



Research Article

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Overwhelming Complexities: Between Rome and Jerusalem

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Abstract: In the search for an understanding of the complexities that could have led such a “banal” man as Adolf Eichmann, to stand trial in Jerusalem for crimes against Humanity – in the humanity of the Jewish People – one ought to go beneath the surface of contemporary events into the roots of an overwhelming hatred that enslaved Europe for far too long and with consequences beyond what imagination could have conceived within the limits of reason alone. In the pursuit for the “*black hole*” that brought European nations to a virtual ethical collapse, seriously damaging the capacity to exercise judgment, this article approaches one of the background dimensions of anti-Semitism which enabled the actions of men to structure evil in all but a “*banal*” manner. The second part of this study seeks alternative ways to conceive a relation between Judaism and Christianity.

Keywords: Judaism, anti-Semitism, Christianity, Holocaust, Hannah Arendt, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig

In compassionate memory of all who perished because of a misunderstanding of the purpose and nature of their genuine beliefs.

1 Prelude

The existence of the Synagogue alongside the Church is of the nature of an ontological impossibility, a wound, an ulcer in the body of Christ himself, an unbearable pain.

—Karl Barth¹

The Holocaust is a massive cataclysm that distorts everything around it.

—Robert Nozick²

Approaching the complexities that could have led such a “banal” man as Adolf Eichmann, to stand trial in Jerusalem for crimes against Humanity – in the humanity of the Jewish People³ – one ought to go beyond the

¹ Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 749: “Die Existenz der Synagoge neben der Kirche [ist] ... so etwas wie eine ontologische Unmöglichkeit, eine Wunde, ja eine Lücke im Leib Christi selber, die schlechterdings unerträglich ist.”

² Nozick, *The Examined Life*, 242.

³ As Arendt affirmed in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: “It was when the Nazi regime declared that the German people not only were unwilling to have any Jews in Germany but wished to make the entire Jewish people disappear from the face of the earth that the new crime, the crime against humanity – in the sense of a crime “against the human status,” or against the very nature of mankind

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surface of relatively recent events, and probe the roots of the overwhelming hatred that enslaved Europe beyond what imagination could have conceived within the limits of reason alone. In this pursuit, we should recall Hannah Arendt's words written on the eve of World War II:

Germany did not become the classic land of anti-Semitism because of Hitler or even because a few Jews have been beaten to death But rather because, long before putting any of this to practical use, Germany – with what might be called total disinterest – expounded modern abstract anti-Semitism most radically and consistently.... It goes without saying that modern anti-Semitism is heir to medieval antecedents and thus to the ancient hatred of the Jews as well.⁴

In her quest for the roots of this long-enrooted hatred, Hannah Arendt remarks that “*Christian hatred of Jews* regards Jews as the people that gave birth to Christ and crucified him, that were once chosen, but cursed ever since.”⁵

While exploring the complex nature of this abominable phenomenon, Hannah Arendt unambiguously asserted that her intent to comprehend it does in no way imply a denial of its despicable nature, nor deducing the unprecedented from precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means, she sustains, “examining and bearing consciously the burden which our century has placed on us – neither denying its existence nor submitting weakly to its weight. Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality – whatever it may be.”⁶ As Arendt unveiled in a letter addressed to her close friend Karl Jaspers, on August 17, 1946, in response to the publication of his monograph *Die Schuldfrage*:

The Nazi crimes, it seems to me, explode the limits of the law; and that is precisely what constitutes their monstrousness. For these crimes, no punishment is severe enough That is, this guilt, in contrast to all criminal guilt, oversteps and shatters any and all legal systems⁷ We are simply not equipped to deal, on a human, political level, with a guilt that is beyond crime.⁸

In this context, it would be important to recall Carol Rittner and John Roth's words proffered in relation to Gregory Baum's theological work. According to Ritter and Roth, behind the straightforward and obvious aims of culture and religion frequently hide conspicuous trends exercising a powerful influence on society while enabling the exercise of authority of its existing institutions. “To discover the ideological influences” in one's religion, Ritter and Roth avow, requires more than “intelligence and good will”:

Discovering these influences in one's religion becomes possible ‘only when these find expression in a great and terrible historical happening where their destructive power is too obvious to go unnoticed.’ While we know that ‘the hatred and persecution of the Jews in Hitler's Germany, leading to the extermination camps in the east, were a racial-pagan phenomenon which had nothing directly to do with religion’, it is clear that ‘this terrible event, surpassing all that could be imagined, would not have been possible if hostility to the Jews had not been fostered by Christian preaching which spoke of the Jews and Judaism almost from the beginning only in terms of rejection.’⁹

– appeared. [G]enocide ... is an attack upon human diversity as such, that is, upon a characteristic of the “human status” without which the very words “mankind” or “humanity” would be devoid of meaning.” Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, (1965), 268f.

4 Arendt, “The Classic Land of Antisemitism,” in *The Jewish Writings*, 64f.

5 Arendt, “Antisemitism and Hatred of the Jews,” in *The Jewish Writings*, 67.

6 Cf. Ritter et al., (eds.), *The Holocaust and the Christian World*, 39.

7 As Jaspers acknowledges in his work on *The Question of German Guilt*: “The world of which the Germans were a part could produce a regime such as the Nazis, and this is a moral fact for which all Germans are responsible. We ... feel that we not only share in what is done at present – thus being co-responsible for the deeds of our contemporaries – but in the links of a tradition. We have to bear the guilt of our fathers. That the spiritual conditions of German life provided an opportunity for such a regime is a fact for which all of us are co-responsible” Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 73.

8 Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence, 1926-1969*, eds. Lotte Kohler & Hans Saner, trans. Robert Kimber & Rita Kimber (1992), 54. As Arendt observed in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: “Nothing is more pernicious to an understanding of these new crimes, or stands in the way of the emergence of an international penal code that could take care of them, than the common illusion that the crime of murder and the crime of genocide are essentially the same, and that the latter therefore is “no new crime properly speaking.” The point of the latter is that an altogether different order is broken, and an altogether different community is violated.” Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 272.

9 Ritter et al., *The Holocaust and the Christian World*, 39.

2 The “Black Hole”

Hatred of Jews and anti-Semitism have assumed different shapes and forms according to the different periods and circumstances of their long history. Exploring the “*black hole*” that 80 years ago engulfed entire European populations in an ethical collapse causing human consciousness to fall in a previously unimaginable abyss of hatred and disdain *vis-à-vis* the human condition, enabling the perpetration of crimes that lashed human suffering into levels without precedent, this study pursues its analysis by approaching a few aspects of one of the main roots of anti-Semitism that empowered the actions of one man – assisted by the actions and inactions of millions of others – to structure evil in all but a “*banal*” manner. While the first part of the study concentrates on one of the main factors deemed co-responsible for the indifference that enabled the perpetration of those hideous crimes casting such a dark shadow over Continental Europe – theological anti-Semitism¹⁰ – fatefully tainted by deeply flawed notions of “dispossession,” “appropriation,” and consequent “supersession” developed by Christian theologians and implemented by the ruling clergy *vis-à-vis* Judaism and the Jewish people, the second part of the work proposes an alternative approach to the potential relation between these two traditions.¹¹

While tackling the background of this ill-conceived phenomenon, one cannot ignore the complex implications of anti-Semitism embedded in multiple layers of European culture and belief, frequently disguised under religious/theological layers,¹² that have characterized most of the last two millennia of European history. As Donald Dietrich explains, the term “antisemitism” was first used in 1879, by the German racist Wilhelm Marr. However, it should be noted that the terms anti-Judaic and anti-Semitism should not technically be used interchangeably, since the latter includes modern biological racism as such:

In the increasingly secularized and modernized society in which faith in Jesus was shrinking, the question of who was responsible for his death began to seem irrelevant, and so a biological basis for the prejudice was advanced. ... In a sense, early Christianity can be characterized as pre-modern antisemitism because in such cases as John's Gospel the Jewish people as a whole were historically demonized. Group hatred became increasingly endemic to Christianity overtime, and such animosity ultimately was biologically based on blood itself in the nineteenth century.¹³

In his *opus magnum*, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Daniel Goldhagen blatantly affirms that European anti-Semitism is a corollary of Christianity:

From the earliest days of Christianity's consolidation of its hold over the Roman Empire, its leaders preached against the Jews, employing explicit, powerful worded, emotionally charged condemnations. The psychological and theological need impelling Christians to differentiate themselves from the bearers of the religion from which their own had broken off, was born anew with each generation, because as long as Jews rejected the revelation of Jesus, they unwittingly challenged the Christians' certitude in that revelation.¹⁴

As Goldhagen further avows, “[t]hese views of Jews, fundamental to Christian theology and teaching until the modern era, were highly articulated in the fourth century, when the Church established its suzerainty over the Roman world.” One such example was John Chrysostom, whose theology and teachings had a lasting influence through the centuries, becoming a central example of Christian anti-Jewish teachings and rhetoric: “Where Christ killers gather, the cross is ridiculed, God blasphemed, the father unacknowledged, the son insulted, the grace of the Spirit rejected. ... If the Jewish rites are holy and venerable, our way of life must be false. But if our

¹⁰ Some scholars have differentiated between “racial” and “theological” anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, in the case of Christian anti-Semitism, history has shown that those two types of hatred often walked “hand-in-hand” not in a well disguised manner. Consider, for example, the despicable disputes over “pure Christian blood” in post-Golden Iberia. I thank Alana Vincent for her insights in this matter. For most other forms of this type of evil called “anti-Semitism,” a vast literature has been made available, remaining, however, beyond the limits of this study.

¹¹ Especially inspired by the ecumenical thought of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig.

¹² Cf. Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, 67: “[H]atred of Jews is an early form of antisemitism, an antisemitism trapped in religious forms.” See: Dietrich, *God and Humanity in Auschwitz*, 16f.

¹³ Dietrich, *God and Humanity in Auschwitz*, 16f.

¹⁴ Goldhagen, “The Evolution of Eliminationist Antisemitism in Modern Germany,” in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, 49. Cf. Chazan, *History and Hate*, 53f.

way is true, as indeed it is, theirs is fraudulent.”¹⁵ This form of religious hatred misused two additional pseudo-theological reasonings, which Goldhagen describes as follows:

First,

Christians conceived of their religion as superseding Judaism. Therefore, Jews as Jews ought to disappear from the earth. ... If Jews were right, then Christians were wrong. The very understanding of the sacred order and its symbols, and of the moral order derived from them, depended upon ensuring that all Christians believed the Jews to be in error. ... Thus, the Jews came to represent much that was antithetical to the moral order of the Christian world.¹⁶

And the second reflected the extended belief that Jews were “Christ-killers”:

Christians held not only the Jews of Jesus’ time responsible for Jesus’ death but also Jews for all time. Contemporary Jews indeed rejected Jesus as messiah and the son of God no less than their forefathers had, who, according to passionate and continuous Christian teaching and preaching, had killed him. All Jews, by taking this rejectionist stance, implicated themselves in the crime which had been the original consequence of their forefathers’ denial of Jesus’ divinity.¹⁷

In this context, it might be pertinent to ask whether according to the Christian view of the mystery involving Christ’s passion, the death of Jesus had a divine or a purely human nature, i.e., was the death of Jesus jointly assumed by the Father and the Son to redeem humankind, or was it an historical accident/incident caused by human nature alone, either attributable to Jews his contemporaries or/and to his Roman executioners? According to the Christian notion of redemption could this same “redemption” have been operated differently (i.e., could Jesus have died of “old age” and still operate his “salvific” design)? Basically, in various structural points of Jesus’ public life, Christian theology acknowledges the necessity of a sacrifice to take place (performed in an attitude of immaculate obedience) as a divine gift to humanity, to transcend the consequences of the failings of a First Man. Against this background, one of two things must have happened:

- 1) Either the Church was aware of the supernatural nature surrounding the mystery involved in the Passion of Christ, and taught differently from what it understood the case to be, allowing unfounded accusations to be projected upon Jews contemporaries of Jesus and all subsequent generations; or,
- 2) it was not and, notwithstanding, insisted in continuing to preach a version of reality in direct conflict with the theological reading implicit in such event.

3 Christian Era’s End?

In a unique text on the impact of the Holocaust on Christian theology, the political philosopher Robert Nozick shares his compelling thoughts:

Christian theology has held that there were two momentous transformations in the situation of humanity, first the Fall and then the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, which redeemed humanity and provided it with a route out of its fallen state. Whatever changed situation or possibility the crucifixion and resurrection were supposed to bring about has now ended; the Holocaust has shut the door that Christ opened. ... The Holocaust is a third momentous transformation. There still remain the ethical teachings and example of the life of Jesus before his end, but there no longer operates the saving message of Christ. In this sense, the Christian era has closed.¹⁸

And Nozick continues:

It might be thought that what Christ accomplished according to Christian theology, he accomplished forever, once and for all. He died for all our sins, past and future, small and large. But not for *that* one, I think. ... Perhaps, in sending his only son to redeem

¹⁵ Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, 50. See: Cohen, “Robert Chazan’s ‘Medieval Anti-Semitism’: A Note on the Impact of Theology,” in D. Berger (ed.), *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism*, 69.

¹⁶ Ibid., 49f.

¹⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹⁸ Nozick, *The Examined Life*, 239.

humanity, he [God] had nothing like the Holocaust in mind as what humanity was going to need redemption from. But in any case, whatever suffering Jesus underwent, or God the father in watching it, this could not be sufficient to redeem humanity in the face of the Holocaust Or rather, whatever the current situation of individuals one by one, the Holocaust has created a radically new situation and status for humanity as a whole, one the sacrifice of Jesus could not and was not meant to heal. The human species now is desanctified; if it were now ended or obliterated now, its end would no longer constitute a special tragedy.¹⁹

But will humanity be permanently reduced to this “desanctified status”? Nozick concludes saying:

Christian doctrine has held that Jesus took humanity's suffering upon himself, redeeming it, and while others were told to imitate Christ, they were not expected similarly to take suffering upon themselves with redemptive effect. If the Christian era has ended, it has been replaced by one in which we each now have to take humanity's suffering upon ourselves. What Jesus was supposed to have done for us, before the Holocaust, humanity must now do for itself.²⁰

From a similar perspective, commenting on Irving Greenberg's view *vis-à-vis* post-Holocaust Christianity, in his work on *God and Humanity in Auschwitz* Donald Dietrich avers that issues posed in Auschwitz go undeniably to the essence of the Human condition:

From the perspective of two millennia of suffering inflicted by Christians, Greenberg posits Christianity at a real crossroads where its choice of direction is contingent on whether it can overcome its earlier contempt for the Jewish people that has incubated in our civilization. In light of the Holocaust, he has suggested that Christianity may have to ‘die’ as a prelude to receiving new life. If Christianity continues unaffected and does not rethink itself in its search for its authentic identity, he has asserted, then it will die to both God and humanity.²¹

4 Volte Face?

For the Jew who regards Judaism as embodied in *Torah* and *Mitzvoth*, there can be no coexistence of ideas (in contradistinction to factual coexistence) between Judaism and Christianity and no place for the ‘Judeo-Christian dialogue’.

—Yeshayahu Leibovitz²²

Aware of the tragic background that to a great extent contributed to the unreasonable hatred that ultimately enabled the Holocaust to take place after 1900 years of Christian civilization, four months after the capture of Adolf Eichmann on May 11, 1960, Pope John XXIII instructed Cardinal Bea to prepare a theological amendment to the prevailing doctrine that for centuries had inflamed Christian theology and pulpit preaching. This document was initially entitled “Decree on the Jews” (“*Decretum de Judaeis*”). Cardinal Bea finished its first draft fourteen months later, in November 1961. Although this version would not be presented to the Second Vatican Council, convened to begin on October 11, 1962, the great majority of Bishops assembled in this Council decided to vote for the annulment of the infamous generalized guilt that for two millennia had been abusively projected on the Jewish people as a whole, inciting crimes of a nature not previously imagined. The fourth and last version of the “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” entitled *Nostra Aetate*, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, on October 28, 1965, finally affirmed the Church's inseparable relation with the People that had offered the world the awareness of the transcendent God she envisioned to proclaim:

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.

¹⁹ Ibid., 239f.

²⁰ Ibid., 241.

²¹ Dietrich, *God and Humanity in Auschwitz*, 133.

²² Leibovitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, 260ff.

Referring to the Jewish people more in detail, although reiterating its long standing supersessionist doctrine, *Nostra Aetate* proclaimed that:

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. ...

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Should we find here, in this acknowledged practice of preaching about the Jewish people as "rejected" or "cursed" by God, and the implied guilt of "Deicide," the "*black hole*" that allowed the moral collapse of entire populations, which by actions and omissions led to the perpetration of crimes of an unconceivable nature, such as those that came to light in the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem? Does the succession of these two events, the Council's "Decree on the Jews" and the Eichmann trial, respectively, staged in Rome and Jerusalem, constitute a mere coincidence in time, or rather reflect an attempt by the Church to repair something which due to the soteriological nature of its background exacerbated what should have remained within the reasonable contours of the human condition? In relation to this trial, one could even ask: Who or What was indeed being tried in Jerusalem?

Referring to this specific trial, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, one of Israel's sharpest critical intellectuals, asserted that the Eichmann trial ultimately represented a total failure, since the accused was not more than an insignificant piece in the complex setting in which he acted. After all, Leibowitz conveyed:

Eichmann was the product of two thousand years of Christian history, the whole end of which is the destruction of the Jews. ... He [Eichmann] did, in fact, just carry out orders ... but the main thing is that he carried out mankind's will with regard to the Jewish people!²³

In an essay published in Hebrew in 1964, commenting on Rolf Hochhut's controversial play *The Deputy*, concerning the Vatican's attitude towards Jews during the Third Reich, first performed in Berlin on the 20th of February 1963, Leibowitz pungently affirmed that:

The call for obliteration of Judaism was not something grafted upon Christianity as a result of some historical development It is of the very essence of Christianity since the day on which the Christian god appeared on earth. It is nothing but the denial of the right of Judaism to exist; in a sense, a denial of its very existence. The relationship of Christianity to Judaism is unlike that of other religions or faiths, whether pagan or Islamic, which deny the Torah of Israel and would nullify it. Christianity does neither, but claims that *it is* Judaism and there is no Judaism apart from it. On this claim it bases its very legitimacy, and therefore can never concede this point. From the standpoint of Christianity, the existence of Judaism apart from Christianity has ceased to be legitimate. Its continued existence can only be interpreted as a deviation from the proper divine order of the world. The Church could be reconciled to the continued existence of the Jewish people only to the extent that this existence was severed from the proper existence of mankind, that of the Christian world, whose members are the "true Jews." ... Christianity regards itself as the legitimate heir of Judaism, and the heir cannot take possession of his inheritance while the testator is still alive.²⁴

Notwithstanding this apparent theological incompatibility, Leibowitz contended, the Church did not desire the physical annihilation of Jews, despite its evident interest to liquidate halachic Judaism. The Church desired the repentance of Jews, but not their death. Indeed, every Jewish convert was considered a precious testimony to the Church's truth.

²³ Shashar, *Yeshayahu Leibowitz on the World*, 79ff, quoted by Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 365f.

²⁴ Leibowitz, "Hochhut's Error," *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, 253.

However, the experience of scores of generations clearly indicated that there was no prospect of a total conversion of the Jewish people, and only 'with the last of the Jews would there be an end to Judaism.' In effect, the extinction of Judaism could only be attained by the annihilation of the Jews.²⁵

This is, indeed a strong indictment of Christianity, confronted with an overwhelming dilemma: "[O]n the one hand, the need for annihilation of the Jewish people, on the other hand, the inability of the Church to accomplish this by itself or even to demand it explicitly, since according to its principles 'it does not shed blood' – not even the blood of heretics, let alone Jews."²⁶ The coming of Hitler, Leibowitz conjectured, resolved this dilemma (thus explaining the Pope's ominous silence).

The task which itself was not permitted to carry out was undertaken by another agent. The Pope, as a faithful Christian entrusted with upholding Christianity, could not help but see the finger of the divine agency in the appearance of Hitler, proponent of 'the final solution' of the Jewish problem, a solution which concurrently achieves a goal of Christianity since its inception, that is, the obliteration of the Torah of Israel.²⁷

In doing so, Leibowitz contended, the reigning Pope was neither constrained by personal timidity, nor by political–historical considerations, nor concerned for the property of the Church and its legal position in Nazi-occupied land: "Pius XII acted with a Christian religious interest in view."²⁸

Referring specifically to *Nostra Aetate*, Leibowitz reiterated his perspective on the position of Christianity *vis-à-vis* Judaism, which he considered "not refuted by the 'Jewish document' adopted by Vatican II and the heirs of Pius XII twenty years after the extinction of the major portion of European Jewry." Indeed, Leibowitz claims:

Today the Church finds it convenient to blur the concept of Jewish guilt of deicide, which is unacceptable to the faithful in the 'enlightened' Western lands. They had been influenced by liberal humanitarian attitudes derived from secular sources and were shocked by the horror of the 'final solution'. This does not in the least affect the denial by Christianity of the legitimate independent existence of Judaism and the hope that Judaism will cease to exist.²⁹

Yeshayahu Leibowitz would return to this topic a few years later. In an essay published in 1968, on "The Common Judeo-Christian Heritage," he reasserted his conviction that underlying the epiphenomenon of Auschwitz something deeper had been transformed into act. In his view, the theological background to this terrible event consisted of the fact that:

The Christian religion has never recognized and will never be able to recognize *de jure* the right of Judaism to subsist, even if it is forced to recognize this existence *de facto*; for the relationship to Judaism of Christianity is unlike the relationship of other faiths. The others deny the Torah of Israel and discredit it, whereas Christianity claims that it is the true Judaism and that there is no legitimate Judaism other than Christianity. ... From the Christian point of view, the legitimate existence of a Judaism outside Christianity ceased long ago, and that community which has continued nominally to exist for more than 1900 years in the form a Jewish people that is not Christian is not a genuine religious community but a ghost, a mirage, or an act of Satan intended to mock Christianity and enrage it. The very admission of the right of Judaism to exist is equivalent to admission that Christianity is false and counterfeit, rather than the legitimate heir of Judaism. ...

For the Jew who regards Judaism as embodied in Torah and *Mitzvoth* [divine commandments], there can be no coexistence of ideas (in contradistinction to factual coexistence) between Judaism and Christianity and no place for the 'Judeo-Christian dialogue'. ... There is no possibility of maintaining a dialogue with official Christianity, which claims, blasphemously from the point of view of Judaism, that the Torah has a Christian meaning and that He who once gave the Torah then abrogated the *Mitzvoth*. This explains the repugnance Judaism has for Christianity.³⁰

²⁵ Ibid., 254.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 255.

³⁰ Leibowitz, "The Common Judeo-Christian Heritage," 260ff. As Donald Dietrich asserts: "A number of theologians ... included the direct charge of deicide into their own works to help explain the role of the Jews in salvation. Among them was Justin Martyr (c. 100–65), who delineated themes that continued as Christians advanced their identity by suggesting that Jewish law was emptied

The Israeli historian Jacob Katz endorsed a similar position, finding in theological anti-Semitism the primordial causes underlying the Holocaust. In his work on Christian antagonism towards Judaism in the early modern period, Katz affirmed that the key to reach an understanding of what happened in the nineteenth and twentieth century, in what regards the relations between Jews and non-Jews, including the catastrophic climax achieved in the Holocaust, should not be looked for in the immediate past, but over the course of Jewish history, especially since its entanglement with the history of Christianity.

It was the tragic mistake of the 19th century enthusiasts to believe that the traces of such deep seated antagonism could be banned simply by declaring it unreasonable or unfounded. On the basis of this belief, they predicated the total absorption of the Jewish minority by the majority, when in fact even its initial integration elicited a passionate resistance from both sides.³¹

A similar position concerning the apparent failure of the “Jewish-Christian dialogue” was voiced by Eliezer Berkovits. In an article published in 1978, Berkovits affirms that in light of real issues, the Jewish-Christian dialogue was a total failure:

The matter at hand is not one of differences in creed and dogma; the task is not to further mutual theological understanding of religious differences. ... The first truth to note is the realization that, in its effect upon the life of the Jew and the Jewish people, Christianity's New Testament has been the most dangerous anti-Semitic tract in history. ... No matter what the deeper theological meaning of the hate passages against the Jews might be, in the history of the Jewish people the New Testament lent its inspiring support to oppression, persecution and mass murder of an intensity and duration that were unparalleled in the entire history of man's degradation. Without Christianity's New testament, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* could never have been written. ... To face this truth is the first condition of a meaningful Jewish-Christian dialogue.³²

More recently, the Jewish thinker George Steiner claimed that it is impossible to think about the *Shoah* [Holocaust] if we separate its genesis and its radical enormity from its inherent theological origins. In his words: “We will not ... be capable of ‘thinking the *Shoah*’, albeit inadequately, if we divorce its genesis and its radical enormity from theological origins.”³³ Steiner identifies the origins of anti-Semitism in the rejection that Judaism did of Jesus. Because of their rejection of the Christian Messiah, Steiner contends, “Jews hold humanity in a hostage situation.”³⁴ Since the acceptance of Christian faith by all of humanity is presented as a condition for the reappearance of the Messiah, the Kingdom of grace and compassion cannot be implemented on Earth, while Jews insist on staying outside the Church.³⁵ A similar view was expressed by Hannah Arendt on April 3, 1942:

For the Catholic Church, Jews are both God's chosen and, after the crucifixion of Christ, cursed people. According to their plan of salvation – as one can read in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 2 – God and suffering humanity are waiting for the promised return of the Lord upon the conversion of the Jews. Until that happens, the Jews must remain true to their Law, while preserved from destruction by the *ordo christianus*, and live as meek and indigent witnesses to the truth of the salvation history revealed in the crucified and resurrected Christ. If the Jews were to be untrue to their own Law, without becoming Christians, or if – as Zionism demands – they were to become a people like all other peoples, the plan of salvation is undone.³⁶

This historic choice on the part of the Jewish people resulted in a form of anti-Semitism responsible for the hatred perpetrated from Golgotha to Auschwitz. As Steiner affirmed in an interview with Ron Rosenbaum: “We are that which has shown mankind to be ultimately bestial. ... We refused Jesus, who died hideously on the cross. And then mankind turns on us in the vulgar kind of counter-Golgotha, which

of significance after the Crucifixion, for which ‘the Jews’ were to continue suffering.” Cf. Dietrich, *God and Humanity in Auschwitz*, 18f.

³¹ Katz, *Judaism and Christianity Under the Impact of National-Socialism (1919-1945)*, 17f.

³² Berkovits, *Judaism*, 324f.

³³ Steiner, *Errata*, 137.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Steiner, *No Passion Spent*, 338.

³⁶ Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, 151.

is Auschwitz.”³⁷ And Steiner concluded: “Jews are compelled to envisage ... the hideous paradox of *their innocent guilt*, of the fact that it is they who have, in Western history, been the occasion, the recurrent opportunity, for the gentile to become less than a man.”³⁸

5 A Different View: Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig

In this city [Jerusalem] there exists hardly any real relationship between Christianity and Judaism, but the depth of the times is mightier than the shallowness of our time, and when I look down from Mount Scopus ... I see my David, the sinner and singer, walking alongside your son of David, the parabolic speaker without sin, in truly paternal fashion with his strong arm placed around the youth's shoulders.

—Martin Buber³⁹

In his major work *The Star of Redemption*, Franz Rosenzweig argues that the nations have been in a state of “inner conflict” since Christianity imposed itself upon them as supranational power:

Ever since then, and everywhere, a Siegfried is at strife with that stranger, the man on the cross, in his very appearance so suspect a character. A Siegfried who, depending on the nation he comes from may be blond and blue-eyed, or dark and small-boned, or brown and dark-eyed, wrestles again and again with this stranger who resists the continued attempts to assimilate him to the nation's own idealization.⁴⁰

For Rosenzweig, the Jew alone suffers no conflict between the supreme vision placed before his soul and the people among whom his life has placed him: “He alone possesses the unity of myth which the nations lost through the influx of Christianity, which they were bound to lose, for their own myth was pagan myth which, by leading them into itself, led them away from God and their neighbour.”⁴¹ According to Rosenzweig, the Jewish myth has the specific function of leading the individual Jew into his people, setting him “face to face with God who is also the God of all the nations.”⁴² The Jewish people alone, he sustains, feels no conflict between what is its own and what is supreme. In this symbiosis the love it has for itself is extended into love for its neighbour:

In contrast to the Christian, the Jew has no inner conflict that history is expected to solve. The Christian soul is divided between nation and Church, between ‘Siegfried’ and Christ, between myth and revelation. For the Jew no such inner discord exists. His sense of national destiny and his allegiance to God find themselves in complete harmony.⁴³

³⁷ Cf. Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler*, 314.

³⁸ Steiner, “Through that Glass Darkly,” 334ff.

³⁹ Letter dedicated to Leonard Ragaz (1868–1945) and included in a *Festschrift* compiled by Lina Lewy and published on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, July 28, 1938. See: Martin Buber, *The Letters of Martin Buber*, Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds.), Cf. “Martin Buber and Leonard Ragaz,” *Martin Buber: Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten. Band III: 1938–1965*, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Grete Schaefer in Beratung mit Ernst Simon und unter Mitwirkung von Rafael Buber, Margot Cohn und Gabriel Stern, Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider 1975, 11f.

⁴⁰ Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 329.

⁴¹ Ibid. Cf. Kochan, *The Jew and His History*, 110f.

⁴² Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 329.

⁴³ Ibid. See: Altmann, *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, 130. See also: Rosenzweig's letter to his mother, dated 3.7.1918: “Die Juden sind noch heute das einzige Volk (wohlgerne Volk) mit einem nationalen Mythos, praktisch gesprochen: das einzige Volk, dem man im Theater Stücke aus dem nationalen Leben vorspielen kann, deren Inhalt jeder Zuschauer kennt (Unterschied des antiken Theaters vom modernen). Die anderen Völker haben nationalen Mythos, wohl den christlich-religiösen. Das Passionsspiel ist allgemein christlich, gehört keinem Volk an. Das heisst aber: als Völker sind sie alle seelenlos, es gibt nur ein einziges Volk, das eine Seele hat. Als Glieder der Christenheit, als Menschen also, haben sie Mythos, d. h. Seele, aber als Volksglieder nicht. Die Völker sind alle unruhig und haben ein schlechtes Gewissen, weil sie als Völker bloss nackt-brutale Wirklichkeiten sind. Und das jüdische zieht den allgemeinen Hass (und heimliche Bewunderung) auf sich, weil es das einzige ist, das dieser Unruhe überhoben ist und deshalb nicht aktiv

The inner division tearing apart the core of European identity has been recognized as one of the causes of anti-Semitism. The Jewish historian Howard Sacher calls this dangerous phenomenon “Europe’s revenge on the Prophets.” The Jew is persecuted because he brought ethics and the conception of sin into the Western world: “The European Christian cannot forgive the Jew for giving him Christianity. ... It is not because ... they are ‘good Christians’ that the Europeans are instinctively anti-Semites. It is because they are bad Christians, in reality repressed ... pagans.”⁴⁴ On a similar path, Ernst Simmel followed those who after Freud tried to approach anti-Semitism from a psychological–sociological point of view:

The Jew must take over the role of innocent lamb, carrying the load of hate which up to now has not been absorbed in the process of Christian civilization. The anti-Semite who tortures and kills the Jew actually re-enacts the crucifixion of his Saviour. ... God ... was transformed [by the Jews] into a spiritual collective super-ego. ... In choosing the Jew as the object of his hatred, his [the anti-Semite’s] ego takes upon itself the privilege of attacking this super-ego, to punish it, instead of being punished by it. It will therefore not evoke surprise if we assert that the Jew, as the object of anti-Semitism, represents the bad conscience of Christian civilization.⁴⁵

Searching for his understanding of the complexities underlying the apparent irreconcilable nature of these two religions, Martin Buber argues that early Christianity did not succeed to be a source of renewal for Judaism, since it became untrue to itself. It constricted the original ideal of the God-winning “turning,” to a communion by grace with Christ: “At that point it won the nations, and abandoned Judaism by sundering the structure of its Community. From then on Christianity rose to dominion over the nations, and Judaism sank into rigidness, humiliation, and degradation; but its core unshakably maintained its claim to be the true *ecclesia*, the ever faithful community of divine immediacy.”⁴⁶ As Rosemary Ruether explains, by seeing itself as a “new covenant,” superseding the covenant of God with Israel, Christianity cut itself off from its Jewish roots and therefore lost the source of the authentic interpretation of its mission: “Christianity responded with hostility when Jews refused to accept this false concept of Jesus as the Messiah and the Church as the New Israel, superseding the Jewish people. Such a Gospel of Christ could only be rejected by the Jews with a resounding no. This rejection expresses the faithfulness of the Jewish people to its God.”⁴⁷ In a lecture delivered in 1926, with the title “The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible,” Buber situates this withdrawal from the grounds of the “Old Testament,” drawing a distinction between the concepts Creation, Revelation and Redemption:

Within early Christianity the Gospel according to John was the first to try to substitute a dual triad by weaving Revelation and Redemption into one. The light that shone in darkness and was not received by the darkness, the light enlightening the whole man which comes into the world - that light is at the same time Revelation and Redemption; by his coming into the world God Himself, and the soul is redeemed. The Old Testament shrinks into a prologue to the New Testament.⁴⁸

In the moment its earliest theology, Buber argues, Christianity fused the essentials of Revelation and of Redemption in the person of Christ. Yet, Buber clarifies, in the Bible itself these three levels, although distinguished, should not be seen as “separated,” since they are actually coincident. In the Morning Prayer, for example, the Jew upholds that every day God renews the work of the Beginning, while He anticipates the work of the End.⁴⁹

According to Martin Buber, when the Western peoples accepted the Gospel, with it they received the Torah of Israel (the “written” part of it), comprehending three main things: the history of Creation, developing into

mitmacht; es hat schon, was die andern bewusst oder unbewusst suchen.” Cf. Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, I. Band, 1900-1918, herausgegeben von Rachel Rosenzweig und Edith Rosenzweig-Scheinmann, unter Mitwirkung von Bernard Casper, 586f.

⁴⁴ Sacher, “Revenge on the Prophets;” Cf. Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man*, 284f., n. 45.

⁴⁵ Simmel, (ed.), *Anti-Semitism*, 61f., 65.

⁴⁶ Buber, *On Judaism*, 79–94 (esp. 90); first published in German: “Jüdische Religiosität,” *Reden Über das Judentum*, Frankfurt am Main: Rütten & Lüning 1923.

⁴⁷ Ruether, *The Twentieth Century*, 84.

⁴⁸ Buber, “The Faith of Judaism,” in *Israel and the World*, 13–27 (esp. 25). Cf. Buber, *Volk und Reich der Deutschen*, 429–40. See: Buber, *Der Jude und sein Judentum*, 187–200. Concerning the character of God’s continuous redeeming power, cf. “The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul,” *Israel and the World*, 28–40 (esp. 34f.); Buber, “Die Brennpunkte der Jüdischen Seele,” 375–84. See also: Horwitz, *Buber’s Way to ‘I and Thou.’*, 235, n. 35.

⁴⁹ Buber, “The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible,” in *Israel and the World*, 96.

the history of Israel; the Revelation of God, communicated first of all to the Jewish people; and the messianic prophecies, centred around the people of Israel, in its effort to award the Redemption of humanity.⁵⁰ This Jewish heritage, from Jesus' point of view, was destined for Israel alone, when he explicitly declared that he had come "only for the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Mt.15, 24),⁵¹ was too heavy a burden for the nations to accept in full as their own faith. This, Buber avers, led them to rise up against it time and again.⁵² The fact that the Holy Scriptures were taken to be a "common" legacy – although in completely different ways – to both Jews and Christians, would become one of the main sources of theological anti-Semitism.

If we consider all the reasons for anti-Semitism advanced by the Christian nations ... we find that there is one deep and unconscious reason that is true for all periods of the exile. It is that there has entered and become dispersed among them a people carrying a charge from heaven which is written in a Book which became sacred for them too when they became Christians. It is unique in human history, strange and awesome, that heaven should make a specific demand in reference to human behaviour, and that the demand should be recorded in a Book, and that the Book should be the heritage of a people which is dispersed among all the nations with this, its holy Book, which is holy for all the nations as well. The demand stands above and remote from the nations, a comprehensive demand, differing entirely from the quality characteristic of their own lives; it hovers high over them as the demand which their God makes of them. And the nations refuse to submit to it. To be sure, they wish to retain the God they have received, but at the same time they would reject His demand.⁵³

While Buber censures the Jews for fulfilling the commandments, but not the divine "demand," the Christians are criticized for pretending to retain God, while not submitting to His "charge." If God is understood to be the source, and the commandments the means, the fulfilment of the demand is the goal. The "demand," in Buber's view, points to something beyond the divinization of the means and the mystical possession of the source.

Within the framework of Christianity, Martin Buber identifies the source of the problem in Pauline theology.⁵⁴ According to Paul, Buber claims, Jesus had "fulfilled the Torah and abolished it at the same time," and "demanded nothing of his true believers save faith."⁵⁵ This was the argument of the nations that went in the footsteps of such a theology.

Yet against all their opposition to the Torah stood that unfortunate Jewish people, bearing the Book which was its own Book and at the same time part of the holy Book of the nations.⁵⁶

Buber recognizes here the true reason of Christian hatred towards the Jews. The nations' rejection of the Jewish faith, in time would become a rejection of the people giving testimony to it. As a way of sanctioning this attitude, Christian theologians projected their own rejection into the divine realm itself. They wrangle that "God rejected this people, who no longer have any heritage because that heritage has now passed over to Christianity."⁵⁷ But, Buber concludes, "the Jewish people continued to exist, Book in hand. ... That is the perennial source of anti-Semitism."⁵⁸

⁵⁰ Buber, *Israel and the World*, 197–213 (esp. 201); first published in the Hebrew original, under the title: "Elohei Yisrael ve-Elohei ha-Avot," *Zion* VII, 1 (1941) 1–11; "Goyim ve-Elohab," *Knesset*, *Divrei Sopherim Le-zerech H. N. Bialik*, Tel-Aviv: Mossad Bialik 1941, 287–95; and in the German version: "Israel und die Völker," *Neue Wege* XXXV/3 März 1941, 101–13. Cf. Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 185. It is important to notice that in this description of the "Torah of Israel" Buber does not a specific reference to the "legal" aspects of this Torah, which, in fact, form the core of the Jewish religious life. Among other factors, not less important, the "Law" – and all its specific *mitzvot* – is the dividing element between Judaism and Christianity, a position similar to the one defended by Leibowitz. Cf. Buber, "The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today," *Israel and the World*, 190f.

⁵¹ Cf. Buber and Schmidt, *Two Types of Faith*, 172.

⁵² Buber, "The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today," 190f.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵⁴ Buber's interpretation of Paul was in some respect influenced by Kierkegaard, for whom "salvation" could be achieved only by a "leap" of faith and a transformation of existence through faith. Cf. Greta, *The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber*, 404f.

⁵⁵ Buber, "The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today," 190.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Buber and Schmidt, "Kirche, Staat, Volk, Judentum. Zwiegespräch im jüdischen Lehrhaus in Stuttgart am 14. Januar 1933," 257–74; reprinted in: *Der Jude und sein Judentum*, 558–70 (esp. 559).

⁵⁸ Buber, "The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today," 190.

Arthur Cohen has a similar view of this situation. In his study on the relations between Christian theology and the Holocaust, he claims that the Jews, the Jewish community, and the Jewish belief ended for Christianity with the death of Jesus:

What remained of the Jews and Judaism beyond the times of Jesus of Nazareth were accounted as little more than a spectral reality to be maintained in virtual invisibility during the ages of Christian monopoly and assimilated to comparable invisibility during the age of emancipation and the rise of the secular state. In either historical age, the Jew was expected for his own safety and to ensure the benignity of the Christian world to remain unnoticed and unnoticeable. In fact, the Jew continued to be what he had determined to be for centuries, faithful to the Law and as much possible indifferent to the exigencies of his surroundings. But it is no less clear that as spectre to the Christian, the Jew was the surreal shadow of Christian unfulfilment, the warning presence who reminded by his mute and stubborn endurance that with each passing century the *Eschaton* was farther off, rather than nearer to hand.⁵⁹

Following the appropriation of what was seen as the core of Jewish faith, Israel was seen as “a reality rejected by God.” However, Martin Buber avows, the people sees itself from a radically different perspective:

The Jews, who know from within, in the darkness of a knowing from within, in the light of knowing from within, know otherwise concerning Israel. We who have sinned against God a thousand times, who have turned our backs on God a thousand times, who have experienced throughout these millennia a divine dispensation which it would be too simple to call it punishment (for it is greater than punishment) - we know that nonetheless we have not been repudiated.⁶⁰

One aspect of the problem even more critical than the one just depicted is that, according to Martin Buber, the Jews themselves, as a people, didn’t succeed in fulfilling the demand. The people of Israel were charged by Heaven to lead the way towards an international fulfilment of divine truth and the development of a true fellowship of nations. “They were commanded, as a nation, to demonstrate a life of unity and peace, of righteousness and justice to the human race, as a sort of example and beginning.”⁶¹ Buber further asserts that it was Israel’s vocation “to teach the nations,” teach them to worship the absolute in itself, and not the absolutized faculties of the nations. However, he anxiously replies: “How can we teach what we ourselves have not yet learned?”

For untold generations the Jews observed the six hundred and thirteen injunctions of the Torah; but the charge which is higher than every formulation of individual precepts was not fulfilled. The life of the nation as such never became one of righteousness and justice.⁶²

In this respect, Buber diverges sharply from the main streams of Jewish Orthodoxy, for which the final goal of Judaism can only be accomplished through the fulfilment of all and every specific *mitzvah*. By setting a superstructure, in its essence ethical in nature, above the specific commandments revealed in the Torah, Buber shows his dependency on Kant’s philosophy, especially as defined by its categorical imperative. This point was denounced by Rosenzweig in 1924, in an open letter to Buber entitled “The Builders,” where he accuses the latter of a residual Kantian attachment. This letter is Rosenzweig’s response to Buber’s essay “*Herut*,” published in 1919. Rosenzweig accuses Buber of rejecting the Law, deemed to be a narrow legal corpus. In doing this, Rosenzweig avers, Buber unquestionably holds fast to a Kantian view of the Law.⁶³

The Jewish people, Martin Buber argues, did not become a true nation taking the lead in the fulfilment of the divine command:

⁵⁹ Cohen, *Judaism and Christianity Under the Impact of National Socialism*, 473–97.

⁶⁰ Buber, “The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today,” 190. Cf. “Preface to the 1923 Edition” of Buber, “The Early Addresses 1909–1918,” *On Judaism*, 9. See also: Neusner, *Judaism in Society. The Evidence of the Yerushalmi*, 197.

⁶¹ Buber, “The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today,” 186f. Cf. Kulka, *Demonizing the Other*, 196–209 (esp. 198f.).

⁶² Buber, “The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today,” 187.

⁶³ See: “The Builders: Concerning the Law,” in Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, 72–92; in the German version: “Die Bauleute. Über das Gesetz” (1923), *Kleinere Schriften*, Berlin: Schocken Verlag / Jüdischer Buchverlag 1937, 106–21. See: “Teaching and Law – To Martin Buber,” Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, 234–42. See also: Mendes-Flohr, *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians*, 315–41 (esp. 315f.).

If we as a people had fulfilled this requirement and had refuted the word of Saul of Tarsus by our actions, and if we had actually shown the nations by our actions the way to a better life on earth, a life of friendship within and without – then we would have ceased to be contradictory and terrifying to them, and we would have become what we truly are, their older brother.⁶⁴

As Buber expresses in “The Gods of the Nations and God,” one people has only one means to point to God, and that is through life lived in accordance with His will:

Up to now, our existence has only sufficed to shake the thrones of idols, not to erect a throne to God. It is that fact which makes our existence among the nations so mysterious. We pretend to teach the absolute, but what we actually do is say No to the other nations, or rather we ourselves are such a negation and nothing more.⁶⁵ That is why we have become a nightmare to the nations. That is why every nation is bound to desire to get rid of us at the time it is in the act of setting itself up as the absolute.

... That is why today we are not permitted to soar over the abyss and point the way to salvation but are dragged to the bottom of the whirlpool of common wretchedness.⁶⁶

In saying this, Buber points to the inconceivable dangers implied in Jewish insularity. Few Jewish thinkers have ventured to recognize Jewish reality and self-responsibility from such a blunt standpoint. In this implicit indictment, Buber unambiguously acknowledges that Judaism itself had a negative attitude towards other nations. Buber recognizes in this adverse attitude and in the consequent schism created *vis-à-vis* the reality of other nations one of the main sources of anti-Semitism.

Seven years earlier, Buber identified the Fall of Jerusalem as a Jewish city as the moment that “hurled [the Jewish people] into the abyss of the world”:

Ever since, he [the Jew] has represented to the world the insecure man. Within that general insecurity which marks human existence as a whole, there has since that time lived a species of man to whom destiny has denied even the small share of dubious security other beings possess.⁶⁷

It is this state of insecurity, Buber contends, that Jews have in mind when they speak of their Exile as *Galut*. However, all along this long, tortuous, and dangerous Exile, something remained solid at the bottom of the soul of each member of the people: the unshakable faith in the One Who had set it on its way, since the call of the first Patriarch. It is important to recall what Buber wrote in his book on *The Prophetic Faith*, where he contends that the God Who in the days of old caused the first father to “stray” from his father’s house and went before him in his wanderings as a faithful shepherd, is acknowledged by suffering generations in their way, the way of exile, to be their Shepherd (Is.40, 11): “He Whom the *nabi* Abraham had recognized in days of old as ‘the God of the way,’ remained the leader, which the suffering generations have carried with them on their wanderings.”⁶⁸

It is true that elsewhere, Martin Buber doesn’t fall short of blaming the nations for being one of the central causes of anti-Semitism.⁶⁹ Yet, here Buber attributes this responsibility to Israel itself, since it alone was charged with a “mission” not yet fulfilled. As long as it lived on its Land, Buber asserts, the people represented the charge to other nations, but when exiled it introduced it to the world, proclaiming its confession up to martyrdom. However, “as a nation” that charge was never met. Buber maintains that Israel was elected to be established as God’s people, i.e., “as a people building its whole common life under God’s order and rule.” But, he remarks, “it was laid upon Israel to work not on others but on itself ... to shine in the midst of the world of nations, to win souls for God and thus to become the beginning of His Kingdom, ‘the first of His harvest’.”⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Buber, “The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today,” 187.

⁶⁵ It should be noticed that this “negation” is directed upon “the life of the nations [*Leben der Völker*],” i.e., upon their own existence as such, and not upon certain principles or attitudes characterizing them.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Buber, “The Jew in the World,” *Israel and the World*, 167.

⁶⁸ Buber and Schmidt, *The Prophetic Faith*, 234f.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Buber, “The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today,” *Israel and the World*, 190.

⁷⁰ Cf. Buber and Schmidt, *The Prophetic Faith*, 233.

Buber recognizes that, already during the First Temple period, this task, which Israel was called upon to do for itself and for humankind, it did not do.⁷¹

In the aforementioned address, "The Jew in the World," delivered in 1934, Martin Buber asserts that anti-Semitism is like "a kind of fear of ghosts." Its uniqueness, and consequent resistance to historical categories and general concepts arranged by the nations within the context of history, brought Israel to be considered an "alarming element" among them. The wandering, roving, defenceless group different from any other and comparable to none seems to the nations among which it lives to have something spectral about it, because it does not fit into any other given group. Buber distinguishes between "being" and "appearance": "We ourselves know very well that we are not spectres, but a living community."⁷² Although, from any view point other than faith, the Jewish inability to fit into a category would appear intolerable as counter to history and nature, from the view point of faith this same inability to fit into a certain category, Buber further asserts, is "the foundation and meaning of our living avowal of the uniqueness of Israel."⁷³

Martin Buber sustains that the Apostle Paul held the intrinsic unity of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospel. However, twenty years after his death, the Gnostic Marcion was born and would later undertake to separate the two. As Grete Schaefer explains, Buber's interpretation of Paul was influenced by Kierkegaard, whose views of the Apostle were coloured by his own brooding, melancholy nature and for whom salvation could be achieved only by a "leap" of faith and a transformation of existence through faith. Buber saw Paul as the first who opened the way that would lead to Marcion. In his view, Paul was a representative of Hellenistic Diaspora-Judaism, whose manner of thinking was a syncretism of the Pharisaic, apocalyptic, and Hellenistic spirit.⁷⁴ Yet, this theological influence was not restricted to Kierkegaard alone. As Buber stated in his letter to Albert Schweitzer, written in Heppenheim in December 5, 1932: "Since my letter to you, your book on St. Paul has made an even deeper impression on me. It is very important to me to discuss with you the questions raised by it." Contrasting the view of Paul prevalent to that time, Schweitzer interpreted him primarily in light of the Jewish tradition. This was expressed by the German theologian himself, in his response to Buber, written in Königsfeld on December 3, 1932: "I am looking forward to a discussion about St. Paul, whom I rescued from Hellenism. [Adolf von] Harnack shared my pleasure."⁷⁵

In his own Gospel, Martin Buber avers, created as "a kind of spiritual contribution to the destruction of Israel," in addition to separating the "Old" from the "New Testament," and the history of Christianity from the history of Israel, Marcion drew a line of separation between the Deities: "On one side the God of Israel, who is also the Creator of this imperfect world ...; on the other side, the 'strange,' unknown God who has no concern with this world, yet takes pity on it and redeems it."⁷⁶ The conclusion was the Gnostic transvaluation, which contends that "there is no value to this material world, and no thought ought to be given to its correction."⁷⁷ In the teachings of Marcion, Buber remarks, "the nations of the world are absolved of the demands of heaven by an extreme dualism: the life of the redeemed soul on the one hand, and that of the existing society on the other."⁷⁸ While in the former there is not justice, but just lovingkindness, in the latter there is not even true justice.⁷⁹ Although neither the Catholic Church nor Protestantism followed in Marcion's footsteps completely,

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Buber, "The Jew in the World," *Israel and the World*, 168f.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Schaefer, *The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber*, 399–405. See also: Diamond, *Martin Buber*, 166ff.

⁷⁵ Glatzer and Mendes-Flohr (eds.), *The Letters of Martin Buber*; Cf. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Paulinischen Forschung von der Reformation bis auf die Gegenwart*, Tübingen 1911; and the English translation: *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (1912), republished in New York: Schocken Books, 1964.

⁷⁶ Buber, "The Jew in the World," *Israel and the World*, 191. Cf. Buber and Schmidt, *Two Types of Faith*, 167.

⁷⁷ Buber, "The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today," *Israel and the World*, 191.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 192. As Maurice Friedman explains: "Jesus' message was carried to the peoples of the world as a dualism which split the realm of community, state, and the whole life-answer of man from the kingdom of God, severed 'religion' and 'politics,' and strengthened by the power of the church, declared Israel cut off from the task of making the human race into a community of God." See: Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work*, 181.

⁷⁹ Buber, "The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today," *Israel and the World*, 192.

in the year 1920, Adolf von Harnack, a liberal Protestant theologian⁸⁰ and professor of Church history, described the Scriptures, with the exception of the Prophets and the psalms, as a hindrance to “the inner development of Christianity.” Three years after the death of Harnack, his idea – which had been the former idea of Marcion – was put into action, “not however by spiritual means but by means of violence and terror.” The state of which Harnack was a citizen placed before the Church one of two alternatives: “Either to exclude Judaism and the spirit of Israel entirely from its midst ...; or else to be overthrown together with Judaism.”⁸¹

With tragic irony, Martin Buber averred in a lecture proffered in Tel-Aviv in 1939, the “terror of destruction enacted upon the Jewish people had for the moment passed away” but, he added, “[w]e do not know today, when Christianity will again be faced with the alternative of renunciation, which is an inner death, and exterior overthrowal.”⁸² “This we know,” Buber further declared, “the exclusion of the Jewish element from Christianity means an extrusion of the divine demand and concrete messianism; its separation from the divine truth calling for fulfilment.”⁸³ A similar thought had been expressed six months earlier, by Ernst Lohmeyer, a Protestant theologian who taught in Breslau from 1920 to 1935. As he suggested in a letter addressed to Buber, dated August 19, 1933: “I hope you agree with me that the Christian faith is Christian only as long as it has the Jewish faith in its heart. ... But we have hardly ever been as distant from the Christian faith as we are now, and there remains for us only the faint hope of a regeneration of Christianity, just as you hope for a regeneration of Judaism.”⁸⁴

On January 14th, 1933, the Jüdischen Lehrhaus in Stuttgart, under the directorship of Leopold Marx, sponsored an inter-faith dialogue on “Church, State, Nation, and Jewry” between Martin Buber⁸⁵ and Karl Ludwig Schmidt,⁸⁶ a Protestant liberal theologian.⁸⁷ In his first response to Schmidt, who argued that the Church – “the Israel after the spirit” – is Jewry’s “ultimate center and eternal refuge,” Buber lamented “the unredeemedness of the world,” thus contradicting the specific claim of Christianity on history.⁸⁸ “We [Jews]

⁸⁰ Ibid. Concerning liberal Protestant theology, in a note to a poem of Judah ha-Levi on “The True and the False Messiah,” Franz Rosenzweig refers to a talk with his friend and teacher, Hermann Cohen, who once, over seventy at the time, told him he was “still hoping to see the dawn of the messianic era.” Rosenzweig explained that what Cohen, who believed in ‘the false Messiah of the nineteenth century,’ meant was “the conversion of Christians to the ‘pure monotheism’ of his Judaism,” a conversion which he thought the liberal Protestant theology of his day was initiating. Rosenzweig confessed that he was startled by the vigour of Cohen’s belief that it would happen “speedily in our days,” and did not dare tell him that he did not think these indications were true signs. Rosenzweig, *Franz Rosenzweig*, 351.

⁸¹ Buber, “The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today,” *Israel and the World*, 192.

⁸² Ibid., 192f.

⁸³ Ibid., 193.

⁸⁴ Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten – Band II: 1918-1938*, herausg. und einleitung von Grete Schaefer in Beratung mit Ernst Simon und unter Mitwirkung von Rafael Buber, Margot Cohn und Gabriel Stern, Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider 1972/1973/1975, 499ff.

⁸⁵ In a letter addressed to Ernst Simon, dated “Heppenheim, 14.2.1933,” Buber mentions his participation in the Conference with Schmidt: “Auch eine Stuttgarter öffentliche Aussprache mit Prof. Karl Ludwig Schmidt (einem führenden protestantischen Theologen) über Staat, Volk, Judentum soll veröffentlicht werden.” Ibid., 465f.

⁸⁶ See Karl Ludwig Schmidt’s letter to Martin Buber, dated “Bonn, 11.12.1.1933”: “Sehr verehrter Herr Kollege Buber, ... Ich schicke Ihnen nun hiermit den Aufgang meines Vortrag mit Eilpost, indem ich hoffe, dass er noch im Laufe des Donnerstags, jedenfalls vor meiner Ankunft bei Ihnen in Heppenheim ankommt. Sie ersehen aus diesen Darlegungen, von welchem Standort aus ich sprechen muss. Ich tue das einem Menschen und Denker wie Ihnen gegenüber mit Scheu und Scham Gegenüber Ihrer Erfahrung, die Sie als Mensch und doch wohl gerade als Jude haben, komme ich mir vor wie ein kleiner Sendling aus dem Beruf heraus, in den ich hineingestellt bin.” See also Schmidt’s letter addressed to Buber two weeks after the Conference in Stuttgart, dated “Bonn, 28.1.1933”: “Hochverehrter, lieber Herr Buber, es wird Ihnen sicherlich deutlich geworden sein, dass ich für unser Stuttgarter Gespräch dankbar war und bin. Ich möchte es aber in einem Brief, zu dem ich endlich heute komme, gerne noch einmal sehr unterstreichen. ... Ich habe den Plan, meinen Vortrag demnächst in den ThBl [Theologischen Blättern] herauszubringen ... Haben Sie vor, Ihre Ausführungen vollständig wiederzugeben, so würde ich mich freuen, das ganze Gespräch in den ThBl herauszubringen.” Ibid., 460ff.

⁸⁷ Cf. Buber’s first response to Schmidt, published by Schmidt and Buber, “Kirche, Staat, Volk, Judentum. Zwiegespräch im jüdischen Lehrhaus in Stuttgart am 14. Januar 1933,” 257–74. Cf. Buber and Schmidt, *Christianity*, 174–88. See also: Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions. Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity*, 133–67 (esp. 151–60). Buber’s theological encounter with Schmidt has been reprinted in: Buber, *Der Jude und sein Judentum*, 558–70.

⁸⁸ See: Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work*, 177–97 (esp. 179ff).

know that the world has not been redeemed ... as surely as we know that the air which we breath exists, that the space in which we move exists. We know it more deeply, more authentically. We apprehend the unredeemedness of the world.”⁸⁹ Three years earlier, in March 1930, in an address delivered also in Stuttgart, Buber mentioned the continuous paradoxical tension between an unredeemed world, developing itself within the mysterious call to salvation:

We feel salvation happening; and we feel the unsaved world. No saviour with whom a new redeemed history began has appeared to us at any definite point in history. Because we have not been stilled by anything which has happened, we are wholly directed toward the coming of that which is to come. Thus, though divided from you, we have been attached to you. As Franz Rosenzweig wrote in the letter which I have already quoted: “You who live in an *ecclesia triumphans* need a silent servant to cry to you whenever you believe you have partaken of God in bread and wine, ‘Lord, remember the last things’.”⁹⁰

A similar view had been expressed by Franz Rosenzweig in his letter to Rudolf Ehrenberg. Referring to the Church’s involvement in world history of the nations, Rosenzweig contended that: “Whenever the Church forgets she is a stumbling block and desires to become reconciled with what is ‘common to all men’ ... the Synagogue confronts the Church as a silent warner who is not seduced by what is common to all men and knows only of the stumbling block.”⁹¹ In a final reply to Schmidt, in the inter-faith dialogue held in Stuttgart in 1933, Buber asserted that, “Israel may be rejected by men, humiliated and defamed; compared to the magnificent power of the Church, Israel may indeed be humble and destitute – but her relationship to God remains mutually firm.”⁹²

In his essay “The Gods of the Nations and God,” Martin Buber explains that even when entire nations were converted *in toto* to Christianity, not the nations as such but individuals alone were received into the redeemed world – the antechamber to a hereafter removed from anything that had to do with nationality.⁹³ This, Buber remarks, obviated the task set to the people of Israel, “to make the world into the Kingdom of God.” That goal would be replaced by the Christian transfiguration of historical power-tendencies and acts, the concept of a “holy empire.”⁹⁴ This specific point is relevant, for it reveals what Buber considered to be the “appropriation” made by the Church of the vocation of Israel. Having remained “within history,” he averred, the “Church tried to give a ‘visible’ expression to what might have been its ‘invisible’ vocation, thus dis-figuring the conception of ‘the Kingdom of God’ into the concept of ‘a holy empire’.”⁹⁵

In 1952, seven years after the Holocaust had destroyed more than one third of European Jewry, Martin Buber wrote a book on the relation between religion and philosophy. In a chapter entitled “Religion and Ethics,” he explained the reason why Christianity became “a community of individuals,” rather than “a people,” or a group of people to whom the concept of nationhood could be applied: “As a religious movement, it [Christianity] arose at a time in Hellenistic civilization when the element of the ‘people’ was being displaced by that of the ‘individual’.”⁹⁶ Buber contends that Christianity is “Hellenistic,” insofar as it surrenders the concept of the “holy people” and recognizes only a personal holiness.⁹⁷ Considered from a different angle, in his book on *The Prophetic Faith*, Buber asserts that it was the prophet Ezekiel who was responsible for the “individualization” of the idea of “the holy remnant.” The remnant, Buber maintains, “no longer appears as a preserved life-community of the faithful who are saved, but as a sum of individuals: pious ones and penitents.” On the other side, Ezekiel, in his messianic prophecy, saw Israel “as a community,” although in his vision and

⁸⁹ Cf. Buber and Schmidt, “Kirche, Staat, Volk, Judentum,” *Der Jude und sein Judentum*, 562; cf. *ibid.*, 559.

⁹⁰ Buber, “The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul,” *Israel and the World*, 39. Cf. Rosenzweig, *Judaism Despite Christianity*, 48–70 (esp. 65f.).

⁹¹ See: Letter from Franz Rosenzweig to Rudolf Ehrenberg, dated 1.11.1913, in: *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 136f. Cf. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, 343f. See also: Altmann, *Between East and West, Essays dedicated to the memory of Bela Horowitz*, 196–204; and Herberg, *Faith Enacted as History*, 58.

⁹² Cf. Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions*, 159.

⁹³ Buber, “The Gods of the Nations and God,” 201.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Cf. Buber, *Eclipse of God*, 105; cf. Buber, *Gottesfinsternis - Betrachtungen zur Beziehung zwischen Religion und Philosophie*.

⁹⁷ Buber, *Eclipse of God*, 105.

reproof of the present he sees it “as a multitude of individuals,” each one responsible before God for himself alone. This personal responsibility, however, is full and complete, implying that “no one has to bear an inherited sin, no one shares in accumulating new guilt, no one has to answer for his fellow, but each has to answer fully for himself.” This, Buber concludes, is the special character of “the time of the great transition,” the time that has begun even now.⁹⁸

In his volume on Judaism and Christianity,⁹⁹ Martin Buber returns to this point saying that Christian faith, although born “outside the historical experiences of nations,” in seclusion from history, is in the souls of individuals to whom the challenge came, to believe that a man crucified in Jerusalem was their saviour. Yet, he observes, “Christianity rests upon a foundation which, in spite of its ‘irrationality,’ must be described as logical or noetic, for it is the acceptance and recognition as true, of a ‘proposition’ pronounced about the object of faith.”¹⁰⁰ Buber characterized this type of faith as “*Pistis*,” and saw its roots in the Greek attitude that acknowledges a certain fact which is beyond the current circle of conceptions, yet is an acknowledgment accomplished in a noetic form: “I believe that this is so.”¹⁰¹ This manner of confessing one’s “faith” came into being (in contrast to other streams of the history of conversion) as the action of the person who was sharply separated from the community of his nation, as the “demand” was directed to just such an attitude.¹⁰²

Martin Buber argues that although Jesus also addresses individuals, he sees himself as sent to the “lost sheep of the House of Israel” alone (Mt.15, 24). During his lifetime, Jesus perceived himself as operating within the framework of the “House of Israel,” although this would change after his death.¹⁰³ As Malcolm Diamond suggests, Buber’s approach to Jesus must be taken within the context of his understanding of Messianism, especially in connection with his view of the shift from the mysterious, but emphatically prophetic message of Deutero-Isaiah to the apocalyptic view of the Book of Daniel and inter-testamental literature. Concerning Buber’s comprehension of Jesus teaching and work, as inspired by Isaiah’s figure of God’s Servant, Diamond contends the he was influenced by the theological work of Albert Schweitzer.¹⁰⁴ Buber remarks that although Paul often speaks about Jews and Greeks, he never does it in connection with the realities of their nationalities. Paul is only concerned with the newly established community, which by its nature is not a nation.¹⁰⁵ The conception of the “holy nation” in its strict sense has faded altogether; it does not enter the consciousness of Christendom, leading the Church to take its place.¹⁰⁶ The consequences of this, Buber contends, is that even in the mass baptisms of the West, individuals as individuals, rather than the nations as such, became Christians, i.e., subjected to Christ. Thus, the “People of God” was Christendom, which in its nature differed from the nations; these – “as nations” – would remain in their own nature and their own law.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, the fact that the new members were accepted into the community “as individuals” gave them the possibility of attaining an unusual degree of intensity and inwardness in their religiosity. This, Buber explains, was due to the fact that their “imitation of God” was actually lived in light of the “ever present image

⁹⁸ Buber and Schmidt, “The God of the Sufferers - The Question,” *The Prophetic Faith*, 186f.

⁹⁹ Werblowsky, “Reflections on Martin Buber’s *Two Types of Faith*,” 92–101; Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work. The Later Years, 1945-1965*, 83–101.

¹⁰⁰ Buber and Schmidt, *Two Types of Faith*, 172. Cf. Werblowsky, “Reflections on Martin Buber’s *Two Types of Faith*,” 96.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. In his Eranos-Lecture, delivered in 1966, Gershom Scholem sharply criticizes Buber’s understanding of Christian faith. Concerning Buber’s *Two Types of Faith*, he remarks: “In seiner Auseinandersetzung mit dem Christentum, die er in seinem schwächsten Buch, “Zwei Glaubensweisen” (1950), vorgenommen und an eine freilich überaus dubiose Diskussion des augenblick verschieden Sinnes von Glauben, *Emuna*, im Judentum und von *Pistis* im Neuen Testament gebunden hat, tritt das Gesetz und die Haltung von Judentum und Christentum zu ihm entschieden in die zweite Reihe.” Scholem, *Schöpfung und Gestaltung - Eranos-Jahrbuch 1966*, 9–55 (esp. 45f.). Cf. Hugo Bergmann’s letter to Martin Buber, dated may 30, 1949, in Schaede, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten. Band III: 1938-1965*, 197–200; see also: Brod, *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, 319–40.

¹⁰² Buber and Schmidt, *Two Types of Faith*, 172.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Diamond, “The Jewish Jesus and the Christ of Faith,” *Martin Buber*, 175. See also: Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, 219ff.

¹⁰⁵ Buber and Schmidt, *Two Types of Faith*, 172f.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 173.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

of Christ,” which permits the individual “a far more concrete relation of ‘following after’ and ‘imitation’ than does the imageless nature of the God of Israel, who is a self-revealing but not less a self-concealing God.”¹⁰⁸ With this God, who restricts Himself to no form and withdraws Himself from every manifestation, the peoples won to Christianity would not have been able to enter into an unmediated relationship.¹⁰⁹

In a chapter entitled “Redemption,” included in his volume on *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, Martin Buber contrasts what happened between Christianity and Judaism with Hasidism, considered one of the three spiritual movements that remained faithful to the prophetic message. For him, what Christianity did at the time of her separation from Judaism, her forsaking of the idea of the holiness of the nation and the absolute value of its task, could not be imitated by Hasidism, for in Buber’s view, the national element is central in the Hasidic faith:

The kingdom of God in the eyes of Christianity means the establishment of God’s kingdom over redeemed souls in the world, in which there is no longer a relation between the nation as a nation and God; therefore, people became Christians only as individuals, but the nations as nations remained idol worshippers, and as long as nations exist, the world will not become Christian. In the eyes of Hasidism, in contrast, the kingdom of God has remained the same as it always was in the eyes of Judaism (...) namely the establishment of the kingship of God over the ‘human nation’ as a nation of nations, a nation consisting of nations; and this kingdom will not come about until one nation, which has been destined for this purpose, shall begin to establish in its own way of living the will of God for the redemption of the world. Certainly, this does not mean the weakening of the national existence, and of course not its abolition, but on the contrary - its decisive concentration.¹¹⁰

With “Christian individualism,” the relationship between the ethical and the religious was thus impaired.¹¹¹ When the sanctification of the people as a people is no longer recognized nor taken seriously, the peoples accept the new faith not as peoples, but as collections of individuals. Even where mass conversions take place, the people as a people remains “unbaptized,” for it does not enter as a people into the new covenant proclaimed:¹¹² “[A]lthough the people externally proclaim a ‘common faith’, their ‘princes’ remain unrepentant and, in reality, the religious slogans concealed but a declaration of their autonomy.”¹¹³ As Buber declared in 1939:

There is only one nation which once upon a time heard this charge [to perfect our own portion of the universe – the human world] so loudly and clearly that the charge penetrated to the very depths of its soul. That nation accepted the charge, not as an inchoate mass of individuals but as a nation. As a nation it accepted the truth which calls for its fulfilment by the human race as a whole. And that is its spirit, the spirit of Israel.¹¹⁴

Irving Greenberg claims that the dialectic of the Holocaust reveals that “in pure secularity humans appoint themselves God and thereby become the devil. It warns that glorification of human autonomy can evoke the nemesis of human idolatry; that in the amassing of science, technology, and efficiency lies the potential for mass killing, so that simple affirmation of human autonomy and human might is no longer morally tenable.”¹¹⁵ For Buber, those who believed in Christ possessed at every period “a twofold being”: as individuals in the realm of the person, and as participants in the public life of their nations. This state of existence remained

¹⁰⁸ Buber, “Religion and Ethics,” *Eclipse of God*, 105f.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 106.

¹¹⁰ Buber and Schmidt, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, 91.

¹¹¹ As mentioned above, Buber was deeply influenced by the philosophical and theological thought of Søren Kierkegaard. The reading of *Fear and Trembling* made a lasting impression on Buber. It compelled him to reflect on the problem of the relation of the ethical to the religious, which, as Grete Schaefer maintains, engaged his mind throughout his life. In one of his last works Buber dedicated at least two chapters to this subject, entitled “Religion and Ethics” and “On the Suspension of the Ethical.” The second is a reflection on the problematics developed by the Danish philosopher in the aforementioned volume. Buber, *Eclipse of God*, 93–111 and 113–20, respectively. See: Schaefer, *Hebrew Humanism*, 212f.

¹¹² Buber, “Religion and Ethics,” *Eclipse of God*, 106.

¹¹³ Buber, “The Gods of the Nations and God,” in *Israel and the World*, 201.

¹¹⁴ Buber, “The Spirit of Israel and the World of Today,” *Israel and the World*, 186. This situation was acknowledged by Søren Kierkegaard who, in Buber’s opinion, did not estimate adequately the causes of the “malady.” Cf. Buber and Schmidt, *Two Types of Faith*, 173.

¹¹⁵ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 134.

preserved from the crisis as long as the sphere of the person was able to assert itself against the determining power of public affairs.¹¹⁶ However, with the penetration of public life within the sphere of the person, down to the depth of his redeemed soul, the blessing of Christian salvation is imperilled. The disparity between the sanctification of the individual and the accepted unholiness of his community as such was transferred to the inner dialectic of the human soul.¹¹⁷

It is tragic that these two religions decided to trail adverse and apparently incompatible paths, instead of accomplishing the complementary dimensions divinely ascribed to each other. Tired of this deceptive incompatibility, Irving Greenberg observes that:

One Christian interpretation of the emergence of their faith has been that Jews lost the vision ... Why? Because Christians have experienced their own chosenness, so they assumed that Jews have lost theirs. But why? Why is God not capable of communicating to gentiles through sacramental experiences and to Jews through a more natural order? Why insist that new experiences exhaust God's potential? Why insist that any religious experiences, however valid, impugn the competence or quality of the other?¹¹⁸

As the branches of the *olive tree*, in the pursuit of a life inspired by the *Spirit*, should not despise the *ground* of the roots that sustain those branches, consisting of a covenanted commitment to fulfil *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, those roots should not disregard that in His wisdom and infinite freedom the Lord of the Universe might have decided to integrate into His living covenant, although in a different way and perhaps for a different purpose, some of those that previously ignored Him.

Until the end of time, Judaism and Christianity will indeed remain different in purpose and nature. Meanwhile, confronting the future of a world bereft of redemption and reimagining the possible relationship between Judaism and Christianity, in an attempt to break the ethnocentric parameters and conflict-ridden historical context within which the two faiths have related over the past two millennia, Judaism and Christianity, although remaining distinct in nature, can and should work 'side by side,' since from the beginning they were "jointly and severally intended to play a part in an Infinite Creator's plan to perfect the world."¹¹⁹ Their variant approaches to specific problems concerning human beings, their existential involvement in the world and their relation with the Creator, will keep them apart, "until mankind is gathered in from the exiles of the 'religions' into the Kingdom of God."¹²⁰

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¹¹⁶ Buber and Schmidt, *Two Types of Faith*, 173.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 177.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 49.

¹²⁰ Buber and Schmidt, *Two Types of Faith*, 173f. See: Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 49.

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