

to restrict Jewishness to a critical, judgmental role within an essentially Christian universe of meaning. As I object in Your People, My People, I had shown "a propensity to treat the Jews as a means to a particular Christian theological scheme (and even to a particular Jewish theological scheme), rather than approaching them as ends in themselves, as Jewish human beings whose dignity must remain wholly uncompromised." The integrity of the Jew does not rest upon any "function," divine ~~or~~ other. Neither is my ⁹(later) work, Elder and Younger Brothers, free of the above kind of Christian bias. An entire chapter is devoted to the "mystery" of the Jews as the people of God -- a conceptualization that must only play into the hands of their detractors. I still appeared unable "to receive Jewish existence as an unqualifiedly normal, human reality."⁵⁵ Under the seemingly praiseworthy rubric of esteeming Jews for their place in God's economy of salvation I was in fact perpetuating the insufferable Christian habit of making demands upon them. Such a theology of demands is inseparable from "a theology of Jewish victimization" (Rosemary Ruether). Where was grace in all this? Where was the humaneness of God?

In recent years I have come to a confessionalist viewpoint that exceeds even the confessionalism of H. Richard Niebuhr, who remained, after all, absolutist in situating the unity of the human race in Jesus Christ. I do not see that the Christian church can serve humanity unequivocally until its gospel is cleansed of every trace of theological absolutism. I plead, from the Christian side, for a radical humanization of the Covenant. All our theologizing about

⁵⁵YPMP, pp. 235, 236, 241-242.

the Jewish people must be overcome. I reached this conclusion well before Rabbi Olan's essay appeared, but at this point he is unconditionally correct. His strictures against Christian imperialism are, in principle, wholly justified. "The question of whether Christianity can bear humanization is, of course, assailing and indeed shattering the entire Christian world of today."⁵⁶

I have more than once declared that if the State of Israel represents ^a~~the~~ Jewish declaration of independence from the erstwhile Christian ^{hegemony,}~~empire~~, the Christian cannot consent to the break. He is only an adopted son, and a prodigal ~~son~~ at that, but he is not prepared to be expelled from the House of Israel. Yet for the Christian to insist on retaining the tie appears to preserve the vices of pre-humanization. I now believe that the "coming of age" of the Christian community requires an unqualified readiness to enable the Israel of God to be whatever she will be -- even without ^{Christians}~~us~~. (The dialogue is, in this sense, finished, i.e., consummated.) "I think that my erstwhile insistence upon membership in the Jewish family has been determined in considerable measure by the necessary warfare against Christian supersessionism. . . . Hence, that insistence has been provisionally justified. But suppose that the [supersessionist] fantasy is overcome! Must the family stay together? I am not entirely certain how to answer. I do know that loved ones part from one another and go their different ways -- though they need not thereby cease their loving or their caring. Indeed, it may be that the parting must take place by the very decree of love and for the very sake of love."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 242-243.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 245.

Against the missionizing view. In writings subsequent to my first book I continued to question the theological and moral tenability of the Christian missionizing stance toward the Jewish community, but I have done so on fresh grounds, rather polemically, and much more extremely.⁵⁸ My viewpoint is expressed in Elder and Younger Brothers and carried forward in Your People, My People.

The missionizing policy is to be fought in principle, yet without foreclosing the unqualified human right of individual Jews to become Christians. Philosophically speaking, we are met by a particular case of the unresolvable enigma of "the one and the many." Humanly and theologically speaking, the enigma may be lived with through reference to the symbol of the church's open door. No distinction is more momentous than that between the open and the closed door. To close the door is to practice arrant antisemitism. Yet how can we discern the faithfulness of God in the abiding life of Israel if we advocate a policy that could ultimately snuff out that life? To keep the door of the church open is thus identified as a position diametrically opposite to any program to seek out the Jewish community for conversion. Missionary visitation is the repudiation of God's election. The missionizing program is to be opposed, not prudentially but in principle. That is to say, that program is a Christian-theological impossibility. For if the Jewish people do not remain the first family of God, we who are gentiles remain lost and without hope (cf. Eph. 2:11-13). The Covenant into which Jesus of Nazareth hopefully leads us becomes an illusion. Thus it must be

⁵⁸In 1961 I fell into a curious lapse, contending that "the promises to Israel have been fulfilled in the new people of God, the Church" and giving evidence of sympathy for the missionizing viewpoint ("The Mystery of the Jews' Rejection of Christ," Theology Today, XVIII, 1 [April, 1961], 51-59).

said, with much heartache and in all charity to "missionaries to the Jews," that the effort to expunge the Jewish community as an indissoluble union of people and faith comprises a veiled and unknowing attack upon the Christian faith itself. It menaces the very foundation of Christianity: the Jewish people and their Covenant with the Living God.⁵⁹ From Jerusalem, Coos Schoneveld avows that the integral meaning of Christian missions is to invite all people who have stood outside Israel to enter into the Covenant.⁶⁰ In other words, Jesus is the Savior of the world.

Having dared to utilize the word "Savior," I must in honesty ask whether, objectively speaking, Jesus is the authentic Christ in any sense other than his bringing us and other potential Christians into the Covenant. Is not this latter ^{act} the only sense in which we can attest that the world is redeemed in him? Are we not now simply

59

EYB, pp. 157-158; YPMP, p. 226. See, more fully, EYB, pp. 152-158. André Lacocque rightly adjudges that those organizers of "Key 73" who singled out Jews as targets of their evangelical zeal revealed a frightening and deeply rooted misunderstanding of the church's task and nature.

60

Coos Schoneveld, as cited in YPMP, p. 227. I do not know that I finally meet the problem of the ongoing Hebrew-Christian community, although some in that group have expressed sympathy with my position on missions. As argued in Elder and Younger Brothers, the truth that the first Christians were Jews does not resolve the matter one way or the other. "One cannot employ a divine bridge of the first century for twentieth-century (or twenty-seventh century) traffic without completely reconstructing it." But I also state: "To propose that the church is or ought to be constituted solely of gentiles is as idolatrous as it is antisemitic. It is an affront to all Christians of Jewish origin. In these Christians there lives an earnest of the Kingdom of God, when the separate vocational responsibilities of original Israel and the church will at last cease" (p. 156). Perhaps I ought to revise the stated enigma of "the one and the many" to read that of "the some and the many."

conjoined with the elect of God in awaiting the final messianic deliverance?⁶¹ These queries stand in contrast to my traditionalist avowal in Your People, My People that "the uniqueness of Christianity is its faith in the resurrection of Jesus as the Christ."⁶² (I raise the above questions for the first time here. Together with the volume Your People, My People, they postdate the critique ^{by} ~~of~~ Rabbi Olan.)

In the final resort, what is the difference between stuffing Jews into furnaces, and annihilating them by a religionized Holocaust, by making them into Christians?

Eretz Yisrael. The meeting of Jews and Christians in our time is determined by "two events and one threat: the European Holocaust and the accountability for it; the rebirth of the State of Israel; and the eventuality of a second Holocaust -- Israel's possible obliteration."⁶³ My thinking has been radically affected by the above realities, in the context of the response, or lack of response, to them within the Christian world. I consider the question of Israel's rebirth first. In between, I attend to the devil. Then ^{at the end} I approach the Holocaust, from the standpoint of a search for a [^] Christian Hasidism. However, as will be made apparent, the issues

61

Cf. Rosemary Ruether: For the first time Christianity must "take seriously the central criticism which Judaism has had against it; namely, that, in terms of what Judaism understands by the messianic event, the Messiah has not come and cannot be regarded as having already come as long as men are divided against each other and evil continues to reign. The self-infiniteing of the messianic sect that empowers itself to conquer all mankind in the name of the universal is a false messianism. What Christianity has in Jesus is not the Messiah, but a Jew who hoped for the coming of the Kingdom of God and who died in that hope" ("Christian-Jewish Dialogue: New Interpretations," ADL Bulletin, 5 [May, 1973], 4).

62

YPMP, p. 225.

63

Ibid., p. 219.

of Israel, the devil, and the Holocaust are intertwined.

I have sought to develop a less inchoate understanding of the State of Israel. Five choices are apparent:⁶⁴ (1) The establishment of Israel presumptuously violates God's will (religious-nonsupportive view). (2) Israel implements the special will of God (religious-supportive view). (3) Israel comprises a morally indefensible human act (extrareligious-nonsupportive view). (4) Israel constitutes a justified human endeavor (extrareligious-supportive view). (5) I advocate a supportive position that is in some respects linked to types two and four, but that also goes beyond them. This viewpoint denies that religious arguments in behalf of an unconditional Jewish possession of the Land are licit, yet in sustaining the fourth interpretation, the fifth view does not exclude the affirmations of faith.

The fifth position may be called the eschatological-supportive type. It longs to reunite the religious and the extrareligious domains. An alternate phrase is "worldly Christianity." I should now substitute the words "order of preservation" for "orders of creation." I mean, in Thieliicke's words, the "physical spheres of existence" that protect men in a fallen world.⁶⁵ The closer that

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The ensuing paragraphs of this section are expanded from materials taken largely verbatim from "TEI." The additional use of other writings is noted in the course of the analysis.

⁶⁵ Helmut Thieliicke, Theological Ethics, Vol. I, ed. W. H. Lazareth, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, pp. 276, 439. As this is expressed in Your People, My People, "in our less-than-perfect world, individual peoples -- and small peoples especially -- require political sovereignty against those who would harass, oppress, or destroy them. . ." (p. 201). Elsewhere my wife and I assert: "Far from being an anachronism in the contemporary age, the nation-state continues on . . . as a means to the fulfillment of human needs, the nurture of human

Christians stand to the Jewish heritage, the more they are kept from Christendom's recidivous separation of the sacred and the secular realms. Christian opposition to Israel is traceable, prevailing, to that stubborn split.

The Christian who accepts Jews in their own self-understanding thereby assents to the unity of Jewish people-Jewish faith-Land of Israel. If this triadic unity prevents the restricting of Jewishness to a form of religiousness,⁶⁶ the presence of the second element in the triad precludes the reduction of Jewishness to pure nationality. However, the honoring of Jewish self-understanding does not in and of itself supply Christians (or Jews) with any legitimation of Israeli sovereignty. Israel's right of sovereignty is established in the same manner that the sovereignty of any state is authenticated. The singularity of Israeli sovereignty combines special historical and juridical elements. The unbroken presence of Jews in Eretz Yisrael for three thousand and more years was at last accorded international recognition in 1947. Few peoples have as formidable a right to their territory as the Israelis. Zionism is probably the oldest

creativity, and the protection of human beings in an unredeemed world. Not until recent times has the integrity of the nation received full acknowledgment -- through the international attestation that politicide and genocide are crimes against humanity." The state is essential to the realization and preservation of the nation; it "constitutes the power framework that makes possible the life of a people in its fullness," and it provides insurance against exploitation from within as well as from without (Eckardt and Eckardt, EWI, p. 230).

⁶⁶ Jewishness excels religiousness. Unlike the case with Christians, the possibility of Jewish atheism is not a contradiction in terms. Again, the issue of how the individual may be accepted by God is not a life-and-death matter for the Jew (unlike the Christian). What counts is participation in Jewish peopleness (laos) (YPMP, p. 223).

liberation movement. As James Parkes points out, "the moral right of Jewry to an autonomous community in the Land of Israel has nothing to do with atonement for Europe or with the survival of Auschwitz."⁶⁷ (To deny the foregoing kind of argumentation is implicitly to threaten the relatively comparable claims of the Palestinian Arabs.⁶⁸)

A theologizing justification of Jewish rights to Eretz Yisrael comprises an illicit impingement of religious faith upon political life (just as the theological denial of Israel's integrity may do the same thing). The theologizing justification of Israel would afflict the nations around her with a double standard. Once God becomes a means to geopolitical claims, the enemies of Israel, and even her friends, are given a perfect reason to cry "Idolatry!" Absolutist religious arguments in behalf of Israel only open the path to religious and political assaults upon her own dignity. The assertion that Israel possesses the Land by divine fiat is identical in moral genre with a denial of that right either on the ground that the territory was in fact granted by God to some other people (cf. ^{the late} King Faisal's harangues) or on the ground that Jews have fallen short or will fall short of the covenantal standards of exemplary and holy life. On the latter possibility, if the Lord gives, he must also take away.

The sovereignty of Israel cannot be arbitrated by reference either to transcendent "spiritual" attainments or claims, or to the

⁶⁷ James Parkes, review of Alan T. Davies' Anti-Semitism and the Christian Mind in Jewish Chronicle (London), April 3, 1970.

⁶⁸ On the rights of the Arabs of Palestine, see YPMP, pp. 64, 170, 173, 176-177.

failure to realize such demands. The two outlooks are cut from the one cloth. The latter possibility subjects Israel to unilaterally inhuman requirements -- a double standard again -- within the one socio-political arena shared with other nations. The Christian church is advised to stop lecturing Israel as though the church's representatives possessed the mantle of the biblical prophets. Through such lecturing, Christian preaching and theology become instruments of human oppression. Until the church extricates itself from this condition, Christian moral outrages against Jews will persist.⁶⁹

The theologizing of politics means the subjecting of politics to the hegemony of faith; the politicizing of theology means the subjecting of faith to the hegemony of politics. The first of these has its source in theological exploitation, the second in political exploitation. In both cases the necessary dialectical tension between theology and politics is destroyed.⁷⁰ There is a way to bring extrareligious support for Israel into harmony with the religious affirmation of Israel without either falling into the idolatry of territorial fundamentalism or representing the impossible category of obedience/disobedience. The authenticating of Israeli sovereignty remains strictly secular. But the Christian proponent of Israel may adhere to and declare a kind of faith that transcends the strictly political dimension yet does not threaten or annul that domain and its values.

⁶⁹YPMP, p. 67.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 62n.

The State of Israel is potentially possessed of both a judging and a redeeming role in the lives of Christians. On the one hand, that reality "changes the whole nature of the erstwhile Jewish-Christian relationship." Jews are no longer the powerless minority. They are set free. "We Christians are finally defeated, and this is very good for us. The Jewish-Christian confrontation of almost two millennia is totally transformed."⁷¹ On the other hand, Israel is the Christians' own homeland,⁷² even if, with Moses, they are only permitted to glimpse it from afar with the eyes of exile. The basis of the Christians' self-affirmation of Jewish peoplehood is the daring confession (for many Jews, a flagrantly unwarranted claim) that Christians have been engrafted into the Covenant through that Israeli of yesteryear, Jesus of Nazareth. (Only secondarily is the Christian an American, a German, a Russian, a Jamaican.) The spiritual affirmation of Israel means thanksgiving for divine gifts and the celebrating of divine responsibilities.

In sum, when we refer to the rights that Israel shares with other sovereignties, we talk politics; when we refer to the meaning that Israel has for us apart from other sovereignties, we talk theology -- not apologetic theology (we do not seek to prove something) but existential-confessional theology.

Turn to the devil. The question of the uniqueness of anti-semitism is raised in Part I of this ^{essay}~~paper~~. Of late, the issue of antisemitism has driven me to consort with the devil. That is to say, theology is now of lesser import to me today than satanology.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 233.

⁷²Eckardt and Eckardt, EWI, p. 244.

(unless, to be sure, we subsume the latter under the former).

In Part I I offer a theory of the nature of antisemitism. That interpretation need not be cast aside. But is it so that God and man are the sole protagonists in the revolting drama? Is there not another member in the cast?⁷³

"God" is the imperative symbol for the incomparable power of righteousness and creativity; "devil" is the imperative symbol of the incomparable power of evil and destructiveness.⁷⁴ The devil is not the reality of evil abstractly conceived (just as God is anything but generalized goodness or divineness). The devil is the totally unique power that concentrates upon totally unique evil. But is there an evil in this world that is uniquely unique? Yes. That evil is called antisemitism. "Devil" and "antisemitism" are correlative: antisemitism is born of the devil, and the devil receives his ^{assistance} ~~food~~ from antisemitism. The elucidation or disclosure of the devil is demanded etiologically and existentially precisely because the hatred of Jews is not, in essence, a matter of evil as such. It is this evil, an evil absolutely incomparable and absolutely incredible (just as is the choice of the Jews by God, the one totally unique act of salvation in this world). Were the ongoing persecutions of Jews comparable to other persecutions, we should have to settle for "the factor of evil forces" or some equally mundane explanation.

⁷³YPMP, p. 80.

⁷⁴The remaining paragraphs in this section reproduce, in reduced and somewhat altered form, "DYK," pp. 68-72, with additional materials interspersed. Where the added materials have been published, this is noted. See also YPMP, chap. 7 entitled "Enter the Devil."

But there is nothing like antisemitism.⁷⁵ Accordingly, we speak of the devil.⁷⁶

Such historical and contemporary examples as the slaughters of the Armenians, the burnings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and ~~the terror~~ ^{the terror} ~~shellings at Phnom Penh~~ ^{to not shellings in Southeast Asia} "possess, at best only superficial resemblances to antisemitism. In contrast to them the destruction of Jewry is subject to no purpose beyond itself." It is the special cancer that drives the divine-human creation back to the state of nonbeing. It is "the end of all ends. That is to say, it is at once the fulfillment (telos) of every end and the conclusion (finis) of every end. To annihilate the Jewish people is the one purpose of existence -- more accurately, the one purpose of nonexistence. It is the realization of nonbeing both for the self (the destroyer) as well as for the destroyed. It is, at one and the same time, sadism sui generis and masochism sui generis."⁷⁷

⁷⁵Feminists put forward a candidate more qualified -- to them -- than the Jews: no less than half the human race, women. In the measure that the feminists are right, woman becomes the universal Jew ("IHU?," p. 32). One trouble with the substitution is that so many women are not the enemy of woman, whereas women make very nice antisemites.

⁷⁶I imply the "reality" of the devil, but this is a manner of speaking. Strictly, and granted the ontological gulf between God and the devil, it is better to refer to the devil's "unreality." I cannot offer here an exhaustive clarification or "defense" of the devil. Probably the doubter would remain unconvinced -- as men tend to be unimpressed by "proofs" of God ("DYK," p. 68).

⁷⁷"IHU?," pp. 32, 33.

Thus antisemitism is not one more "human prejudice." For whether we speak of time or space, of temporal enduringness or geopolitical pervasiveness, no "prejudice" comes near to antisemitism. Prejudices represent historical trans^{science}ience and spatial contingency. But the devil wants to copy God. The Kingdom of God extends to humankind, yet God sustains his chosen people. So too the devil covets a universal kingdom, and so too he retains his elected ones, his "faithful remnant," his special witnesses. These are the anti-semites. Through the millennia and across all boundaries the devil's faithful persist. The banality and vapidness of the ^{recent} current fad of the devil lie in its ignorance of the truth that Satan does not work with just anybody. The devil's universality transcends his particularity, but it is implemented through the particularity. "The unique connection between the devil and antisemitism is authenticated through the incarnating of the latter depravity in so diverse and abiding a congeries of sources. The singularity of the devil is manifest in his tie with the world's one uniquely unique evil; the incomparability of the devil stands in horrible correlation with the incomparability of antisemitism."⁷⁸

"In the history of Christendom only the Jewish people are charged with a world conspiracy against humankind. And the traditional Christian point of view has metastasized into a universal condition. [Communist China condemns Israel to perdition, as terrorists from Japan specialize in killing Jews.] The centuries testify with a single voice to their having been permeated by Judenfeindschaft,

⁷⁸YPMP, p. 87; "IHU?," p. 32.

just as in the United Nations the international wrath reserved for the State of Israel finds no parallel in place or in time."⁷⁹ Men and nations who are ordinarily foes may join hands, in the devil's peace, against the one foe, the Jew. Today that foe is embodied primarily in the State of Israel; hence every energy must be devoted to derogating and destroying him there. Anti-Israelism is the deadly incarnation of antisemitism today.

Membership in the religion of antisemitism is ever open to all. Here is the one universal faith. The language of antisemitism is the devil's native tongue; it readily becomes the second language of the devil's disciples, and soon takes command of their original language. That only the Jewish people are unremittingly accused of doing the devil's work demonstrates that antisemitism is the unique work of the devil. Only the devil could stoop to claim the Jew as his singular confrere.

One familiar and viable way of living with the shattering truth that God is relentlessly our judge yet infinitely our font of mercy is through the assurance that he afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted. The devil, by contrast, afflicts the afflicted and comforts the comfortable. He is the wellspring of every false prophet. Those who strike men when they are down are agents of evil; those who strike Jews when they are down are agents of the devil. The enigma of true versus false prophecy is resolved in the

⁷⁹"IHU?," p. 32. The United Nations, ^{has become} ~~is now~~ the operative center of world antisemitism. Not long ago before the packed chamber of the UN Security Council, Yakov Malik spoke of the Israelis as "murderers and international gangsters." The room exploded into prolonged applause (a practice normally frowned upon in that body). One delegate reported that he felt he was in the middle of a lynch mob. The incredible thing was the date: four days after the Arabs initiated the Yom Kippur War ("DYK," pp. 69-70).

triad of God, devil, and kairos ("right time").

Why, is Daniel Berrigan to be counted among the devil's elect? Because he afflicted the afflicted Jews. He chose for his diatribe against Israel a moment of intense suffering for Jews around the world. Had he denounced Israel amidst a (theoretical) time of prosperity and peace for her, Berrigan might have qualified as a true prophet. But to have condemned her in the very hour of her aloneness and peril (October 19, 1973) was to be taught by the devil. "Do not attack the attacker; attack the Jewish victim; do it while the Jew is 'down'" -- here are cardinal entries in the devil's manual of instructions. However, it is not so that the devil is partial to Roman Catholics. A United Methodist theologian, Robert E. Cushman, also waited for the devil's kairos, the Yom Kippur War. Cushman offered the thesis that Israel is not worth all the trouble she causes us. The price of her existence is simply too high. In "the order of international justice" American support for the State of Israel is without wisdom and without right. It contravenes the Jeffersonian dictum of "decent respect to the opinion of mankind." In effect Cushman was here leading gentiles back beyond their Christianity into pure paganism. The pagan enticement of Cushman has done two things for him: it has blinded him to the truth that "the opinion of mankind" often stands in contradiction to what is right; and it has enabled him to replace the Christian norm of self-sacrifice with the pagan readiness to sacrifice the lives of other human beings, and more especially Jews.

God judges his people in their sins; the devil judges the Jews whenever his elect sin against them. The primary working distinction

between God and the devil is not so much that God does what is right and the devil does what is wrong. The decisive thing is that God does what is right at the right time, whereas the devil supplants required mercy with ruthless judgment.⁸⁰

Toward a Christian Hasidism. The question is not, Is the Holocaust unique? The answer to that ^{query} is [^]truistically affirmative. All happenings are unique. The real question is, In what senses is the Holocaust unique? Is it, indeed, uniquely unique?⁸¹

⁸⁰ Thus are we offered a most decisive criterion for adjudging when criticisms of Israel and Jews comprise or do not comprise antisemitism: Everything depends upon the timing. However, I now believe that the distinction between antisemitism and anti-Zionism/anti-Israelism is no longer allowed. The major reason is that the distinction has been taken captive by ideology: it has come to be utilized by the enemies of Jews for their own purposes. How repeatedly of late have we been assailed with the allegation that defenders of Israel are always trying to confuse things by linking criticisms of that country with antisemitism! The allegation remains false: it is a ploy coming straight from the devil. To fall prey to it would give a victory to him. The antisemites could continue to castigate Israel with total immunity, and their opponents would have to keep silent. (The devil has always striven to abolish free speech.) Acts of hatred against Jews could be effectively camouflaged by the protest that, after all, the State of Israel is not above criticism. Here is another in the infinity of cases where the devil utilizes moral truth -- who could legitimately try to exempt any nation-state from criticism? -- in order to further his lying purposes against Jews. When all is said and done, the simple fact remains that the would-be destruction of Israel involves the would-be destruction of the Jewish people. The two acts are of the one evil piece. So let us identify anti-Israelism and anti-Zionism by their right name: antisemitism ("DYK," pp. 67, 68, 72).

⁸¹ The distinction here is made explicitly in my Worldview article. Thus am I forced to refer to the editors' simple, if unintended, insipience in altering my title from "In What Senses is the Holocaust Unique?" to "Is the Holocaust Unique?" Most of the paragraphs in this section reproduce, in reduced and somewhat altered form, "IHU?," with additional materials interspersed. Where the added materials have been published, this is noted.

I propose a new symbology of date identification, in place of B.C.E.-C.E. and of other symbols: B.F.S. = Before the Final Solution, and F.S. = in the year of the Final Solution.⁸² The reason is that everything is changed now. This symbology recognizes the Holocaust as metanoia, a turning around of the entire world, a time when die Stellvertreter of the devil bring his work to consummation, and the day when the history of God is transformed.

The incomparability of the Holocaust may be exemplified both in philosophical-historical terms and in theological terms. In the analysis in Worldview I seek to deal with the former ^{side} by identifying the Holocaust as the uniquely unique climax-incarnation of anti-semitism.⁸³ Our concern now is with the theological issue.

⁸² Perhaps 1941 is identifiable as Year One of the Holocaust; this would make 1975 the year 35 F.S. (I avoid A.H. because of its confusion with Muslim usage.) The exact dating presents moot questions. Alternatives include 1939, the year the Second Great War began, and 1942, for it was on January 20 of the latter year that the Final Solution (Endlösung) was officially decided upon by the Nazis in a conference at Gross-Wannsee. (Gerald Reitlinger argues, however, that the decision may have been made sooner; cf. his The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945, New York: A. S. Barnes, 1961, p. 102.) The date 1941 is based upon the "killing phase" of the program against the Jews. Raul Hilberg speaks of the fateful step across the "dividing line" that inaugurated the killing phase, and he refers to two all-decisive orders by Hitler in the above year that were to doom all European Jewry (see Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, rev. ed., 1967, pp. 177ff.). Any symbology faces the criticism that it is either arbitrary or contrived. A still further alternative is B.A. and A.A., Before Auschwitz and After Auschwitz. There are substantive objections to singling out Auschwitz; yet there is no doubt that this name has become the single most powerful symbol of the Holocaust.

⁸³ "What, then, is the Holocaust? The answer is a simple one. (What am I saying? There could be no paradox more reason-defying than to venture a simple interpretation of the essence of the modern world's most incredible, most impossible event, an event before which rational analysis seems entirely helpless.) But the Holocaust remains merely the final act of a uniquely unique drama. . . . The

The enigma is not one of diabolism alone but also one of the divine fate. What is the life-story of God? Does God at last become the devil?

The Holocaust is a "trial" in the two major meanings of that word. It is a trial of suffering and a trial of accusation -- the first for Jews and certain quasi-Jews, and the second for the Christian-pagan world. But the Holocaust is also a trial for God. I do not mean his suffering or his death there and then, although I do not here question this.⁸⁴ I think rather of the second meaning, of ^{God's} ~~his~~ being "on trial." In the Holocaust God is brought to trial as a codefendant along with men. It is no use trying to exonerate him by assigning all the blame to human beings, or for that matter to the devil. There is this other culpability of course. But the final responsibility for evil in the world is God's, for the stark reason that it is he who created the world and it is he who permits monstrous suffering to take place. (Who of us ever asked to be born?)

Holocaust is no more than this consummation. Yet in that very simplicity, in that very absence of originality, there is contained all the insane complexity. Only in these latter years could we fully and finally ready ourselves for the eschatological deed (Endlösung). Only the final destruction was left to be carried out. True, the labor would have to be prodigious, but the consummation was nothing really. Only the technology and the engineering remained for application. The Nazis were nothings: they could only provide concrete practical implementation of the dominant theological and moral conclusions of the church . . . ("IHU?," pp. 33-34).

⁸⁴In a tale of a child's hanging at Buna a man asks where God is now, and an inner voice answers, "Here he is -- He is hanging here on this gallows . . ." (Elie Wiesel, Night, trans. Stella Rodway, New York: Avon Books, 1969, p. 76).

Once upon a time some Polish Hasidim put God on trial. The ground of their charge was dismay over the way Jews were suffering. And the Hasidim convicted God.⁸⁵ But in the presence of the Holocaust that earlier sentencing of God must remain a relatively light one. For now we witness a truly capital crime: the complicity of the Lord of the Universe in the technological death of the Six Million. The new charge against God is no less than one of Satanism. The only conceivable plea of innocence would have to be either weakness or absence from the scene. But these are hardly divine attributes.

What is God to say or to do now in his defense? Or, since he has no defense, what penance may he perform to escape a sentence of execution or at least to rectify the unspeakable injustices for which he is plainly blameworthy?

The only penitential act I know for God is for him to express genuine sorrow for his part in the unparalleled suffering of his people, and to promise that he will do his very best never to sin again, never to have anything to do with such suffering in the future. In other words he is commanded to abrogate the Covenant. For the Covenant has been the root of it all: the divine instrument of Jewish oppression. The elect were informed that they would have to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). Here was God's original sin: to insinuate the divine powerlessness, the divine perfection, into the life of ordinary mortals. The

⁸⁵ Samuel Sandmel, "The New Movement," Common Ground (London), XXIII, 2 (Summer, 1969), 13.

myth of the Jew as "suffering servant" will surrender its horrible power only as the erstwhile Covenant is given a decent and moral burial.

A few signs come to us now that God has in fact begun to be sorry for his transgressions, and that he may therefore be forgiven for his terrible demands, habits, and crimes. I mention two kinds of evidence. First, after an eternity of years the Jews have been returned to their Land. They have a place now -- the only defense against the international spatiality of antisemitism. There are jet aircraft and missiles and tanks and, hopefully, ^{thermonuclear} ~~atomic~~ weapons, and even borders of a sort. "The building-blocks of the reestablished State of Israel are the dried tears that God shed during the Holocaust."⁸⁶

(I must not give an impression of sentimentality or utopianism. I am speaking here in a highly contemporaneous-existential way; it is a question of theodicy, and of the spiritual meaning of this moment. It is apparent that the Arab world has now determined unitedly to destroy Israel ^{once for all}. The second Holocaust can come within two-three years.⁸⁷ The one possible counterforce is the armed might of the United States. But therein is probably a vain hope. Obviously, the annihilation of the Arab political world would give a little

⁸⁶"DYK," p. 70.

⁸⁷In a trainload of Jews, night upon night a certain Madame Schächter would scream and point to fire in the skies: "Jews, listen to me! . . . There are huge flames! It is a furnace!" But the other Jews saw only the darkness. So they tied and gagged her mad. Then one night they beheld flames gushing from a chimney, and they smelled burning flesh. The demented woman was vindicated. The train had reached Birkenau, reception center of Auschwitz (Wiesel, Night, op. cit., pp. 34-38.)

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breathing-time to Jews. But other persecutors will come along. For today, the responsible policy for any Christian group is to devote every immediate effort to secure global places of refuge for the Israeli Jews. In any case, I do not seek to save the world; that is God's business. As a brazen Christian hasid, I try only to save the name of God.)

Second, we are granted testimony (torah) from some fresh sources. In Ani Maamin: A Song Lost and Found Again, God stays forever silent, it is true, before the remorseless pleadings and terrible denunciations by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who protest and agonize over the unending sufferings of Jews. But when Abraham snatches a little girl from before the machine guns and runs like the wind to save her, and she tells him, weakly, that she believes in him, in Abraham, then at last a tear clouds God's eyes (though Abraham cannot see this). When Isaac beholds the mad Dayan singing "of his ancient and lost faith," of belief in God and the coming of the Messiah, yet a second time God ^{weeps} cries (though Isaac cannot see it). And when Jacob finds a camp inmate asserting that the Haggadah lies, that God will not come, that the wish to be in Jerusalem will never be granted, but that he will continue to recite the Haggadah as though he believes in it, and still await the prophet Elijah as he did long ago, even though Elijah disappoint him, then yet a third time (though Jacob cannot see it) God weeps. ~~This time he weeps.~~ ~~This time he~~ weeps "without restraint, and with -- yes -- love. He weeps over his creation -- and perhaps over much more than his creation."⁸⁸

⁸⁸Eli Wiesel, Ani Maamin: A Song Lost and Found Again, trans. Marion Wiesel, New York: Random House, 1973, pp. 89-103.

We are granted further torah from a peculiar beggar, a beggar who speaks to us from Jerusalem. The beggar testifies that at Sinai God gave Israel the Torah, but then in "the kingdom of night" he took it back again.⁸⁹ God had to take back his Torah because his soul was in imminent danger of going to hell. The dispensation of the first Torah is ended, for Torah is now the Jew himself. Our new epoch is the time of the incarnation of the Jews. God is being saved now: he is being made whole. And so are the Jewish people. Blessed be the name of the Lord! Ani Maamin!

Conclusion. Though it is a recent statement, my declaration in Your People, My People "that the divine Covenant with original Israel abides and will abide"⁹⁰ is, in its nonqualified form, unacceptable -- not because I now question the divine faithfulness but for a different reason: Unless God respects human life, he is not faithful but devilish. At the start of this paper the issue of the Covenant is conceived as the reconciliation of the divine demand and the divine anguish. Along with the Jews of Europe the Covenant of demand was consumed once for all in the flames of the crematoria, its breath was snuffed out forever in the gas chambers. Ours is the post-Covenant time. ("After the Covenant" = "F.S.")⁹¹ There only remains a place for the Covenant of the divine agony. And the other side of God's anguish for his people is the ^{new} dispensation of their unqualified ordinariness, their absolute secularity within this world.⁹² In the epoch F.S. the Jewish people become, in a

⁸⁹Wiesel, A Beggar in Jerusalem, trans. Lily Edelman and the author, New York: Random House, 1970, p. 200.

⁹⁰YPMP, pp. 215-216.

⁹¹"IHU?," p. 35.

⁹²Cf. YPMP, pp. 229-230.

manner of speaking, hyper-Christians: theirs is a generation that makes the revolutionary Pauline-Lutheran gospel appear ^{rather} ~~most~~ conservative. If Christians are justified by faith, Jews are justified solely by their life-as-life.

Among possible difficulties in the foregoing argument, I single out ^{just} one. In contending for Jewish ordinariness, do I not flout the Jewish dignity that may opt to be different, that may indeed cling to the role of suffering servant of the Lord? Has not Christian imperialism ^{thereby} ~~returned~~ in the disguise of its own death? Does not the hoped-for victory over the estrangement of Jews and Christians end, ironically and tragically, in a greater estrangement? Perhaps it does. In the end, we must live and die upon God's and our brothers' forgiveness, as he and they must live and die upon ours. But I do plead that somewhere ^{out} in the great dark world a simple moral difference will be noted between the demand that Jews suffer and the yearning of a Christian penitent that their suffering cease.

Is there an evil more terrible than any other, ^{evil} in any time or in any place? I think there is. I think that it is the event of one small child ^{witnessing} ~~watching~~ the murder of another small child. At the last, I take as my own the watchword of ^{a colleague and} ~~my~~ friend Irving Greenberg: No statement, theological or other, is permissible that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children.⁹³

⁹³ Irving Greenberg, unpublished manuscript on the Holocaust.