

nection between these three problems, and at the same time the proof of their intrinsic cohesion, even unity, is to be found in the basic fact with which Judaism stands or falls—namely, the *revelation on Mount Sinai*.

Resplendent among the myriads of the sanctuary, Israel's God makes His entry on earth⁴: This is the miracle of miracles.

His word resounds from the heights of Sinai, penetrating the ears of the national community.⁴ Then all of Israel turns prophet.

From His right hand He extends to the community fire transformed into Law⁴: That is the second creation out of nothing—Israel's law.

For this reason, whoever rationalizes miracles, whoever humanizes prophecy, whoever gauges creation against the standards of the context of development, completely denies the revelation and thus the very basis of Judaism.

Revelation is the central concept which throws light on the concepts of miracle, prophecy, and creation.

Revelation does not fall to the object, but to the person deemed worthy of it. It demands insight into the direct activity of God, and thus the self-assured certainty that the object of revelation proceeds directly from God.

Whatever is experienced by way of revelation cannot be classified in the causal system of context and relevancy of human perception because it is not perceived with the means of human perception.

The community at Sinai heard "*Shamor*" and "*Zakhor*" uttered simultaneously.⁵ Here the experience of revelation appears in clear contradiction to all experience gained by human conceptual perception. Whatever is utterly inaccessible to human means of perception, revelation makes possible by granting intuitive means of perception of a new nature.

The creation of the world could only be *comprehended* by means of revelation. But only the *fact* of creation was communicated to us; creation itself remains God's secret: woe betide him who meddles with it.

Every miracle we experience is, however, the experience of a *partial creation* of God. For, from all that we have already dis-

cussed, it is not the object of the miracle, but the manner in which we experience and become aware of it that constitutes the essence of the miracle. Whoever experiences a miracle becomes a prophet by reason of this experience. For at that moment he has arrived at a glimpse into the activity of God which is not granted through the means of human perception, but through direct observation. This divine activity is removed from all classification in the context of conceptually perceived existing matter. Human means of perception cannot perceive miracles as such since they are only able to perceive by classification in a meaningful context. Every miracle is a revelation. What is revealed, however, is indeed not "recognized."

Balaam's ass "sees" the angel of the Lord, whilst the eyes of the would-be-wise, directed as they are towards the causal system of context and relevancy, are blind. Only after God had "opened" his eyes, and granted him the means of perception, did he dismount and prostrate himself on the ground in reverence.⁶

It is not the disturbance of the normal means of perception, such as, say, the somnambulant state of ecstasy, that appears in Judaism as the prerequisite of the miracle as well as of prophecy. Rather, both are based on the granting of original powers of perception, which no longer laboriously construct the object of perception following the guidance of accumulated concepts, but, seeing it with divine clarity, can perceive it directly and, perceiving it, can see it. The legitimization of the miracle is the miracle itself.

In this context, God's revelation to Moses in the burning bush is exceedingly instructive.

"Now Moses meanwhile had been tending the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the sheep, keeping to the pastureland,⁷ and came to the Mountain of God, Horeb.

There, an angel of God appeared to him in the heart of a fire from the midst of a thorn bush. He looked and, behold, the thorn bush was burning in the fire, and the thorn bush was not consumed!

are distinguished, may not enjoy the fruit of the tree of life to procure eternal life without effort. Eternal life: only a life which has a share in the truth, is eternal. Final truth cannot be imagined, it can only be "bewilled."

WEILER: "Bewilled?" What does that mean?

ALFRED: The divine origin of Torah is, just like God Himself, not an object of reason or observation. Whoever demands rational proof for them is like the blind man who wants to smell colors. However, they are the object of the will.

WEILER: Not so quickly, Mr. Roden. Otherwise I cannot follow you. I understand your previous argument: God and Torah cannot possibly be results of reasoning, nor logical necessities. Reason is supposed to be servant—not master. Man should be free in the face of God and Torah, and not enslaved to them by his reason. But why does there not exist any possibility of an empirical proof? Why does God no longer reveal himself to us as he did to our fathers? Why do miracles no longer occur as they did in our forefathers' times? Why has God covered himself for many centuries in this mystifying, dreadful silence? Is not this question, at least, most justified?

ALFRED: At any rate there is some sense to it, whilst the question about rational proof is really nonsensical.

WEILER: Well?

ALFRED: I could make things easy for myself and answer you by saying: "I do not stand in God's place. I do not know." What would you say to that?

WEILER: Just that it is—not an answer.

ALFRED: And suppose we all did not know? What would be your conclusion?

WEILER: Well, I would say that as little as God reveals Himself nowadays in words or in miracles, just as little did it happen before.

ALFRED: Is this conclusion compelling? Does it not presuppose that revelation occurs within and not outside experience?

WEILER: I do not understand that.

ALFRED: If some natural event is supposed to have taken place

on one single occasion many centuries ago, and has not occurred again, then even I would be inclined to deduce from the latter circumstance that the former fact, which has only reached our knowledge by tradition, is, to say the least, to a great extent improvable. For what reason should that constellation, which is supposed to have led to that natural event, never have made itself apparent again in all these centuries? Is not nature the realm of the inflexible rule? Is it not the realm in which what was valid yesterday is valid tomorrow? Nature knows of no exception.

WEILER: But?

ALFRED: But the revelation—be it in words or in actions—lies outside the limits of empirical nature and beyond the structure of its laws; even beyond the scope of human, rational perception. It endows the man, who is released from his corporeality, liberated from good and evil, with the gift of a perception which can scan in cogitation but not comprehend, and actually makes him a prophet for the duration of the revelatory act. As far as revelation is concerned, the rule which says: What was once, must perpetually continue to be—does not hold good. For it, the rule holds good which says: What once was, will never reoccur.¹⁴

WEILER: I admit that according to this, my conclusion is not compelling.

ALFRED: Not only is it not compelling, I can even reverse it—and perhaps more justly so. It is precisely because God did reveal Himself in words and actions on one occasion, that it no longer occurs.

WEILER: Then why did it occur at all?

ALFRED: I am not speaking of those few great men who had attained such a high level that the manner in which they mastered their bodies and environment by their will actually represented one of God's characteristics and, in the very fact that they were themselves a revelation of God, also granted proximity to God.

WEILER: I do not understand . . .

ALFRED: I do not want to dwell at length on this point. I was

ALFRED: Perfectly correct. In perception, the will is directed exclusively at the "I." And the will's bondage?

WEILER: I have understood the world-in-itself to be the realm where the will lacks freedom, the realm of craving, the realm where the will is willed and is not itself actively willing. If we were also able to perceive the world-in-itself, then we would enjoy divine freedom. The tragedy of humankind lies resolved in the falling-apart of the world as conception—the realm of our free will in repose—and of the world-in-itself—the realm of our stimulated yet captive will. Have I understood you correctly?

ALFRED: Absolutely correctly.

WEILER: And now you wished to take me further. For all that was just a preliminary stage, was it not?

ALFRED: Certainly. Anyway, I believe that it is the indispensable preliminary stage, which no one can be spared if he would like to ponder the fundamentals of Judaism and define its relationship to humanity. One cannot grasp the historical essence of Judaism if one lacks insight into the essence of history in general, if one lacks insight into the tragedy of nations in history, for the meta-history³² of the Jewish nation rises above this tragedy as its divine corrective, perceived in its necessity. The historical distress of nations is the sole possible proof for the truth of Moses' historical mission. Individual human distress is in its turn the sole individual-ethical proof for the divine origin of Torah. Meta-history and meta-ethics³³ presuppose history and ethics. But there I am already anticipating things. Let me return to the starting point of our first conversation. Your surely remember demanding proof for the divine origin of the Torah, do you not?

WEILER: I have learned a great deal since then. Above all I have become more cautious. What does the divine origin of the Torah mean? I suppose it means that God has revealed the Torah to us. In that case it is a question of a proof for a claimed historical event.

ALFRED: The divine origin of Torah can also mean that the Torah, as we possess it, has to be valid for you and for me as the embodi-

ment of divine will which makes us duty bound to it. In that case it is a matter of an asserted claim to ethical validity.

WEILER: I understand. One thing is history; the other is ethics. The one thing is national; the other is individual. One thing deals with nations, the other with men. We are now considering the latter.

ALFRED: We are, I hope, quite clear about one thing, namely that at any rate a direct proof cannot be brought from the world as conception. Neither God nor His Torah is an object of conception.

WEILER: Thus neither God nor His Torah is an object of perception?

ALFRED: Agreed. If God were an object of perception in the sense of the word as we understand it all the time, then God, as a component part of the conceived world, would be "given" to the "I" and set forth by the "I" in self-liberation. Then we would confront God in the unstimulated freedom of our will and God would have nothing to say to us. How could a "perceived" God aspire to bind our will?

WEILER: And Torah? Is it not an object of our perception either?

ALFRED: Leave aside ambiguities, please. Of course we are supposed to comprehend the individual precepts of Torah. How would we otherwise be able to regulate our lives in accordance with them. We have to "learn" Torah as the legal code of our lives. Our reason's competence to associate and to analyse is presupposed by Torah to the highest degree. The request for both gifts is the first and noblest of our prayers, and it precedes our request for a return to Torah.³⁴ The manner in which we comprehend Torah's precepts by dint of our associative and analytical reason, and the manner in which we are able by dint of the same activity of our reason to conceive and perceive the world which is "given" to us, are basically the same. For the Torah which we come to comprehend is given us as a norm for our behavior in this world that we have conceived and perceived. The Torah is revealed to us in the word. The word, however, and therefore the concept, is precisely that type of

human perception which we apply to the world which is "given" us when we are confronted with it. It is, however, in just as small a degree possible to penetrate the word to arrive at the Torah-in-itself with our own power, as it is to burst through the limits of the world we have conceived and comprehended to arrive at a perception of the world-in-itself.

WEILER: In any case, according to this, is Torah in its verbal form an object of our perception?

ALFRED: In just the same way that the world as conception is an object of our perception.

WEILER: What do you mean? Is that a qualification?

ALFRED: Certainly. Where does the boundary of our perception of the world as conception lie?

WEILER: In its "givenness." Its being-thus-and-not-otherwise.

ALFRED: Precisely the same thing is valid for the Torah which is formed in words and which we can perceive.

WEILER: I do not understand.

ALFRED: Look, it is simple enough. If the Torah entered into our thought pattern, that is into verbal form, so that we might comprehend it to enable us to shape our lives, then we still must not deduce from the comprehensibility of Torah in its verbal form the right to—lay hands on it. We must not touch its unique "givenness." Likewise, we perceive the world, which we have conceived, without daring to negate or correct what we think is enigmatic or indeed contradictory in it. The Torah scorns such an undertaking in no lesser degree than the world which we have conceived. Like nature, the Torah is only an object of our perception with the proviso of its unbreachable "givenness" which is removed from perception.

WEILER: If I have followed your reasoning correctly, then you mean that you reject Bible criticism as a matter of principle.

ALFRED: Correct. It is only conceivable in the selfsame manner that one would pursue, say, criticism of nature. You may ask as many questions as you wish, detect difficulties, discover contradictions, miss contextual associations, distinguish stylistic patterns; it all may serve you, just as in nature, as a heuristic

principle to arrive at an increasingly deeper perception of Torah's laws. But its creation-like "givenness," which can only be derived from the Torah-in-itself which is removed from our perception, has to remain completely unscathed. The Torah is a revelation in words just as nature is a revelation in conception. In the latter as in the former the revelation lies in the "givenness." The Torah represents for biblical criticism, which lays hands on the word, not the revelation of the word but the word pure and simple. Also the natural scientist would not leave nature unscathed—viewing it as it is and shying away because of the shortcomings he supposes are present. The Torah bothers just as little about the Bible critic as nature does about the natural scientist.

WEILER: The word, however, is more defenseless than the conception. The most radical natural scientist cannot get away from the unalterable "givenness" of nature. The word has to suffer being crossed out, abbreviated, altered, and canceled.

ALFRED: The revealed "givenness" of the word is not an object of perception. The word is regularly the expression of our very perception. If the word, for its part, becomes an object of our perception, then this means one of two things: either that we appropriate someone else's perception by learning the word, that we check and evaluate someone else's perception, accept it, refute it, and correct it; or that we take the word as a historical phenomenon by reason of its having been engendered in time and busy ourselves with it in accordance with the principles of historical research. This latter is what biblical criticism does. For it, the Torah's "givenness" in words does not signify "givenness" of revelation but historical "givenness," not something that has been revealed but something that has evolved, and biblical criticism believes it is able to probe the genesis of this something that has evolved.

WEILER: Is not, however, nature for natural science also something that has evolved? Does it not also attempt to outline the history of nature's evolution? It will not indeed cancel the integral wholeness of nature, will not wish to delete or erase anything

of it. Nevertheless it still strives to trace the multiplicity of all that is existent today back to primary forms. Are these endeavors not similar to those the biblical scholar pursues?

ALFRED: Even for the natural scientist the "givenness" of nature, its being-thus-and-not-otherwise is an inexplicable mystery. His instrument—reason which is supported by contemplation, synthesis, and analysis—cannot break through to God and God's creation, for God and God's creation are not objectives of observation and signify a primal beginning which tolerates no synthesis and eludes all analysis. The world is not conceived as primeval creation but as a perpetual system of contexts and relevancies. The natural scientist, therefore, does perfect justice to the world as conception with his methods, if he only remains aware that it is exclusively the world of conception, as accessible solely to the perceiving "I," in which he seeks to determine a framework of laws corresponding to the "I" itself. The world-in-itself is still creation even if it is conceived by the "I" as an external context. The world can be conceived by the "I," in accordance with the "I"'s own laws, only as something that has evolved and as something that is eternally evolving. Although, however, the world as conception is really the "I"'s world, there is no natural scientist who thinks of mastering the dissonances and enigmas, which are abundantly evident in this world, too, by simply eliminating them as not belonging to the world; by negating the unity of nature because of those tendencies in it, which seem to be at odds with one another; by presuming to sit in judgment over nature and only allowing the state of his concrete perception at any one time to enjoy validity. The Torah—and in this you are right—is more defenseless than nature.

WEILER: Can reason, then, possibly see something more in the Torah, than that it is just one book among others?

ALFRED: That is just the problem. We men can only think in words, that is in concepts, and we can only understand proceedings seen in temporal sequence. The Torah proclaims the law of God to us in words, and in the pattern of time it reveals

our own history to us from the beginning of the world right up to the death of Moses. Behind the words we have comprehended, behind the era we have contemplated, there broods Torah-in-itself, there broods the mystery. Because the Torah is composed of words, because its accounts have entered into the time-form, therefore reason supposes that men have compiled it, who think in words and exist in time. The obvious presupposition of all biblical criticism is the human origin of the Torah. For this reason, to argue with it is the most futile of all undertakings. The human origin of Torah is accepted in all the argumentations of bible criticism as a self-evident presupposition. If one admits this presupposition to be true, there is no point in refuting the argumentation on one point or another. If one contests it, then mostly their argumentation collapses on its own. The human origin of the Torah can be proved rationally neither in the positive nor in the negative sense. Is not also nature, as the conceived world, the embodiment of all our intuitive conceptions,³⁵ integrated into a unity according to the laws of our "I," exactly like the Torah which speaks to us in the terms of our concepts and presents things to us in our own time-form? And do we perhaps conclude from that that men compiled nature? The "I" is not the creator-"I" of the world but only the perceiving "I" of the world. The "I" is not the creator-"I" of Torah, but only the "I" which both perceives it and is addressed by it. In both cases an un-touchable "givenness" is evident. In both cases the "givenness" is the boundary of perceiving reason. This "givenness" is creation. The creation of the Torah joins the creation of the world. The revelation in words joins the revelation in deeds. Reason cannot come to terms with both of these revelations. In place of the revelation in deeds, in place of the deed that has been revealed once, reason installs the eternal deed in perpetual combination, with no beginning and no end. In place of the word that reveals itself eternally anew, reason installs the word that was recorded once, born within time and spoken within time. Because it is not able to comprehend the primary

act, it robs it of its beginning. And because it is not able to understand the word as not having a beginning, it presents it with the seal of a beginning.

WEILER: Nevertheless you still say yourself that reason perceives the conceived world correctly. What is the situation with regard to the Torah?

ALFRED: Reason must, of necessity, perceive the world as the embodiment of those intuitive conceptions which are "given" to the "I." The "I"'s self-assertion, this indispensable presupposition for all perception, allows the world-in-itself, which can only be bewilled but can never be perceived, to arise before the "I" at the same moment that it perceives the world as conception. If there were no world-in-itself, the world as conception would only be the "I"'s dream devoid of content. The world-in-itself is the corrective of the comprehended world as conception.

WEILER: And is there not a similar corrective with regard to the Torah?

ALFRED: Not automatically, as there is with regard to the world. If Torah's words reach us and we cogitate the concepts, which are clothed in these words, according to our laws of logic, and we relive its accounts in the time-form, then in our cogitation and imagination Torah's words appear in the first place to be nothing more than just—words. It is we ourselves who think the Torah's thoughts and compose its images on the basis of reproducing them from its written form. Whether we think the correct thoughts or compose the correct images, is solely dependent on whether we interpret its written form correctly. Our reproductive activity of logic and imagination is only restricted by the written form. For the rest the Torah is in fact the embodiment of thoughts and images that we have ourselves reproduced, and to which we may only ascribe objectivity insofar as we maintain that they correspond to the sense of the written form. The Bible critic believes he is able to exhaust the sense of the written form, and from the fact that this sense may be reproducible by man, he has no compunction in deducing

the human provenance of the written form itself. This Torah, therefore, which reason can perceive from within itself, that is to say the written form of it, which may be interpreted grammatically and logically with the assistance of historical studies pursued more or less conscientiously—this Torah is thus the sum of our own thoughts and images which have been triggered off by the Torah's word form. This Torah, which reason perceives from within itself, corresponds completely to the world as conception which has been perceived by the "I." But just as the world as conception, without the corrective of the world-in-itself, would be no more than simply a dream of the "I" so the Torah, which has merely been perceived by reason, is the sum of the "I"'s concepts and images, which have been triggered off by the written text, lacking objective reality. It has then become a playground of the "I"'s fantasies which were being sparked by these concepts and images—fantasies which do not even stop short with the written text, but rather correct and complete, classify in groups and split again just as they wish. A real value in terms of perception cannot basically be attributed to this Torah of reason. It is, indeed, nothing but reason itself cogitating in a certain manner as it deduces on the strength of the written text. The boundaries of reason, therefore, form the boundaries, too, of this Torah, and insofar as the written text appears to refer to things that are beyond the limits of our reason, this text is represented only by empty shells of concepts. Only where there is unity in duality is there evident a perception that truly does enrich the "I." The perception of the world is such a perception. It is an objective world, it is the world-in-itself which, indeed, we do not perceive as such, but nevertheless as a conceived world. Whoever thinks that the Torah is only a written text, which serves to activate reason alone, can never appreciate the Torah as more than a precipitate of reason, and to him the Torah can say no more than reason itself might ultimately have been able to say. Just as it is only the world-in-itself that gives the world as conception sense and significance, so the indispensable presupposition of the Torah is solely the Torah-

in-itself. There exists just as little agreement of the Bible critic and the Jew of the Torah as there is agreement of the solipsist, who considers the world to be his dream, and the person who acknowledges an objective world. The Bible critic's Torah shares in common with the Jewish people's Torah—only the name.

WEILER: What do you understand by Torah-in-itself?

ALFRED: Just the same as I understand by the world-in-itself.

WEILER: But the world-in-itself is surely the world that is independent of the "I" and that exists outside the "I"—the world insofar as it is not my conception.

ALFRED: Torah-in-itself is the Torah that exists independently of our reason and outside our reason—the Torah insofar as it is not my thoughts triggered off by written text.

WEILER: In this point I am as yet unable to follow you. Would you not explain yourself?

ALFRED: For the Jewish nation, the Torah is the sum of the letters that were written down at God's command and by God's dictation. The words that are composed of these letters produce a meaning which our reason can appreciate. For God has availed Himself of man's language for His revelation of the word. But the Torah has not become the language of man on the strength of this circumstance. The Torah as the language of men is only the visible form of the Torah as the language of God, in just the same manner that the world as conception we have perceived is only the visible form of the world-in-itself. Torah-in-itself—that is the Torah as the language of God, the Torah as the embodiment of that which God has thought, and still thinks, in the form of the letters and their compositions which have been handed down to us. Apart from what my reason comprehends from within itself under these letters and their compositions as their "meaning," there pertains to these letters and their compositions a "sense of their own," which is precisely God's sense.³⁶ If the Torah were indeed the work of man, then its sense could on principle be reproduced exhaustively on the basis of the written text. Then I would not "perceive" the Torah in the manner that I perceive the world. There would be no

Torah at all, except my own when I cogitate its words. I myself would then be reproducing the Torah in my cogitation. I would myself, as it were, be my own Torah.

WEILER:

ALFRED: You can only compare the Torah to the world. For the Torah is also God's creation. Basically I can only "read" God's creation in deeds, just as I can God's creation in words. My senses collect the letters together from God's creation in deeds, and my intuitive cogitation binds them together to produce conceptions. In this manner there is engendered the world I have conceived—a product of my mind. For even conceiving is nothing other than thinking. God's creation in deeds, however—is it now really nothing other and nothing more than my conception? Does not my will teach me, at the very moment I conceive the world, that, as well as the sense that I "perceive," it has further a "sense of its own"?

WEILER: Now I am beginning to understand. The world is God's "language of deed" and the Torah is God's "deed of language."³⁷

ALFRED: That is precisely what I mean. What confronts the world as our intuitive cogitation, confronts the Torah as our conceptual cogitation. Just as the world is not merely our intuitive cogitation of a special kind, but beyond that is precisely the world-in-itself, so too the Torah is not merely our conceptual cogitation of a special kind stimulated by a certain written text, but is beyond that precisely Torah-in-itself, God's Torah. Just as the world is a world which has been "given" to us, which we only "perceive" by becoming one with it and, at the same time, removing ourselves from it; just as there lies in this very act of becoming one while duality endures, the secret as to how the world-in-itself, which exists outside us, can be "perceived" at least as conception—precisely and only in the same manner can we "perceive" the Torah which is "given from heaven" and thus identify with ourselves something that exists outside us and remains outside us, as our own concept, whilst at the same time we divorce it from ourselves, insofar as it is never-

theless not our own concept, since it does not constitute our "I." He who cancels the Torah's transcendence as he "perceives," perceives not the Torah but only himself. Whosoever cancels the transcendence of the world as he "perceives," perceives not the world but only his own dreams. The objective world and also the objective Torah are only perceptible as long as their quality of transcendence endures. But whosoever feels that for him the Torah is merely one more book among so many others, does not "perceive" the Torah but creates an imitation of it. We have to descend to the "primal foundation," if we are to grasp the epistemological essence of the Torah.

WEILER: According to this you mean to say that the Jew's approach to Torah is from the first different from that of anybody else. Even if he at first only thinks of the written text as of concepts, his approach is by no means the same as it would be in reading a book. He is aware of the fact that, as he cogitates on the written text of the Torah, he does not assimilate into his "I" the Torah-in-itself, and the contents of the Torah-in-itself have not at all become the contents of his own comprehending cogitation. He is aware, rather, that Torah-in-itself remains an objective "givenness" even in the face of its being conceptually perceived by human comprehension, and that this fact of its being perceived only represents the form in which the Torah-in-itself offers itself to our perceiving "I." The relationship of comprehended Torah to Torah-in-itself is like the relationship of the conceived world to the world-in-itself. Have I understood you correctly?

ALFRED: Absolutely. And I suppose you will now admit that the Torah read by the disloyal Jew, and the Bible critic in particular, is basically quite a different Torah from God's creation in words, which was entrusted to our nation. The results of Bible criticism—no matter how well founded they may be on grammatical, logical or historical methods—are not of the least concern to our nation. They may pass as Torah which is nothing but comprehended, nothing but one book among many others, as Torah which is completely identical with the comprehending

"I." But they do not come anywhere near God's creation in words. The disloyal Jew does not perceive God's creation in words as a concept. In his eyes God's creation in words is rather itself nothing more than a concept, and God's written text no more than symbol of this concept.³⁸ The Jewish nation, however, never ceases to acclaim the written text, held up in the midst of the congregation, as "the Torah which Moses set before the sons of Israel,"³⁹ just as the world is set before us: an everlasting "givenness," in irrevocable and unassailable objectivity identical with our "I" solely as conception and solely as concept, as "in-itself," forever alien.

WEILER: I have to admit that you are really quite serious about "Torah from heaven." Whoever sees Torah as God's revelation must consider the Bible critics' efforts as absolutely ridiculous. He does not require any refutation. On the other hand, whoever does not consider Torah as God's revelation, to him no refutation is of any avail. It is also completely logical that we approach God's revelation in quite a different manner than we would a book, no matter how venerable it may be. If I may say so, your distinction between Torah-in-itself and comprehended Torah is likewise the necessary result of your entire system. In my view its value lies above all in the fact that it provides definitive protection for the Torah-in-itself—its letters and words against those arguments that can be raised from the Torah that has merely been comprehended. Even in the world I have conceived there is no lack of things that are indeed incomprehensible and contradictory, with which I have to come to terms, since this world is indeed not a product of my fantasy but a world which is "given" me and surmounts my "I." What, however, is the relationship of comprehended Torah to Torah-in-itself? After all, we surely are supposed to understand the Torah, as you said yourself, so that it may shape our lives. Do we possess any instrument for its comprehension other than our reason?

ALFRED: Torah is certainly to be "understood" by us. At this point, however, there emerges a significant difference between

our behavior in the face of the world we have conceived and our behavior in the face of the Torah which we have to comprehend. As the Jewish nation approaches Torah in a manner different from that to a book, so too it comprehends Torah in a manner different from that in which it would comprehend a book. The laws of the world we have perceived and our laws of logic are in the completest harmony. For we are the ones who conceive the world according to the integral laws of our logic. The integral laws of our logic create at the same time the integrality of the world we have conceived. For this reason the laws of our logic are unconditionally valid for the world which we have conceived. They are also valid for the Torah we have comprehended, for it is only by reason of the laws of our logic that we have comprehended Torah. We have, however, no guarantee that the Torah we have comprehended according to our laws of logic corresponds in any way to Torah-in-itself, God's creation in words, just as little as we can identify the laws of the world we have conceived with the world-in-itself which we have not perceived. With regard to the world we may resign ourselves to the fact that we can only perceive it as conception. If, however, we possessed only the comprehended Torah, then we would not have the possibility of extracting from it God's real will so as to give our lives the required shape. For us Torah is indeed not only an object of perception which leaves our "I" in a state of free self-assertion, but above all an object of our recognition which obligates the will. Where, then, is the link between Torah which has been comprehended and Torah-in-itself?

WEILER: I can already anticipate where this is leading. You mean tradition.

ALFRED: I mean the oral teaching, the "Torah of the spoken word," which forms the link between Torah-in-itself, the "Torah of the written word," and comprehended Torah.

WEILER: Well, tradition then. The "Torah of the spoken word" can only be preserved by tradition, being passed on orally from one generation to the next. The Torah of the written word resides

with the "primal foundation" of things; it is creation, just like the world-in-itself.

ALFRED: The Torah of the spoken word resides with the eternal Jewish nation which, as the transcendental custodian of the word which was addressed to it by God through Moses and has been guarded by it, is called "Keneset Israel." In its unity, formed by God's spoken word, it represents God's "kingship."⁴⁰

WEILER: To what extent, then, is the Torah of the spoken word the mediator between Torah-in-itself and comprehended Torah?

ALFRED: The Jewish nation does not approach Torah-in-itself with reason alone. This is what the Bible critics may do, or those disloyal ones who no longer wish to have any part in Keneset Israel. They do not gain possession of Torah-in-itself in its unimpeachable objectivity, and the Torah which they have comprehended resembles the spirit that comprehends it but does not resemble Torah-in-itself.⁴¹ The "I," being rooted itself in the "primal foundation," may comprehend, as "masculine" principle, with its laws of intuition and thought, the instances of "givenness" and mold them into the unity of the world of conception. Torah-in-itself, however, does not allow itself to be molded but itself molds. It is itself a "masculine," not a "feminine" principle. To it we have to surrender ourselves with our intellectual powers, which have been prepared and led step by step by the Torah of the spoken word, so that it enters into us and forms, together with our reason, which cogitates on the Torah of the spoken word, a unity. This unity indeed signifies that type of comprehended Torah which the Torah's Creator wishes to be acknowledged by us as the factor that obligates our will to shape our lives. It is not directly Torah-in-itself but, in the first place, the Torah of the spoken word that is the object of our rational activity. This, which comes in no less degree from Sinai than Torah-in-itself, is, as it were, the Sabbath-robe⁴² of Torah-in-itself, which conceals the unfathomable primal foundations of creation and thus first makes Torah-in-itself comprehensible. It is not through Torah-

in-itself but through the enclothing robe of the Torah of the spoken word that the buds approved by God sprout forth from our reason. The symbols of the Torah of the spoken word are not a written text, which our reason is able to interpret of itself. How otherwise could Torah-in-itself, which is composed of these symbols, be God's creation. Its symbols are ciphers which can only be made out by our reason after having been preformed by the Torah of the spoken word, and only insofar as God considered it necessary for the molding of the life of His nation. Beyond this, these symbols are boundaries behind which lurks the secret of creation. The Torah of the spoken word is not composed of the ciphers of creation. It is really the Torah of the word and, therefore, is fundamentally a comprehensible, ponderable, reproducible Torah. On it, and through it on the Torah-in-itself, our nation has accomplished, in endless sacrifice of love and trust over many centuries, a work of the most perceptive and most critical rational activity, which is without comparison on earth. It is with this Jewish nation, preformed by the Torah of the spoken word—it is with Keneset Israel—that Torah has espoused itself in love and has entrusted to it the secrets of God to a degree that is at all achievable by humankind on earth.

WEILER: The Torah of the spoken word, then, teaches us to read the Torah of the written word in a manner that is proper for us. And even if we "perceive" the Torah-in-itself with the aid of the Torah of the written word, then this Torah remains "in itself" and endures, as a piece of God, in unimpeachable objectivity. Torah which is nothing but comprehended is fundamentally not credited with any value of truth. Only Torah which is comprehended with the Torah of the spoken word is the Torah which we have correctly perceived for the purpose of our earthly active life.

ALFRED: That is it. There exists no relationship between the Torah which is no more than comprehended, spirit of the spirit of those who comprehend, and the Torah which is comprehended by the Jewish nation, spirit of the spirit of God. There

exists no possibility of agreement or, indeed, of a compromise of any kind. The Torah of the spoken word contains the constitutive rules, according to the application of which the Torah-in-itself can be "perceived." Without these rules, without these laws which preform reason, a conceptual Torah comes into being which relates to the "perceived" Torah in the same way that the world of dreams relates to the world of reality. Again, the Torah which is perceived along with the Torah of the spoken word and its rules relates to Torah-in-itself as the world of conception we have perceived relates to the world-in-itself.

WEILER: I understand completely what you say about the relationship of Judaism to Bible criticism. But . . .

ALFRED: Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch set up with ingenious clarity, right at the beginning of his literary career, the following maxim with regard to Torah: "As Jews must we read it."⁴³ With this maxim he dealt a blow of rejection to Bible criticism which freed him for the rest of his life from the obligation of a discussion. Had we always understood this maxim correctly and taken it to heart, then we would have been spared many an aberration.

WEILER: I am in complete agreement with you. Since Torah is for us quite a different object of perception from what it is for Bible criticism; since we approach this object with quite different means of perception than does Bible criticism; therefore it is a matter of course that also the results of research cannot tally. All this is absolutely clear to me. However, who can now provide me with guarantees for the Torah of the spoken word, which is the real guarantor for the Torah of the written word? We are indeed agreed that when our minds cogitate on Torah-in-itself without the laws of the Torah of the spoken word, then they convey to us merely a Torah which, as you say, is no more than comprehended, which reflects at us only our own spirit which is activated by the written text and contains not a trace of divine creation. Only the Torah of the spoken word permits us to perceive and comprehend the Torah of the written word as a

system of the revelation of divine will. Therefore, I repeat my question: who is the guarantor of the Torah of the spoken word?

ALFRED: At this point we have now at last arrived again at the decisive question. Everything is indeed dependent on whether the Jewish nation, Keneset Israel, is speaking the truth when it maintains it has received the Torah of the spoken word from God through Moses on Sinai. For you are perfectly correct in noting that the Torah of the spoken word is for us the guarantor of the Torah of the written word. In just the same way the world as conception is our guarantor for the world-in-itself.

WEILER: Keneset Israel, you said, is the Jewish nation as the living custodian of the divine word that has been handed down to us.

ALFRED: The echoes of the unwritten word die away if there is no human community which listens to take it in and preserve it.

WEILER: "Hear, O Israel . . ."44

ALFRED: Even if there were no humanly conceiving beings, the world-in-itself would still exist; however, our world, which is conceived by man, and the form of the revelation of the divine act of creation which was adapted to man, would vanish. And if the Jewish nation no longer existed, it would in no way damage Torah-in-itself in its unimpeachable objectivity; but the Torah of the word which was spoken once for all time would no longer have an ear to preserve it.

WEILER: Everything is then dependent once again on Keneset Israel. Keneset Israel vouches for the Torah of the spoken word; the Torah of the spoken word vouches for Torah-in-itself; who vouches for Keneset Israel?

ALFRED: What a merciless questioner you are . . .

WEILER: Am I not allowed to? I only want to learn . . .

ALFRED: You have to. I am learning at the same time. Just let us consider this: Who could be considered as a guarantor for Keneset Israel? For, surely, we have both already learned enough to know that one should not immediately look for the answer to any basic question, but that one should first carefully and conscientiously consider, whether and in what form the question itself has any—sense.

WEILER: Agreed. Who could be guarantor? Surely only someone who witnessed the event.

ALFRED: Only Keneset Israel took in the event and preserved its memory. The first two of the Ten Commandments were heard by Keneset Israel directly from the mouth of the Almighty; a great voice—and then no more.⁴⁵ But it is enough for us to know that the Almighty's words can reach a mortal's ears and that he can survive it; enough to verify for Keneset Israel Moses' transmission of the word for the rest of the Torah of the spoken word. Keneset Israel is the sole living witness of the event. Are you demanding a witness to corroborate the witness? And even if he were found, would you rather trust him than Keneset Israel?

WEILER: Only God himself could, therefore, testify for Keneset Israel.

ALFRED: And Keneset Israel, in its turn, for God. This is where it comes full circle.

WEILER: Is my question, then, senseless?

ALFRED: It is, for a human being, so natural. Almost a matter of course. For everyone who stands outside Keneset Israel.

WEILER: Outside?

ALFRED: That was the gravest worry of our departing teacher⁴⁶ to which he gave uninterrupted expression in his last speeches: namely that the individual earthly members of Keneset Israel—you and I—might forget Keneset Israel's transcendental experience.

WEILER: By that do you mean to say that only that person who stands outside Keneset Israel can demand surety for Keneset Israel?

ALFRED: That is indeed what I mean to say. Whoever carries within himself the living identity of Keneset Israel; whosoever has a share in Keneset Israel, he, too, has a share in the knowledge of Keneset Israel. How should he then search for a guarantor?

WEILER: Here I am standing before the gate and cannot find the key for entry. Mr. Roden, many German Jews are in this position.

There we stand before the gate with longing in our hearts, and cannot get in. Do you possess the key, Mr. Roden?—Mr. Roden, you once stood outside, too, did you not?

ALFRED: It seems to me that there are many paths that lead to Keneset Israel. I am only acquainted with my own path. It would seem that there is a great deal of room in Judaism. Yet I only know my own place.

WEILER: Show me your path, then. Point out your place to me, then. Perhaps I can follow.

ALFRED: It was no easy matter for me.

WEILER: Can any German Jew find it an easy matter?

ALFRED: You are right . . . We have to help one another.

WEILER: I am so grateful to you.

ALFRED: Just tell me, Mr. Weiler: who can vouch to you for the fact that you perceive the world as conception correctly.

WEILER: Whatever I have perceived is constantly proved to me. The laws which I find are confirmed every day. Even in space and its incomprehensible dimensions we find that our laws are valid.

ALFRED: That is it. Proof is one aspect of the problem: the practical one. The other aspect is of a theoretical nature. We ourselves are the ones who by means of our contemplative and comprehensive laws of logic cause the world to arise as our world of conception. If there were not these laws of our logic, then there would not be a world of conception for us at all. No wonder, then, that our constructing laws of logic are valid in the world of conception. The subsequent proof, then, in the world of conception and the preceding construction of the world of conception are the guarantors for the validity of our laws of logic for the world of conception. I suppose no other guarantors are possible.

WEILER: I can understand that. But what do you mean to infer by it?

ALFRED: Keneset Israel is one of the ways in which God rules, namely a mode of divine rule which is directed at the building of the community of humankind under God's kingship, insofar

as it has become historically effective and remains historically effective. The manifestation of this historical revelation of God is the Jewish people as it is concretely alive. The Torah of the spoken word is the comprehensible constitution of the human community which stands under God's kingship. To put this constitution into effect was and is the active concern of God's historical mode of rule. Keneset Israel—as the eternal, the indestructible “in-itself” of the visibly evident Jewish people living in the world of phenomena and the flow of generations—has heard this constitution and adopted it. Keneset Israel is the guarantor of the Torah of the spoken word. Keneset Israel's guarantor, however, is the Jewish people which lives in the world of phenomena, namely in the sense of the subsequent test as well as of the preceding construction.

WEILER: You are making a distinction between Keneset Israel and the Jewish people, are you not?

ALFRED: In just the same way that I distinguish between the world-in-itself and the world as conception. Keneset Israel is God's creation of a nation which has been formed by the Torah of the spoken word. The Jewish people is the visible form of this creation. Without Keneset Israel the fate of the Jewish people is not to be explained. Keneset Israel proves itself in the Jewish nation's fate, just as Keneset Israel provides the import of the existence of the Jewish nation.

WEILER: Do nations have, then, their “in-themselves,” too?

ALFRED: According to our sages' profound teaching the question has decidedly to be answered in the affirmative. The smallest particle of the world of conception is rooted in the world-in-itself. No plant grows, blooms, and fades without God's judgment in the world-in-itself being passed on to the plant-in-itself and executed.⁴⁷ And should nations grow, bloom and fade without the world-in-itself having any relationship to it? In that case the nations would not be objective instances of “givenness” which we only have to “perceive”; in that case history would only be—a dream. Only history-in-itself—I shall call it meta-history—gives sense and significance to the history

we can perceive. History is not just an arbitrary sum of chance events or a chain of senseless casual contexts, neither is it a compound of forces which are acting blindly upon and against one another. What is taking place before our eyes is—like the world of conception—the visible form of history-in-itself which we can perceive, corresponding to the world-in-itself; it is the firm stride of divine rule, the direction of which is determined by the extent of the creation-force given by God and the significance of free human action.

WEILER: Is this Jewish doctrine? I never heard anything about it. It is of overwhelming magnitude . . .

ALFRED: Nations are created, just like the world-in-itself. They were allotted their degree of creation-force, and then the Sabbath of creation descended upon them just as upon the world-in-itself. They spring, develop, and bloom . . . and they wither away when their forces are exhausted or when they contravene the law of life of their "in-themselves." Their history is rooted in history-in-itself, in meta-history, just as the world of conception is rooted in the world-in-itself. The world of conception, however—by reason of the Sabbath of creation which has descended upon the world-in-itself—displays a context which reposes in itself and is never disrupted. It relates over and over again one phenomenon back to another, and the contextual laws that can be experienced suffice completely—at least fundamentally—for a deductive explanation of the processes within the world of conception. In just the same way even nations possess what are, as it were, natural living conditions, as seen by reason comprehending their history. Their historical evolution allows itself to be traced back—at least subsequently—to perceivable causes, there being no need to lift the Sabbath veil⁴² of their "in-themselves" and to probe into the law of their creation. The laws, according to which the nations appeared before the God of history, is revealed neither to the nations themselves nor to historians. No mortal hand can lift the Sabbath veil with its own strength.

WEILER: And the Jewish nation?

ALFRED: The Jewish nation has had its "in-itself" revealed to it.

Keneset Israel is its "in-itself," and the Torah of the spoken word is the law according to which it has appeared before the God of history. It is the law of creation which determines its fate. No Sabbath has descended upon Keneset Israel. Keneset Israel is not granted any creation-forces of its own which do not henceforth require God's "Let there be." Keneset Israel is directly dependent in its entire existence on God's Torah of the spoken word. It is for this reason that its phenomenon, the Jewish nation, is indeed perceivable in its historical life, as far as actual events within the world of conception are concerned, but the individual events do not coalesce to produce a general context which in its effective causes is comprehensible through reason alone. Keneset Israel is, in fact, nothing but the Torah of the spoken word, insofar as it has become an effective factor in history. And just as the Torah of the written word cannot be comprehended without Keneset Israel as custodian of the Torah of the spoken word, so the Jewish nation, too, remains a phenomenon which in its uniqueness is completely enigmatic, unless its revealed "in-itself," unless Keneset Israel, as the divine creation molded by the Torah of the spoken word, offers comprehending reason the key to understanding. The enigma of the Jewish nation as a historical phenomenon enabled me to take the first step along the path to Judaism. To me the Jewish people has become the guarantor for Keneset Israel. As the laws of our mind are valid in the world of conception, because it is only through them that we become aware of the world of conception as a comprehensible system, so, too, Keneset Israel is, as it were, the *a priori* of the Jewish nation, the epistemological presupposition for the comprehensibility of its unique history.

WEILER: And the test?

ALFRED: It speaks a language almost more distinct than the preceding presupposition of perception. Did not even our departing teacher⁴⁶ characterize the Torah of the spoken word as the factor that molds the fate of the Jewish nation, just as it is