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orthodoxy, are saved from such heresies of the right and the left.

Be that as it may, Lutheran orthodoxy and American liberal skepticism have produced the contradictory results of a confessional theism and a Christian atheism. The work of two authors discussed in Mr. Herzog's survey will clarify the issue between the thesis of a "natural"—that is, rational—knowledge of the divine and the thesis that there is a special purpose of religious faith in clinging to the idea of a mysterious divine source of order and meaning. A book by John B. Cobb jr., entitled *Christian Natural Theology* (1965), uses Whitehead's philosophy to suggest that a rational analysis of the whole sequence of causes always assumes a "principle of concretion"—or, in short, leaves room for the mystery of creation, because no previous cause is a fully adequate explanation of the emergence of novelty in the evolutionary "process." Thus God becomes the mysterious source of the world's meaningful order.

The second work Mr. Herzog discusses is William Hordern's *Speaking of God: The Nature and Purpose of Theological Language* (1964). Mr. Hordern's thesis is that all religious propositions are symbolic because they indicate a mystery which guarantees the order and meaning of the world despite the obvious incoherences and ambiguities in nature and history. Mr. Hordern thus emphasizes the function of religious faith, as distinguished from pure philosophy. Religion is the expression of a basic trust in the meaning of human existence, despite and in defiance of the disorders and evils to which all men are subject. Mr. Hordern's thesis thus might clarify the thought of both orthodox and heretical students of the relation of religion to the rational pursuits of men. It might also indicate why religious faith is able to survive in an empirical culture which is bound to question many of its symbolic statements, particularly when these statements claim to be records of actual history.

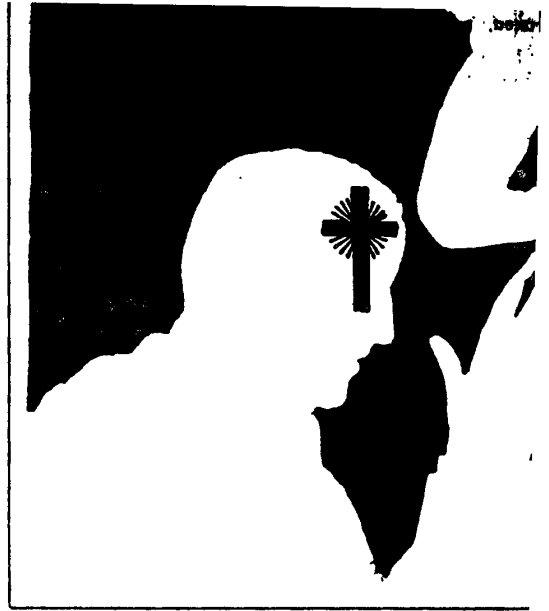
Bishop Robinson's plea for a "New Image of God" was influenced by the late Paul Tillich's idea that the conception of God as "Being per se" is the only possible philosophical, non-metaphorical affirmation of faith. But this conception assumes that "Being per se" is able to give moral imperatives to man, though man transcends "being," including his own being. It thus negates the whole conception of the Bible inherited from Hebrew thought of a transcendent God who confronts man with a "Thou shalt" or a "Thou shalt not."

Bishop Robinson accepts the Hebraic and Christian idea of a historic revelation; he also relies, however, upon the German theologian Rudolph Bultmann for an interpretation of this revelation. Mr. Bultmann is skeptical of the New Testament version of this revelation, and questions whether the Resurrection, regarded by Christian orthodoxy as the final climax of the revelation in Christ, was really a "public event" in the same way that the Crucifixion was. Thus, a linchpin of orthodoxy is missing both in Mr. Bultmann's and in Mr. Robinson's account of traditional faith.

Gabriel Vahanian's *No Other God* is an eloquent and passionate protest against all the versions of Christian atheism that Mr. Herzog's volume describes. His concern is not with the function of religion generally in giving meaning to life, but rather with the function of "radical monotheism" in helping men to understand their own nature and avoid self-idolatry.

Mr. Vahanian writes in his introduction to this group of essays: "Taken as nothing less if nothing more than a cultural

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Yahweh on the couch

By Arthur Hertzberg

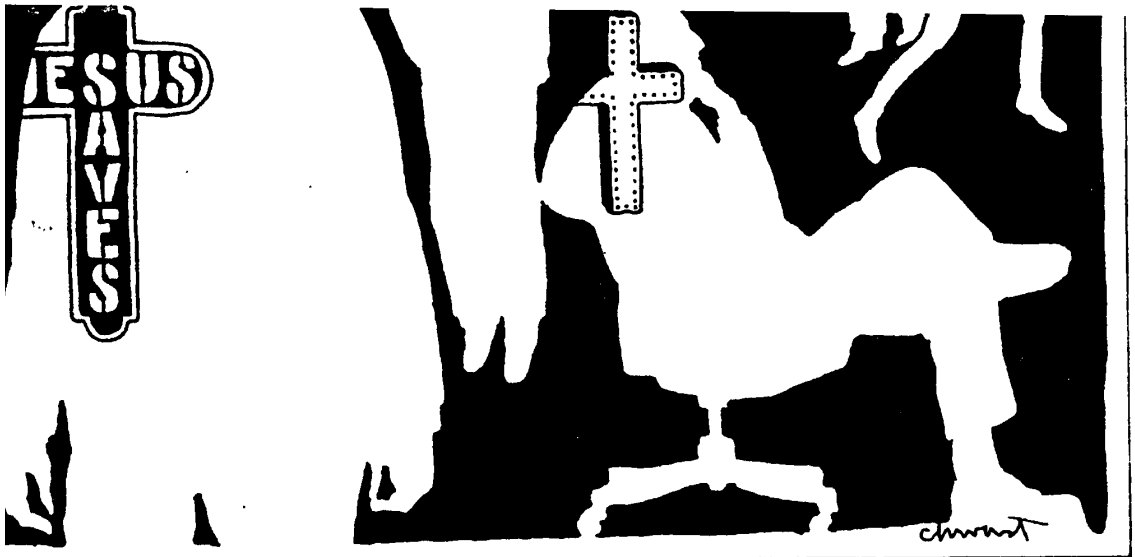
YOU SHALL BE AS GODS: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition. By Erich Fromm. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 240 pp. \$4.95.

Erich Fromm is both a unique and a predictable religious thinker. His uniqueness lies in his combination of solid, classic Jewish scholarship and a in-doubtable knowledge of psychoanalysis, a field which he has served both as an innovator and an interpreter. More overtly and certainly more consciously than Freud before him, he stands as a kind of secular humanist rabbi, who is especially attractive to your Jews who are seeking a new structure for the moral ideals they have inherited.

On the other hand, Fromm is by no means an anomaly. He stands in an important historical line which began with Paul and has been continued with such figures as Spinoza and Freud. Each of these Jews had to come to terms, one way or another, with the Bible of their ancestors, for they found themselves unable to develop their respective new systems of thought unless they either assimilated the Old Testament to it as a preamble or else demolished its authority. Spinoza and Freud each attacked the Jewish God that he had abandoned as an obstacle to the perfection of human culture. Paul made him into a precursor of the new Christian dispensation. Fromm has now come forward to revise the Old Testament to embody his own Judaism, one that points towards a freely humanist, this-worldly dispensation.

Fromm quotes from Judaism at least as ably as St. Paul once did—and he is wrong in the very same way. The central burden of Fromm's argument is to

Arthur Hertzberg is rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, Englewood, N. J., and the author of, among other books, *The Zionist Idea* (Harper & Row).



prove that the biblical image of God was created by an evolving process in which man was freeing himself of all primary ties, "fixation to mother, to blood and to soil," in order to develop a full human freedom. The Jewish God, as law-giver, "represents conscience," and Fromm asserts that this image was necessary at the time it was developed. It enabled man to free himself from incestuous relationships by transferring his obedience to the law of God. But there is a further stage of this process in which man rises to his highest level, humanism, and frees himself from obedience to God in order to be true to himself. Fromm then proceeds to adduce a number of passages in the Bible and rabbinic sources which indicate a tendency within the Jewish tradition that asks God himself to be obedient to the moral law. Once men begin to make this request, does it not follow, according to Fromm, that they are really engaged in freeing themselves from the authority of God in the name of their own moral sense?

An even more obdurate tradition that Fromm tries to restate is that of "the chosen people," which embodies the central assertion of Judaism about the Jews. To do so, Fromm follows the lead of the 19th-century Protestant biblical scholars. Led by Julius Wellhausen, they made a historical case for the superiority of Christianity by arguing that within the Old Testament itself there was a continuing battle between the ethnocentrism of the priests and the universalism of the prophets. Prophetic Judaism was depicted as being engaged in freeing itself from the doctrine of the "chosen people." Wellhausen used this perspective to make the prophets the lineal ancestors of the Christian dispensation. Jesus was thus both the heir and the redeemer of the best of the Old Testament.

Fromm advances the same argument, though somewhat more subtly. Thus, he writes: "The highest point of universalism is reached in the prophetic literature. While in some prophetic speeches the idea of the superiority of the Hebrews over the gentiles is upheld, as teachers and spiritual examples, we find other statements in which the role of the children of Israel as God's favorite is abandoned." Now Fromm's method throughout the book is to quote extensively from Jewish sources, either marshalling them in evidence or else re-interpreting them. But after this statement which is of crucial importance to his argu-

ment, he does not produce a single passage from the prophetic books of the Bible to support it. Why? Being as learned as he is in the sources, Fromm knows that every one of the so-called universalist passages in the prophets, if understood in the context of the whole message of the particular prophet, is not universalist in any sense which is useful to his argument. For example, the Book of Amos begins with two chapters of the most universalist kind of prophecy about the whole of the Near Eastern world of that day. It contains (IX, 7) the famous affirmation that to God the Jews are no better than the Ethiopians or the Philistines. Nevertheless, no competent scholar of the Bible can read these passages except in the light of Amos's statement (III, 2): "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities."

The closest that we can come to formulating a true description of Judaism is by a set of paradoxes. The biblical faith and the Jewish tradition which grew from it affirm that man must be absolutely obedient to God, and yet that man's image of justice can sometimes be used to question the Divine justice. Judaism affirms that all men are God's children, and it yet insists that Jews have a special task in the world, one which is often a mystery even to themselves, which they can perform only by persisting in obedience to their own tradition. Fromm has a right to that part of these paradoxes which may be more pleasing to a post-Jewish mind such as his and to assert that this is his faith. He does not have a right to lay the God and the traditions of Judaism on his analyst's couch and observe that this tradition was really trying to express—in the cruder language, alas, of an earlier age—a glimmering awareness of Fromm's humanism. The Bible deserves to be taken seriously and to be confronted in all its complexities. Precisely because quotations from it, from the Talmud, and from Hasidic sources come fluently to Fromm's pen, he creates the illusion that a sane, contemporary mind has now produced a new understanding of the Jewish past. What he has really done is a piece of *ex-parte* pleading, a lawyer's brief in defense of his own present before the bar of his own past. Like Paul before him, he seems to want to believe that he is not a rebel but an heir—but to go further with this thought would mean to turn the tables on Fromm and analyze him as he has attempted to analyze the biblical God.

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