tree of life to those who grasp it; those who hold it fast are called happy'" (Prov. 3:18).

Such contributions form the counterpart to taxes, that is, scarce resources taken away from the owner by force for the purposes of the public good, that is, the ultimate meeting point of economics and politics, the explicit formation of distributive, as against market, economics. Then what is distributed and to whom and by what force forms the centerpiece of the systemic political economy, and the answer is perfectly simple: all sorts of valued things are taken away from people and handed over for the support of sages.

That extends to freeing sages from the obligation to pay taxes, e.g., for the defense of the city. I cannot imagine a more extreme claim than that not walls but sages and their Torah-study form the strongest defense for the city. Therefore sages should not have to pay for the upkeep of the common defense. Since people took for granted that walls were the best defense, Torah here confronts the common culture with its uncommon claim.

So it is alleged that sages are the guardians of cities, and later on that would yield the further allegation that sages do not have to pay taxes to build walls around cities, since their Torah-study protects the cities (Pesiqta deRab Kahana XV:V.1):

> A. R. Abba bar Kahana commenced discourse by citing the following verse: "Who is the man so wise that he may understand this? To whom has the mouth of the Lord spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, [so that no one passes through?' The Lord said, It is because they forsook my Torah which I set before them; they neither obeyed me nor conformed to it. They followed the promptings of their own stubborn hearts, they followed the Baalim as their forefathers had taught them. Therefore these are the words of the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel: I will feed this people with wormwood and give them bitter poison to drink. I will scatter them among nations whom neither they nor their forefathers have known; I will harry them with the sword until I have made an end of them] (Jer. 9:16)."
> B. It was taught in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai, "If you see towns uprooted from their place in the land of Israel, know that [it is because] the people did not pay the salaries of teachers of children and Mishnah-instructors.
> C. "What is the verse of Scripture that indicates it? 'Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, [so that no one passes through?'] What is written just following? 'It is because they forsook my Torah [which I set before them; they neither obeyed me nor conformed to it.]'"

2.
A. Rabbi sent R. Yose and R. Ammi to go and survey the towns of the land of Israel. They would go into a town and say to the people, "Bring me the guardians of the town."
B. The people would bring out the head of the police and the local guard.
C. [The sages] would say, "These are not the guardians of the town, they are those who destroy the town. Who are the guardians of the town? They are the teachers of children and Mishnah-teachers, who keep watch by day and by night, in line with the verse, 'And you shall meditate in it day and night' (Josh. 1:8)."
D. And so Scripture says, "If the Lord does not build the house, in vain the builders labor" (Ps. 127:1).

7.
A. Said R. Abba bar Kahana, "No philosophers in the world ever arose of the quality of Balaam b. Beor and Abdymos of Gadara. The nations of the world came to Abnymos of Gadara. They said to him, 'Do you maintain that we can make war against this nation?'
B. "He said to them, 'Go and make the rounds of their synagogues and their study houses. So long as there are there children chirping out loud in their voices [and studying the Torah], then you cannot overcome them. If not, then you can conquer them, for so did their father promise them: 'The voice is Jacob's voice' (Gen. 27:22), meaning that when Jacob's voice chirps in synagogues and study houses, The hands are not the hands of Esau [so Esau has no power].
C. "'So long as there are no children chirping out loud in their voices [and studying the Torah] in synagogues and study houses, The hands are the hands of Esau [so Esau has power].'"

The reference to Esau, that is, Rome, of course links the whole to the contemporary context and alleges that if the Israelites will support those who study the Torah and teach it, then their cities will be safe, and, still more, the rule of Esau/Rome will come to an end; then the Messiah will come, so the stakes are not trivial. That claim, contrary to the intuited givens of the common culture, places Torah over against that culture, and does so in an extreme manner.

What we see are two distinct positions, Torah-study within the framework of the culture of economics, Torah-study as against the culture of conventional economics. There is no harmonizing the two. Economics deals with scarce resources, and the disenlandisement of economics has turned upon its head the very focus of economics: scarcity and the rational way of disposing of what is scarce. To land rigid limits are set by nature, to the Holy Land, still more narrow ones apply. But to knowledge of the Torah no limits pertain. So we

find ourselves dealing with an economics that concern not the rational utilization of scarce resources, but the very opposite: the rational utilization of what can and ought to be the opposite of scarce. In identifying knowledge and teaching of the Torah as the ultimate value, the successor-system has not simply constructed a new economics in place of an old one, finding of value something other than had earlier been valued; it has redefined economics altogether. It has done so, as a matter of fact, in a manner that is entirely familiar, by setting forth in place of an economics of scarcity an economics of abundant productivity. Disenlandising value thus transvalues value by insisting upon its (potential) increase as the definition of what is rational economic action. The task is not preservation of power over land but increase of power over the Torah, because one can only preserve land, but one can increase one's knowledge of the Torah.

VII. *The Harmony of Torah and Culture*

So much for the position that recognizes only conflict between Torah and culture. Is there no view that finds culture in the Torah, that identifies the Torah as the source of culture? Just as Niebuhr is able to show how the several positions on the relationship of Christ and culture inhere within the logic of Christian theology and its dialectics, so I can show how the identification of Torah and culture comes to expression in the same documents as contain the opposite theory of matters. The aspect of culture that is identical to Torah is what we should call natural science. The Torah is represented as fully realized by the creation of the world, so that, by extension, the study of creation carries us deep into the mysteries of the Torah as the record of creation. This view I find in a classic, famous passage, Genesis Rabbah I:I, which alleges in so many words that God created the world by looking into the Torah. Then creation comes about by reference to the design set forth in the Torah. That bears the message: creation forms a guide to the fullness of the Torah, and all natural science forms a chapter in the revelation of the Torah that creation realizes. No. 2 below states that proposition in so many words:

l.
A. "In the beginning God created" (Gen. l:l):
B. R. Oshaia commenced [discourse by citing the following verse:] "'Then I was beside him like a little child, and I was daily his

delight [rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world, and delighting in the sons of men]' (Prov. 8:30-31).
C. "The word for 'child' uses consonants that may also stand for 'teacher,' 'covered over,' and 'hidden away.'
D. "Some hold that the word also means 'great.'
E. "The word means 'teacher,' in line with the following: 'As a teacher carries the suckling child' (Num. 11:12).
F. "The word means 'covered over,' as in the following: 'Those who were covered over in scarlet' (Lam. 4:5).
G. "The word means 'hidden,' as in the verse, 'And he hid Hadassah' (Est. 2:7).
H. "The word means 'great,' in line with the verse, 'Are you better than No-Ammon?' (Nah. 3:8). This we translate, 'Are you better than Alexandria the Great, which is located between rivers.'"

2.
A. Another matter:
B. The word [for child] in fact means "workman."
C. [In the cited verse] the Torah speaks, "I was the work-plan of the Holy One, blessed be he."
D. In the accepted practice of the world, when a mortal king builds a palace, he does not build it out of his own head, but he follows a work-plan.
E. And [the one who supplies] the work-plan does not build out of his own head, but he has designs and diagrams, so as to know how to situate the rooms and the doorways.
F. Thus the Holy One, blessed be he, consulted the Torah when he created the world.
G. So the Torah stated, "By means of 'the beginning' [that is to say, the Torah] did God create . . ." (Gen. 1:1).
H. And the word for "beginning" refers only to the Torah, as Scripture says, "The Lord made me as the beginning of his way" (Prov. 8:22).

The matter is explicit: the Torah forms the key to the creation of the world, and, working back from nature to the Torah, man penetrates the mysteries of the Torah by investigating the traits and properties of nature. Botany, biology, physics, chemistry—these form media of revelation of God's plan and will, as much as does the Torah in its specific formulation. Here in the terms of Niebuhr's typology, Torah forms a harmonious union with culture. In that capacious vision, one cannot distinguish secular from sacred science, for all learning, all chapters of culture, embody God's plan and program for creation, which to be sure comes to its most authentic expression in the words of the Torah itself.

VIII. *Why the Persistence of the Dialectics?*

If I have succeeded in showing how, within its native category-formations and language, Judaism struggles with the dialectic of the relationship of religion and culture just as does Christianity, I also have to ask, why does this particular dialectics characterize both religious traditions? The answer cannot derive from the history of the two traditions, since the several possible positions do not emerge in temporal order or sequence. From the very beginning to contemporary times, the relationship of Christ and culture has come to expression within a range of models not bound to a particular circumstance or occasion. And along these same lines, in ancient, medieval, and modern times the issues of Torah and culture have come to expression, the details subject to variation, but the main point always the same. As Niebuhr lays matters out, the inner logic of Christianity persistently counterpoises religion and "the world," or "culture," and explores the two possible relationships, harmony and opposition, and the intermediary ones as well. And as I see matters, Rabbinic Judaism concurs on the issue and its resolution.

If I had to hazard a guess on what consistently generates the binary opposites, I should point to the conception of God characteristic of both monotheisms: immanent and transcendent, both with us and wholly other. The same God who makes himself known and hides his face, who shelters his prophet in the cleft of the rock as his glory goes by, is the God who is both at home in humanity and different from humanity. In that setting, why should culture differ? Culture both embodies the faith, reminiscent of God's immanence in the world, and is contradicted by it, recalling God's transcendence over the world. It is hardly surprising, then, that culture is to be abandoned by the faithful and also to be shaped as their primary medium. The generative theology not only sustains but precipitates the dialectics that comes to expression, too, in the conception of Torah as part of culture and separate from culture, why some Yeshiva-masters counsel studying mathematics and astrophysics along with Torah, and many do; and advise studying only Torah, and many more do.

That is what I learn upon rereading *Christ and Culture* fifty years after my first encounter with that exemplary framing of the fundamental issues of Judaic existence, too.