

insecticide they were disposed of as common refuse. Job sat upon the dungheap. The Holocaust victims were transformed into a dungheap.⁸¹

Rubenstein conjectures that the author(s) of Job may have considered the possibility that 'the biblical God is nothing and of no account save as an objectification of biblical men's conflicting self image'.⁸² However, they might well have repressed their insights because they were fearful of the price they would have to pay for living in a spiritual and metaphysical wasteland.⁸³ The biblical authors gave a model meaningful for their time in terms of the suffering of the righteous, but they fail to give us a meaningful model for the Holocaust, not because they lacked wisdom, but because they could never have anticipated the technological revolution of the twentieth century. Rubenstein places great emphasis on the power endowed by technology, a power which will not restrict or restrain man from perpetrating any deeds no matter how catastrophic or detrimental to others. The author(s) of Job explained radical misfortune for their own time. 'Never in their worst nightmares could they have imagined a descent into hell so total yet so banal, rationalized, and bureaucratic as the twentieth century death camp. The experience of our times has exploded our ancient categories of the meaning and dimension of both human suffering and human evil.'⁸⁴

81. Rubenstein, *Home and Holocaust*, p. 56. Cf. *The Religious Imagination*, pp. xvii, xix. See also *After Auschwitz*, pp. 322 ff., in which Rubenstein describes how the Jews were turned by the Nazis into faeces, the *Anus Mundi*.

82. Rubenstein, *Job and Auschwitz*, p. 278.

83. Ibid. I have already pointed out Rubenstein's views on man's inability to live in a metaphysical wasteland. See Chapter V. It may elucidate Rubenstein's views on God as a projection to examine Rubenstein's reconstruction of the thoughts which may have occupied the authors of *Job*. 'Even if you are absolutely convinced of your own innocence, even if you honestly believe that the Creator is nothing and of no account, *live for the sake of humanity*. Men cannot bear to live in the world you, and perhaps we, know to be the real one. Confess your sin; bow before a God who may not exist. Perhaps all of us must deceive each other, pretending that God rules the universe in justice. Nevertheless, it is better thus. We shall never know death. We will assuredly know the terrors of a godless world should men cease to hope and to believe.' *Job and Auschwitz*, p. 279. (my emphasis).

84. Rubenstein, *Job and Auschwitz*, p. 286.

Modern Jewish Theology's Failure to Confront the Problem of Power

Rubenstein questions the validity of any theology which does not deal responsibly with the problem of power, a problem which is never irrelevant to inter-personal encounter. The failure to deal responsibly with this problem, which is a common failure among Jewish theologians in his view, may arise out of the fact that the theologians themselves have emerged from a people whose political perspectives had been distorted by their experience. For two thousand years they had experienced power solely as its object.

In addition to this Rubenstein points out that no theologian or philosopher has had a greater influence on modern American Jewish religious thinkers than Franz Rosenzweig. Rosenzweig's life situation was characterized by total physical impotence resulting from multiple sclerosis. In Rubenstein's view, Rosenzweig's life situation which is of great significance for the understanding of his theological views (as is the life situation of all theologians) enabled him to elevate the impotence of the Jewish community to greater religious significance than any other modern thinker. Rosenzweig asserted that the Synagogue, which is immortal but stands with broken staff and bound eyes, must renounce all work in this world, and must muster all her strength to preserve her life and keep herself untainted by life.⁸⁵ Franz Rosenzweig saw the homelessness and powerlessness of the Jewish community as a special virtue as it enabled the community to maintain its eternal fellowship with God, uncorrupted by the vicissitudes of power that afflicted the other nations.⁸⁶

85. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 52. See also Glatzer, Nahum N., *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1953, p. 342.

Milton Himmelfarb points out that Rubenstein is incorrect in his assessment of Rosenzweig. Rosenzweig's theology was not an outgrowth of his disease. His theology was already formed when his disease came upon him. He also rejects Rubenstein's view that Rosenzweig regarded activity as immoral and wrong. He sees Rosenzweig as 'daringly proactivist' in certain respects. See Milton Himmelfarb, 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', in D. R. Cutler, ed., *The Religious Situation*, 1968, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, pp. 72 ff.

86. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination*, p. 53. See also Guttman, Julius, *Philosophies of Judaism*, Transl. David Silverman, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1974.

Denying this, however, Rubenstein is convinced that there can be no special virtue in powerlessness. He sees powerlessness, not sin, as man's ultimate failing. With this view it is not surprising that he accuses Jewish theologians of placing too much stress on God and too little on the question of power. 'They refuse to acknowledge that issues of power and worldliness must be faced in any realistic philosophy of religion.'⁸⁷ He accuses them of speaking of 'sanctity' of the 'covenant people' and its 'mission' while ignoring its real life, thereby turning theology into a very private fantasy.⁸⁸

Rejection of Yochanan's Bargain

Because of the ultimate powerlessness which has resulted from it, Rubenstein questions whether there is any longer justification for maintaining Yochanan's bargain or the religio-cultural institutions which affirm it as the normative expression of Jewish life. He certainly questions his own need to be bound by Yochanan's political bargain.⁸⁹

In the same way that Yochanan's bargain had cultural consequences in Jewish life, rejection of it would likewise affect the inner life of Jews. With rejection of the bargain there would be a concomitant rejection of its terms. Rubenstein perceives evidence of this transformation in Israel. The establishment of the State of Israel is the most prototypical response of the Jews to the Holocaust.⁹⁰ The Israelis refuse servile submission based on the model of Yavneh. They established in its stead freedom by means of combat, a strategy not used since the time of Bar Kochba.⁹¹ The Israelis are diametrically opposed to Yochanan on the means by which Jews defend their existence. Yochanan defended Judaism by a strategy of submission. The Israelis elected armed combat when necessary. Massada remains a potent symbol for modern Israel.

87. Rubenstein, 'Homeland and Holocaust', from *The Religious Situation, 1968*, ed. D. R. Cutler, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, pp. 53, 54.

88. Ibid. p. 54.

89. Personal communication, Letter dated 30 April 1980.

90. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', p. 16.

91. Ibid. p. 16. Bar Kochba led an armed rebellion against the Romans when they appeared to renege on their end of the bargain by not allowing the Jews to have religious autonomy.

Rubenstein suggests that not only is Massada a potent symbol but it remains an ever-present possibility in the face of persistent Arab threats of annihilation, threats which could materialise and not be prevented by the world in the light of Arab oil wealth. Israelis will refuse to predicate life on appeasing servitude to others. When Massada is a possibility, there will be no second Auschwitz.⁹² In terms of politics and international relations Israel manifests a secularised messianism as a response to radical catastrophe. This expresses itself in the rejection of a socio-political Torah of Exile and the election of a new Torah of Combat, if not of redemption.⁹³ Human nature being what it is, the State of Israel has to resort to war and death to defend itself.⁹⁴

The Nazis can savour one victory, their victory over the Jewish people. The Nazi victory can be understood in two senses:

- (1) 'Of all the practical goals sought by the Nazi movement, their one undisputed success was the elimination of the Jews as a demographic presence and a cultural influence on the European continent.'⁹⁵
- (2) Nazism 'has radically transformed both the Jewish past and the Jewish future'.⁹⁶

The threat of extermination now hangs permanently over the people of Israel. The Arabs must be taken seriously when they threaten Israel with annihilation. The religio-social culture of the Pharisees is 'absolutely dysfunctional in meeting Israel's need to survive'.⁹⁷ The religious movement in Judaism predicated on Jewish powerlessness and Caesar's trustworthiness is no longer tenable.⁹⁸

92. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 178.

93. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', p. 16.

94. Rubenstein, 'Buber Anniversary Article', p. 399.

95. Rubenstein, *The Age of Triage*, Prospectus.

96. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', p. 16.

97. Ibid. p. 17.

98. Personal communication. Letter dated 30 April 1980.

The Fate of Diaspora Judaism

These views raise the profound issue of the fate of diaspora Judaism. Rubenstein does not hold out any hope for the long-term survival or viability of diaspora Judaism. He regards rabbinic Judaism, as formulated after the defeat in 70 C.E. and the consolidation of a diaspora, as an interim arrangement. He takes very seriously both the literal meaning of the traditional prayer book and the aspirations it expresses. 'By any reading, the *Sitz im Leben* expressed in those prayers is that of a bitterly defeated people that looks forward to the day when its religious and political institutions will be restored and defeat turned into victory. Thus, the institutions of rabbinic Judaism were from the start designed to be interim institutions that were meant to come to an end with the restoration of Jewish autonomy in Israel.⁹⁹ Implicit in rabbinic Judaism is an urge toward closure at some future date. Rubenstein believes that that closure has already taken place.¹⁰⁰

In his commitment to honesty and lack of ambiguity Rubenstein is not interested in formulating a theology designed to bolster diaspora Judaism. Unlike Emil Fackenheim whom he sees as 'committed to the survival and preservation of Jewish institutions under any and all conditions', he is committed to the exploration of their viability. 'If I believe Jewish beliefs or institutions have ceased to be viable, I will state this with no compromising ambiguity. I will pursue my research and my train of thought no matter where it leads me. Nor will I have any regrets if something perishes. The priestly Judaism of the Temple perished as a result of the fall of Jerusalem. I am convinced that the transformation that must result from the even more revolutionary transformations of the twentieth century - the Holocaust and the State of Israel - will be more radical.'¹⁰¹ Rubenstein foresees profound changes in religious expression in Israel. The religion that will arise in Israel will, of necessity, be quite different from rabbinic Judaism. He also suggests that outside of Israel the Jews may, in any case, be a doomed community, not necessarily by violence but by accelerated

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

inter-marriage and defection.¹⁰² However, he believes that the middle class is doomed. 'No society can dispense with elites or workers; in times of catastrophic upheaval, the middle class is the one class likely to become redundant. One may ask with a shudder what the history of the twentieth century has taught us about the fate of redundant classes. It is my conviction that, insofar as American Jewish institutions are middle-class institutions, they are doomed.'¹⁰³

Rubenstein's Radical Pessimism

Rubenstein's entire view is overshadowed by radical pessimism. It is his sorrowful conviction that underlying trends in contemporary civilisation are 'inherently self-destructive and 'that no partial political therapy or revolutionary strategy will make sound the world community's body politic'.¹⁰⁴ If a new beginning is at all possible for the human race, it will come about only after mammoth world-wide catastrophe. In matters of 'over population, scarcity, and social organization that afflict us - largely as the ironic result of our own technological ingenuity - it is very likely that only sorrow and misfortune will prove to be effective teachers of the race'.¹⁰⁵ After world-wide catastrophe, if any one group of institutions is likely to survive (if there are any Jews left) it will be the religious institutions. 'There was a time when Israelites offered sacrifice on the high places of Palestine under the leadership of local priests. The high places were displaced by the Jerusalem sanctuary and its priesthood; that sanctuary was in turn displaced by the synagogue and the rabbinate. There is no more reason to assume that the current form of Judaism is the ultimate form than were any of its predecessors.' If tragedy and misfortune increase, religious institutions and centres of worship and consolation will be more needed than ever. 'For all its shortcomings,

102. Jacob Neusner noted in *American Judaism*, Prentice-Hall, 1972, that at that stage (1972) the number of American Jews marrying out of their faith approached fifteen percent.

103. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', p. 22.

104. Ibid. p. 18.

105. Ibid.

the one institution which retains minimal integrity within the Jewish community remains the religious institution.¹⁰⁶

The establishment of Israel as an independent state has already turned the diaspora into a two thousand year parenthesis. The Israelis are Jews who have been profoundly transformed by catastrophic events of recent Jewish history. The State of Israel, which was not itself a victim of Nazism, was founded upon the terrible lesson to be drawn from the Holocaust victims. The fundamental purpose of the state was to offer the hope that the successor Jewish community would no longer be the gathering place of future defenceless victims.¹⁰⁷ Jews now have direct experience with the problems facing a national majority as it confronts a minority. For the first time since 70 C.E. Jews have power. Rubenstein concurs with the view expressed by Ben Gurion on the twentieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising that the only way Jews can prevent further massacres will be to 'cease to be a people depending on the mercy of others' and furthermore, that hatred of Jews 'will not vanish until the majority of our people are reunited in their original home, and until that home is secure'.¹⁰⁸ Israeli opinion corresponds with this view.

Will the establishment of the State of Israel and the accompanying social and religious transformations mean the end of Judaism as we know it? In his proposals for a new Jewish sensibility Rubenstein emphasises the possibility of Reconstructionism as containing an important dimension. Reconstructionism places importance on ethnicity rather than on creed and election. Rubenstein rejects the doctrine of election seeing it as an attempt to gain assurance of exceptional worth in the face of marginality and radical insecurity.¹⁰⁹ Pointing to the remarkable identification by Jews all over the world with the

106. See Chapter of this thesis which deals with Rubenstein's view of religion (Chapter IV). It explicates his functional approach to religion in which sacrifice assists in assuaging guilt. See also Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', pp. 22, 23.

107. Rubenstein, 'Euber Anniversary Article', p. 399.

108. Rubenstein, 'Homeland and Holocaust', p. 42.

109. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 29.

Six Day War he suggests that there are unconscious depths to the phenomenon of Jewishness in all Jews,¹¹⁰ and that ethnicity is a decisive factor. He sees another transformation in the Jewish consciousness in relation to Israeli Judaism's sense of time and history. Zion, throughout two millennia, has always been an unachieved goal. The restoration of Israel has now 'transformed the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans into a modern event. Modern Jewish history begins in Roman times. In 1948 the Jewish community in Israel reversed a historic defeat inflicted upon them by an ancient foe. In the process, they made a parenthesis of diaspora experience. Time has ceased to be linear and future oriented for Jews. Once again, it has become archaic, cyclical and pagan'.¹¹¹ Rubenstein interprets the return to the concrete reality of territory in terms of retribalisation seeing in it a return of archaic man in Israel.

Whatever their racial background, today's Jews trace their psychological, cultural and religious roots back to the Palestinian community which was defeated in two desperate wars against the Romans (67 to 70 C.E. and 132 to 135 C.E.). We are all thousands of years old the day we are born.¹¹² We are, therefore, heirs to the tradition of Yochanan's bargain which is characterised by a lack of territory, power, and an inability to determine one's destiny. Yochanan's bargain, originally a strategy of survival proved to be suicidal in the face of the Holocaust. With harsh unambiguous judgment Rubenstein states: 'Auschwitz marks the final bankruptcy of the religious, ethical, and psychological values of diaspora Judaism. The strategy of the powerless failed completely when confronted by a technologically competent enemy determined to annihilate'.¹¹³ In modern Israel Auschwitz has become a cornerstone of the national psychology. Israelis can trust no one but themselves. One of the 'supreme ironies of contemporary religious history is that the people who gave the world the prophetic vision of universal brotherhood and peace must effectively renounce its own heritage if it is to

110. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 44. He marvels at his own deep feelings of Jewishness and identification with the events of the Six Day War.

111. Ibid. p. 45. See also *Morality and Eros*.

112. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', p. 23.

113. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 50. Milton Himmelfarb points out that it was not a 'strategy' of powerlessness but a fact of powerlessness. 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', p. 71.

survive'.¹¹⁴ In a world in which aggression between nations is deterred only by a mutual balance of terror, Rubenstein sees the first religious task of Jews in Israel as survival. However, the Israelis' strategy for survival will be vastly different from that formulated by the Pharisees.

Whither Now?

Rubenstein, within his pessimistic framework has limited options to offer the young for a meaningful Jewish existence in an increasingly hostile world. He advocates insight into one's history as a Jew as an indispensable starting point. With an exceedingly limited goal he urges his students to construct a meaningful Jewish life in their own way. Such a project is impossible without knowledge of the past. None of us can know our present or project a viable future without such knowledge. The task of conveying a realistic knowledge of the past lies with the rabbinate. 'What gives the synagogue its residual integrity is the fact that it is led by the only group of men in the diaspora, weak and powerless though they may be, who have even a minimally realistic knowledge of the Jewish past. Their possession of that knowledge makes them the only organized Jewish group with the capacity to understand the continuities of Jewish life and thought throughout all its vicissitudes.'¹¹⁵

On the other hand, Rubenstein is deeply critical of the rabbinic inheritance with the characteristics of life style which have imbued Jews with a servile consciousness so detrimental to their survival in a savage and calculating world. He therefore asks the young not to commit themselves to faith, but for a radical act of disbelief. He urges them to take as credible nothing they have received either in their religious traditions or in the socio-political myths that have formed their consciousness. Above all, his students do not have to be infantilised when they attend religious services and participate in a liturgy which exhorts them to be the obedient children of an all powerful Father. Dusk has fallen on the proud and venerable faith

114. Rubenstein, 'Homeland and Holocaust', p. 50.

115. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation'.

that guided his people. 'Today it can only be understood; it cannot be rejuvenated.'¹¹⁶ Rubenstein assures us that he is not the only rabbi for whom the tradition has lost its meaning. He is one of the few who is willing to declare openly what many feel and cannot say. He correctly intuits that if the questions he raises and the views he propounds were totally without substance, they would not have evoked the anger which they have done.¹¹⁷

Rubenstein sees the death of God as a cultural fact which is real and all-embracing. He contrasts the fruitless 'God-talk' of American Jewish theologians with the concrete actions of the Israelis. The death of God extends 'not merely to the relatively inconsequential matters of whether the divine Thou encounters man in prayer and ritual;

116. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 19. This view appears to conflict with his earlier views on the necessity for maintaining the traditional prayer book intact and his emphasis on the necessity for ritual participation in the service. A logical strain must ensue.
117. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 19, has, as a result of his radical stance, received a great deal of criticism from Jewish scholars. He speaks of his painful alienation from the Jewish community. But, as Jacob Neusner suggests, the torrent of abuse to which Rubenstein has been subjected may constitute 'the highest possible tribute on the part of his enemies to the compelling importance of his contribution'. Jacob Neusner, *Understanding Jewish Theology*, p. 184. There is some substance to the view that if underlying ideas provoke rage in the hearer there is likely to be some inner agreement with and/or fear of them in the mind of the hearer. Freud, in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, explores the phenomenon of a gamut of everyday acts which reveal unconscious fears and motivations. He cites numerous omissions, bumbles, slips of the tongue to illustrate the fact that such acts 'give expression to something which the agent himself does not suspect in them, and which he does not as a rule intend to impart to other people but to keep to himself'. (p. 247). Freud does not draw any sharp lines between the various actions and suggests that he is indeed forced to conclude that all the divisions made in his study, 'have no significance other than a descriptive one and run counter to the inner unity in this field of phenomena'. (p. 215. - my emphasis).

Moral indignation can thus reveal an unconscious desire to, or fear of perpetrating the very act against which the moral indignation is directed. (The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 5. ed. Angela Richards).

it reaches to the far more consequential matter of nuclear terror as the last remaining deterrent to acts of national annihilation'.¹¹⁸

The persistence of 'God-talk' and the idea of a God who acts in history should be abandoned by theology. It makes no sense to ascribe ultimate responsibility for human history to God, for it is as spurious in moments of victory as in moments of defeat. 'In defeat, such assertion makes God the punitive author of history. In victory, such sentiments have the grating sound of *Gott mit uns*.'¹¹⁹

American Jewish theologians have little to say concerning Israel because their life situations are so far removed from the type of situation facing the Israelis. Although American Jews form part of the comfortable middle-class stratum of society, they have little, if any, experience in the financial, political and military decision-making in America. They therefore lack experience with the realities of decision-making power. Rubenstein sees American Jews as constituting a 'gilded ghetto' and in no way sharing the power of the gentile majority.¹²⁰ The experience of the Israeli Jews on the other hand approximates the experience of American gentiles more closely than it does that of American or diaspora Jews.

Perhaps the threatened character of twentieth century Jewish existence has contributed greatly to the conservatism of Jewish intellectuals. In addition to the ravages of the Holocaust the Jewish community is threatened by widespread defection, indifference and intermarriage. Hence committed Jewish thinkers normally see themselves as conservers

118. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 50. Himmelfarb argues that even for someone who stresses the social and communal nexus of religion, it should not be an inconsequential matter whether the divine Thou encounters man. 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', p. 72.

119. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 51. Himmelfarb suggests that Rubenstein wants it both ways. 'If Jews thank God for victory, theirs is a *Gott mit uns* religion. If in their prayers they lament but justify exile and persecution "because of our sins", they are being masochistic, self-repressive'. See 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', p. 73.

120. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 43. Cf. After *Auschwitz*.

rather than as path finders. Judaism has been attacked so heavily from without and has been eroded so deeply from within that many perceive theological radicalism as additional internal attack. Rubenstein laments the fact that he has often been accused of, in effect, doing Hitler's work. 'No other comments on my theological work have saddened me more than these.'¹²¹ He understands the fear of radical probing but believes the fear to be profoundly mistaken. 'A people is like a living organism. It is impossible to rip out a major portion of its substance without the surviving remnant's experiencing the deepest shock.'¹²² The trauma of Auschwitz still has to be spent. It remains emotionally impossible for most Jews to deal with it. The pain and implied threat are too great. Rubenstein suggests that denial is a frequently used mechanism to cope with trauma. 'Nor is it altogether surprising that powerless people delude themselves with pathetic myths about their importance to the human drama.'¹²³ Belief in election, on both the personal and national level, is an attempt to gain assurance of exceptional worth in the face of marginality and radical insecurity. Rubenstein is deeply convinced of the need for straight-forward theological confrontation of the facts of recent Jewish history no matter how painful this may be. He sees it as an urgently needed act of religious and psychological therapy which cannot, in his view, be equated or associated with Hitler's mischief. Israelis need to confront their life situation unafraid. Likewise, the theologian must confront the real issues of power and dignity as they arise in the living situation.

It has already been stated that Rubenstein's views on the future of Judaism are overshadowed by apocalyptic pessimism. He asks the question whether Judaism's symbolic universe, which is already severely beset by Auschwitz, could retain any credibility in the face of possible world-wide tragedy and concludes that there would be no shred of credibility to the Jewish view of God as the first Actor and the Jews as the people chosen to play a decisive role in the human drama in the face of overwhelming global disaster. He rejects the biblical doctrine of election and the doctrine that misfortune is

121. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 56.

122. Ibid. pp. 56, 57. 123. Ibid. p. 57.

divinely inflicted punishment for sin, preferring the view that flaws are intrinsic to mankind's promethean attempts to create order, and that men are authors of actions and events whose entailments are beyond them. He claims his view to be more credible than the normative Jewish view when facing the possibility of world-wide catastrophe.

Even after apocalyptic catastrophe there may be a remnant of Jews. Rubenstein suggests that even the most orthodox of these may experience radical transformation. Revealing his distaste for limited existence, he suggests that the transformation may be similar to the reaction of Sabbatai Zvi to the expulsion from Spain. He predicts the possibility of a similar antinomian explosion. The Sabbatian revolution had a period of gestation of one and a half centuries.

Christianity's triumph, according to Rubenstein, meant the end of the ancient world. The end to the dominant modes of religious sensibility of our time will be brought about by the end of modern civilisation. He senses the imminence of these developments in the process of disintegration which he perceives as already visible in mainstream Judaism and Christianity. On this basis, he hazards the prediction that, if any, only a radically altered Judaism and Christianity may survive.¹²⁴

Rubenstein acknowledges the pervasive pessimism of his message. He is, however, convinced that old forms of religious consciousness are dying because they no longer serve life as they once did. After they pass on, life will be served by other modes of personal and religious consciousness which, hopefully, have yet to be institutionalised. The progression of his thought should be seen as a journey out of the graveyard of senescent tradition into the seedling ground of his own exilic consciousness. He holds the death of the old to be pregnant with the new.¹²⁵ The world will therefore not remain godless for long. 'Gods die; other gods arise to take their place.' Today a new God is awakening. He is not above the human drama in mysterious righteousness which humbles men. He is not the awesome God of Job. He is incarnate in human life. He does not annul suffering.

124. Rubenstein, 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', p. 19.

125. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 19, 20.

He shares it more completely than did the Christian saviour. He participates in the agonies and ecstasies of human life. Dionysius is reborn among us, but he requires the opposing presence of his brother Apollo. These together offer more than the 'illusory' promise of salvation and the reality of Auschwitz. They offer the certitude of mortality and the delights and searing pains of human abundance in a world in which men must find and realise their humanity in themselves and in each other. This new God will take on Jewish and Christian guises but Dionysius and Apollo will outlast both the God of Moses and the God of Jesus.¹²⁶

126. Rubenstein, *Job and Auschwitz*, pp. 239 f.

S E C T I O N T W O

Perhaps some day someone will explain how, on the level of man, Auschwitz was possible; but on the level of God, it will forever remain the most disturbing of mysteries.

Elia Wiesel

Only he who cries out for the Jews has the right to sing Gregorian Chant.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

INTRODUCTION

The aim of Section One of this thesis was to present a picture of Rubenstein's thought as it has developed from his first major statement in *After Auschwitz* up to the present. Chapter I described secularisation and the secularising world as a backdrop against which a philosophy such as Rubenstein's could emerge. Chapter III formed a discursus on the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud as psychoanalysis was extremely prominent in Rubenstein's rationale for the maintenance of Jewish religious practice. This was a characteristic feature of Rubenstein's thinking during the nineteen sixties, the period of his thought which I have found to be most important and viable.

We turn now to a critique of Rubenstein's major trends of thought. The most obvious area of concern is the role of God in the death camps. Theodicy seems to be the cardinal issue in an assessment of Rubenstein's 'death of God' philosophy. As theodicy was not the problem which motivated the conclusion of the major Christian death of God theologians, they have not been considered. Chapter VII deals with God and the Holocaust. In it, the major responses of Jewish and Christian theologians are described in order to indicate the severity of the problem and to assess Rubenstein's response in relation to other responses.

As Rubenstein is insistent that Jews should reject the doctrine of chosenness, Chapter VIII constitutes a consideration of this proposal.

Chapter IX deals with a discussion of some of Rubenstein's other protests and proposals in an attempt to assess both their validity and viability.

In the final chapter 'Rubenstein and a Theology of History', Rubenstein's philosophy is viewed against the more 'normative' Jewish view of God and history. This chapter also embodies my conclusion.

Before turning to the major problem, namely, God and the Holocaust, some of the difficulties associated with a study of the Holocaust will be delineated.

APPROACHING THE HOLOCAUST

Interest in the Holocaust has become a central item on the contemporary Jewish agenda. In the lay and scholarly fields an atmosphere of interest and investigation became a striking phenomenon of the nineteen seventies and formed a stark contrast to the decades immediately following the war when the Holocaust was conspicuous by its absence from the spectrum of communal Jewish concerns, an absence, or silence, which generally has been attributed to the sense of shock which pervaded the Jewish world immediately following the Holocaust.

Today, however, the Holocaust has been commercialised and exploited both by the Jewish community and the world at large. Deborah L. Lipstadt has summed up the present exploitative attitude in the laconic statement: 'There is No Business like Shoah Business'¹ (Shoah being a Hebrew word denoting Holocaust). Cynthia Ozick has declared that the Holocaust is already dangerously literary, dangerously legendary, dangerously trivialised to pity, and the pity to poetry.² Simultaneously with this emphasis on the Holocaust in which many, even sincere writers, have become 'the profiteers of torment'³ there has been a resentment by

1. Deborah E. Lipstadt, 'Invoking the Holocaust', *Judaism*, Vol. 30, No. 3, Summer 1981, p. 335.
2. Cynthia Ozick, 'The Uses of Legend: Elie Wiesel as Tsaddik', *Congress Bi-weekly*, XXXVI, 9 (9 June 1969), 19. Quoted in Alice and Roy Eckardt, 'Studying the Holocaust's Impact Today: Some Dilemmas of Language and Method', *Judaism*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring 1978, p. 231.
3. Alice and Roy Eckardt, 'Studying the Holocaust's Impact Today: Some Dilemmas of Language and Method', *Judaism*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring 1978, p. 230.

the non-Jewish world who attack this emphasis, and many who deny that the Holocaust ever occurred and argue that the 'myth' of the murder of six million Jews is Zionist chicanery.⁴ Clearly, while there are lessons to be learned by both Jews and non-Jews from this watershed event, invidious exploitation should be avoided.

Alice and Roy Eckardt⁵ have pointed to some of the real problems associated with the study of the Holocaust. 'How is the unspeakable to be spoken about?'⁶, they ask. Directly associated with this particular question is the 'incomprehensibility' of the Holocaust. Elie Wiesel asserted that the dead 'are in possession of a secret that we, the living, are neither worthy of nor capable of recovering'.⁷ Nora Levin has said that the Holocaust refuses to go the way of most history, not only because of the magnitude of the destruction, but because events surrounding it are still, in a very real sense, humanly incomprehensible. 'Indeed, comprehensibility may never be possible.'⁸

However, as Dan Magurshak⁹ has pointed out, incomprehensibility implies the impossibility of understanding fully and adequately the

4. Lipstadt, op. cit. p. 335. This attitude of denial is exposed with great clarity in an article by Ragnar Kvam, 'Among Two Hundred Survivors from Auschwitz', *Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Summer 1979, pp. 283 - 292. He shows how Nazism is resurgent and that anti-Semitism has become, to a large extent, anti-Zionism. He describes some of the more modern anti-Semitic 'sewer' literature that denies the extermination of the Jews. Among the publications are *Did Six Million Really Die?*, published in London in 1972 by one who calls himself Richard Harwood and who claims to be a historian. It appeared in large editions and in many languages. Another is a pamphlet called *Die Auschwitz-Lüge*, by Thies Christophersen. A noteworthy feature of this type of publication is the paradox that while the writers would like to destroy the Jews, they claim that Hitler never harmed a hair on a Jewish head! See also Ismar Schorsch, 'Historical Reflections on the Holocaust', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 31, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall-Winter 1976 - 1977, pp. 26 - 33, for an account of the world's indifference to and denial of the Holocaust.

5. Alice and Roy Eckardt, op. cit. 6. Ibid. p. 231.

7. Elie Wiesel, 'Trivializing the Holocaust: Semi-Fact and Semi-Fiction', *The New York Times*, April 16, 1978, Section 2, p. 29.

8. Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry, 1933 - 1945*, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968, New York, p. xi.

9. Dan Magurshak, 'The "Incomprehensibility" of the Holocaust: Tightening Up Some Loose Usage', *Judaism*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Spring, 1980, pp. 233 - 242.

necessary conditions for the Holocaust's occurrence. It implies that even after ideally exhaustive historical, psychological and sociological analyses, the researchers would still have failed to penetrate the essence of the event. As control and prevention of such outrages presuppose some understanding of their essential components, a generation of scholars, because of the incomprehensibility of the past, may be doomed to repeat it. Thus if the Holocaust is humanly incomprehensible, then the incentive to study the phenomenon, the commitment to spreading an awareness of it, and the ability to prevent a similar occurrence are severely diminished. As the implications of the appropriation of the past in constructive self-knowledge, particularly in relation to the Holocaust, are of extreme importance to humankind, Magurshak clarifies the precise areas in which the Holocaust may be considered incomprehensible.

The Holocaust was certainly overwhelming and empathetically taxing. Its incomprehensibility lies in two basic areas, in apprehending it 'wholistically' with a feeling of total empathy, and in the theological sense. It is the latter area which is of central concern to this thesis. 'Believers in Israel's God of history or in the Christian God of the resurrection have often asked how God - omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent - could let the children burn under the blue and empty sky.'¹⁰ The event demands a rethinking of speculations about the nature of God, his relationship to mankind, the plausibility of his existence and in his purpose in at least allowing, if not willing such carnage. To this extent, the Holocaust will always elude total comprehensibility. Given the nature of theological questions, no complete, thoroughly satisfying answers will be forthcoming. At best, believers can hope only for disciplined speculation consistent with a certain set of theological assertions perhaps rationally supported and made within a context of a particular faith. If theologians accept Irving Greenberg's injunction not to present any insights which would mock the reality of the burning children,¹¹ they are constantly reminded

10. Magurshak, op. cit. p. 237.

11. Magurshak, op. cit. p. 237. See also Irving Greenberg, 'Clouds of Smoke, Pillars of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust', in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?*, ed., Eva Fleischner, KTAV, New York, 1977, pp. 23, 26, 34.

of the difficulty of reconciling traditional notions of God with the technological mass murder of the chosen people.

It is to this aspect of the 'incomprehensibility' of the Holocaust that Rubenstein has devoted much of his concern. He has grappled with the God of the covenant and the concept of the chosen people, opting for a meaningless universe in which man suffers, but not at the hand of a punitive God or history. The God of history is, for Rubenstein, a dead God. Nevertheless in its other aspects, he is intent on discovering the comprehensibility of the Holocaust in relation to its causes and implications in order to prevent, if possible, its recurrence. He would undoubtedly agree with Magurshak that an attempt to track down the Holocaust's incomprehensibility does not minimise the overwhelming importance of the mass murder of six-million Jews, five-hundred-thousand Gypsies and millions of others. It denies neither the awesome horror of the event nor the harsh challenges which confront contemporary scholars. By clarifying the way in which the Holocaust is comprehensible the way for unimpeded investigation of the event is cleared. The Holocaust must be critically and compassionately analysed, explained and comprehended. Only in this way might the fire of Auschwitz 'illumine otherwise dark corners of our moral landscape, making us aware of present acts of human demonry we would not otherwise see'.¹² Men need a brutally harsh knowledge of their capabilities and tendencies, a self-knowledge which is a necessary condition for the prevention of the actualisation of their moral responsibilities.

Among the questions that can be asked are how and why the Holocaust occurred.

- (1) How was it possible for a modern state to carry out the systematic murder of a whole people simply on the grounds that they were Jewish?
- (2) How did a whole people allow itself to be destroyed?

12. Robert McAfee Brown, 'The Holocaust as a Problem in Moral Choice', in *Dimensions of the Holocaust*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1977 p. 62. Quoted by Magurshak op. cit., p. 242.

- (3) How was it possible for the world to stand by without halting this destruction?¹³

Rubenstein has addressed himself to all these issues with unambiguous, illuminating, if not shattering, discoveries and disclosures. For all its radicality and possible limitations, Rubenstein's interpretation is underscored by an intense integrity and relentless search for truth. His attempts to diminish the incomprehensibility of the event deserve careful attention.

The Term 'Holocaust'

A study of the Holocaust raises conceptual and procedural problems which must be faced by all who engage in such study. This becomes apparent in the very term 'Holocaust', which is inadequate. Alice and Roy Eckardt point out that there is no way that the term covers the full intention and meaning of the Nazis. Holocaust means 'a consuming fire, a burnt offering' and does not encompass the ideology of the Final Solution of the Jewish Question in Europe, *die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Europa*, which had as its central intention the total annihilation of European Jewry as proposed on the 20th January, 1942 at the conference at Gross-Wannsee (if not earlier). Nor does it encompass the intention of *Judenvernichtung*, annihilation of the Jews. Both *Endlösung* and *Judenvernichtung* mean total dehumanisation and degradation of the Jew as the *Untermensch*, the contaminator from below, or the *Tierrnensch*, the sub-human. *Endlösung* implies ultimate degradation in which the Jew is turned by an inhuman bureaucracy into the accomplice of his executioners. This imprecision of terminology occurs in every language. The Hebrew *Shoah* (destruction, catastrophe) or *Churban* (destruction or ruin), the French *Shoa* (cataclysm) suffer from similar limitations in meaning. 'Auschwitz' has become a powerful symbol but may be considered to be unfairly selective. In short, no word adequately conveys the full Nazi intention. 'Holocaust' has received increasing acceptance and there seems to be little choice but to use it, always bearing in mind that it must be adopted with a certain unease.

13. Lucy Davidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933 - 1945*, Bantam Books, Inc., New York, 1976, p. xxi.

In all his work, Rubenstein has used the accepted terminology but no one could have conveyed with greater clarity the full meaning of the *Endlösung*. In *After Auschwitz* he does, at times, see the Holocaust in terms of a giant ritual murder, but in his later works he is quite unambiguous about the intense dehumanisation and degradation of the Jews intended and achieved by the Nazis. He exposes uniquely the totally unprecedented nature of the Holocaust seeing in it, not a developmental continuum in the history of anti-Semitism, but a totally novel and unprecedented event in Jewish history which he perceives as a direct consequence of the ethos of the twentieth century and the quintessence of a thoroughly modern spirit.

Those Who Were There, and Those Who Were Not

There are two approaches to a study of the Holocaust: that of the detached observer characterised by objective study, and that of *un homme engagé*. Alice and Roy Eckardt regard both approaches as equally valuable because they contend that direct participation in, or victimisation by the Nazis does not make the survivor incapable of comprehending evil within a broad reference. Furthermore, with a distancing of years, a creative objectivity in their assessment and descriptions may occur. 'It is a fact that the very study of the Holocaust's aftermath becomes inevitably part of that aftermath, part of *Existens*. There is objectivity for the sake of truth, and subjectivity for the sake of goodness. Truth and goodness are not separable.'¹⁴ The investigations of the detached scholar may contain much merit in uncovering the reasons behind the Holocaust. The Eckardts suggest that one does not have to have been within the inferno in order to approach it and write of it and they say with Cynthia Haft, 'we too want this event, so unique, never to be forgotten, that we too feel obliged to join with them in their efforts to remind others and to bear witness without in any way violating the sanctity of the subject matter'.¹⁵

14. Alice and Roy Eckardt, op. cit. p. 229.

15. Cynthia Haft, *The Theme of the Nazi Concentration Camps in French Literature*, Mouton, The Hague-Press, 1973, p. 11. Quoted by Alice and Roy Eckardt, op. cit. p. 228.

However, when it comes to theological reflection Eliezer Berkovits raises some profound problems.¹⁶ One of the most painful and perhaps theologically pertinent questions raised by the Holocaust is the problem 'Where was God at Auschwitz?'. For many this remains a genuinely faith-challenging question and theologians, among them Orthodox Jews, have struggled with this issue, offering a variety of answers and solutions, many of which are not predicated on a denial of the existence of God.

Berkovits suggests that there are two possible theological approaches to the Holocaust: pious submission to the event as a manifestation of the divine will, or an attitude of questioning and doubt which may lead ultimately to outright rebellion against the idea of a beneficent providence. The final expression of this latter attitude leads to the conclusion that God is dead and life is absurd. Berkovits' decisive question is, however, 'Who is the person who relates himself to this awesome issue?'. Is it one who experienced the horrors, body and soul, or is it the response of one who has merely read or heard about it and perhaps identified with it? He warns that the response of these two cannot and *dare* not be the same.

He asserts that those of us who were not there must pay attention above all else to the responses of those who were there 'which are alone the authentic ones'.¹⁷ He understands the loss of faith of those who were there. At the same time, he who was not there, cannot reject faith 'because to reject would be a desecration of the sacrifice of the myriads who accepted their lot in faith. How dare I reject, if they accepted? Neither can I accept....I who was not there...dare not submit, because my brothers in their tens of thousands, who did go through that hell, did rebel and did reject. How dare I, who was not there, accept their super-human suffering and submit to it in faith?'¹⁸ For survivors disbelief was not intellectual but existential, a faith crushed and pulverised. For Berkovits, neither stance can be adopted by those who were not there. Those who were not there and yet readily accept the Holocaust as the will of God that must not be questioned,

16. Eliezer Berkovits, 'Approaching the Holocaust', *Judaism*, Winter 1973, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 18 - 20.

17. Berkovits, op. cit. p. 18.

18. Ibid. p. 19.

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132
'desecrate the holy disbelief of those whose faith was murdered'.¹⁹
And those who were not there and yet join with self-assurance the
rank of the disbelievers 'desecrate the holy faith of the believers'.²⁰
Ready faith is 'vulgarity' while loss of faith of the sophisticated
intellectual is 'obscenity'.

Whilst there is a great deal of validity to Berkovits' statements
there must surely be a way for people who did not experience the
Holocaust to speak meaningfully of it, even in terms of God's role at
Auschwitz. Bearing Berkovits' tense dialectic in mind, theologians
must be able to approach the Holocaust responsibly in an attempt to
understand its theological implications. Without desecrating the
memory of the martyrs or underestimating the harrowing experiences of
the survivors, meaningful study must be possible by those who were not
there, particularly if it is undertaken with honesty and sensitivity.
It is my conviction that even radical statements such as those of
Rubenstein cannot be ruled out of court because he was not there. He
displays a sensitivity, and honesty and a relentless commitment to
learn the lesson of the Holocaust. His radical purging and probing
may constitute a therapy for twentieth century Jews.

19. Berkovits, op. cit. p. 19. 20. Ibid.

C H A P T E R V I I

*Spare thy people, O Lord, thy own people,
expose them not to reproach,
lest other nations make them a byword
and everywhere men ask,
"Where is their God?"*

Joel 2:17

GOD AND THE HOLOCAUST

There was a story told at Auschwitz, by those who tell such stories, concerning a Hasidic *rebbe* arguing with a disciple. 'You know, there's a possibility that the *ribbano shel olam* - the Master of the universe - is a liar.' 'How can that be possible?' the disciple asked. 'Because', answered the *rebbe*, 'if the *ribbano shel olam* should open His window now and look down here and see Auschwitz, He would close the window again, and say "I did not do this." And that would have been a lie.'¹ How can man respond to this most agonising accusation raised by the Holocaust, given the classical Jewish view of God, the omnipotent, the merciful Lord of history who chose Israel as his special people? It raises fundamental questions. Is God? If so, where was God? Could he have stopped such needless and calculated slaughter if, as Jews believe, man has been endowed with free choice? Elie Wiesel's statements assume tragic proportions in this light. 'I don't know how man could have chosen cruelty. I still don't know how God could have allowed him such choice....In fact I know nothing. And, frankly, I don't know how one can talk about it.'²

1. Reported by Menachem Rosenhaft, son of Josef Rosenhaft, president of the World Federation of Bergen-Belsen Survivors in 'Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust Future : A Symposium', *Judaism*, Vol. 16, No. 3, Summer 1967, p. 294. (This Symposium will be referred to hereafter as 'Jewish Values').

2. Wiesel, Elie, 'Jewish Values', p. 298.

The monumental and unprecedented nature of the catastrophe has made the possibility of Jewish living with the God of history tenuous, problematic, if not impossible, for some. Jewish life has to be restructured after the event. Clearly, the normative theological categories of Judaism have, somehow, to be re-interpreted and re-examined. Theologians have to grapple with questions and answers raised by normative theological categories which assert that:

- (1) God is supreme and active in history,
- (2) there is a special relationship between God and Israel, with Israel as the chosen people, and
- (3) normative Judaism accepts the existence of a covenant which implies reward and punishment.³

Rubenstein's theology represents a rejection of all three categories when understood in the normative sense, as well as the most radical response to the questions raised by the Holocaust.

The traditional theodicy in the West has always been rooted in three basic presuppositions: God is good; God is all-powerful; and evil is real. All answers to the problem focus on these areas one or more of which have to be modified in order to yield a solution.

- (1) The goodness of God may be questioned or negated.
- (2) God's omnipotence is somehow limited.
- (3) The reality of evil is denied by seeing evil as negation, as a background for good, as illusory, subjective, or perhaps, viewed within the vast panorama of God's plan, as not evil at all.

These presuppositions are made more problematic when viewed together with the above-mentioned theological categories concerning God's omnipotent action in history, Jewish chosenness and the doctrine of reward and punishment.

3. See Kaufmann, William E., *Contemporary Jewish Philosophies*, Reconstructionist Press and Barricade House, Inc., New York, 1976, for the basic statement of these categories. I have reflected views which I share with Kaufmann from time to time in this chapter.

The Holocaust has brought these categories into painful and glaring focus. The sheer dimensions of the catastrophe preclude normative answers. Solutions to theodicy which may have made sense before the Holocaust have lost their thrust. Questions abound. Answers elude us. All hypotheses remain tentative in the face of the enormity of the disaster. All modern Jewish theology has, perforce, become Holocaust theology. Christian theologians have begun, very recently and tentatively, to assess and re-examine their faith in relation to the Holocaust. When the 'death of God' movement came to prominence during the nineteen sixties one might, at first glance, have expected that the Holocaust may have been the motivation behind such radical declarations. Alas, not one of the Christian death of God theologians, representatives of a predominantly Christian movement, saw fit to regard the destruction of European Jewry as sufficient reason to declare God's demise. This has been the cause of much pain for the Jewish community.⁴ It is noteworthy, therefore, that Rubenstein is the only death of God theologian to use the Holocaust as his fundamental point of departure. Equally noteworthy is the fact that while the other radical theologians greet the death of God with celebration or exultation, Rubenstein mourns it with a cry of agony.

Among the Jewish responses Rubenstein's has been the most radical and the least popular. Normative Jewish responses are no longer adequate when applied to the Holocaust. Attempts at a solution range from the fideistic to the radical. Some of the more notable responses will be examined. I shall begin with a consideration of the most fideistic attempts at solution, and proceed through the more moderate to the most radical. Rubenstein's views will be examined in relation to the contemporary theological questions and answers.

Emil Fackenheim and the 614th Commandment

Emil Fackenheim has emerged as the theologian of the greatest philosophical authority in 'establishment' Judaism and will undoubtedly

4. Paul van Buren in a recently published book *Discerning the Way : A Theology of the Jewish Christian Reality*, The Seabury Press, New York, 1980, rejects Christian triumphalism vis-à-vis the Jews in response to the Holocaust's historical impact. Van Buren attempts a Christian rethinking of Christianity's relation to Judaism. He points to a common Jewish-Christian historic reality, and, therefore, toward meaningful dialogue.

assured of a permanent place in modern Jewish theology. However, though he stands out in certain respects, he can be grouped with the fideistic theologians such as Eliezer Berkovits and Eugene Borowitz.

Eliezer Berkovits is traditional in background and upbringing, in thought and in practice. He is a distinguished Talmudist and is well-versed in mediaeval Jewish philosophy. His *Faith After the Holocaust*⁵, is an important response by an orthodox theologian to the challenge of the Holocaust. He defends traditional theodicy asking not 'Where was God?' but 'Why was there man?'. He asserts radical freedom as dangerous for the survival of mankind. 'God is mighty for He shackles His omnipotence and becomes "powerless" so that history may be possible.'⁶ Not unaware of the problems raised, he asserts that God is not ultimately relieved of responsibility. He acknowledges the difficulty of affirming faith in the presence of God after Auschwitz. Such affirmation requires a leap of faith and the reliance on a messianic future.

Eugene Borowitz regards faith in God as the *sine qua non* of Jewish existence. He opposes Jewish secularists. Though the Holocaust is shattering, it is not determinative. 'It was not the Sinai of our time' and it should therefore not become 'our paradigm for future history'.⁷ The terms of the covenant remain valid after Auschwitz. Fackenheim, like Borowitz, will not give up the God of history but he is unwilling to divorce the Holocaust from the divine. Fackenheim insists that the Holocaust forces the Jew to restructure his theological categories. In this respect he is in substantive agreement with Rubenstein. However, it is in the way that these theological categories are re-interpreted that their paths diverge in what seems to be an irreparable manner. These two men stand as polar opposites. Fackenheim differs markedly from Rubenstein in his attempt to extract a positive theological commitment from the ashes of Auschwitz.

5. Berkovits, Eliezer, *Faith After the Holocaust*, KTAV, New York, 1973.

6. Ibid. p. 109.

7. Borowitz, Eugene, *How Can a Jew Speak of Faith Today?* The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1969, p. 52. Compare with Borowitz, 'Hope Jewish and Hope Secular', *Judaism*, Vol. 17, No 2, Spring 1968, p. 143.

Emil Fackenheim was ordained as a rabbi in Berlin in 1939. After internment for three months in a Nazi concentration camp he went to Scotland and then to Canada where he is now Professor of Philosophy at the University of Toronto.

Firstly, he emphasises faith which he defines as 'total commitment'.⁸

Secondly, he places great stress on the primacy of encounter. 'Judaism is a history of encounters between God and Israel of which the evolution of ideas is a mere human reflection.'⁹ In this respect, there is a marked influence of Buber. The living existential encounter between man and God is of primary significance to Fackenheim. This encounter is irreducible to existentialist, ideational and psychological terms. Revelation is an event of divine incursion shot through with human interpretation.¹⁰ Revelation is still available to modern man.

Thirdly, if revelation is not available to modern man, it is because he has shut his ears to it. Fackenheim calls this tendency 'subjectivist reductionism'. The scientist reduces God to a hypothesis, the psychologist to a projection of feeling, and many modern philosophers reduce God to an idea.

Initially hostile to secular humanism and liberalism, his confrontation with the Holocaust gave rise to a more open attitude to secular humanists (i.e. Jewish secular humanists) based on the idea of Jewish survival as a duty. He places emphasis on the religious value of Jewish survival *per se*. Referring to the imperative for survival as the 614th Commandment and a holy duty, he has written, 'Jewish survival, were it even for no more than survival's sake, is a holy duty as well'.¹¹ Even the secular Jew who promotes survival for survival's sake, is performing a holy duty.

Fackenheim has an unflinching, even stubborn, faith in the God of history. The Jews were the first to affirm the God of history and their collective survival throughout the ages was bound up with this

8. Fackenheim, Emil, *Quest for Past and Future: Essays in Jewish Theology*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1970, p. 114.

9. Ibid. p. 8.

10. Ibid. p. 8.

11. Fackenheim, Emil, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections*, New York University Press, New York, 1970, p. 86.

because their great-grandparents had obeyed him'.¹² There is an inherent rejection of the God of history in this, instead of recognising the rejection of God that this statement implies, Fackenheim asks Jews to pause, and pause at length, and proceeds to defend the God of history through an oblique route. He argues for God's presence at Auschwitz, leaving the integrity of his providence to be implied. He considers Buber's concept of the eclipse of God as an evasive concept. He also rejects the notion that Auschwitz can be seen as a punishment for the sins of Israel. He rejects the equation of the Holocaust with martyrdom in suggesting that martyrdom itself was murdered by the Nazi extermination machine. He cannot accept the notion

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12. Fackenheim, Emil, *God's Presence in History : Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections*, New York University Press, New York, 1970, p. 6.

Seymour Cain raised objections to this assertion pointing out that Jews did not die in the Holocaust for their own sins, or even vicariously for the sins of others. They did not even die for their own faith and commitment. They died because they were singled out and were identifiable as Jews and this occurred because their forebears decided to remain Jews and raise their children as Jews. They died therefore, because of the commitment and the (or rashness) of their great grand-parents. The decision of the present-day Jew to remain Jewish and raise his children as Jews is, humanly speaking, an absurdity. It can be seen as the wilful courting of disaster and risking of self-destruction.

Cain, Seymour, 'The Question and the Answers After Auschwitz', *Judaism*, Vol. No. 20, No. 3, Summer 1971, p. 273.

finite God¹³ which suggests a limitation of God's power because he perceives this position as being perilously close to the Christian conception of the death of God. He takes the position of asserting a Commanding Voice at Auschwitz which speaks to the Jewish secularist and religionist alike. He distinguishes between two root experiences of the Jewish people, God's saving presence, as exemplified at the Red Sea, and God's commanding presence, as exemplified at Sinai. God's saving presence was absent at Auschwitz

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13. Fackenheim is to be credited for struggling with the problem of theodicy without taking recourse to the easy solution offered by this concept of a finite God. This concept of God, which has its roots in Platonic philosophy, has its contemporary advocates in the circles of Process Theology. Plato's Demiurge was a 'good God' with unambiguous good intentions with the world which he intended to shape according to the eternal, archetypal and perfect 'ideas'. However, due to the recalcitrance *ἀνταγν* of the object of his ordering and informing activity, he could only do as much as possible, and could never be blamed for any failures on his part. Thus the concept of a finite God renders a theodicy problemless. Process-philosophy, as advocated by A. N. Whitehead and his followers, and which in its turn relies on the thinking of philosophers such as F. W. J. Schelling and G. T. Fechner, postulates a di-polarity in God, i.e. a concept according to which God has both a 'primordial' and a 'consequent' nature. The 'primordial' nature of God contains the ideal world of absolute perfection. Realisation of the eternal 'forms' or 'ideas', however, occurs by virtue of the 'consequent' nature of God, i.e. the divine activity as it enters into the reality of the world and of history. There is a great resemblance between Plato's 'Demiurge' and Process-theology's concept of the consequent nature of God. Characteristic of Process-theology is also the easy solution which it offers to the problem of theodicy.

See Whitehead, A. N., *Religion in the Making*, Meridian Books, Inc., New York, 1960, pp. 143 ff.

See also Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1953, pp. 233 ff.

A well-known example of the concept of a finite God was, of course, also offered by John Stuart Mill who held that, although God is limitless in intelligence, he is limited in power.

his Commanding Voice was delivered in the form of the 614th Commandment which is binding on all authentic Jews. The Jewish people are first 'commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. We are commanded, second, to remember in our very guts and bones the martyrs of the Holocaust, lest their memory perish. We are forbidden, thirdly, to deny or despair of God, however much we may have to contend with Him or with belief in Him, lest Judaism perish. We are forbidden, finally, to despair of the world as the place which is to become the kingdom of God, lest we help make it a meaningless place in which God is dead or irrelevant and everything is permitted. To abandon any of these imperatives, in response to Hitler's victory at Auschwitz, would be to hand him yet other, posthumous victories'.¹⁴ In ancient times, the unthinkable Jewish sin was idolatry. Today, it is to respond to Hitler by doing his work. Fackenheim is not unaware of the fact that the mere possibility of obeying these imperatives requires the endurance of intolerable contradictions.

It could be argued that Fackenheim exceeds the domain of propriety when he compares the Voice of Auschwitz to the Voice of Sinai. Would not the Orthodox Jew resent the placement of the two sets of divine words in the same context? Equally, the secularist would resent the inference that he is acting, no matter how unconsciously, in response to a divine voice, or revelation, which he may be quite incapable of hearing.¹⁵

It is in relation to the hearing of the Voice that one can perceive a violent, if not tragic, rift and unbridgeable chasm between Rubenstein and Fackenheim. Although Rubenstein's name is not mentioned,¹⁶ I have no doubt that Fackenheim had Rubenstein in mind when he stated the following in relation to handing Hitler posthumous

14. Fackenheim, 'Jewish Values', p. 273.

15. See Kaufmann, William E., *Contemporary Jewish Philosophies*, p. 116.

16. Michael Berenbaum points out that Rubenstein has been subjected to personal and professional abuse which is so marked that his theological adversaries have even refused to talk of him by name. See Berenbaum, Michael, 'Elie Wiesel and Contemporary Jewish Theology', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 30, No. 3, Spring 1976, p. 26.

lateries:

'This can be done in many ways. One way of doing it is to try to solve the problem of theodicy which even the Rabbis left unsolved, though they had no Auschwitz to contend with. One can solve the problem of evil in history by denying that God is concerned with history; He is the divine Nothing, and Jews must abandon Judaism and embrace a non- and anti-Jewish kind of mysticism. This, to me, is appalling. If a Jew is forced to abandon Judaism on other grounds, this is a different matter. But if in response to Hitler he, wittingly or unwittingly, lends himself to doing Hitler's work, namely to destroying Judaism - this, to interpret it charitably, can only be because of an innocence to which we have no right. We must live in and through our present contradiction, and the commandment - indeed, the joy of the commandment - will give us strength to do it.'¹⁷

My initial response to this is to question whether there are any other, more valid, grounds for abandoning Jewish belief which would be more cogent or excusable than a genuine existential loss of faith after Auschwitz, and whether the defection of Jews who are 'forced to abandon Judaism on other grounds' does not serve equally to hand Hitler a posthumous victory. As the cause of Rubenstein's loss of faith lies in the Holocaust, he is, in Fackenheim's opinion doing Hitler's work. It should also be noted that in Rubenstein's early work there was no suggestion that Jews should abandon Judaism.

Rubenstein, quite clearly, cannot share in Fackenheim's experience of the divine Presence, although it is an experience which cannot be challenged. This inability to share the world of the Presence is neither an act of malice nor wilfulness on his part and I sense a note of despair tinged with irony, if not contempt, in Rubenstein's statement: 'I have on occasion regretted that I have no such Archimedean point with which to construct my world.'¹⁸

17. Fackenheim, 'Jewish Values', p. 296.

18. Rubenstein, Richard L., 'Emil Fackenheim's Radical Monotheism', *Soundings*, Vol. 57, No. 2, Summer 1974, p. 239.

stop one's ears is a voluntary and wilful act. This interpretation of man's inability to experience the divine command makes no allowance for those who genuinely *cannot* hear. Rubenstein questions whether anyone has in fact heard the Voice and even goes so far as to assert that there is a possibility that Fackenheim himself has not heard it!¹⁹ The accusation that those who, as a result of the Holocaust, have lost their faith, and are therefore accomplices of Hitler is indeed a grave one. It equates genuine Jewish despair with collaboration in the worst scourge ever to afflict the Jewish people. In this respect Fackenheim's fideism has an element of unambiguous cruelty. If the divine Voice is necessary for the survival of Judaism can it not be seen in terms of 'pedagogic overkill'?²⁰ It seems excessive that God, even the jealous God of the covenant, should require the death of six million Jews in order to forbid the Jews to suffer the death of their faith.

Rubenstein correctly asserts that Jews need no commanding Voice in order to remember those who perished. He, for one, has not only *not* forgotten, but has been obsessed by the fate of European Jewry despite his inability to hear the Voice. Memories of the dead can only be lost by an act of repression so complete as to be pathological.

Both Rubenstein and Fackenheim are unable to accept the theology which asserts that 'for our sins are we punished' as a response to Auschwitz. Fackenheim regards this theology as 'a religious absurdity even a sacrilege'.²¹ With this in mind I concur with Michael Wyschogrod when he notes that this being so 'what is so dreadfully wrong with Rubenstein's rejection of the Biblical God once he found himself rejecting the view that in Hitler, Israel was once more feeling the scourge of God?'²²

Fackenheim places Jewish survival at the head of his agenda. He almost attains the point in unifying the traditionalist and the secularist in the quest for Jewish survival. The traditionalist must continue being

19. Ibid. p. 249. 20. Ibid.

21. Fackenheim 'God's Presence in History', p. 73.

22. Wyschogrod, Michael, 'Faith and the Holocaust', *Judaism*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Summer 1971, p. 287.

Jewish no matter how inadequate Auschwitz may have shown his frame of reference to be, while the secularist may not turn the Voice of Auschwitz against the Voice of Sinai. The Voice of Auschwitz commands Jewish unity. The 'sin' of Rubenstein is that he permits Auschwitz to divide the Jewish people when survival is paramount, thus doing Hitler's work.

It seems difficult to extract a voice from the Holocaust which will speak to believer and non-believer alike. The question of faith cannot be circumvented by Auschwitz, let alone forced by it. Judaism, if it is faltering in a secular world, is unlikely to be given a new lease of life by means of Auschwitz which, for many, was a totally destructive and negative event. Judaism has always been centred on the saving acts of God, no matter how prevalent destruction was in the history of the people. If Auschwitz is permitted to enter the Holy of Holies and become the dominant voice that Israel hears, Wyschogrod argues that it could only become a demonic voice, for there is no salvation in the Holocaust.²³

Fackenheim's attempt to extract a positive result and commitment from the Holocaust has been termed 'heroic'.²⁴ Wyschogrod has called it 'a kind of negative, natural theology with the survival of the people rather than the existence of God, as the conclusion'.²⁵ When it comes to Jewish survival, the Orthodox Jew will be doing his share, heeding the Voice of Sinai, regardless of whether or not there was a voice at Auschwitz. However, when it comes to the secularised Jew, he is unlikely to be moved by Fackenheim's views which play heavily on the guilt feelings of Jews who did not experience the Holocaust in order to evoke a quasi-religious sentiment. The secularised Jew should not have a duty to preserve Judaism only because Hitler wanted to destroy it. It was incumbent on all Jews to destroy Hitler. This having been accomplished, the free choice of the individual should be restored with no further Hitler-derived burdens resting upon any Jews, secular or religious.

23. Ibid. p. 294.

24. Kaufmann, William E., *Contemporary Jewish Philosophies*, p. 94.

25. Wyschogrod, 'Faith and the Holocaust', p. 288.

One of the merits of Fackenheim's theology, as Seymour Cain points out,²⁶ is that it commands Jews to hope, which Rubenstein's most definitely does not. This implies an ontological virtue and function and is not to be seen as self-deceptive sentimental optimism. It is rooted in personal, human and universal being, and ultimately in the bond with, or aspiration toward the transcendent that may become present. It implies saying 'yes' to reality no matter what. This attitude, or its opposite, is the basic orientation out of which all else flows. However, in Wyschogrod's view, if there is any hope after the Holocaust, it is because for those who believe, the voices of the prophets speak more loudly than did Hitler and because the divine promise sweeps over the crematoria and silences the voice of Auschwitz.²⁷

Martin Buber's *Eclipse of God*

Buber was the first theologian to attempt to answer to the role of God in the Holocaust. The silence in Jewish theology which followed the Holocaust has been attributed to the deep wounding shock inflicted on the Jewish people which could elicit only silence. Buber's philosophy is centred on dialogue, dialogue between man and man in which the eternal Thou becomes present through going out whole-heartedly into the world to meet the world with one's whole being.

'The primary word *I-Thou* can only be spoken with the whole being.... In every sphere in its own way, through each process of becoming that is present to us we look out toward the fringe of the eternal Thou; in each we are aware of a breath from the eternal Thou; in each Thou we address the eternal Thou.'²⁸

He addresses himself to the question of God and the Holocaust by asking whether and how, in our time, a Jewish life is still possible. He then asks more pertinently: 'how is a life with God still possible in a time in which there is an Auschwitz? The estrangement has become too cruel, the hiddenness too deep. One can still believe in the God who allowed these things to happen, but can one still speak to Him? Can one

26. Cain, 'The Question and the Answers After Auschwitz', p. 278.

27. Wyschogrod, 'Faith and the Holocaust', p. 294.

28. Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, (2nd edition), Transl. by Ronald Gregor Smith, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1958, pp. 1, 6.

still hear His word? Can one still, as an individual and as a people enter at all into a dialogic relationship with Him?'²⁹

I find myself questioning whether it is still possible to believe in the God who allowed these things to happen. While many can, and Buber is obviously one of them, many, including Rubenstein, cannot.

Buber's response to the Holocaust is formulated in his concept of the eclipse of God, a development of the biblical concept of the 'hiding God' or *el mistater*. Buber's concept is ambiguous. The ambiguity lies in whether, for Buber, the eclipse of God is a non-subjective reality, or whether it is a human psychic, subjective experience. On the one hand he writes that the eclipse refers to something that happens *between* man and God. Just as an eclipse of the sun is something that happens 'between the sun and our eyes, not in the sun itself'. The eclipse of God represents the character of the 'historic hour through which the world is passing'.³⁰ This would represent a non-subjective event. On the other hand, he places the responsibility for the event squarely in the lap of man by saying that in our age the I-It relationship, gigantically swollen, has usurped the I-Thou relationship. It is the omnipotent 'I' that steps in between, and shuts off from us the light of heaven.³¹ Man, then, clearly limits God.

Man's course of action during the period of eclipse is to await the reappearance of the 'hiding one' and when he comes again 'though His coming appearance resemble no earlier one, we shall recognize again our cruel and merciful Lord'.³² Man, through his intransigence, is partially responsible for the eclipse. In the meantime, however, the Divine is unresponsive to the victims of evil.

Although the hiding God is a biblical concept,³³ William E. Kaufmann³⁴ asserts that Buber's notion of the eclipse of God is the

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29. Buber, M. *On Judaism*, ed. Glatzer, N. Schocken Books, New York, 1967. p.224.
30. Buber, M. *Eclipse of God*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1952, p. 23. 31. Ibid. p. 129.
32. Buber, *On Judaism*, p. 225.
33. See Psalm 42:11 'Where is your God?' they ask me all day long. How deep am I sunk in misery.' Psalm 44:23 'Bestir thyself, Lord; why dost thou sleep? Awake, do not reject us for ever. Why dost thou hide thy face....?' Psalm 73:11 'What does God know? The Most High neither knows nor cares.' Isaiah 45:15 'How then canst thou be a god that hidest thyself....?' Jeremiah 5:12 'They have denied the Lord, saying "He does not exist...."' (N.E.B. Transl.).
34. Kaufmann, William E., *Contemporary Jewish Philosophies*, p. 75.

weakest point in his philosophy. If our time is characterised by waiting, what guarantee is there that God will reappear? Could not Samuel Beckett be more accurate when in his play *Waiting for Godot*, Godot, alas, never comes? Man's agonised waiting might simply be unfulfilled and meaningless. Kaufmann also regards Buber's hiding God, with man awaiting his reappearance, as a childish game of 'hide and seek'. He suggests that within the context of Buber's philosophy, we are entitled to a nobler conception of God, which he believes, could be found in a concept of the 'silence of God'.³⁵

35. Ibid. It can be mentioned in passing that Christian theology offers a highly sophisticated explanation of the 'hiddenness' of God within the context of some interpretations of Christology. Just as God was 'hidden' in the incarnation of the Word and in the crucified Jesus, so he remains hidden in the ascension of Jesus. The rule of God in history is, according to this view, characterised by an essential hiddenness. It remains a matter of faith. The 'kingdom of God' which is believed to have been realised in the world, in Israel and through Jesus, will remain essentially ambiguous until the eschatological second coming of the messiah and the ultimate glorification of the world. The following statements by A. A. van Ruler give a clarifying explanation of this view.

'De hemelvaart is dan verberging van de opstanding en van het leven dat in de opstanding aan het licht is getreden ...en daarom voortzetting of herhaling van het kruis, dat ook was verberging van het leven van den Zoon Gods in het vleesch.' See *De Vervulling van de Wet*, Callenbach, Nijkerk, 1947, p. 105.

'De hemelvaart brengt de kerk weer terug in de situatie van het kruis. Christus is koning, en als koning regeert hij, maar: hy heerscht vanaf het kruis. De kruisiging was een soort verhooging, een soort hemelvaart voor Christus. Zoo ook omgekeerd: de hemelvaart is een soort kruisiging voor zijn gemeente.' 'God is tegenwoordig op de aarde... maar deze tegenwoordigheid is niet bestemd om duurzaam te blijven; hij zal openlijk tegenwoordig zijn in zijn majesteit en heerlijkheid, over alle dingen; en dan verdwijnen Israel en de kerk en de Christus, dan verdwijnen al de verborgenheid en de barmhartigheid en de bijzonderheid... (wij) zijn nog niet terechtgekomen in de eschatologische realiteit, uitgeschreden uit de belofte in de beloofde werkelijkheid.... Deze schrede, waarop inderdaad de heele existentie gericht staat, word niet omschreven door de categorie vervulling πληρωμα maar door de categorie openbaring αποκάλυψις.

A. A. van Ruler, *Religie en Politiek*, Callenbach, Nijkerk, 1945, pp. 68, 138, 139.

Given Buber's conception of the Eternal Thou, it is questionable whether everyone is capable of meeting God at all, even if he goes out with his whole being to meet the world, and through meeting, is supposed to find the eternal Thou. What may be true in Buber's case may decidedly not be a universal human experience. This would render Buber's encounter with God meaningless from a universal point of view. He could, like Rubenstein, be accused of making theology into a matter of a very private subjectivity. When Buber speaks of God 'allowing these things to happen', he severely limits the moral dimensions of deity. He indicts God by speaking of the estrangement as too cruel and the hiddenness too deep.³⁶

A hiding God is an inactive and limited God, a concept which is open to moral objections. However, there may be great psychic efficacy in the belief that God is somehow uninvolved in the problem of human suffering. In his article 'A Battered People Syndrome?'³⁷ S. Levin argues for such psychological efficacy. Using the analogy of the battered baby syndrome in which the battered children usually become battering parents, Levin questions why the Jewish people 'battered as no other, bruised as no other'³⁸ should have become a charitable and non-violent people in its two-thousand years of diaspora existence. Israel's relationship to God is clearly one of son to father. God is both transcendent and yet very near. He is lovingly addressed as *Gottenyu* in Yiddish, an intimate and endearing title. The religious Jew imputes torments to God who is author of both prosperity and trouble. However, when it comes to the problem of evil, particularly in the light of radical evil such as that typified by the Holocaust, questions are raised and answers sought.

Among the various responses to the problem of the existence of evil is the placing of a limitation on God's power, thereby excusing God's culpability. Within the paradox of God's omnipotence and omnipresence he is regarded as uninvolved with human evil. Such limitations, taken

36. Kaufmann, *Contemporary Jewish Philosophies*, p. 72, posits similar views.

37. Levin, S., 'A Battered People Syndrome?', *Judaism*, Vol. 26, No. 2. Spring 1977, pp. 217 - 221.

38. Ibid. p. 217.

no extremes, may lead to the assertion that God is totally absent. There is ample biblical basis for the invocation of a God who is unconcerned, inactive or even perhaps, absent. The concept of the hidden God developed in a uniquely Jewish way.

The advantage of the *el mistater* is that it permits continuing faith despite evil, hope for a God of compassion, temporarily hiding his face. It protects the integrity of God on whom it would be intolerable to place the blame for undeserved human suffering. From Job to Wiesel, the 'modern Job',³⁹ God the father is there, and yet absent when the blows fall. 'An obligatory theist, the Jew is at the same time a tender atheist, shielding his father from accusations of battering.'⁴⁰ Thus, the reason that the Jews did not become a battering people lay in the fact that they opted for a hiding, limited God, for a painful home rather than for the desolation of a non-hurtful orphanage. Based on the non-violent behaviour of the battered child-people, Levin posits the view that a battered child, should he grow up to be a gentle and considerate person, will have adopted the Jewish mechanism of *el mistater* in relation to his battering parents. He will find an excuse for them and defend them.⁴¹

While the concept of a hiding God has ample biblical precedent, is it not ultimately a tragic psychic self-deception in order to retain meaning in the face of suffering? It raises the problem of whether God is a transcendent reality or a projected illusion when looked at in the manner described above.

If a hiding God is a transcendent reality, then the Bible makes no attempt to deceive us. It pictures God as constantly struggling with existent powers which distort life as he intended it to be. Moreover, the picture of God which is presented is that he is the loser of the battle. The problem of theodicy confronts us with the most vexatious mystery of history and of existence. If there were to be any solution to this mystery, it would have to be an eschatological one. God will have to prove himself, as the prophets

39. See *Judaism*, Vol. 16, No. 3, Summer 1967, p. 266, for such a reference.

40. Levin, 'A Battered People Syndrome?', p. 221.

41. Ibid.

also claimed, to be the eternal power overcoming evil, in and through the phenomenon of evil itself. We perceive a glimpse of this belief which demands a universal eschatological application in Genesis 50:20 when Joseph reassures his brothers, 'You meant to do me harm; but God meant to bring good out of it by preserving the lives of many people, as we see today.'

If, however, God is a projected illusion, the practical results of the *el mistater* may be shielding and beneficial. Either way, a truly hiding God, one who is totally unavailable for human solace, is awesome indeed.

Is not protest, or even denial, a more understandable response to the problem of God and the existence of evil?

Elie Wiesel : Question and Protest

'In the beginning there was neither the Word, nor Love, but Laughter, the roaring, eternal laughter whose echoes are more deceitful than the mirages of the desert'⁴² says Elie Wiesel and as a corollary to that statement 'In the beginning there was the Holocaust'.⁴³

Wiesel, the Job of our times, is a Holocaust survivor of intense sensitivity, courage, honesty and sheer ability, who speaks hauntingly to our post-Holocaust generation in a Holocaust universe. He is a radical questioner of God who finds himself unable to affirm God or his saving presence and, at the same time, unable to transgress beyond the theodicy by totally denying his existence. As a young boy Wiesel was reared on the Talmud. He aspired to initiation into study of the Kabbalah and was dedicated to the Eternal. The Holocaust was responsible for his loss of faith, for 'the death of God in the soul of a child who suddenly discovers absolute evil'.⁴⁴

In *Night*,⁴⁵ his first book, he speaks of his loss of faith: 'Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the faces of the

42. Wiesel, Elie, *The Accident*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1962, p. 49.

43. Wiesel, 'Jewish Values', p. 285.

44. Mauriac, Francois, Foreword to Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Fontana Books, (first published by Les Editions Minuit, 1958), 1972, p. 7.

45. Wiesel, Elie, *Night*, Fontana Books, 1972.

children whose bodies I saw turned to wreaths of smoke beneath a silent sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever....Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.'⁴⁶

Wiesel has been tormented by a search for his lost God who is both there, and yet painfully absent. This is the paradox which is basic to Wiesel's dialectic. God is the centre of his concern. He speaks about little else in his books.⁴⁷ The Holocaust is his problem. It is also *God's* problem. He cannot conceive of the Holocaust *with* God, and he can as little conceive of the Holocaust *without* God.⁴⁸ His courage lies in his continuing ability to remember and interrogate the Holocaust in ways that honour the dead and teach the living.

He is not primarily a philosopher, a theologian, or a political theorist. Instead, he is a story-teller exploring with sensitivity, concern and protest the deepest questions of our times. God, radical evil, free choice, responsibility, protest, despair, defiance and questioning - constant questioning, are among the many themes that are woven into the fabric of his tales. Writing mainly in French, he employs prose, poetry, fact and fiction and draws heavily on Jewish legend and tradition. He echoes thinkers like Kierkegaard, Kafka, Buber and Camus, transforming all his resources into a literature of lasting power and moral authority. His tales bear the indelible and unmistakable stamp of the Midrashic mould. Michael Berenbaum considers Wiesel's writing to be a Midrash on the Holocaust.⁴⁹

46. Ibid. p. 45.

47. Wiesel, 'Jewish Values', p. 298.

48. Ibid. p. 281. See also Wiesel, *Elie, One Generation After*, translated from the French by Lily Edelman and the author, Bard Books, Published by Avon, New York. First Printing (Bard), March 1972. p. 216.

49. Berenbaum, Michael, 'Elie Wiesel and Contemporary Jewish Theology', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 30, No. 3, Spring 1976, p. 21.

Within the Midrashic framework, however, he demonstrates the incompatibility of the previous Midrashic tradition with the post-Holocaust world. The traditional Midrash on Exodus 34:20 asks why man could not see God and live. Wiesel answers the traditional question with new and horrifying impact and transformation. 'Why can't man see God and live? Because God is ashamed, deeply ashamed, that he likes to sleep with twelve-year-old girls.'⁵⁰ Equally challenging to God, he states in another passage: 'There is a legend in the Midrash that disturbs me. When did God decide to liberate his people from Egyptian bondage? When Pharaoh ordered that living Jewish children be used as bricks for his pyramids, the Angel Michael caught one such child - already disfigured - He was overcome by compassion and love and chose to redeem his people.'

'And I often say to myself: *Ribona shel olam*, Master of the universe, one child was enough to move you - and one million children were not?'⁵¹

Wiesel does not, however, shirk responsibility by blaming God. He explores the crucial nature of human responsibility⁵² in a world which not only lacks enough insurance for the good, but ever permits our doing, as well as thinking, the unthinkable. On the other hand, he believes that for the first time in history God has broken his covenant with his people by failing them in their desperate hour of need.⁵³ That is why the Holocaust has such terrifying theological

50. Wiesel, *The Accident*, p. 93.

51. Wiesel, 'Art and Culture after the Holocaust', Address reprinted in Fleischer, Eva, (Ed.) *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1977, pp. 403 - 415. See p. 413.

52. Wiesel places great stress on human indifference and the need for human responsibility. 'God's failure was matched by man's. The world was divided - with some rare exceptions - into assassins, victims, and indifferent onlookers.' He in no way minimises Jewish culpability by indifference, 'Never before have so many Jews been abandoned by so many Jews.' See 'Jewish Values', p. 282.

53. Wiesel, 'Jewish Values', p. 281. Wiesel accuses God of breaking his own covenant with extraordinary power when in invoking Abraham's testimony (for Abraham, above all knew what it meant to sacrifice), he says: 'Know too that the God of Israel is today violating the law of Israel. The Torah prohibits killing the cow and her calf on the same day; yet this law, which we have faithfully observed, does not apply to us. See that what is granted to animals is refused to the children of Israel.' *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, p.68.

implications. 'Whether we wanted it or not, because of its sheer dimensions, the event transcends man and involves more than him alone. It can be explained neither with God nor without him.'⁵⁴

Despite his grappling with God, the dominant motif seems to be God's silence and the moral emptiness of the Void. Silence, Void and the Kingdom of Night which he was forced to endure all shadow his reasons for living, yet he refuses to yield to despair because for Wiesel to be Jewish is 'never to give up - never to yield to despair'.⁵⁵ Defiance transcends despair. 'During and after the Holocaust, it was impossible for any Jew not to choose defiance as a means of transcending despair.'⁵⁶ That affirmation is a categorical imperative and it applies to man's relationship with his fellow men and with God, regardless of the temptation toward despair they may provoke. It is a difficult commandment to keep and one which, for Wiesel, has required a lifetime of grappling. In order to keep the commandment, Wiesel has had to wrestle for and against the Jewish tradition, for and against God and humankind together. His writings represent the effort to discover and create trustworthy resources against despair.⁵⁷

54. Wiesel, 'Jewish Values', p. 281.

55. Wiesel, 'From Holocaust to Rebirth', The Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, New York, 1970.

56. Wiesel, 'Against Despair', Essay published as a pamphlet by the United Jewish Appeal. It is a reprint of the first annual Louis A. Pincus Memorial Lecture, delivered by Wiesel on December 8, 1973.

57. Roth, John K., *A Consuming Fire: Encounters with Elie Wiesel and the Holocaust*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1977. This is a deeply sincere and sensitive book which probes the implications of the Holocaust for Christianity after Auschwitz. It poses some of the questions which should concern Christian life in the wake of such a tragic event. It emphasises protest with humility and suggests that Christians need to become more Jewish 'Wiesel-style'.

See p. 11.

For Wiesel there is a post-Holocaust sense of obligation and commandment⁵⁸ which does not stem from a relation between man and God, or between Israel and God, but between Israel and its memories of pain and suffering, God and meaning. Wiesel questions the nature of God the commander. He cannot deny traditional Judaism's emphasis on God's saving presence, yet he cannot find such saving presence in his post-Holocaust world.

Michael Berenbaum has suggested that Wiesel is a theologian of the Void,⁵⁹ a theologian who both describes and understands the shattering impact of Auschwitz on Jewish tradition and Jewish belief. For Wiesel the struggle of the survivor is deeply existential. It is not merely an inquiring with the mind while *knowing* in the heart, but a shattering of that knowledge, that trust in God. Wiesel's God is not only a God who gave man freedom in history, but one who promised deliverance and remained silent in Israel's most fearful hour of need, a God, therefore, who made it impossible for him to believe in the promise of future deliverance. He suggests, obliquely, the crucifixion of God, thus implying the death of God. In response to the question: 'Where is God now?', Wiesel replies, 'Where is He? Here He is, hanging on this gallows...'⁶⁰ This passage is often cited to prove that Wiesel is a death of God theologian - which is not the case. God is not dead, but is buried alive by human indifference. The God who dies in Wiesel's writing, has the face of a child, a face of innocence and helplessness, victimised by human brutality and indifference. When man becomes a criminal, even through complicity by

58. Michael Berenbaum has termed Wiesel's suggestion concerning the nature of Jewish commitment after the Holocaust the 'Additional Covenant', avoiding the obvious Christian implications and connotations of the term 'New Covenant'. The elements of the Additional Covenant are three-fold encompassing solidarity, witness and sanctification. It functions as an additional covenant for those Jews who still find the original covenant relevant. For those who are unable to find relevance in the original covenant, it serves as a basis for self-affirmation as Jews. See Berenbaum, 'Elie Wiesel and Contemporary Jewish Theology', pp. 23, 24.

59. Berenbaum, 'Elie Wiesel and Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 28.

60. Wiesel, *Night*, p. 76.

indifference, the image of God swings to its death. The sign of God upon man is his only claim to the possibility of being human. Once the sign is removed, man becomes a *Golem*, dust in essence and recklessly destructive in practice.⁶¹ Although Wiesel may be seen to be God-intoxicated, with an intense yearning for the God he lost at Auschwitz, his theodicy remains a theodicy of the Void. His God is a God of silence. His struggle is to live in the face of the void where God once stood. His honesty precludes an affirmation of God in the face of the Void. His dilemma becomes explicit in his statement: 'How can you not believe in God after what has happened?'⁶²

In *Night* Wiesel speaks of God in terms of his broken promises to the Jewish people, while contrasting the fact that Hitler kept his promise. In *The Accident* he sees God as a deceitful puppeteer who uses man for his amusement. Although many see in Wiesel's most recent writing a re-affirmation of faith,⁶³ his images of God remain frighteningly amoral, though less aggressively accusatory. God's response is limited to empathy. It comes too late, is too little, and remains unperceived.⁶⁴

Jews have not survived centuries of atrocities for no purpose. They have some mysterious mission involving other people and the world. 'This is what I think we are trying to prove to ourselves, desperately, because it is desperately needed: in a world of absurdity, we must invent reason; we must create beauty out of nothingness. And because there is murder in this world - and we are the first ones to know it - and we know how hopeless our battle may appear, we have to fight murder and absurdity, and give meaning to the battle, if not to our hope.

'This is not a lesson; this is not an answer. It is only a question.'⁶⁵

61. Sherwin, Byron L., 'Elie Wiesel and Jewish Theology', *Judaism*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Winter 1969, p. 51.

62. Wiesel, Elie, *The Gates of the Forest*, p. 194. Avon Library, June 1967. New York: Hard Books, 1974. Published by Avon.

63. Sherwin sees in Wiesel's writing a progression from deep pessimism to a sombre but firm optimism, even a suggestion of hope.

64. See Berenbaum, Michael, 'Elie Wiesel and Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 23.

65. Wiesel, 'Jewish Values', p. 299.

Wiesel never implies definitive answers, only questions. The questions in his work set an agenda for action and the realisation of values in a post-Holocaust future. His Jewishness understands that the fate of humanity depends on pursuing questions that we cannot, and perhaps must not, answer. As the *Tanna Kama*, master teacher of the new Talmud,⁶⁶ Wiesel attempts to explain why God's prayers as well as man's prayers have not been answered.

It has been suggested that Wiesel is writing a new bible⁶⁷ in which the Holocaust, though the absolute antithesis of Sinai, is its equal in significance. This new bible would have as its major theme not God's disappointment with man but man's disappointment with God. As Jewish 'protestant' after Auschwitz, he walks the thin line between faith and heresy. For Wiesel God has, in a sense, died and men must take up a stance of defiance against the God who has failed them.⁶⁸

In contrasting the attitude of the Jewish community to Wiesel and to Rubenstein one finds that Wiesel has been greeted with deserved accolade and honour while Rubenstein has been subjected to personal and professional abuse which has served to exile him from Jewish community life. Yet, their theological responses to the Holocaust, while not identical, bear striking similarities. Wiesel is a theologian of the Void while Rubenstein's God is the Holy Nothingness. Rubenstein cannot believe in a redeeming God who is active in history and who will ultimately redeem mankind, as this would imply that Auschwitz was part of the divine plan. He does not merely suspend, but rejects the rabbinic God as a 'dread Illusion'.⁶⁹ When his views first became generally known, at least during the nineteen sixties, Rubenstein

66. Sherwin suggests that after every catastrophe in Jewish history there have been Jewish reconstructionists of faith who have arisen amongst traditional Jewish blasphemers. As the writing of the Talmud followed the destruction of the second temple, and the Kabbalah followed the expulsion of the Jews from Spain as an attempt to explain the tragedy, so Wiesel is the master teacher of the new Talmud which follows the Holocaust.

67. Sherwin, 'Elie Wiesel and Jewish Theology', p. 40.

68. See Unterman, Alan, *Jews: Their Religion, Belief and Practices*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, p. 87.

69. Rubenstein, *Homeland and Holocaust*, p. 61.

certainly did not see in this rejection of God an end to Judaism itself in that he continued to emphasise the immense importance of Jewish ritual and practice within the Jewish community. He remains distinct from the Christian death of God theologians in that nowhere does he celebrate or exult in God's death, but emphasises its tragic aspects.⁷⁰ The assertion that we are living in the time of the death of God is one marked by agony and the tragic vision.

Wiesel, like Rubenstein, stresses the importance of the Holocaust in terms of its theological implications. He finds it difficult to speak about God after Auschwitz. He challenges the traditional theodicy of Israel with shattering, often shocking, implications. He contends with God, accusing, rejecting, questioning him, yet is unable to abandon his quest for him. Like Rubenstein, he stresses the need for human solidarity in community and the priestly functions of religion.⁷¹ They share the tragic vision resulting from the death of the innocent. Both men regard the re-establishment of the State

70. Berenbaum points out that Rubenstein's theological opponents insist on grouping him with the Christian death of God theologians and then attacking him as a proponent of their movement despite the immense differences his views exhibit.

71. This is apparent in Wiesel's *The Gates of the Forest*, in Gregor's encounter with the Hasidic rebbe. For example, 'His audience listened with a fervid passion. What did it matter if they understood, if they pursued the master's thought to its ultimate significance: they were purified by his voice, by his secret. It had to suffice; it sufficed.' One can perceive the elements of the irrational in religious worship, which serve a priestly function and may be compared with Rubenstein's emphasis on archaic and irrational aspects of religious ritual as well as the corporate, shared character of ritual. It is also noteworthy that Rubenstein does not favour the changing of the prayer book, despite the fact that the original Hebrew may not always be understood, or that parts of the ritual may be seen as 'embarrassing'. Ritual speaks to the unconscious elements in the makeup of the individual.

of Israel as the most positive factor in present-day Jewish life.⁷²

Why, then, has the community's response been so utterly different? Michael Berenbaum suggests some of the possible reasons.⁷³

Firstly, Wiesel is very much an 'insider'. He was reared in the traditions, language and symbol set of Judaism. His mythic structure is profoundly Jewish in that he presents his arguments in the structural form of Midrashic exegesis, although, as we have already observed, he uses the Midrashic tradition in order to express the very failure of that tradition when applied to contemporary events. Auschwitz is compared to Sinai, and in *the language of Sinai*, he expresses the view that the covenant at Sinai has been shattered. Wiesel undoubtedly displays an innate 'Jewishness'.

72. Rubenstein's views on power have been discussed in Chapter VI of this thesis. In *Homeland and Holocaust*, he deals with Zionism as the end to Jewish powerlessness. Wiesel posits some similar views in *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, a novel on the Six Day War, and in *One Generation After*. For example, 'There are two possibilities. Either you stay and dismiss all thought of possible defeat from your mind, or, if it's death you're after, you'd better seek it elsewhere.' *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, p. 58. Note also: 'People used to hate the Jew because he refused to fit their concept of a victim. Today they are disturbed because he refuses to fit their concept of a victor.' - and his view that the Jew 'is rebuked for his nationalism, and his universalism, his wealth and his poverty, his submissiveness and his revolt. We have not yet finished pleading on behalf of the Jews who during the holocaust accepted death without a fight, and already we are forced to defend other Jews who, one generation later, do fight - and fight well - because they refuse to die.' Both quotations from *One Generation After*,

Secondly, Wiesel, while not a mystic, has a penchant for mystification in his writing.⁷⁴ He mystifies Hasidism, his understanding of the Holocaust, his portrayal of his own origins, the Six Day War and the status of Russian Jewry. Correspondingly, the Jewish community often accords him the reverence and status of the charismatic Hasidic *rebbe*.⁷⁵ The mystifier shows similar characteristics to the mystic in that he tends to use the prevailing symbols and imagery of the tradition in which he was reared. He would tend to be conservative, rediscovering the basis of the root of authority for his tradition in the expression of his ideas pertaining to his experience. He would use the symbolic language of the tradition or the community to communicate his experience.

Rubenstein, though born to Jewish parents, came to Judaism as an outsider. His education and conceptual framework were markedly different from Wiesel's. He writes of Auschwitz and Sinai through vastly different conceptual lenses than does Wiesel. He does not view these events through the prism of covenant and Midrash. Having entered the tradition as an outsider, Rubenstein is able to evaluate the tradition using external categories and is able to deny the ultimate authority of tradition. His experiences have not allowed him to bow to established authority. His work has not enhanced, but rather attacked, the mythic and symbolic system itself.

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74. Berenbaum relies on Peter Berger's understanding of the terms 'mystification' and 'demystification'. According to Berger mystification is part of 'the falsification of consciousness wherein the socio-cultural world which is an edifice of human meanings is overlaid with mysteries posited as non-human in their origins'. *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 90.

Demystification is the process of bringing the human origin of humanly created meanings to consciousness.

75. Elie Wiesel visited South Africa in July 1975. He gave two lectures at the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit on the 21st and 29th of July. On both occasions the auditorium was packed to capacity.

At a student lecture given at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, there was standing room only and many students had to be turned away.

Rubenstein's once avid Zionism was unable to mediate his relationship with the Jewish community and this area of his thought may be seen to be of vital concern to the Jewish community.⁷⁶ This concern for Israel, in addition to Rubenstein's emphasis on the importance of ritual and community taken together with the hostile reaction to him, would tend to suggest that the authority of forms speaks more loudly than the content of the statement. Rubenstein and Wiesel say similar things with regard to God, Auschwitz, and the State of Israel, but the community seems to be as sensitive to the forms of the language as to the meaning of the words, if not more so.

Rubenstein's work can be seen as a constant attempt at demystification. He wishes to demystify Jewish chosenness by restoring to the Jew a situation of normalcy. He demystifies rabbinic myth and legend by analysing the basic psychic and physical needs which produced them. He speaks of the functional or dysfunctional aspects of the rabbinic tradition rather than of their authority. While the reader is given insight into rabbinic wisdom and adaptive responses, the rabbis are divested of their absolute authority.⁷⁷

A brief comparison between the views and methods of Wiesel and Rubenstein reveals Wiesel's innate Jewishness and the manner in which he reaffirms the symbolic tradition of Judaism by testifying to its

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76. The need for Israel's continued existence for Judaism as a whole need not be argued. Berenbaum points out that while the Jewish community is hostile to Christians, students or New Leftists who criticise Israel (and in my opinion, justifiably so), they do not show this hostility to Jewish critics of Israel such as Arthur Waskow, Everett Gendler and Stephen Schwartzchild. He attributes this to the fact that they preserve the mythic structure of the tradition, even while they attack Judaism's most basic interest. They have not been ostracised and abused as has Rubenstein.
77. Interestingly in a recent article 'Academia and the Holocaust', *Judaism*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Spring 1982, pp. 166 - 176, Alan L. Berger points to the loss of ethical values among contemporary academics in their excessively objective approaches to the Holocaust. Berger commends both Wiesel and Rubenstein, whom he regards as polar opposites, for their ethical confrontation with the Holocaust. Both men, despite their vastly different conclusions, view the Holocaust as a *novum*. Wiesel compares the enormity of Auschwitz to the revelation at Sinai. Rubenstein demystifies the Holocaust, claiming that hitherto unbreachable moral barriers have been broken. Other academics tend to avoid coming to grips with this tension. See pp. 166 f.

viability in expressing new dimensions of reality, even though challenging the *content* of that tradition. The response of the community to the two men, despite the similarity of their theological perceptions, forces one to conclude that the Jewish community may be far more sensitive to the forms of theology than to its content. Wiesel's theology is uttered in an authentically Jewish form, even though its content exhibits a significant break from the past. The Void is painfully apparent in his thought. Unlike Fackenheim, he cannot minimise it. Unlike Berkovits, he cannot affirm a trust in the future. Wiesel is radical enough to question, but not radical enough to transgress beyond theodicy, and is therefore, forced to re-interpret theodicy in the face of the Void. Unlike Rubenstein, he cannot transcend the Void.⁷⁸

I have no doubt, however, that the most cogent explanation for the different reception accorded to the two men lies in the fact that Wiesel was *there*. He is 'a messenger of the dead among the living'. His theology was forged in the fires of Auschwitz. He experienced God's silence in the eternal Holocaust night. He survived the unleashing of hell on a carefully selected section of humanity while the rest of the world looked the other way. Who would *dare* question a theological training gained in Auschwitz no matter how negative its conclusion?

Byron L. Sherwin points to the fact that the death of God movement consists of contemporary comfortable Americans who gained their theological training contemporaneously with Auschwitz, and who made their claims after Auschwitz.⁷⁹ Wiesel's theological training was gained *in* Auschwitz. Berkovits makes a clear distinction between the authority of those who were there and those who were not. While I do not believe that those who were not there have no right to speak, one cannot compare the weight and credibility of the theological utterances of a survivor to those of a theologian who was not there, no matter how sensitive his reaction. The fact that Wiesel experienced the Holocaust and Rubenstein did not, must play a crucial role in the community's acceptance and understanding of their views.

78. Berenbaum, 'Elie Wiesel and Contemporary Jewish Theology', p. 39.

79. Sherwin, 'Elie Wiesel and Jewish Theology', p. 50.

Some Christian Responses

While the Holocaust looms as a stumbling block for contemporary Jewish theology, it has, on the whole, not played a significant generative or transformative role in Christian theology. While many Christians, theologians among them, might have been deeply affected in their hearts and minds and in their ecumenical and interfaith intentions and activities by the event, until recently it was seldom a central issue, and is often not even mentioned in the considered explicit theological works of Christian theologians, even when they deal with such themes as God's action in history.⁸⁰

John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*

Although works on the Holocaust are emerging, the problem has tended to centre on theodicy. One of the major quests for a theodicy has emerged from the Christian writer John Hick in his *Evil and the God of Love*.⁸¹ While it is not directed specifically at the Holocaust, it attempts to understand God's dealings with mankind particularly when confronting God's permission of evil. While Hick suggests that a complete theodicy may not be obtainable, some approaches may be less inadequate than others, and the theodicy may acquire a modest degree of genuine illumination and thereby discover some helpful criteria by which to discriminate among speculations concerning responses to the question of evil. Hick favours the approach of Irenaeus (second century C.E.) who saw the world with its hardships and challenges as an appropriate arena for the emergence of values which make man God-like in his struggle for good, and equip him, thereby to enjoy God forever. He opposes the views of Augustine which stressed the 'Fall' of man as the primary cause of evil in this world. The Genesis account represents the natural condition of man as a finite creature remote

80. Seymour Cain made this observation in 1971 and stated that he would be happy to be proved mistaken on this impression. See Cain, Seymour, 'The Question and Answers After Auschwitz', p. 263.

81. Hick, John, *Evil and the God of Love*, Macmillan, 1966, (2nd. edition), 1977.

from God. Hick sees this as the natural state of man and not as the result of a 'Fall'. Only in a world in which there has to be a struggle for the good can man freely choose God.

Hick examines comprehensively the free-will defence. The world is not a vale of tears but is a vale of soul-making. He considers the meaning of God's omnipotence in this light. God cannot do the absolutely impossible as this involves a contradiction in terms. Even God cannot give man free will and the opportunity of exercising it in a world in which no choice is possible.

Hick's theodicy, however, does not account for the intensity of suffering in the world as well as the suffering of children and animals which is both pointless and unnecessary for men's moral development.⁸² He resorts here to an impenetrable mystery. 'The mystery of dysteleological sufferings is a real mystery, impenetrable to the rationalizing human mind.'⁸³ This tends to indicate the insolubility of the problem of innocent suffering and points to the fact that there is, perhaps, no theodicy.

Hick asserts that the random element in nature is essential, for if it were always possible to discover teleological necessity behind each kind of suffering, man's free choice would be limited. The very world in which we live, with all its negativities, provides the basis for a vale of soul-making. It is through the ambiguities of existence, out of its continuation, variation and the transformation of this present life that the infinite good symbolised by the Kingdom of God will finally come. Our moral natures can develop precisely because of the mystery that rewards and punishments are not

82. This criticism was raised by Roland Puccetti in 'The Loving God: Some Observations on John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*', *Religious Studies*, April 1967, pp. 255 - 268.

83. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 371.

justly apportioned to our deeds. A world in which the ultimately constructive use of adversity was an established scientific fact, could not function as a soul-making sphere.⁸⁴

The Theodicy of A. A. van Ruler

A. A. van Ruler offers an attempt towards a theodicy within the context of a biblical philosophy of history. Although he does not respond to the Holocaust *per se*, his views are noteworthy in that they stand as the polar opposite to the views of Rubenstein. He accepts the full reality of divine revelation, and *thereby*, the reality of history. He constructs his theodicy within this frame of reference.

According to Van Ruler the meaning of history should be found in the divine acts of the revealing of sin as the guilt of man, and the reconciliation of his guilt. The ascension of God to his throne

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84. Hick, John, 'God of Evil and Mystery', *Religious Studies*, April 1968, pp. 539 - 546.

It is interesting to note that when referring to the Holocaust Hick regards it as unforgivable. See *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 361. He cannot concede that such bestial events were willed by God. God's purpose was retarded by the Holocaust. He concludes that:

- (1) In the realms beyond our world the victims are alive and will have their place in the final fulfilment of God's creation.
- (2) Christians should have been willing to risk their own lives to save the threatened victims. Though the record of such acts is partially good, it is in too large part, also bad.
- (3) The Christian should not meet hatred and cruelty with an answering hatred and cruelty. 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'. (Romans 12:19). *Evil and the God of Love*, pp. 361 - 362.

In relation to the question of theodicy Louis Jacobs sees strong similarities between Hick's view and Jewish thought as expressed by Abraham Ibn David, Maimonides and the Kabbalah. Man has to respond to the challenges posed by evil and overcome adversity.

See Louis Jacobs, *A Jewish Theology*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1973.

is to be understood in terms of history as his struggle to subject his adversaries to his power and his reign. God's presence in the world should not be sought in unambiguous revelations of his saving and redeeming power. If it is true at all that God is present in the world, then it is a presence *in medio inimicorum* in the depths of human sin and of cosmic and universal depravity. The *praesentia realis* of God in history is the *absconditas Dei*. 'Wenn Gott gegenwärtig ist, dann ist er auch wahrhaft gegenwärtig: in der Gegenwart, in der Zeit, in der Verfallenheit und Verlorenheit, in der Sünde und Gottlosigkeit.'⁸⁵ This is the essential characteristic of the kingdom and the rule of God in history: 'In medio inimicorum, in tenebris regnat ligno!' It is only through, and by virtue of the presence of God in the world that sin is exposed, and qualified as guilt.

The Christianisation of the world, for which the Torah is the indispensable instrument, the medium between revelation and existence, should never be understood in an idealistic sense, in the sense of improvement of the world. Sin and guilt are realities about which only Israel had a revealed knowledge. Christianisation calls forth human enmity against God and is therefore as little to be understood in moralistic categories as sin itself.⁸⁶ Sin, first and foremost, is an existential reality, not a moral deficiency. The presence of God in history can only be understood as his presence in the sin of man with all its abysmal implications. This is what is primarily revealed by the Christianisation of the world, which has its historical parallel and paradigm in the history of Israel.

Paul was deeply concerned with the struggle for a meaning of history and the unfathomable depths of the ways of God. The destiny and role of the people of Israel was to bring to light the guilt of the world. God gave the law to Israel with this purpose.⁸⁷ The Torah, therefore, had more than a moral function. It not only revealed sin, but it actually called it forth and declared it to be guilt. The

85. Van Ruler, A. A., *Gestaltwerdung Christi in der Welt*, Neukirchen, 1956, pp. 46 - 49.

86. Van Ruler, *Ibid.*

87. *Ibid.*

presence of God in the world actually renders the world sinful and guilty. For this purpose God revealed himself to Israel and was present in their midst so that not only would they come to a knowledge and recognition of sin and guilt, but that the world itself would be revealed to be sin and guilt.⁸⁸

The implications of Van Ruler's theodicy are stunning and also disarmingly realistic. The presence of God in the world, particularly in the history of Israel with the Torah, *causes* a sinful and rebellious world to sin and to rebel against the divine will and intentions. God, with his intention to establish his kingdom of justice and peace in the world, seems to be the loser in the gigantic struggle of recreation, but history with its essential ambiguity, is a necessary phase in the process of divine redemption. The reality of sin should be rendered absolute so that man can recognise his absolute guilt. Man, in the full knowledge and recognition of sin could thus know with God the deepest and most abysmal reality of the depth which exists between man and God, namely, guilt.⁸⁹ Absolute redemption can only be wrought for absolute guilt. The accumulation of guilt, therefore, is an essential component of the biblical proclamation of the coming kingdom of God. In the light of revelation, of which Israel and Christianity are the bearers *par excellence*, the essence of history is to be seen as a 'permanent syntax of guilt and reconciliation'.⁹⁰ The fundamental form (*grondvorm*) of the kingdom of God in history is that of the cross, the presence of God in the abyss and chaos of existence. For this reason the manifestation of evil in the world is an inescapable necessity and corollary of the divine work of redemption. The Christian contemplating the cross is led to the confession: 'in God is geen onrecht', there is no injustice in God, and herein we perceive something of the theodicy. 'Deze wereld' (with all its testimonies to the God-foresakenness of man and his habitation!) 'is de beste van alle werelden' is an echo by Van Ruler of the well-known dictum of Leibniz. '...dat is', (concludes Van Ruler) 'apostolisch verstaan, waar en in deze waarheid is het gehele geheim van de liefde uitgedrukt.'⁹¹

88. Ibid. 89. Ibid.

90. See Van Ruler, *Het Koninkrijk Gods en de Geschiedenis*, p. 14.

91. Van Ruler, A. A. *Theologie van het Apostolaat*, Nijkerk, aa, pp. 48, 49.

History, interpreted as the ascension of God to his throne, is not so much to be understood in a celebratory sense, but rather in the sense of a militant struggle. Its positive aspect finds expression in the belief that God's revelation of himself to Israel has its essential significance, not in the final redemption of Israel, but in giving a historical quality to the entire reality and process of existence. Without revelation there would be no real history. It is only through the intervention of God in the chaos of existence that time and space acquired the quality of history. The kingdom of God therefore, is not to be understood in an ideal sense ('in een statisch-ontologischen zin als een andere ruimte, sfeer of wereld naast of boven onze tijdsruimtelijke wereld') but in a dynamic sense ('doch als handelen Gods met deze onze werkelijkheid'). God appears as the Lord on the scene of reality and thus renders existence historical. The cycle of nature is broken and reality is orientated toward its future. This in itself is an insight of 'soteriological' significance. 'De kringloop der natuur is doorbroken en de werkelijkheid is op haar toekomst gericht.' God, therefore, is not to be called before the forum of man to be judged. His intervention in the world through the revelation of himself to Israel proves nothing more than that he claims to be the God of history, that world events, enigmatic and abysmal as they may be, have an 'eschaton' set to them by God himself.⁹²

Thus the kingdom of God should be described as a 'militant holiness' rather than a 'static theocracy'. Through the revelation given to Israel we know that it is God who determines history, although the 'how' and the 'why' of events may remain for us unfathomable. The Kingdom of God is in no way diminished by the fact that it is not a static theocracy but a militant holiness. It is not immanent in this world in a revolutionary sense but its coming into this world is imminent.

92. B. L. Hebblethwaite observes that 'the dominant thrust of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is towards construing human history as moving under divine providence towards a particular goal,' and that it holds to 'a progressive realisation of God's ultimate plan for the world'. *The Problems of Theology*, Cambridge, 1980, p. 104.

The obverse side of this belief is that the struggle of God with history goes hand in hand with the 'incarnation of Satan'. The necessity and in this regard, also the meaning of history lie in the incarnation of Satan in which the rebellion against God becomes fully realised. Referring to Luke 21:22, 24 Van Ruler suggests that it is difficult to deny that this terrible thought fits structurally into the kerygma of the new Testament.⁹³

Van Ruler does not deal with the Holocaust in particular, but with history in general and with the problem of theodicy. It is clear, however, where this phase of history, which will forever remain mortifying to God and man, has its place within the framework of his thinking. The revelation of God gives the quality of 'history' to existence. At the same time it calls forth, out of the chaos of existence, which is to be redeemed *absolutely*, the *absolute evil*, the incarnation of Satan as an essential moment in history. The ascension of God to his throne is a struggle rather than a celebration. As he rules in the midst of his enemies all the rebelliousness of man against the rule of God is revealed in and by the process of history. Man's rebellion and guilt, however, cannot prevent God from ascending his throne. On the contrary, the other aspect of God's ascension to this throne is the reconciliation of guilt. In guilt and reconciliation the enigma of history is not solved but expressed. 'In deze twee - de schuld en de versoening - is het raadsel der geschiedenis niet opgelost, maar samengevat. De geschiedenis is te verstaan als een permanente syntaxis van schuld en versoening...'⁹⁴

Ulrich E. Simon's *A Theology of Auschwitz*

A thoughtful response to the Holocaust has come from a Christian, Ulrich E. Simon in his *A Theology of Auschwitz*.⁹⁵ A Jew, who converted to Christianity, Simon views Auschwitz against the canvas of tradition

93. Van Ruler, A. A., *Het Koninkrijk Gods en de Geschiedenis*, Nijkerk, 1947, pp. 8 - 13. Also incorporated in *Verwachting en Voltooiing*, Nijkerk, 1978, pp. 29 ff.

94. Van Ruler, *Het Koninkrijk Gods en de Geschiedenis*, pp. 13, 14. Cf. Engelbrecht, B., *Achtergrond en Grondlyne van die Teokratiese Visioen*, D.D. Thesis, Unisa, 1963, pp. 122 ff.

95. Simon, Ulrich, E., *A Theology of Auschwitz*, Victor Gollanz, Ltd., London, 1967.

and, as a committed Christian, he connects Auschwitz with the redemptive process as seen by Christianity. The Babylonian exile, the spoliation of the Temple, the Crucifixion, the fall of Jerusalem, are all seen as links in the chain of events which despite or because of their catastrophic import grant us insight into God's dealings with man which nature and speculation cannot supply. Auschwitz must be viewed against the backdrop of tradition even if a new element of evil has to be comprehended. Old answers to the problem of evil are not adequate when viewed against Auschwitz.

Simon affirms the fact that anti-Semitism's history which is the history of the Jews since 70 C.E. is inseparable from Christian theology. The miracle of diaspora survival is not perceived of as such by the Church. The wandering Jew was evidence of God's displeasure. In the Church's dealings with the Jews there was always limited violence, never total extermination. Christians saw too late that Law, Prophecy, Wisdom Gospel were rejected in common with the Jews.

He perceives a pattern in which the cross of Christ interprets the tragic Holocaust and in which the contemporary scene reflects the eternal. He interprets the arrest and suffering of the Jews under the Nazis as a imitation of Christ, but goes on to suggest that the arrest of Christ does not parallel the brutal wrenching of Jews from their moorings, that whilst Jesus had a trial, the Jews did not even have a parody of a trial. They were totally dehumanised. Christ's death partly can be appropriated as a pattern for the victims at Auschwitz. They share in the supreme sacrifice by way of an analogy. The frightful journey of the Jews to the gas is compared to the *via dolorosa* of Christ. Auschwitz demands a 'more than secular'⁹⁶ understanding. By interpreting the despair of the extreme situation in the light of the suffering Christ, the meaningless is given meaning. Thus Christian tradition and modern experience fertilise one another. Neither of them can be segregated unless cynical despair is to overtake us all.

Simon is insistent that there can be no forgiveness for Auschwitz. Auschwitz is a sin against man and the Spirit which is unforgivable. As Louis Jacobs points out, however, Simon's views are far from clear.

96. Simon, Ulrich E., *A Theology of Auschwitz*, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., London, 1967, p. 105.

What he seems to be saying is that 'Auschwitz demonstrates the horrors which result from the loss of the personal and of the idea of law and from the relativist idea in morals. Hence a blow has been struck for all time for human freedom under God, so that those who went to their death were martyrs for the truth'.⁹⁷ Though Simon's is a powerful analogy Jacobs asserts that nothing is gained by the association of Jewish symbols and suffering with the passion of Jesus 'which had no meaning whatsoever for the majority of the victims'.⁹⁸

The notion of God suffering with his people is present in the Bible and is well developed in rabbinic thought.⁹⁹ It also appears in modern Jewish theology. Wiesel's account of the hanging child would tend to suggest this analogy.¹⁰⁰ Abraham Heschel speaks of the divine pathos in which God suffers at having to punish his erring people.¹⁰¹ Ignaz Maybaum interprets the Holocaust in terms of a *churban*, a turning point to a new and better age. A *churban* is a world-historical event, the unavoidable work of God. During the Holocaust the Jews, according to Maybaum, died for the sins of mankind, as Suffering Servant, High Priest and Sacrificial Lamb, all in one. Maybaum is not unaware of the possibly offensive, even seemingly incredible connotations of his interpretation of Auschwitz as a *churban*. He notes the striking Christian pattern of his schema, Auschwitz being the analogue of Golgotha. He sees Auschwitz not only as a sacrifice but as a salvation, not merely an analogue of Calvary but rather as an event on the pattern of the Exodus in which "the Remnant" were saved from the persecution of Pharaoh. Only a part, though a traumatically large part, of the Jewish people was

97. Jacobs, Louis, 'The Problem of Evil in our Time', in 'Current Theological Literature', *Judaism*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Summer 1968, p. 351.

98. Ibid.

99. See Robert Alan Hammer's 'The God of Suffering' *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 31, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall-Winter 1976 - 1977, pp. 34 - 41, for a lucid account of the rabbinic view of the suffering God.

100. Wiesel, *Night*, pp. 76, 77.

101. Heschel, Abraham, *The Prophets*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962.

destroyed by Hitler. Therefore, genocide did not take place. This calls for lamentation for the millions who perished, but also for hallelujahs for the millions who were saved.¹⁰²

Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*

Jürgen Moltmann in *The Crucified God* addresses himself to the Holocaust in terms of God's suffering with the people. Pointing to the theology of Abraham Heschel as *pathetic theology* he suggests that the prophets had no 'idea' of God but understood themselves and the people in the *situation* of God, this situation being the pathos of God. God is affected by events and human actions and suffering in history. He is affected because he is interested in his creation and his people. God suffers as a result of Israel's disobedience and his passion for his right and his honour in this world. It is his interest in his creation and his people by which he transfers his being into the history of his relationship and his covenant with man. 'God takes man so seriously that he suffers under the actions of man and can be injured by them. At the heart of the prophetic proclamation there stands the certainty that God is interested in the world to the point of suffering.'¹⁰³

Heschel has developed a *dipolar theology*.¹⁰⁴ God is free in himself and at the same time interested in his covenant relationship and affected by human history. This suggests a dual personality in God. Both notions can be followed in the theology of the rabbis who further deepened them.

Judaism has argued for an idea of the *theos apathes* and for a long time the apathetic God became a fundamental principle for Jewish theology. Jehuda Halevi thought that compassion and sympathy could only be signs of weakness in the soul and were not appropriate to God.

102. Maybaum, Ignaz, *The Face of God After Auschwitz*, Polak and Van Gemrep, Amsterdam, 1965. See also Seymour Cain, 'The Questions and Answers After Auschwitz', *Judaism*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Summer 1971, pp. 264 - 265.

103. Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Crucified God*, SCM Press, Limited, London, 1974, p. 271.

104. Ibid. p. 272.

According to Maimonides, no predicate which involves corporeality and the capacity for suffering may be applied to God. 'God is free from passions; he is moved neither by feelings of joy nor feelings of grief.'¹⁰⁵ Spinoza asserted that 'God neither loves nor hates'.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand Judaism has also acknowledged the theology which asserts the *pathos* of God. It is upon this basis that Moltmann constructs his theodicy. He argues that because of God's intense involvement in history, particularly in terms of the covenant, he is injured by disobedience and suffers in the people. The wrath of God therefore is a category of divine *pathos*, the opposite of indifference. Indifference, not wrath, is the opposite of love. The rabbis spoke of the stages of the self-humiliation of God in the creation, in the call of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the history of Israel, in the Exodus and Exile. Like a servant he bears the torch before Israel in the wilderness. Like a servant he bears Israel and its sins upon his back. These accommodations of God to the limitations of human history at the same time contain anticipation of his future indwelling in his whole creation. God's whole existence with Israel is in suffering. He cannot forget Israel's suffering for he would then have to forget 'his own rights'. He goes with the people into exile. He feels sorrow with the martyrs of the Holocaust. Moltmann sees a shattering expression of the *theologica crucis* as suggested in rabbinic theology in Wiesel's image of the hanging child. For Moltmann, there can be no other Christian answer to the Holocaust than this one. 'To speak here of a God who could not suffer would make God a demon. To speak here of an absolute God would make God an annihilating nothingness. To speak here of an indifferent God would condemn men to indifference.'¹⁰⁷

The Jewish understanding of the *pathos* of God is the presupposition for the Christian understanding of the living God in the passion of Christ. God humbles himself and takes upon himself the eternal death of the godless and godforsaken, so that all the godless and godforsaken

105. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 271.

106. Ibid. Quoted on p. 271. From Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, V, XVII.

107. Ibid. p. 274.

can experience communion with him. God himself was hanged on the gallows.¹⁰⁸ If that is taken seriously it follows that like the cross of Christ, even Auschwitz is in God himself. Even Auschwitz is taken up into the grief of the Father, the surrender of the Son and the power of the Spirit.

This does not justify Auschwitz or any other inhumanity to man. 'God in Auschwitz and Auschwitz in the crucified God - that is the basis for real hope which both embraces and overcomes the world, and the ground for a love which is stronger than death and can sustain death.'¹⁰⁹ This conviction forms the ground for living with the terror of history and the end of history, and nevertheless remaining in love and meeting what comes in openness for God's future. It is the ground for living and bearing guilt and sorrow for the future of man in God.¹¹⁰

John K. Roth's *A Consuming Fire*

deeply sincere and moving confrontation with the Holocaust has emerged in John K. Roth's *A Consuming Fire: Encounters with Elie Wiesel and the Holocaust*.¹¹¹ Through his contact with the thought of Wiesel he searches the religious and theological implications of the Holocaust, and as these are illumined by Wiesel, examines their implications for Christian belief after Auschwitz. The emphasis lies more in questions than in answers. Through question, protest and active involvement against injustice, he asks the Christian to

108. Moltmann here refers again to Wiesel's image of God in the form of a child, an inmate of the death camp, hanging on the gallows.

109. Ibid. p. 278.

110. Ibid. Robert Alan Hammer, *The God of Suffering*, p. 35, points out however that the 'God that suffers offers the comfort of his presence and points quietly to the idea that He cannot change the situation, whatever this may do to one's theology!'

111. Roth, John K., *A Consuming Fire: Encounters with Elie Wiesel and the Holocaust*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1977.

examine his faith and become more Jewish 'Wiesel-style'.¹¹² The very possibility of Christian testimony after Auschwitz is explored. He echoes Wiesel's protests and questions for a programme between creator and his creatures after Auschwitz, specifically for those who claim to encounter God through Jesus of Nazareth. The Holocaust beckons the Christian to share in the desolation, despair, the healing. Nothing about the first day in the beginning was quite as good as God pronounced it. The Holocaust was enough to make one give up in despair, yet it is precisely despair which must be fought.

Interestingly, one of the persons to whom Roth's book has been dedicated is Rubenstein. However, Roth finds Rubenstein's God too impersonal and his thinking too political and sociological. Though opposed to Rubenstein's conclusions, Roth admits his indebtedness to Rubenstein's questions, to his concern for honesty, and his openness to give every point of view its due.¹¹³

Like Rubenstein and Simon, Roth also gives an account of the teaching of contempt promulgated by the early Church against the Jews. Jewish-Christian relationships were a necessary condition for the Holocaust to have taken place. Unlike Simon, he refuses to push the analogy of Christ's suffering with the destruction of European Jewry too far. Dwelling too much on the passion of Christ can misplace priorities badly. Jesus died quickly with only one protest. He did not suffer the intense dehumanisation and degradation for interminable weeks or months as did the inmates of the death camps.

In a Holocaust universe Roth asserts that the term 'chosen' must mean emptying oneself in the service of others.¹¹⁴ There must be no exclusiveness, no smugness, no triumphalism.

112. Ibid. p. 11. Wiesel is exerting an increasing influence on Christian theologians. Robert McAfee Brown, in 'The Holocaust: The Crisis of Indifference', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 31, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall-Winter 1976 - 1977, pp. 16 - 20, acknowledges Wiesel's interpretation as the most important influence on his theology (p. 16) in the preceding 3 - 4 years.

113. Ibid. p. 12.

114. Roth cites Philippians 2:5-7. 'Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus. For the divine nature was his from the first: yet he did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave.'

Exclusiveness must never reign again. For the Christian Jesus must remain the way and the truth but Roth rejects the claim 'no-one comes to the Father but by me'. (John 14:6).

This must no longer be held as a requirement for admission to the Kingdom of God. The Christian must not condone all, but neither must he give up as lost any one whose commitments differ from his own.¹¹⁵ This startling assertion can be allied with Rubenstein's desire for the Jews to demythologise the doctrine of chosenness. In the final analysis, both these options, as attractive as they are, may prove to be impossible.

Roth urges the Christian to ask, 'Because the Messiah has come, in spite of the conviction that the Messiah has come, what are we to do until the Messiah comes?'¹¹⁶ The Holocaust forces him to question God's goodness and his power. The view that God is a cosmic sadist is morally intolerable. If God is purely light, with no darkness, the death camps suggested that God is too weak to make his goodness matter. To justify God may be to speak against human life. To protest against God may be to defend what is good. Not simply to accept God's will but to question it long and hard can be essential for sensitising us to each other.

He asks ultimately for a new Christian 'protestantism' for and against God, a choice of life against despair, a striving for healing in a world in which for the Jew the Messiah has not come, and in which for the Christian, the second coming is imperative. In the wake of the Holocaust the Christian should seek solidarity with the burdens of the Jews and become like the Jews. The Christian must learn that to be a Jew today is not to make the world Jewish or Christian. The task is to be Jewish, to be Christian, to live, in order to humanise the world, and to die in the attempt if necessary.

Though the Holocaust was a human action based on free choice, God too, is on trial. Both God and humanity have sinned and need forgiveness from each other. He says 'yes' to freedom, but not the kind of freedom

115. Roth, John K., *A Consuming Fire: Encounters with Elie Wiesel and the Holocaust*, p. 156. (Hereinafter referred to as *A Consuming Fire*.)

116. Ibid. p. 156.

that permits a Holocaust. Was it necessary for God to create a world of such freedom that his own ability to intervene was curtailed to prevent a Holocaust?

Any world with a Holocaust must be worse than one without it. It seems, therefore, that God willingly and freely opted for a world that could and did become less good than it, or some other, might have been. We emphasise God's goodness and innocence at the expense of his power. Is it still possible to see God's face after Auschwitz? Can there be any meaning in making the priestly benediction after God has so hidden his face?

The Areas of Theodicy

It is clear that the three areas in the problem of theodicy are God's omnipotence, God's goodness and the reality of evil. In our century, the reality of evil, in fact radical evil, cannot be denied. It cannot be seen as a privation or lack but as an end in itself, if not an object of worship.¹¹⁷ The sheer nakedness of evil, its vast extent and colossal scale, and the fact that it has occurred in the most radical form in a century in which man is supposed to have reached a high stage of moral and intellectual development, renders all earlier attempts at solution of theodicy banal.¹¹⁸

As radical evil is a reality, and cannot be denied, the two dominant areas for concern seem to lie in God's omnipotence and God's goodness, neither of which can be conceived simplistically or in water-tight compartments.

God's goodness has been questioned in past Jewish quests for theodicy, particularly in the mystic tradition. In the Kabbalah there is a strong element of evil within God himself. God is conceived of as Becoming as opposed to the non-mystical idea of God as a Being. The purging of the evil element in the Godhead becomes a central theme in the divine drama. This view was reasserted by Isaac Luria after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Luria asserted that:

117. Kenneth R. Seeskin has argued for the reality of radical evil in our era. See 'The Reality of Radical Evil', *Judaism*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Fall 1980, pp. 440 - 453.

118. See Jacobs, 'The Problem of Evil in our Time', p. 347.

- (1) there is an evil element in God,
- (2) the existence of evil in the world is necessary as a by-product of the creative process, and
- (3) a possible flaw in the process caused more than the minimum necessary amount of evil to be generated.¹¹⁹

There is biblical precedent to the view that evil is a creation of God (Job 2:10 and Isaiah 45:7). Wiesel and Roth protest against God, seeing in him an evil element. Not far removed from this, however, is the question of God's omnipotence which raises several different questions. One of the most notable is the 'free will' explanation of theodicy to which I now turn.¹²⁰

Free Will and God's Omnipotence

Some, though not all, evil can be accounted for by locating the cause in man's freedom of choice rather than in God's providence. If God granted man free choice, God cannot be held responsible if man chooses evil. Seeskin makes the interesting observation that this view can only be defended if God also endowed man with rational faculties sufficient to allow intelligent choices. If man has not been granted adequate intelligence to use his freedom correctly then God, not man, is responsible if man fails to do so.¹²¹

This issue is brought into focus in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*,¹²² in which a conditioning programme is imposed on a violent young criminal which, in order to cut down crime and violence, renders him incapable of choosing evil. The thrust of the novel however is that when 'a man cannot choose he ceases to be a man'.¹²³ Without choice he becomes a programmed clockwork orange. To be human is to be endowed with free

119. See Sherwin, 'Elie Wiesel and Jewish Theology', p. 45.

120. David Wolf Silverman in 'The Holocaust: A Living Force', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 31, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall-Winter 1976 - 1977, pp. 21 - 25, argues that omnipotence can no longer be regarded as an attribute appropriate to God. 'Once man exists in history, God is endangered'. He is also threatened, having risked himself upon the freedom of man. See p. 25.

121. Seeskin, 'The Reality of Radical Evil', p. 451.

122. Burgess, Anthony, *A Clockwork Orange*, Penguin Books, 1972, (First printed by Heineman 1962).

123. Ibid. p. 67.

choice. To realise one's humanity is to choose correctly. The sickening realisation in *A Clockwork Orange* is that the boy is stripped of his humanity by being deprived of free choice, albeit a choice of evil. His version of 'humanity' is only restored when he returns to his choice of violence. When applied to the reality of radical evil in the world one is tempted to wonder whether man indeed, is endowed with the genuine capacity for making the right choices. This view of man, however, is sceptical, perhaps justifiably so in the light of modern experience. The Judaic view of man is that he is capable of grasping the difference between good and evil. Man is perfectible otherwise the giving of the covenant would be futile. God could only have given a Torah to beings capable of grasping its intentions.¹²⁴

An interesting aspect to the free will problem is what God, having endowed man with choice could have intervened to rescue innocent victims when human choices inclined toward catastrophe. Rescue is a current theme in the Bible. Abraham was free to choose the sacrifice of Isaac. The rescuing intervention of God came only after the decision was made. The Egyptians pursued the Israelites across the Red Sea, thus exercising free choice. God rescued the people after Egyptian free will had been exercised. In principle, therefore, the lives of six million Jews could have been saved without robbing the Germans of free will. Seeskin suggests that many Jews failed to resist the Nazis precisely because they believed in the inevitability of such a rescue.¹²⁵ In this regard perhaps Rubenstein's scepticism is justified. Those who awaited deliverance simply perished. Perhaps the Jewish view of God has indeed become dysfunctional when facing the exigencies of the twentieth century.

When one looks at the free choice explanation in relation to the Holocaust one can find neither a teaching nor a punishing aspect. If man must endure some suffering in order to develop his virtues, and if human suffering serves some higher purpose the children who were

124. See Seeskin, 'The Reality of Radical Evil', p. 450.

125. Ibid. p. 451.

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124. See Seeskin, 'The Reality of Radical Evil', p. 450.

125. Ibid. p. 451.

slaughtered were certainly never given an opportunity to develop anything or fulfil anything. If this argument contains merit, surely God could have devised a more humane way of testing the moral fibre of his creatures. Likewise, whatever crimes the Jews had committed could not merit the intensity and severity of a punishment such as the Holocaust. What kind of teaching experience could it have been if God turned his face? 'Were not the Jews of Europe as deserving of rescue as the Jews of ancient Egypt? If not, of what crime were they guilty - where *they* includes a million children?'¹²⁶

Rubenstein's View

Rubenstein has turned toward the mystic view of God by insisting on the dark aspects of divinity. He, however, has added elements of Tillich's Ground of being and the Freudian death instinct to his God-concept by suggesting that God is the Ground of Being from which we come and to which we shall ultimately return, and, in fact, to which we desire to return. God becomes the Cannibal Mother who gives birth only to consume. God is the omnipotent Holy Nothingness.

Rubenstein cuts the Gordian knot in relation to the biblical God's omnipotence and goodness by denying his existence, an existence which he could never really affirm. His God died at Auschwitz. It is a logical absurdity to assert that a God who never existed died at Auschwitz. It therefore seems that he cannot be declaring the 'death' of a non-existent God. What he *does* seem to be saying is that the efficacy of the illusion of the Father God of the Bible, in efficacy which lasted for almost two thousand years of diaspora existence, has now become disastrously dysfunctional. Not only is it no longer effective, but it is positively damaging. The biblical God is 'dead' in terms of function and meaning. He is also 'dead' as the author of morality because modern man with his radical secular attitudes has eliminated God effectively in his dealings with his fellow men. For all practical purposes we live in a world which is functionally 'godless'. The time of radical secularity is the time of the death of God.

126. Ibid. p. 452.

Because Rubenstein is fully cognizant of man's inherent evil he cannot rejoice in the death of God and, in my view, exhibits a nostalgia for that lost world in which God once functioned, as well as a groping toward a finding of God in the future. Although he shows a deep awareness of some kind of divine presence, he appears to be groping toward a new aspect of divinity.

His view of the biblical God as an illusion forces one to conclude that as far as the biblical God is concerned, Rubenstein is moving within the Freudian circle with all the presuppositions that that position implies. He cannot be assessed on the same basis as the theistic theologians for whom the biblical God is a reality and a confrontation.

Charles W. Steckel has cut the Gordian knot in a totally different way from Rubenstein by arguing the total irrelevance of theodicy.¹²⁷ He points out that the 'God is dead' question was raised by American rabbis and not by survivors of the Holocaust. The survivors, on the whole, did not lose faith in God. They rebelled against society rather than against God. He regards them as more profound spokesmen for Auschwitz than the writers of radical theology. 'How inadequate is the statement and the comparison that "Judaism and Christianity are in the process of becoming neo-archaic, pagan religion in fact if not in name"¹²⁸ as compared with the inscription: "I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love even when feeling it not. I believe in God even when He is silent"'.¹²⁹

To the atheist, suffering presents no theological problem because the universe lacks a transcendent power capable of redeeming it. For the totally committed orthodox theist, suffering is not a problem

127. Steckel, Charles W., 'God and the Holocaust', *Judaism*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Summer 1971, pp. 282 ff.

128. Steckel, op cit. p. 285, is quite obviously referring to Rubenstein.

129. Ibid. p. 285. The latter quotation may be found in Glatstein, Knox and Margoshes, (eds.), *Anthology of Holocaust Literature*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1969, p. 340.

It is noteworthy that in a recent review essay 'Faith and the Holocaust', *Judaism*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Spring 1982, pp. 185 - 201, Benny Kraut observes that there has been a vast range of theological responses among survivors of the Holocaust. It is intriguing that these responses mirror some of the fundamental insights of contemporary Jewish theologians, including those of Rubenstein. See especially pp. 194 f.

because he believes that eventually evil will be punished and good rewarded. For those in the middle, however, who have either experienced the Holocaust or have reacted sensitively to its horrors, some search for a theodicy is understandable. Some Jews have kept silent because they feel it irreligious to probe too deeply. They invoke a hallowed tradition 'And Aaron was silent.' (Leviticus 10:3).

However, God is not to be defended at the expense of laying the blame at the doors of European Jewry who have spontaneously been given the name *kedoshim*, martyrs.

At the other extreme despair has led to a denial of God and an affirmation of Jewish values. Jacobs asserts that this is a form of atheism and should be recognised as such even though it may be wrenched from faithful hearts torn in agony. 'Nothing' is still "not anything" even if it is spelled with a capital "N".¹³⁰

In a favourable review of Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz* Arnold Jacob Wolf¹³¹ suggested that Rubenstein's view of God as Holy Nothingness and of the Messiah as the Angel of Death were treated too briefly for the consequential and ambiguous concepts they represent. Wolf felt that Rubenstein's next task was elaboration and elucidation of these concepts.¹³² Apart from a slight elaboration of his concept of God the Holy Nothingness in the final chapter of *Morality and Eros*, I do not believe that he has done this.

Seymour Cain has given a sympathetic consideration to the theodicy of Rubenstein. He, however, regards Rubenstein's protests as more cogent and convincing than his proposals,¹³³ an accusation levelled equally at Fackenheim.¹³⁴

It is to a consideration and critique of Rubenstein's proposals that I now turn.

130. Jacobs, 'The Problem of Evil in our Time', p. 348.

131. Wolf, Arnold Jacob, 'Jewish Theology After the Death Camps', A review of Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz*, *Judaism*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Spring 1967, pp. 233 - 236.

132. *Ibid.* p. 236.

133. Cain, 'The Question and Answers After Auschwitz', p. 271.

134. *Ibid.* p. 273.

C H A P T E R V I I I

If mankind is to be destroyed, it will be a result of Auschwitz. If there is a lesson to be found in Auschwitz it is for the world to learn, not for us. We are still engaged in telling the tale. The world should learn its own lesson on its own level for its own good, namely: when people do things of this nature to Jews, tomorrow they will do them to themselves. This, perhaps, may be our mission to the world: we are to save it from self-destruction.

Elie Wiesel

RUBENSTEIN'S REJECTION OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHOSENNESS

As already indicated, Rubenstein rejects the doctrine of chosenness. He has done so for several reasons, many of which are compellingly significant as well as genuinely illuminating.

- (1) Primarily, his rejection seems to stem from the question concerning the *way* in which Jews view themselves as a causative or exacerbating factor behind Christian anti-Semitism.
- (2) He views the doctrine functionally as a compensatory claim of superordinate worth in the face of marginality and powerlessness.
- (3) He, quite, correctly, does not interpret the doctrine as one of racial superiority, but goes much further in seeing in it a source of millennia of pathetic self-blame and guilt.
- (4) The doctrine endows the Jew with a supernatural vocation, thus dehumanising him. He becomes, to the outside world, an object of unreasonable demands and expectations, resulting in decisive hatreds of him. He can never be

accepted as a normal human being possessing the average spectrum of virtues and vices, but is alternately praised as Jesus-like or condemned as Judas-like. Philo-Semitism is as dangerous as anti-Semitism in that undue attention and expectation focused on the Jew can always lead to violence.

- (5) Because of the special role claimed by the Jew in the divine drama, he assumes inordinate importance for Christianity as chosenness passed from the Old Israel to the New Israel. This results in dynamics of jealousy not unlike those operative in sibling rivalry as to which son is to be the Father's favourite.
- (6) The whole situation thus assumes an Antigone-like quality, for the Christian is forced to view the Jew as chosen, otherwise the Christ event is stripped of meaning and the Christ makes absolutely no theological difference.
- (7) This tension is vastly complicated by the deicide accusation against the Jews and their rejection of the Christ as Messiah.
- (8) The doctrine of election is inextricably tied with the giving of the covenant which directly implies reward and punishment.
- (9) Taken to its logical conclusion, as God's hand has always been active in history in terms of reward and punishment, the Holocaust can be seen legitimately as a consequence of divine retribution. The difference between the Jewish and Christian interpretation of the Holocaust as divine punishment revolves around the *nature* of the sin committed. In the Christian view it is failure to recognise in Christ the Messiah. In the Jewish view it lies in infidelity to Torah commandments.
- (10) Politically, and economically, many self-legitimizing ideologies which ruthlessly divide men into the "elect" and the "preterite", such as social Darwinism, are based ultimately on the biblical doctrine of chosenness. This modern expression of radical secularity forces him to reject the doctrine.

The Modern Period and the Doctrine of Chosenness

Levi A. Olan¹ points out that there are two major phenomena in our time which compel us to re-examine the doctrine of chosenness, although the thrust of his argument and the final conclusion he reaches are that the doctrine should be retained as the Jew's 'most positive way of giving witness to the reality of the living God who is Liberator as He is Creator'.²

The first phenomenon is the development of secularism among Jews which, strangely, is accompanied by increased observance of the sacerdotal and the cultic. People live their lives as if God does not exist, neither denying God, nor formally acknowledging his existence. For such modern Jews, the doctrine of chosenness is as unreal as God himself.

The second phenomenon is the Holocaust. Despite two thousand years of anti-Semitism and violent persecution, Jews survived, retaining belief in chosenness. The covenant was eternal even if only a small saving remnant survived. The Holocaust has shaken Jewish faith in God and certainly in Jewish chosenness. 'The Jew today more adequately fits the Christian doctrine of vicarious atonement than his role of witness to the living God who chose Israel to be a light unto the nations. In a world which is largely secularistic and in which the Jew is threatened with total extinction, the validity of Israel's claim to be a people chosen by God must be seriously questioned.'³

Rubenstein does not have a simplistic view of the role of chosenness in Jewish self-consciousness although he tends to distort the historicity of this self-consciousness in his predominantly functional approach to it. He is aware of the meaning with which it has endowed Jewish existence and of the fact that both Jew and Christian are dependent on the centrality of the doctrine. Christians, clearly, cannot dispense with the doctrine and it is precisely in this area that the dilemma of Jews being required to do so becomes explicit.

1. Olan, Levi, A. 'The Doctrine of the Chosen People Reaffirmed'. *Judaism*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Fall 1980, pp. 461 - 468.

2. Ibid, p. 46

3. Ibid, p. 466.

Rubenstein has been drawn toward Reconstructionism because it does not emphasise the chosenness issue but focuses rather on the ethnic or national quality of Judaism. It would appear then, that it is simpler for Jews to bypass the doctrine of Jewish election than it is for Christians. He is acutely aware of the fact that men are not responsible for the mythic structures of the traditions into which they were born. We are all thrown absurdly into the world with our inherited traditions and their accompanying myths. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to rid ourselves of the encasing meaning of these myths. Thus, despite Rubenstein's personal choice to reject the doctrine of chosenness, he, to some extent, retains his special unwanted destiny and significance as a Jew, as do all Jews.

Chosenness, Covenant and Monotheism as Early Manifestations in Jewish Consciousness

As Zvi Werblowsky points out, the Jews were always fiercely conscious of being a people set apart from other nations.⁴ This distinctiveness was seen as being due to a religious vocation and destiny. As a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6) it knew that it was destined to dwell alone and that it shall not be reckoned among the nations (Numbers 23:6). This consciousness presumably passed through many stages but this process is not reflected in the documents. It is presented in the Bible in crystallised form and it is in this form that it influenced later Jewish history.

In Jewish self-understanding, Israel is a natural community, 'the seed of Abraham' whose natural existence has a religious significance and purpose. It is a nation solely by virtue of its Torah. This combination of an ethnic quality with a distinctive religious calling places Judaism in a unique situation. Peoplehood and religion are integrally related. The people and their religion are not adventitious, but grew together.

John Bright affirms that election and covenant are not given formal statement by early Israel but that both doctrines are fundamental to her understanding of herself and her God from the beginning. At no

⁴ Werblowsky, Zvi, Chapter 'Judaism' in *Historia Religionum*, Vol. II, Religions of the Present, Eds. C. J. Bleeker and G. Widengren, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1971, p. 3.

period did Israel not believe she was the chosen people of God. This awareness dates back to the Exodus and beyond, to the promises made to Abraham.

Israel was a people born of this promise, brought out of bondage in Egypt, an event which was confirmed by a covenant with them at Sinai.

Although scholars sometimes argue that absolute monotheism only emerged during the time of classical prophecy, it seems that monotheism was explicit at the very beginning.⁶ The prophets were appealing to traditional values when they inveighed against idolatry and infidelity to the covenant. Werblowsky thus terms Israel's chosenness as 'universalistic exclusiveness'. It is significant that Israel's election to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is preceded immediately by the words: 'for the whole earth is mine'. While other peoples may walk in the ways of their gods, these gods are sheer vanity and nothingness. Israel's Lord alone is God of heaven and earth. (Psalm 96:5-10).

Chosenness of the Jewish people by the one God was a double-edged sword. It was accompanied by an everlasting covenant from which there was no escape and there was no respite from the required loyalty. Unfaithfulness to the covenant could not dissolve it. Infidelity could only bring chastisement. Israel could not be widowed, divorced or disowned, but asked to return God's love and to God's love.

The destruction of the first temple confirmed and strengthened belief in the special destiny of the Jewish people. A promise of final salvation beyond catastrophe and destruction, as enunciated by Deutero-Isaiah, was now rendered more credible. Traditional monotheism weighted the scale in favour of the prophetic interpretation. The conviction was affirmed that injustice, oppression and whoring after strange gods were disastrous aberrations from the path which Israel should walk.

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5. Bright, John, *A History of Israel*, Old Testament Library, SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1964. (Third Impression), p. 132.
 6. Yehezkel Kaufmann argues for the sudden eruption into history of monotheism with the Exodus in his *The Religion of Israel*, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1961.
 7. Werblowsky, *Historia Religionum*, Vol. II, p. 5.

The concept of chosenness passed automatically into the rabbinic consciousness and the development of the Midrash testifies to the difficulties implied by the doctrine. A rabbinic tradition relates that God offered the role of chosenness to all the other nations of the world but he was turned down by each in turn. In desperation, it seems, he asked the Jews, who also declined the role of becoming his people. Only when God held the mountain over their heads as a threat, did the people of Israel consent to become God's chosen people (*Avodah Zarah* 2b - 3a). The Midrash thus indicates that the role was not popular.⁸

The role has been integrally related with the suffering of the Jewish people. A *Leitmotif* which runs through Israel's dealings with God is the centrality of the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac, which is inextricably tied to the notion of Israel's chosenness and suffering. Bert Breiner points to the centrality of the *Akedah* in the Jewish self-consciousness.⁹ It is through Isaac that God's promise to Abraham concerning the election of the Jews was to be fulfilled. Yet Isaac, the son of the promise, was to be sacrificed. Herein lies an impenetrable mystery concerning the trials with which God tries his chosen ones. 'Israel has learned that suffering is somehow an intrinsic part of her identity as the chosen people of God.'¹⁰ The Talmud states: 'Three precious gifts did the Holy One blessed by He, bestow upon Israel, and all of them He gave only through the medium of suffering. They are Torah, the land of Israel, and the world to come.' (*Ber. 5a*). The Jew thus sees in the *Akedah* the sacrifice of himself. As the child of Abraham through the lineage of Isaac, he looks back to the *Akedah* through which he became part of a priest people, God's suffering servant, to live by the law and bear the burden of woes that might come upon his people in order to achieve redemption both for themselves and for mankind.

8. See Olan, 'The Doctrine of the Chosen People Reaffirmed', p. 461.

9. Breiner, Bert, 'Abraham in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.' Paper read at the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Conference held at the University of Birmingham, September, 1981.

10. Ibid. pp. 12, 13.

Thus, in looking back, the Jew also looks forward to the Messianic age for humanity as a whole.¹¹

Challenges to the Doctrine

The first challenge to the doctrine came from the early Christians who declared themselves the New Israel. They affirmed the Jewish claim, but pronounced that it has now been forfeited because the Jews had sinned against God by worshipping the golden calf, but, more seriously, by rejecting the Christ as the Messiah. In Romans 11 Paul wrote that Israel's failure had not completely destroyed its election, since ultimately, there would be a reconciliation. I Peter 2:9 left no room for reconciliation. Despite such ambiguities Christian succession to Israel's role as God's chosen people became church dogma.

With two religions claiming chosenness by the same God, and the persistent rejection by the Jews of Jesus as the Messiah, and its refusal to enter the Church as the New Israel, there was constant chastisement of the Jews by the more powerful Church.

Persistent persecution of the Jews as well as the credibility and attractiveness of the legend of the Wandering Jew, homeless and belonging nowhere, led to a reticence by Jews to declare their role as the chosen people and they thus confined it to the privacy of Jewish liturgy. The belief in chosenness and covenant had become the foundation upon which the religion of Israel was established. The liturgical tradition has retained it from the beginning to the present day. The only secession from this tradition was introduced by Mordecai Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement, who omitted any reference to chosenness in the Reconstructionist prayer book.

It was only with the dawn of the modern era, marked by the Enlightenment and the Emancipation that Jewish philosophers such as Baruch Spinoza and Moses Mendelssohn began to question the doctrine of Jewish chosenness. The first serious challenge to the doctrine arose in the nineteenth

11. Breiner, Bert., cites Arthur Herzberg, 'On Jewish Chosenness', *Jewish Heritage Reader*, Compiled by Morris Adler, (B'nai B'rith Book), Taplinger Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1965, pp. 137, 132.

century in terms of Jewish nationalism and Jewish socialism. In the former case, a search for a Jewish national homeland was inaugurated in which Jewish relationships with the outside world could be normalised. In the latter case, as an alternative to Jewish nationalism, a small group of Russian Jewish revolutionaries, the Bundists, promoted atheism, vigorously antagonistic to all expressions of the Jewish religious heritage. Along with traditional Judaism, they discarded the traditional doctrine of chosenness.

Religious Judaism, whether Orthodox or Reform, continues to pay homage to the doctrine of chosenness and retains it in the liturgy, with the exception of the Reconstructionists.

In the non-Jewish world the claim to chosenness has been subjected to derision and scorn, and Jews have been charged with brazen arrogance. Olan quotes George Bernard Shaw: 'The fault of the Jew is his enormous arrogance based on his claim to belong to God's chosen race. The Nordic nonsense is only an attempt to imitate the posterity of Abraham.'¹²

When viewed in the light of this statement, Rubenstein's question concerning the way in which Jews view themselves as a causative factor behind anti-Semitism assumes enormous import. George Steiner echoes Rubenstein's sentiments.¹³ He suggests that in the wake of the Holocaust Jews have a unique task to teach the lesson of common humanity as the Jews may have launched upon history and themselves the murderous boomerang of arrogance and nationalistic fervour as expressed in Nazism. 'For it is in Judaism that we find claims which the Hellenic world did not put forth. We know today that Nazism subtly mimed the millenary claims and the myth of singular election in the Judaism of the Pentateuch.'¹⁴ He sees a 'hideous relationship of parody' between the Nazis and the Jews. To the extent that the Jews may be responsible for having spoken of being a people exalted, a people divinely elect against others, certainly during the time of Joshua and the Judges, to that extent the boomerang sought the Jews out and nearly destroyed

12. Olan, 'The Doctrine of the Chosen People Reaffirmed', p. 464, quoted as being without reference.

13. Steiner, George. 'Jewish Values', pp. 279, 280 and 297, 298.

14. Ibid. p. 279.

the people totally. Steiner warns that the instruction of that is that Jews must never again accept those claims and those nationalisms. Steiner points out that the Nazis couched their messianic and millennial claims in the very words and phrases culled from the Old Testament, 'ein Reich fuer Immer', 'ein ewiges Volk', 'ein Volk unter Völkern'. Other nations, before the Germans, also sought a final solution to the Jewish problem. One of the first blueprints for such a solution was by Céline in 1937 in *Bagatelle pour un Massacre*.¹⁵ 'If we ask for the root of that terrible hatred, I say, just provisionally, it may lie in the fact that other human nations found it intolerable that the Jews had made certain claims of millennial and Messianic privilege.'¹⁶ The devilish parody between Jewish chosenness and anti-Semitism is demonstrated by the fact that even the language of the Jewish books passed into the roster of anti-Semitic propaganda from 1880 until the Nazi onslaught. In this respect Rubenstein's insights are valuable in that not only does he emphasise the negative features inherent in the doctrine of chosenness, but he accompanies his explication with the teaching of contempt promulgated by the Church against the deicidal Jews, thus rendering their claims to chosenness even more provocative for the outside world. Perhaps there is something about the way in which Jews view themselves which contributes to the incitement of antagonism and violence.

Is Abandonment of the Doctrine Possible?

The protests of Rubenstein seem to be more cogent than his proposals. Rubenstein, as Steiner, does not take adequate account of the revelatory nature of the question of chosenness. He views the doctrine naturalistically and functionally. While realising the tremendous impact of covenantal faith on Judaism up to the present day, he does not appear to take adequate account of the fact that in the Jewish understanding it is a revelatory event, although in a recent paper he concedes that Moses may have received a revelation.¹⁷

15. Ibid. p. 298. 16. Ibid. p. 298.

17. Rubenstein, Richard L. 'Religion and History : Power, History and the Covenant at Sinai', to be published in *Take Judaism For Example. Studies Toward the Comparison of Religion*, ed. Jacob Neusner, University of Chicago Press, 1982. (Received by personal communication).

For those who regard the doctrine as being of divine origin there is no possibility of denying its centrality no matter how catastrophic or problematic its entailments. Furthermore, for the believing Jew the problem of suffering is explained by the impenetrable mystery of Israel's chosenness, as was indicated by Breiner. It is noteworthy, however, that Rubenstein's position cannot be denied or disproved when viewed from the vantage point of naturalism, non-faith or atheism and the doctrine can legitimately be viewed as a simple case of ethnocentrism.

Rubenstein, until very recently, has had a tendency to distort the doctrine by giving the impression that it is peculiar to rabbinic Judaism and the state of Jewish powerlessness which ensued after 70 C.E. As he is fully aware, but does not always make apparent, the doctrine was no invention of the rabbis to compensate for a state of marginality, but dated back to the earliest consciousness of the Jewish people. Rubenstein appears to over-emphasise the break which occurred between pre-70 and post-70 C.E. Jewish existence. The doctrine of election was held when the Jewish people had a national existence of its own (tenuous as it might have been!). Thus, even as a state which could enter into the power arena, Israel's chosenness was always central to its self-consciousness.

In a recent article which was sent to me by Rubenstein and which is soon to be published,¹⁸ he examines the Jewish view of history in terms of functionality in the face of power. It is one of the few pieces in which he discusses biblical history. He tends, in his earlier works to focus on rabbinic Judaism and its aftermath. In this paper he appears to have revised, or at least elaborated his earlier views on Israel's self-consciousness in relation to chosenness by dealing with the Exodus event itself and the biblical period.

He sees all history in terms of power, asserting that history is 'the record of the ways in which men have employed power that have been deemed worthy of memory'.¹⁹ Every reflection on history therefore, is a consideration of the nature and use of power. Israel was to reverse

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

previous allocation of power by the Exodus event and her subsequent history, up to the present day, was to be characterised by a tension and conflict between the power of a single, invisible Lord of history, who demanded ethical covenant obligations, and the only *concrete* power which exists, namely, human power.

He interprets the Exodus event, accompanied by the covenant and chosenness in functional terms as the breaking away of an amorphous group of people, the 'Hebrews' from the oppression of the sacred kingship of Egypt. The 'Hebrews' were united only by common experience, yearning and hatred for their overlords. The Exodus and covenant, with its revolutionary doctrine of chosenness of a slave people by an all-powerful God, served to weld them into a people by transferring power from the Egyptian king to the one almighty God. They were united and bound by the ethical entailments of the covenant, thus rebelling against all previous social hierarchies with revolutionary and long-term consequences.

According to Rubenstein the set of values needed to *establish* a community are vastly different from those needed to *maintain* it. When Israel entered its own land it was faced with power politics. A tension between ethical *commandments* of the covenant and the exigencies of statehood, which often require the ruthless sacrifice of ethical norms, ensued. Israel responded like all other nations. In its national existence force took precedence over ethics. Israel, and subsequently, Judah fell to foreign powers. The prophetic interpretation was that they fell as a result of infidelity to the covenant. However, because the prophets accurately predicted doom, there is no certainty that their analysis of the *causes* of doom was correct. Rubenstein asserts that the two small kingdoms fell because of their relative military weakness. The prophetic interpretation, however, served to console and give hope.

After the fall of the second temple in 70 C.E. the rabbis adopted the same interpretation as had the prophets. Rubenstein regards the periods of the Exodus and the aftermath of the catastrophe in 70 C.E. as being similar in that in both cases a new community had to be forged and its existence given cohesive meaning and hope. In these two periods covenantal religion, which has been the hallmark of Judaism from the Exodus until the present time has been both functional

and dysfunctional depending on the circumstances of the people in relation to power. Rubenstein concedes, however, that the vision of hope it gave was essential for the survival of the Jewish people for two thousand years of diaspora existence. For the greater part, its function could be seen primarily in psychological terms.

There is a great difference, however, between recognising:-

(a) that covenantal religion was functional for Jews during much of their history, (b) that it has also been functional for certain disadvantaged classes in the world who are not necessarily Jews, and (c) making the claim, as both Christian and Jewish theologians tend to do, that covenant religion is *the* preeminent model for all of humanity at its finest.²⁰ Rubenstein suggests that for many individuals who feel more or less at home in their world and who do not experience existence as slaves, outsiders or exiles, alternative religious options are likely to prove more appropriate than the God of the covenant, even if they have been born into covenantal faith and retain membership in a religion which formally affirms the sovereignty of the God of the covenant. This is the position in which he, no doubt, finds himself.

Werblowsky points to the fact that there is a difference between history and one's perception of history. He suggests that there is a tendency, particularly among Christian scholars, to differentiate sharply between the pre-exilic period of Jewish history, calling it 'Israelite religion' and post-exilic Jewish history, calling it 'Judaism'. This is based on the differing presuppositions in relation to the Christ and the divergent ways in which Christians and Jews view the career of Jesus. For the former, there is a straight line running from the Old Testament through the Gospels, the history of the Church, up to the Church today. The post-biblical period which is now called 'Judaism' in order to distinguish it clearly from the religion of biblical Israel, is considered as a sideline which branches off at the main and most important juncture, the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ. In the Jewish consciousness, however, there is no break at all in the line leading from the Bible through the rabbis and up to the present day. For the Jew 'Judaism' and 'the religion of

20. Ibid.

Israel' are the same and what is called the religion of biblical Israel is but one chapter of a long and variegated historical continuum.²¹

Likewise, I feel that Rubenstein, relying on his personal theological premises, makes too great a break between Jewish existence before and after 70 C.E. in terms of power and chosenness. The basic consciousness which motivated the rabbis in regard to Israel's chosenness went back to the very beginnings of Jewish existence. Indeed, the rabbis led a community now stripped of political power, but their insights were based on scripture and could, in reality, have been no different with regard to the question of chosenness. Equally, for those whose lives are motivated by the basic tenets of Judaism chosenness would be impossible to eliminate.

The Deicide Accusation and Chosenness

In his present emphasis on power in relative isolation from discussion of the deicide accusation, Rubenstein tends to distort the doctrine of chosenness, seeing it as a claim of inordinate worth in the face of marginality. Perhaps he was more accurate when in *After Auschwitz*, instead of basing his assumptions on the factor of powerlessness, he focused more finely on the Christian mythic structure as lying behind anti-Semitism and resulting ultimately in the Holocaust. Undoubtedly powerlessness was an important factor, but powerlessness, in isolation from chosenness combined with the deicide accusation and the resultant teaching of contempt against the Jew, could never have been responsible for a disaster of the proportions of the Holocaust.

Rubenstein is acutely and sensitively aware of the force of the mythic structure of the Jew as deicide in moulding Nazi propaganda. With enormous insight, he suggested that deicide is the secret, dark wish of all men nurtured on the Judaeo-Christian tradition. They wish to overthrow the biblical God in order to attain the release from all behavioural restraint. The aim of the Nazis was to create a world in which God is dead, or more precisely, a world in which He is negated. The perversity of the human heart finds its ultimate expression in the

21. Werblowsky, *Historia Religionum*, Vol. II, p. 2.

myth of the murder of God. The Germans resented the imposition of the Jewish God through Christianity and a loss of their Teutonic folk gods. Hitler had an avowed contempt for Christianity and felt that German alienation could only be terminated by an end to the Jewish 'gods' of Christianity. The ancient Jewish-Christian quarrel over the 'true' Israel led to the utilisation of the original Israel as a surrogate victim and scapegoat for the presumed sins of the New Israel in affecting the alienation of the German people from their native traditions. The Nazis were able to rid themselves of the last restraints against violence imposed by the Jewish God and avenge his death at the very same time.

The painful tension inherent in the opposing claims of the two faiths is pin-pointed. The early Church became the New Israel supplanting the 'Old' Israel. Paul felt that ultimately the Jews would accept the Christ and he felt a real sense of kinship with those whom he regarded as his erring brethren. However, the tension inherent in Paul's view developed into bitter religious antagonism. In the writings of some of the Church fathers Paul's mild doctrine of the Old and New Israel developed into an extreme contrast between the Church and the New Israel and the Synagogue as the despised and rejected of God. In Justin Martyr's writings an old Jewish idea, God's punishment of Israel, has been combined with a new sin, the murder of Christ, which soon became regarded as the murder of God.

Rubenstein has given a clearly considered account of the origins of Jew hatred in *After Auschwitz* seeing in the Christian conception of the Jew as deicide a significant component of the religious origins of the death camps. He however, has ceased to discuss this important contributing factor to the Holocaust in his more recent works and tends to focus on power and its uses in modern problem solving. He is aware of the teaching of contempt for a deicidal people who refused to recognise Jesus as the messiah. He is also aware of the fact that the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. was interpreted by the Church as punishment for this sin. Both these factors became apparent contemporaneously with the advent of Jewish powerlessness. His present one-sided focus on powerlessness therefore is a distortion. Indeed, powerlessness was an important pre-condition for the Holocaust, but in my opinion, the decisive hatred for the Jew, which cannot be separated

from the deicide accusation, was a much more important motivation behind the Holocaust. Rubenstein's assertion that the fires which incinerated the corpses at Dachau were lit by Titus and Hitler completed what Titus began could perhaps be more accurately stated as:

'The fires which consumed the Jews during the Holocaust were lit by the deicide accusation in the Gospels.' The deicide accusation provided the fuel for the credibility of the Nazi propaganda delineating the Jew as *Tierrnensch* or *Untermensch*.²²

Far from being a platitude this statement finds remarkable corroboration in much responsible and serious Christian theology. There is a line of continuity between the Gospels of the New Testament and Auschwitz. It differs somewhat from the superficial and hypocritical accusation of deicide made against the Jews and the theologically superficial Jewish indignation it evokes, and concentrates on man's sin of actual 'deicide' as one of the two great moments which determine the essence of history as a synthesis of absolute guilt and absolute reconciliation. It should be noted, however, that the accusation of deicide which was made throughout the centuries against the Jews by the Christians is an epiphenomenon of what Christianity professes it, *itself*, to be in its very essence.

Given the Christian belief that Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate, the second person of the divine trinity in the flesh, that which happened on Golgotha was 'deicide'. At the same time Jesus was proclaimed by the New Testament to be 'the Lamb of God who takes

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22. Responsible Christian theologians are today rejecting Christian triumphalism in response to the Holocaust, for example, Paul van Buren stated:

'We must shoulder our own responsibility for our own failure to have offered more than a token resistance to this horror, ...our responsibility to those who come after us is to correct what we say to each other. If, for example, we leave unchallenged and do not wipe out the tradition of anti-Judaism which we have inherited, we shall have failed those who follow us... (We) today - after 1945 - can no longer continue it.' Paul van Buren, *Discerning the Way: A Theology of the Jewish Christian Reality*, The Seabury Press, New York, 1980, pp. 47 - 48.

away the sin of the world.' (John 1:29). According to Christianity the crucifixion of Jesus was a divine act of world historical importance in which sinful man was, and *had to be*, instrumental. Man's absolute guilt (his rejection of the revelation of God himself in the flesh to the extent of crucifying him), was at the same time, a divine sacrifice offered by God himself for the sake of the absolute forgiveness of the sin of the world. Pauline teaching, particularly, emphasises this dialectical tension between absolute sinfulness and absolute forgiveness but Christianity lives by the faith that man is to be rendered absolutely guilty before God in order to receive absolute forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption. The Christian, in order to be a true Christian, can only stand before God with a confession of his absolute sin which found the most concrete expression in a real and actual co-responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ. Only he or she is a true Christian who can bring 'the sacrifice acceptable to God', namely, 'a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart' (Psalm 52:17), confessing:-

'En't zijn de Joden niet, ik ben't, O Heer, ik ben't die U dit heb gedaan!' (*Revius*).

Whenever an accusation of deicide is made by a Christian against a Jew it becomes, in the final analysis, a self accusation. Blame of the Jew means blame of himself. If the Christian forgets this, his accusation against the Jews is nothing other than a projection of his own essential guilt, the confession of which is conditional to his salvation (or acceptance by God). Moreover, the Jews of any given time incorporate for him a substitute or surrogate for Jesus. The Jews become a scapegoat.

According to this understanding of the essence of Christianity man, that is universal man, could only crucify God who manifested himself in his real presence in the midst of depraved humanity. Man rebels against God's revelation of himself and his grace because in his heart of hearts he hates God and finds living by his grace alone repulsive. The Jews are hated neither because they are Jews, nor because of their alleged deicide - in this respect the whole of mankind is in solidarity with them - but because they were chosen

to be the bearers of the revelation of God and because the messiah was born of man.²³

Responsible Christian theologians see in the persecution of the Jews by Christians throughout the centuries a confirmation of the guilt of Christianity, or rather, of the guilt of the world in its rejection of God and his revelation. The stumbling block for man is the mere historical fact that God reveals himself as God and saviour. It evokes man's anger and hostility toward God. Just as

23. The rejection of Jesus by the Jews is seen as an essential moment in the divine act of revelation itself. The revelation of God was not rejected by the Jews because they were Jews, but because they represented mankind to whom this revelation was made.

'De wereld,' says M. Bolkenstein, 'heeft Hem niet ontvangen, ook de vrome wereld niet....Niet allen bij de vijandige massa, ook in de kring van Jezus' discipelen sluimert het verzet tegen Hem....

Zoo is het verzet tegen Jezus aanwezig over de hele linie....

Het volk, de vrome leiders, zij allen zeggen neen tegen Jezus. Zij verwerpen Hem, zij kruisigen Hem. Daarmee werpen ze God uit, ze slaan in moedwil en opstandigheid God aan het kruis. In naam van hun God dooden ze den levenden God....Op dit punt mag de prediking niet schromen de gemeente tot tijdgenoten te maken. In de zonden van het Joodsche volk tegenover Jezus worden onze zonden openbaar....De eigenmachtigheid en eigenwilligheid der Joden is onze eigenmachtigheid en eigenwilligheid. Wij zijn solidair met hen in hun neen tegen God. 't En zijn de Joden niet,' wij zijn het die Jezus kruisigden. De Joden hebben het mede in onze naam gedaan. Door ons ongeloof, door onze ongehoorzaamheid slaan wij Jezus Christus nog dagelijks aan het kruis, verwerpen, bespotten, hoonen wij hem iederen dag opnieuw.... De lijdengeschiedenis van Jezus brengt de menschelijke zonde, onze zonde, tot openbaring, onze boosheid, onze opstandigheid. Doch dit staat niet los van de openbaring van God's genade. Door ons is Jezus gekruisigd, en voor ons, *confusio hominum providentia Dei*....Felix culpa!....Over de hoogste uitbarstingen van menschelijke boosheid zagepraalt Gods heilsplan. Het kruis, een en al openbaring van menschelijke zonde, is tevens het altaar, waarop God Zelf het offer brengt tot een verzoening van onze zonden, ja van de zonden der geheele wereld.'

(M. H. Bolkestein, 'De Prediking van Jezus' Lijden', in: *Handboek voor de Prediking*, I, ed., S. F. H. J. Berkelbach van der Sprenkel and P. J. Rooscam Abbing, Holland Uitgevers Maatschappij te Amsterdam, 1948, pp. 148 - 149).

the stumbling block assumed concrete reality in the incarnation of Jesus, so it remains a concrete historical reality in the election of the Jews. 'For salvation', said Jesus according to the Gospel of John, 'is from the Jews'. (R. S. V. 4:22b).²⁴

Although Rubenstein's fundamental approach to divinity, and therefore his presuppositions, are entirely different from those delineated above, it is interesting to note certain parallels in his view. He points out that seldom if ever did the Jews realise that the accusation was an attempt of the accuser to deny his own lawless temptations by ascribing them to the Jews. Jewish protestations of

24. A. A. van Ruler comments on this Johannine statement:

'De zaligheid is uit de Joden. Dit woord stelt op een zeldzaam krasse wijze het Joodsche vraagstuk aan de orde. Wij herinneren ons, hoeveel angst en wreed geweld de Joden te verduren hebben gehad. Midden in onze moderne beschaving was een Jodenvervolgung losgebroken, welke in omvang, wreedheid en verbittering haar gelijke in de geschiedenis niet had. Ik weet: tal van factoren speelden daarin een rol. Maar de kern lag toch daarin, dat de volkeren, die bezig waren hun eigen heidendom weer terug te vinden, zich daaraan ergerden, dat de zaligheid, het heil van de hele wereld, alleen vanuit het volk Israël tot de volkeren der aarde gekomen is.'

'Het koninkrijk Gods...wordt door de menschen verworpen. Zij willen niet, dat deze God koning over hen zij. Zij verzetten zich tegen het heil....Deze verwerping en deze opstandigheid tegen de heerschappij der genade gaan gepaard met een diepen en wilden haat....Deze haat tegen den naam Gods sien we het duidelijkst in den Jodenhaat. Het Joodsche volk is een zeer sprekende herinnering aan den naam Gods. En hoe is het in den loop der eeuwen verdrukt en vertrapt. Een wilde woede heeft zich vaak daarin uitgeraasd. En het diepste verzet in alle Jodenhaat ging niet tegen wat de Joden waren en zijn. Het diepste verzet ging daartegen, dat de zaligheid uit de Joden is en dat het koninkrijk Gods in de wereld gekomen is vanuit Palestina.... Waar hooren wij bij? Bij (hen) die gehaat wordt, of bij de wereld, die haat? We doen dunkt me goed, te beginnen met de erkenning, dat h t laatste het geval is. Wij hooren ook bij de wereld, die haat; bij de volkeren der aarde, die in gedurigen opstand zijn tegen den Heere en zijn gezalfde.... Werkelijk discipel zijn is een zaak van verbrijzeling, overgave en uitverkiezing. Het begint altijd weer daarmee, dat we eerlijk erkennen, dat we geen discipel zijn....'

(Sta op tot de Vreugde, Callenbach, Nijkerk, 1947, pp. 47, 61, 62).

innocence were made at the manifest level and made matters worse. One of the worst aspects of the two-thousand-year-old Jewish-Christian encounter has been a mutual incapacity to understand what was vital to the other. Inner lawlessness is universal. 'Each side could only bolster its own uncertain conviction of virtue by blackening the other. This dreary procedure has yet to be terminated.'²⁵

Without Christianity the Jews could never have become the central victims of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, it would be a vast oversimplification to suggest that Christianity was responsible for the death camps. Christianity provided an indispensable ingredient, the demonological interpretation of the Jews, but only anti-Christian heretics could use this material as did the Nazis. Nazism was an anti-Christian movement but is nevertheless dialectically related to Christianity.

I certainly do not believe that the chosenness issue, considered in isolation from the deicide accusation, could have resulted in the demonism of the Nazi parody of the Old Testament as Steiner suggested. Chosenness must be considered together with all its ramifications in the light of so horrific an event as the Holocaust.

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25. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 'Religion and the Origin of the Death Camps', p. 16.

Rubenstein is aware of the unconscious resentment among Christians evoked by the persistent Jewish rejection of the Christ. If, as Kierkegaard suggested, the faith of the Christian dwells over a sea of doubt seventy fathoms deep, there is much pain associated with this doubt. The constant Jewish rejection of the Christ reinforces this doubt (unconsciously), causes a loss of moorings and therefore heightens the pain of the Christian. *After Auschwitz*, p. 7.

Also, he notes that the tale of deicide is told to children at a highly impressionable age when they are unable to discern its meaning in relation to real 'flesh and blood' Jews. The Judas tale and the Passion drama become reinforced stereotypes from cradle to grave. With great impact he states that the Easter ritual 'rehearses, amidst utterly magnificent music, frequently aesthetically overpowering architecture and ceremonial grandeur, the terrible tale of the Jewish betrayal and the Jewish murder of the Jewish God'.

After Auschwitz, p. 31.

In relation to the doctrine of chosenness causing millennia of guilt and self-blame, perhaps Rubenstein is right in suggesting that guilt is built into the ethos of rabbinic Judaism. If, however, that argument is valid, guilt is equally built into the ethos of biblical religion and guilt already must have been present in the biblical view of reward and punishment. It is doubtful whether the successful elimination of the doctrine of chosenness could in any way alleviate this guilt. In any event Freud saw guilt as the flywheel of society and the basis of civilisation, therefore unavoidable, if not desirable. It could be argued, however, that Freud, as a Jew, was heir to a legacy of guilt.

Like so many of the areas which Rubenstein has investigated, his exposure of the problems inherent in the doctrine of chosenness serves to enlighten and to make us aware of the dynamics behind destructive and explosive situations. I believe that it is too much to ask of the Jew to demythologise and reject his chosenness. If the Christ can make no difference to the Christian without Jewish chosenness, neither can the Torah make sense to the Jew. To remove the doctrine undermines the premises of both faiths. It seems unfair to ask of the Jew what one cannot expect of the Christian. The explosive potentialities of the doctrine, with all its ramifications, cannot be denied in the light of Jewish-Christian relations. However, having done us the genuine service of having exposed its tensions, Rubenstein should perhaps have left it there, as it seems impossible, in any case to demolish the doctrine. Insight into the problem can help to defuse potential hatred and violence. Although positive, life-affirming aspects of the doctrine could be argued, it would be unfair to expect Rubenstein, with his particular world-view, to interpret it positively.

C H A P T E R IX

Surely the reason for my suffering was not that I and my evil deeds may serve as manure for some future harmony for someone else. I want to see with my own eyes the lion lie down with the lamb and the murdered man rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly finds out what it has all been for.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

A CRITIQUE OF SOME OF RUBENSTEIN'S PROTESTS AND PROPOSALS

In a critique of Rubenstein's thought it becomes essential to separate his thinking of the nineteen sixties from its development in the nineteen seventies. He sees this development in terms of a progression rather than a leap.¹ However, because his focus of concern in relation to the Holocaust has altered radically, many of his earlier ideas have been suspended for discussion, or significantly modified.

Zionism and the Future of Diaspora Judaism

During the nineteen sixties Rubenstein declared the death of God in response to the Holocaust. His rejection of the biblical God of history was based on the problem of guilt and punishment in relation to an event which he, quite understandably, could not assimilate into the mainstream of Jewish history theologically. What had become normative for Jewish history during two thousand years of diaspora conflict with the outside world, could no longer be considered functional in the face of the Holocaust.

1. Personal correspondence. Letter dated 5 July 1979.

Some of his positions have altered fairly radically, which leads me to conclude that there has been a leap in his thought in certain areas rather than a smooth progression.

In spite of the death of the biblical God of history, he continued to advocate Jewish practice, emphasising its ritual functions, insisting on the value of the priestly aspects of Judaism over the prophetic aspects. He was insistent that man is a creature of inescapable warring conflicts which are of unconscious origin and that man is intrinsically incapable of moral improvement. Consequently, moral exhortation would prove to be fruitless in an attempt to improve man's lot. Ritual, on the other hand, served to identify the individual's role in the community and his place in the cycle of life. It also served to confirm and expiate man's guilt-ridden nature. As a corollary, he insisted that the Torah and prayer book should remain intact and that no 'embarrassing' rituals should be deleted. What our generation finds embarrassing may not be so found by future generations, and future generations have the right to receive the Jewish tradition intact. He puts forward the very real dilemma which modern Jews face, the freedom to choose aspects of the Torah and reject others. Modern Jews have a tragic freedom characterised by subjectivism and resulting in unavoidable anxiety.

An important thrust of Rubenstein's thinking was that *all* religions serve to answer fundamental questions and problems for their adherents. Judaism is no better or truer than other faiths, but it is the only authentic path to selfhood for the Jew. For the Jew to live authentically he had to follow the rituals and traditions laid down by his ancestors. Rubenstein also commended Judaism for its balance, for its capacity to find place for the total psyche, for its ability to channel what, in any case, could not be abolished, and for its delicate balance between priestly and prophetic aspects of religion. *After Auschwitz* he held that human impulses were regulated by religion rather than ignored. Today he is much more inclined to emphasise the repressive and infantilising aspects of Jewish practice.

The rabbinate is the only body which possesses adequate knowledge of the past to maintain its continuity with the present. Rabbis, because of the priestly function of Judaism, serve primarily as priests in leading the relevant ritual ceremonies. Rabbis are in fact, if not in law, the priestly order which supplanted the old priesthood after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.² Judaism is the heir to Pharisaism as promulgated

2. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 144.

after the fall of Jerusalem. Rabbinic responses to that catastrophe were expressed in the Talmud and became the normative responses of the Jew to his God and his world. Meaning was given to that catastrophe by rabbinic interpretation, and similar meaning was derived for all subsequent historic events.

Initially, Rubenstein's preoccupation with the Holocaust was primarily theological. He questioned the punitive nature of the event, but he did so with a strong Freudian undercurrent. The Germans have, as all other men, irrational motivations. All men, he believed, desired the death of God in order to achieve an end to all moral restraint. There was an anarchic irrationality in all men.

In his more recent work, Rubenstein has become interested in the Holocaust as a manifestation of problem-solving in the Western world. He has left the confines of theology and psychoanalysis to embrace sociological, political and economic considerations. His work maintains theological import in that men behave in a world which is *functionally* godless and carry out power decisions as if there were no God. He, therefore, is still saying what he said in *After Auschwitz*, namely, that we are living in the 'time' of the death of God. The death of God thus means the absence of God from all human dealings for all intents and purposes, particularly in the public sphere. Men have become God-like in their dealings with their fellow men deciding who is to live and who is to die, the ultimate prerogative of God.

Engulfed by an all-pervasive pessimism Rubenstein no longer advocates Jewish practice. During the nineteen sixties he saw it as the Jew's authentic path to selfhood. He now regards it as dysfunctional and infantilising. The way of the rabbis was a direct response to powerlessness and a political bargain made with 'Caesar' by Yochanan ben Zakkai. This response, which gave meaning and hope in the wake of the catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and the dispersal of the people, became a normative response for Jews for two thousand years. It led to a 'servile consciousness' as Jews were always guests (usually unwelcome) in a host country. Their behaviour of necessity, was submissive and compliant, but they looked forward to a time in which their servitude would be overcome. Messianism therefore is an expression of the servile consciousness, perhaps its

most ultimate expression. While the bargain was kept, the religion based on powerlessness was functional. Hitler broke that bargain revealing the suicidal entailment of following a path promulgated for different conditions two thousand years earlier. Rabbinic Judaism has become dysfunctional, if not a direct acquiescence to, and complicity in, the annihilation of European Jewry.

For this reason Rubenstein rejects it. He also rejects it as a way of life because of its behavioural restraints which have caused much repression and bottled-up rage, behavioural mechanisms which do not help Jews to survive in an increasingly savage world. He pleads now *not* for commitment, but for a radical act of disbelief, a disavowal of dysfunctional behaviour patterns. All he *does* insist upon is that Jews should have a responsible knowledge of the Jewish past which can be attained through only one body, powerless and inadequate as it is, the rabbinate. Judaism can no longer be rejuvenated. It can only be understood. He predicts the possibility of apocalyptic catastrophe in which the world as we know it will cease to exist. If there are survivors, and if there are any Jews among them, ironically, it will be the religious institutions to which they will turn for solace. Judaism's mythic universe, however, will not retain a shred of credibility in the face of global disaster. Rubenstein therefore questions its validity and applicability and posits the view that diaspora Judaism ultimately is doomed to disappear.

He will not mourn its disappearance, as in the history of Judaism various institutions have replaced one another. There is no reason to believe that rabbinic Judaism, which is a manifestation of *diaspora* Judaism, should be the final form. Neither will he attempt to bolster a failing diaspora Judaism as he believes Fackenheim is doing. In his radical search for truth he perceives, not a threat, but a much needed therapeutic purging, which he refuses to identify with Hitler's mischief.

Some Jewish Responses to Rubenstein

Arthur E. Green states: 'There is more honesty and willingness to come to grips with reality in a page of Richard Rubenstein than one will find in many a whole book of what sometimes poses for Jewish

theology.³ One cannot but be grateful for such honesty. The Jewish community, beleaguered from within and without, is justifiably alarmed by radical probing, but there is power in an honest voice to raise the level of debate and to stir thinking about the most basic issues which confront modern Judaism. One need not entirely agree with Rubenstein to perceive the sincerity of his search to find insight into the dynamics which lie behind our deeply troubled times and the history of the twentieth century with its two shattering *kairoi*.

Green shares Rubenstein's disappointment with the small-minded bickering and increasing moral irrelevance which are typified in rabbinic and academic debate. He cannot deny Rubenstein's justification for pessimism, but it is the *extent* of that pessimism which he questions.⁴

Elliot Dorff expresses appreciation for the way in which Rubenstein eloquently, but selectively, rivets our attention to the negative aspects of our existence and sees therein a great service. He regards over-emphasis on it, however, as an act of *hubris* in that over-concentration on the predicaments of modern man leads to an inflated view of our own generation and its problems. Ancient and mediaeval men were plagued by famine, disease, robbery and murder on a day to day basis. Whilst there is no need or justification for optimism, we need a corrective in our view of ourselves.⁵

Green does not believe that man is likely to turn on a universal scale to a life of *teshuvah* or commitment to concern, but the intensity of Rubenstein's pessimism is not possible as a basis of life for all individuals. Green affirms the existence of sparks of authentic human life, *nitzotzot kedushah*, in the morass of contemporary alienation. Man's task is to gather and fan those sparks, to create small intimate cells of humanity made up of individuals who are concerned with the awful events of our times, but who are not crippled by their weight.

3. Green, Arthur, E., 'A Response to Richard Rubenstein', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, p. 26.

4. Ibid. p. 27.

5. Dorff, Elliot, 'A Response to Richard Rubenstein', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, pp. 33 - 36.

Man is still capable of loving and cultivating a spirit of life. Green rests his programme of creating such small cells on the model of ben Zakkai. In the face of the destructive society which surrounds us, the only course of action is to build a small house where humanity can survive. If a global catastrophe comes, freezing the Jew in a Pompeii-like position, Green would be happy to be found in *such* a house, surrounded by those he loves.⁶

Dorff takes Rubenstein to task for refusing to offer any hope in that if cataclysm is announced and people believe that it will occur as an inevitability, they will never take positive steps to avoid the cataclysm. Prophecies of that nature tend to be self-fulfilling. If Rubenstein is willing to be hopeful in some small measure, the practical approach would be to exhibit the real danger forcefully and cogently, *but* then to accent the positive and show how to work on the problem in a serious way. The great discoveries in history have come from men and women who believed that solutions could be found, not from those who gave up at the outset.⁷ Rubenstein stops short by simply pointing to the unfolding scenario and to explicating its deep-rooted causes without suggesting a viable solution. Seymour Siegel suggests that the antinomian quality of troubled times is hastened by prophets of doom and pessimism,⁸ in which category we may place Rubenstein.

Ben Zakkai and the Servile Consciousness

As regards the powerlessness of ben Zakkai's path, Green would like to believe that there *may* have been Jews who would kill the Nazis who invaded and captured them, but that they chose not to and preferred to go to their death with the *Shema* on their lips and no blood on their hands as a last stand for religious humanity in a place where humanity was least to be found. There *is* dignity in such death and for Green, such a man is as much a Holocaust hero as the Warsaw Ghetto fighter. Arthur A. Cohen suggests that although the Jews were powerless, there

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6. Green, Arthur E., 'A Response to Richard Rubenstein', pp. 26 - 32.
 7. Dorff, Ellic, 'A Response to Richard Rubenstein', p. 35.
 8. Siegel, Seymour, 'Theology for Today', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, p. 49.

can be little doubt that millions of those who died, died with dignity and honour.⁹ Rubenstein, he suggests, wants force and potency rather than faith and trust. Force and potency, however, *ipso facto*, cannot be wrung from the language of any theology of faith, covenant and election. Consequently, Rubenstein turns to natural pagan religion as the only source of viable theology.¹⁰

In relation to Rubenstein's accusation that the Jews are possessed of a servile consciousness and therefore played into the Nazi's hands, one must question the extent of resistance put up by other peoples during World War II which remains essentially beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that when people are subjected to terrorisation and passivity they are unable to resist in any meaningful way. According to Irving Greenberg Rubenstein slips into an unconsciously cruel moment in his contrast of diaspora and Israeli Judaism when he refers to the powerless Jews cooperating in their self-destruction which 'marks the final bankruptcy of the religious,

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9. Cohen, Arthur A., 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*' in D. R. Cutler, (ed.), *The Religious Situation 1968*, p. 90.

Rubenstein in response to Cohen insists that after diligent study of the Nazi extermination project he is aghast at the *indignity* of what took place. The wholly unanticipated character of the onslaught left Jews bereft of all resources to counter the attack and die fighting. Only at the Warsaw ghetto was Jewish honour redeemed. Jews were reduced to helpless sub-humans who complied with their own undoing. Rubenstein is unimpressed by parallels in behaviour under similar circumstances as these parallels do not add a shred of dignity to a powerless community. In his view, his community's health demands that it face the full impact of its recent past without illusion.

See Rubenstein's 'Response to "Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*"', pp. 102, 103.

In connection with conditions in the death camps and any attempts, Jewish or other, to resist, see Anna Pawelczyńska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz, A Sociological Analysis*, Transl. by Catherine S. Leach, University of California Press, 1979, and Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, Penguin Books, 1980. See also Józef Garliński, *Fighting Auschwitz: The Resistance Movement in the Concentration Camp*, Julian Friedman Publishers, Ltd., London, 1975.

10. Cohen, Arthur A., 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', p. 90. Rubenstein affirms, however, that Cohen has a good grasp of his fundamental concern when he suggests that Rubenstein wants force and potency rather than faith and trust. 'Response to "Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*"', p. 102.

ethical, and psychological values of diaspora Judaism'.¹¹ He ignores the fact that Gypsies, Russian prisoners of war and even Russian civilians acted in the same way as the Jews did when they were exposed to the same treatment. This was true even though they had no history of diaspora Judaism to mistrain them for that terrible moment. Greenberg also points out that American prisoners acted in the same way after Bataan and that in 1966 a group of American nurses acted in the same way as they were slain, one by one, by the mass killer Richard Speck. 'The shattering truth is that if the aggressor is prepared to kill without restraint or relation to significant motives, then he will probably be able to terrorize his victims into passivity, if not indeed into partial cooperation.'¹² It is unfair to compare the sheer terrorisation of uprooted, physically and mentally weakened people with the Israeli response, that of an entire nation, armed and on its own soil and not yet terrorised, and therefore able to rise to its own defence.

In relation to Jewish resistance it is important to point out the following facts:-

- (1) The Jews were genuinely powerless.
- (2) Yochanan's path was the only realistic path for the survival of Judaism in a diaspora world, a fact which Rubenstein readily acknowledges.
- (3) Yehuda Bauer affirms that Jewish resistance was well nigh impossible. There have been instances of armed resistance in Jewish history but armed resistance during the Holocaust was only possible under conditions that most Jews did not enjoy. Jews simply did not possess arms. One needs the availability of weapons and the support of a civilian population, neither of which preconditions existed for the Jews.¹³
- (4) Bauer questions Raul Hilberg's assertion that armed resistance is the only legitimate form of resistance. Bauer defines

11. Greenberg, Irving, 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', p. 98.

12. Ibid. p. 98.

13. Bauer, Yehuda, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1979, pp. 27, 28.

Jewish resistance during the Holocaust as any *group* action consciously taken in opposition to known or surmised laws, actions, or intentions directed against the Jews by the Germans and their supporters.¹⁴ He also questions Henri Michel's definition of resistance as 'maintenance of self respect...and (the refusal to) yield to the blandishments of collaboration'.¹⁵ The definition applies in Nazi Europe generally, but *not* to its Jewish victims who were faced *not* with 'the blandishments of collaboration' but only with unappeasable terror and relentless murder.

Perhaps another definition is needed to fit these circumstances. Sometimes it is extremity that discloses the truth. When death to body and soul is law, as Fackenheim points out, survival in both, so long as it is practised as a group *is* itself resistance. For the Jewish people this marks the beginning of the emergence from powerlessness.¹⁶

- (5) Ghetto rebellions never took place when a hope of survival could be entertained, only when the realisation finally struck that all Jews were going to be killed anyway. The result of a ghetto rebellion was the annihilation of all Jewish residents and subsequent plundering of empty Jewish homes by the surrounding population.¹⁷
- (6) Unarmed struggle did take place in the early phases of the war in comparable measure to that employed by non-Jewish populations under Nazi rule. However, Jews later were subjected to the Holocaust, whereas the other nationalities were not. Jews, on the whole, proved to be recalcitrant and were highly skilled at evasion which falls under Bauer's definition of resistance.¹⁸

14. Ibid. p. 27. See also Emil Fackenheim's foreword to Bauer's book, pp. xii and xiii.

15. See Fackenheim, foreword to Bauer's *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, p. xii, and also Bauer, op. cit. pp. 26, 27.

16. Fackenheim, foreword to Bauer's work, op. cit. p. xii.

17. Bauer, op. cit. p. 29. 18. Ibid. p. 34.

for the land of Israel. The Holocaust had an important escalating influence on the attitudes and actions of Jewish political bodies generally, and on those of the Yishuv in particular. The most direct, immediate influence of the Holocaust was that exercised by the survivors themselves on the political developments that led to the establishment of Israel. 'While it is true to say that the actual war for Israel's independence, from 1947 to 1949, was fought largely by the sons and daughters of the small Yishuv who were subsequently joined by some of the European DPs, it must be concluded that the securing of the State of Israel, the emergence from powerlessness, was to a large degree the direct result of the dynamics within the Jewish world as a whole which the Holocaust set in motion. Relative Jewish power is thus intimately connected with its former absolute absence.'²⁰

It is clear that Rubenstein recognised that there was no other realistic course for Judaism than that chosen by ben Zakkai, yet the terminology he uses to describe ben Zakkai's programme is emotive.

Words such as 'servile', 'submissive' and 'collaborationist' are not unloaded words in our vocabulary. Rubenstein denigrates the last two thousand years of Jewish history and Green avers that he cannot perceive what 'sin' it was for which Rubenstein holds ben Zakkai responsible. Belief that death is punishment is not a creation of the *galut* or exile, nor is the idea that destruction is punishment for sin a creation of ben Zakkai's day. On the contrary, these attitudes (and, I might add, the doctrine of chosenness!), are a creation of the biblical period, not of the Pharisees and rabbis. 'They emerged in that period when the tough proto-Israelites were busy killing off their foes. If anyone is to be singled out for "blame" in this matter it should be Amos or Isaiah, not ben Zakkai.'²¹

In contrasting Rubenstein's emphasis on the lordly consciousness characterised by Massada's defenders, and the servile consciousness of ben Zakkai's followers, Green suggests that the world would not care if the Jews blew themselves up *en masse* in Massada-like fashion. Massada has become dysfunctional, and only ben Zakkai can help Jews to survive. Massada has tremendous appeal as a symbol, but after the Israeli-Arab war of October 1973, Massada went bankrupt.²²

Diaspora Judaism and Repression

Green shares Rubenstein's sentiments about the repression inherent in rabbinic Judaism. But traditional Western religious society is equally repressive and self-destructive particularly with regard to the sensuous. Judaism was no more repressed than Christianity. 'Was Yehuda Ha Levi more repressed than Augustine?...is not the Beal Shem Tov rather a less emasculated figure than a Calvin or a Kierkegaard? If the problem of repression was really a result of the *galut* experience and the doings of ben Zakkai, an Alan Watts or Harvey Cox would not have to fight the same ambivalent battle with his Christianity that you and I fight with our Judaism.'²³ Rubenstein has regarded Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* as an expression of Jewish repression in our own age.²⁴ While there might be a reflection of truth in this

21. See Green, 'A Response to Richard Rubenstein', pp. 28, 29.

22. Ibid. p. 29. 23. Ibid. p. 29.

24. Roth, Philip, *Portnoy's Complaint*, Corgi Books, London, 1971. See Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, pp. 166 - 169.

observation, Peter Shaw suggests that Roth resorts to familiar stereotypes. Both Portnoy's and Sarah Maule's sexual failures are products of their upbringing, and seeing that she is from an old New England Christian family, what is so special about the Jewishness of Portnoy's background? Roth's theory that inability to express oneself sexually in a healthy and normal way is a special Jewish problem is thus disproved.²⁵ Milton Himmelfarb suggests that Judaism is not only a system of repression but of self expression. Traditional or rabbinic normative Judaism's bias has been less repressive sexually than Christianity's. Celibacy has never been a Jewish ideal, only chastity.²⁶ However, if there is a culprit or 'villain' behind the repression of Western religion, Green blames the prophets. While the prophetic passion is stirring, their theology of punishment - of death and destruction as punishment for sin - is dead in our day. Yet, with honesty, Green admits that he still cringes when facing the *Yom Kippur* liturgy.²⁷

Green, like Rubenstein, affirms that there is an anarchic urge in his soul. For this reason he finds himself unable to abandon the restricting bounds of the *halachah*. He cannot abandon the Torah for the lure of antinomianism. He cannot share Rubenstein's irresistible pull toward the antinomianism of Sabbetai Zevi for 'if I go there' he says, 'I'll go all the way. And then there will be nothing. That nothing may have a capital "N" - but there may also be simply nothing.'²⁸ He therefore feels the need to observe the cycle of sacred time and Jewish celebrations of it. His effort may be small but it is humanising, thereby giving order to chaos.

It is precisely in this area that I perceive the value of Rubenstein's theology of the nineteen sixties. Whilst he could not affirm the existence of the God of the Bible, he insisted on observance of Jewish tradition in pursuit of Jewish selfhood. While this must have resulted in a logical strain, if not absurdity, by directing a liturgy and ritual to a Father God, when in fact his deity might well be a Faceless Abyss,

25. Shaw, Peter, 'Portnoy and his Creator', *Commentary*, Vol. 47, No. 5, May 1969, pp. 77 - 79.

26. Himmelfarb, Milton, 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', p. 71.

27. Green, 'A Response to Richard Rubenstein', pp. 29, 30.

28. *Ibid.* p. 31.

a Cannibal Mother, a Holy Nothingness, Jewish solidarity could still be maintained in a relatively meaningful way, particularly in that he emphasised its communal expression. In fact, for the sceptic or functionalist, such practice can be of inestimable importance.

This aspect of his thought, for him, has now lost its force and relevance. Yet I find his message of the nineteen sixties infinitely more valuable for the Jewish community's ongoing life-style than his present stance. It was a key to the survival of diaspora Judaism which his present message is not. Despite its resultant logical strain, it could have enabled the possibility of Jewish life and I am amazed that *After Auschwitz* provoked such anger and such a negative response in the Jewish community. Its message was not nearly as radical as might initially have been perceived. Rubenstein's earlier stance might be echoed in Green's statement to Jews: 'Know chaos, stare it in the face, but ultimately spit in its eye by remaining human.'²⁹ It would call upon Jews not to give up, not to despair, but somehow to remain Jewish, even without a traditional God-concept.

A New Mode of Witnessing for Judaism

It is interesting to note the observations of Manfred H. Vogel concerning the fate of diaspora Judaism and some of the painful areas associated with Jewish emancipation.³⁰ Similarities between his view and those of Rubenstein can be perceived. Like Rubenstein, he emphasises the role of power in Jewish history. A different mode of witnessing of necessity, arise out of the needs of a powerless community to the one which prevailed during biblical times.

The thrust of his argument is that during biblical times Jews lived in their own land exercising power over their destiny. They lived in a concrete political situation. The material mode of witnessing was governed by the power afforded by the concrete world and its profane and secular history. The form of the mode was open and situational.

29. Ibid. p. 32.

30. Vogel, Manfred H., 'Dilemma of Identity for the Emancipated Jew' in *New Theology* No. 4, (eds.) Marty and Peerman, op. cit. pp. 162 - 177.

involved decision-making. Rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand, enforced the creation of a closed, unchanging and complete pattern as a mode of witnessing which let the concrete world and profane history flow by it. Although there were changes in the Law provoked by external and internal exigencies which cropped up from time to time, these did not affect the basic structure of rabbinic Judaism. The change in rabbinic Judaism was in the mode of witnessing, *not* of vocation. It was a change not in content but in expression. The Torah and *halachah* were always central to Judaism, but with rabbinic Judaism there was a new understanding of the Law and its statutes.

- (1) In biblical times the Law was only *one* mode of witnessing, and not necessarily always the most characteristic.
- (2) The Law did not encompass the totality of life.
- (3) The Law was not monolithic. Its application and interpretation differed in different areas and for different circumstances.

Rabbinic Judaism transformed all three areas.

- (1) The Law became the normative mode of witnessing.
- (2) It was extended to all contingencies.
- (3) The Law became hypostatized. It became unchanging and unitary, the eternal all-inclusive teaching.

The task of the rabbi was to yield a response, the correct answer, to any and all situations from what had become all-inclusive and permanent, as opposed to the flux and ongoingness of biblical religion. Theoretically, the rabbis' response was already determined and formulated. Thus the role of the rabbi and the prophet are diametrically opposed. The unchanging Law guided diaspora existence while the prophet acted and spoke in an open situational existence.

Emancipation

A crisis was caused by the emancipation concerning the rabbinic mode of witnessing. The two inseparable hallmarks of Judaism had always been that it was a vocational faith accompanied by ethnic-national qualities.

How, therefore, could the people as a *whole* emancipate into the world at large without losing one or both of these constituents of its essential identity and therefore its *raison d'être*? Neglect of the Law was inevitable as Jews needed a more flexible form of witnessing. Therefore one could question the very possibility of an emancipated Judaism. If Jews can be emancipated, Judaism, as a religion, cannot. Jews acquire their vocation from Judaism. If national identity is a *sine qua non* of Jewish existence, how can Jews be allowed by another nation to share power and control of their world? The door is open, therefore, only to the individual which results in the fact that being Jewish signifies neither the vocation of faith nor the notion of a Jewish nation and it therefore becomes empty. It is impossible for the Jew to enter society at large as a mere abstraction, or human being in general and remain a Jew. (Incidentally, Rubenstein's rejection of the doctrine of chosenness was, in part, to allow the Jew to be 'merely human'. One might ask whether 'mere humanity' is not itself an abstraction and therefore impossible. He seems to have modified his views on this aspect of man in his more recent writing, although *not* embracing the concept of chosenness.).

Vogel points to two ways out of the dilemma:-

- (1) Conversion to another religion which is not really possible from the Jewish point of view as one cannot escape one's Jewish birth. Ironically, the ethnic bond obstructs Jewish exit from the Jewish side! Increased intermarriage makes conversion possible for Jewish descendants of a Jewish parent. (Here Rubenstein is right in predicting a rapid decline in diaspora Judaism.).
- (2) The other possibility is to withdraw from emancipation, become more Jewish, and retreat into orthodoxy.

Both these mechanisms are apparent in Jewish behaviour.

The Re-establishment of the State of Israel

The re-establishment of the State of Israel has had great theological significance. It answers the dilemma of emancipated Jewry from the

secular national viewpoint and also from the religious vocational viewpoint. Once again, the Jew can, and has entered the concrete world of profane history of his own making. The Jewish world is entered by right and not by sufferance. The Jew enters Israel as a Jew and not as an abstraction. However, the crisis of the rabbinic form of witness is not similarly resolved. The crisis of Law as 'fixed' fails in Israel as its formulation which corresponds to diaspora existence does not cater for the openness and ongoing character of the new form of Jewish life. This has become especially poignant because the entry of the emancipated Israeli into the concrete world is so complete and unambiguous. There has been a rejection of rabbinic Judaism by the majority of Israelis which could be interpreted as a secular move, but is not necessarily so. Vogel suggests that the mode of witnessing may be changing. The new secularity in Israel may be transitory and partial in search of a not yet emergent reality of a new mode of witnessing.

Perhaps this new mode will resemble that of biblical Israel which is indicated in modern Israel by the enthusiastic turning toward the Bible. The evidence at the moment looks very negative. The crisis which exists now is comparable only in severity to the crisis which emerged in the change from biblical to diaspora Judaism. We are not in a position to predict the course and development of Israel's mode of witnessing. The future is open and does not admit of prophecies but something positive may yet emerge.

Rubenstein has long perceived something of a religious novelty happening in Israel, although he has currently lost direct interest in Israel. Perhaps Vogel's view offers more than a 'redemption of combat' and a return to paganism. Rubenstein may be pointing toward a reality which yet has to develop, although how it will emerge we cannot know. Rubenstein is probably right in suggesting that rabbinic Judaism may yet yield to another form of Judaism.

Overcoming History

The Jewish view of history as the arena of God's activity, interpreted in terms of reward and punishment, and therefore guilt, was the original focus of Rubenstein's thought. His preoccupation with the

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after two thousand years of alienation from it and a concomitant return to nature and the pagan gods of nature. Time ceased to be linear but reverted to pagan circularity. In historical religion guilt is cumulative. In the religion of nature, each generation is the same as another, each living out its life as part of a replenishing cycle. One generation does not carry the guilt of previous generations. In order to alleviate the burden of guilt, historical man needs to overcome history which can be achieved only by a rejection of the biblical God of history and a return to the pagan earth divinities. Rubenstein believes (or believed) this to have occurred in Israel. It also has been achieved to some extent by the highly technological world in which we live. As a result of rapid communication, time is *experienced* as cyclic.

Rubenstein recently has concluded, however, that history which he thought came to an end in Israel, quite obviously continues. Circularity is seen in more tragic terms than ever before, in that the dialectic of history is now world-wide. It has escaped its religious origins and has become secularised in technological civilisation. It however is (a) a fall, and (b) its end must be catastrophe. Rubenstein takes very seriously the biblical doctrine of the fall at the level of symbolic intuition.³¹

While acknowledging the great gains which have resulted from the historical period Rubenstein suggests that though we learn from it, we should not be enslaved by it. 'I recognize the energizing and activating role of the great monotheistic religions in creating, for better or for worse, the world of modernity. Since this is my world, I find that my rejection of the God who acts

31. These thoughts were expressed in a letter dated 5 July, 1979 (Personal correspondence).

See also the last chapter of Rubenstein's *The Cunning*

purposefully in history is not my last word. I emphatically reject any notion of the election of Israel, but I recognize the crucial role of the myth of the omnipotent God of history in creating our world.³² The demand that we should not be enslaved by the linear historical view of the world may prove to be impossible.

In his most recent thinking Rubenstein has emphasised the most negative aspects of the historical period which is ultimately associated with the biblical view of history. It is well acknowledged that the biblical view of God, history and nature has been the source of secularisation in its positive sense. This movement released the earth from mysterious powers and made possible the development of science and technology. However, in Rubenstein's view, the Bible has been responsible not only for secularisation, but for *radical* secularisation indicating a sophisticated technology, accompanied by the dehumanisation of man and the rape of nature. The modern world, characterised by radical secularisation, is thus an unmitigated disaster. If one wishes to find the origins of the modern secular world one must look for its beginnings at Sinai. Radical secularisation is the unintended consequence of biblical faith. In *The Cunning of History* Rubenstein has seen in the Nazi Holocaust and in the concentration camp as its most horrific cynosure and metaphor, a nodal point not only in Jewish history, but in the history of man. The Holocaust is simultaneously a working out of the premises of the Judaeo-Christian ethos and a turning point in the development of that ethos. It is both a culmination of history, and a turning point in history.³³

The mark of radical secularisation is that man has turned himself into a 'god' with god-like power, namely, the power to decide who is to live and who is to die. This god-like power becomes particularly manifest in situations of massive population redundancy. With radical

32. Personal correspondence. Letter dated 21 August 1981.

33. Howard F. Stein thus describes Rubenstein's attitude to history in 'The Nazi Holocaust, History and Psychohistory', *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall 1979, p. 215.

secularisation, the dehumanisation of man and the total demystification of nature occurred. Decision-making bodies, those with power to decide both the fate of other human beings and of the earth, therefore 'play God'. While the biblical God appears totally absent from the affairs of men we continue to live in the time of the death of God.

In support of his argument that biblical history lies at the origins of radical secularisation, Rubenstein asserts that as God became increasingly transcendent in the Christian tradition, particularly in the Calvinist tradition, the modern ethos of radical secularisation became increasingly predominant. Man's thought patterns accommodated to God's increasing distance and he developed a calculating rationality, unfettered by any sense of mystery, which affects his political and economic decision-making in relation to others. Events such as the Holocaust, Rubenstein argues, would not have been possible without the ethos of radical secularisation. Because the world in which the Holocaust took place is one characterised by radical secularisation and that radical secularisation finds its roots in our most basic tradition, the Bible, the Holocaust can be seen as one of a series of events in which population can be eliminated successfully. Repetition is not only possible but probable. Rubenstein sees no hopeful future for the world while this modern secular spirit prevails because its origin lies in the heart of biblical tradition and the biblical understanding of history. History's 'cunning' lies in the fact that it has fooled man into a rationality which has led ultimately to his own irrelevance.

Rubenstein has admitted that Western man is unlikely to give up the linear view of history because he no longer can give up that view's unintended consequence, namely, technological civilisation. Restoration of circularity would only be possible with a return to a subsistence economy which, clearly, no longer is possible. Nevertheless, he perceives linearity as an illusion and expresses the hope that this illusion can be maintained for as long as possible, for its end will signal global catastrophe in which the world as we know it will cease to exist.³⁴ It, therefore, seems that man is enslaved perforce

34. The thoughts in this paragraph were expressed in a letter to me, from Rubenstein, dated 5 July, 1979.

by his linear view of history and that in reality there is no escape from it.

Does Radical Secularisation Derive from the Bible?

Rubenstein has made a serious accusation in asserting that the Bible lies at the root of the Western world's ills. It certainly is a view, though containing elements of truth, which cannot rest unchallenged. There is no way of knowing how the world would have developed in isolation from the biblical view of history. Rubenstein clearly acknowledges that as long as the biblical ethos was redeemed by genuine faith, it was life affirming. I find it unconvincing that this faith was lost primarily as a result of increasing divine transcendence.

Rubenstein acknowledges, also, that there is no way in which we can overcome our biblical tradition and that rejection of it would be quite unrealistic. He, therefore, seems to be asking for a radical probing into the possible causes of the world's malaise, even if that entails a ruthless examination of the Bible as the possible cause of our plight. He, however, implicitly acknowledges that the revelation at Sinai, as it was intended to be understood, should not have caused such disastrous consequences. There seems to be a missing link in Rubenstein's argumentation. The Bible is seen to be God's revelation, demanding ethical conduct from man. Yet because of the exigencies of statehood and because of God's increasing transcendence man has lost sight of the ethical requirements *vis-à-vis* his neighbour, and has elevated himself to the rank of God, having lost both faith and awareness of God at some point which remains unclear. The manifest values of the Bible, therefore, do not accord with its latent values.

The biblical view of chosenness has led to the possibility of creating destructive ideologies based on the superiority, and therefore, the right of some groups to survive both physically and economically, while others are relegated to the sphere of total redundancy. This is apparent in Rubenstein's statement: 'I must confess that there are times when I wonder whether we may yet be destined to render full account for having accepted a religious ideology that denies the mystery and magic

of the natural order and divides the human order into the elect and the damned.³⁵

It is interesting to note that in a recent paper³⁶ Rubenstein admits that in sacralised kingships, such as that practised in ancient Egypt, the State's right to govern *every sphere* of human activity is completely legitimated and that this is the fundamental political purpose of such a kingship. This type of kingship or institution is the very opposite of that foreseen by biblical religion. It also is one of the areas in revolt of which secularisation took place; the desacralisation of politics. In such a kingship there can be neither private property nor human rights. The ruler, strictly speaking, can do no wrong. As a divine being, or at least a divinely sanctioned being, *all* of his actions are self-legitimizing. Any privileges accorded to his subjects derive solely from the king's cosmically-grounded authority.

In ancient Egypt corvée labour was practised and Rubenstein suggests that when the slave numbers exceeded labour requirements population elimination was practised. It is in this light that he interprets

35. Rubenstein, 'The Elect and the Preterite', op. cit. p. 371. (my emphasis).

It is interesting to note that Rubenstein attempts to uncover the causes of the Holocaust by looking into the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the Bible, and in his earlier works, into the Christian mythic structure. For example, he always insists that it is not his intention to *blame* any group or institution, but rather to expose its possible causative capacity.

Stein in the article cited above questions this stance as being ambivalent. 'No sooner is something implicated in the road to Auschwitz, than Rubenstein insists that it is not to blame. Everything is absorbed by an ethos that reconciles and sublates all contradictions.' Stein then proceeds to give examples of individuals, groups and institutions which are implicated but are not to blame and concludes, 'What is one to make of this string of qualifying "nots"? By deftly applying "paradox" here and "dialectic" there, Rubenstein strives toward a synthesis that belies ambivalence throughout.' p. 222.

36. Rubenstein, 'Religion and History: Power, History and the Covenant at Sinai', (received by personal communication). To be published in Jacob Neusner, (ed.), *Take Judaism for Example. Studies Toward the Comparison of Religion*, University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Pharaoh's order to destroy all Hebrew infants at birth (Exodus 1:16) - an early method of eliminating surplus population - and this in a sacral kingship!

Any form of sovereignty that recognises no transcendent divine authority is self-legitimizing. Ancient Egypt lived by such a system and it was this very system against which the Bible in the Exodus tradition revolted. Obviously sacral kingdoms are not the only states whose rulers regard their actions as self-legitimizing. The same thing happened in Nazi Germany. Whether 'in ancient sacralized kingdoms or modern secular states there is no limit to the actions that can be committed and legitimated by those who command the political institution and control the state's monopoly of power'.³⁷ While power need not always be abused, there is, in effect, no effective check on those in command.

During the Exodus, God was the supreme power who sealed his redemptive action with a covenant requiring unswerving loyalty and involving ethical action. Rubenstein is convinced, however, that people are always regarded as expendable in the interests of state security. As soon, therefore, as Israel was faced with national survival and the vicissitudes of political and military life, she responded like all other nations, and force took precedence over ethics. God's demands were suspended, resulting in tension between ethics and political survival. The religion of landless slaves, the religion of the Bible, became dysfunctional to men who had to defend their own land.

The biblical view of power and history contains hope and consolation. According to Rubenstein it is valuable for the formation of a new community, but incapable of sustaining an established community which inevitably must deal with the challenge of the only real power that exists, namely, *human power*.³⁸

If this is the case then biblical religion has been dysfunctional for most of its history, with the exception of crisis periods such as the Exodus and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. There certainly must have been tensions during the biblical period, and we see these in the prophetic books, but religion, on the whole, was functional throughout

Israel's existence and during the diaspora period in which it was a cornerstone of Jewish survival. I cannot agree with Rubenstein's assertion that biblical religion is only functional in times of new formation of a society. If this is so, one wonders why radical secularisation did not take place before the twentieth century, and also why biblical religion is failing to be functional in the new State of Israel at the moment.

Both systems, sacral kingship and biblical religion are open to abuse and both remain options which society can choose. Though both are perennial, neither is permanent. 'Each contains the seeds of its own dissolution.'³⁹ If both systems are open to the very same abuses, namely, 'playing God', the hallmark of radical secularisation, then it no longer is convincing that the biblical view of history is the ultimate cause of radical secularisation.

Rubenstein's views concerning the elect and the preterite ultimately may not find their roots in the Bible either. Already in pre-Exodus times there existed those who were sacrificed in the interests of the State, and by no more humane a method than mass slaughter. Rubenstein thus contradicts his own argument. One should perhaps look for the answer in his deeply pessimistic view of man. No system, it seems, can ensure lasting human values when given into the hands of man. However, whilst one might be tempted to agree with Rubenstein's totally pessimistic view of man in the light of modern history, Howard F. Stein has pointed out that in Rubenstein's world-view no allowance is made for the positive evolution of childhood. There is no progression in the psychohistoric sense of reality-adaptive cognitive capacities and human love. 'We have progressed only in our capacity for evil.'⁴⁰

The Biblical Tradition as the Root of Radical Secularisation and Rabbinic Judaism

Rubenstein clearly indicts the biblical tradition as lying behind the secular modern spirit which found one of its most horrific manifestations in the Nazi ethos. It *must* also be this very same biblical tradition

39. Ibid.

40. Stein, Howard F., 'The Nazi Holocaust, History and Psychohistory', p. 216.

which lies behind rabbinic Judaism. Therefore, it seems that taken in one direction, with its various influences, the biblical tradition leads to a murderous calculating rationality, population riddance and 'playing God', while directed into another path, also with its influences, the same root tradition results in cowardice, submissiveness and a servile consciousness. Both the Nazis and their victims were influenced by the biblical tradition, yet their actions could not have been more different.

Both behaviour patterns are distasteful for Rubenstein - in the case of the Nazis, justifiably so; in the case of the Jewish response, I find Rubenstein's revulsion for their powerlessness somewhat harsh. Possession or lack of power seems to be the key to the two opposing responses. However, when power becomes the causative factor, Rubenstein's claim about the biblical tradition as lying at the root of the problem tends to be invalidated.

In fact, it was the Hebrew Bible which lay at the root of the secularisation process. Rubenstein acknowledges that as long as biblical secularisation was accompanied by genuine faith and the moral restraints inherent in the religious traditions based on the Bible were operative, a Holocaust could not occur. Likewise, he insists that the path of Yochanan's followers was only functional and life affirming when it was redeemed by genuine faith. It seems, therefore, that it was the loss of faith and the dropping of moral restraints which resulted in a catastrophe of Holocaust proportions. It is the *cause* of loss of faith and restraint, and the *point* at which it occurred which seems difficult to pinpoint and which, therefore, renders Rubenstein's basic premise unconvincing. He would at least have to give a more convincing explanation of how the *same* root tradition, although it developed differently in Judaism and Christianity, resulted in *such* opposing behaviour patterns in the Western world at large and in diaspora Judaism.

The Holocaust: An Irrational Outburst or Expression of Calculating Rationality?

In *The Cunning of History* Rubenstein argues that the Holocaust was perpetrated as a result of a perfectly constructed bureaucracy and therefore was a highly *rational* procedure which grew out of the

biblical tradition and its resultant 'calculating rationality'. In *After Auschwitz* he emphasised the very *irrational* nature of the Nazi outburst. He analysed the psychological dynamics behind the choice of the Jews as scapegoat and the mechanism by which they became seen as an alien group and as a threat to the fragmented identity of the German *Volks* after the humiliating defeat of World War I. The Holocaust thus, in his view, became a giant ritual murder reflecting the manifold disorders within German society at the time of World War II. There is a vast difference between irrational outburst and calculating rationality. Rubenstein, therefore, seems to have changed his premises fairly radically.

In a review of *The Cunning of History* Howard F. Stein⁴¹ emphasises the highly *irrational* nature of the Holocaust and seeks its causes in the German childhood which culminated in the Nazi ethos. He stresses the complicated psychological mechanisms necessary for the Germans to view themselves as an 'in group' and the Jews as a superfluous group, suggesting that superfluity is a state of mind before it is translated into a fact. The primitive repertory of splitting, dissociation and projection seems at least necessary to explain how a people can first be felt to be foreign, then made into foreigners, and finally dealt with in accordance with a stereotype. A partial truth is distorted into a sacred fiction to serve the unconscious need for that fiction and the conscious need to make that fiction appear eminently reasonable.

Those who become superfluous embody the dissociated odious characteristics, and therefore represent something intolerable within the unconscious of those who assign the label. Those who become superfluous represent something 'ego-alien' which the 'normals' must eliminate lest it contaminates their identity. Superfluous people become a social scapegoat or group safety-valve through which the group expiates its guilt for unconscionable wishes and eliminates representation of its fears. Through the scapegoat they seek to extrude a repudiated aspect of themselves.

41. Stein, Howard F., 'The Nazi Holocaust, History and Psychohistory', *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall 1979, pp. 215 - 227.

Hitler's insistence on *Lebensraum* is stressed greatly by Rubenstein in his argument that Hitler wanted to rid Germany of a large surplus population. He sees this in terms of a calculating rationality. Stein suggests that the voracious geographic extent of that *Lebensraum* attested to the decidedly dereistic purposes it was to serve as a compensation for Germany's humiliating defeat in World War I.

In response to Rubenstein's assertion that no 'law' was broken at Auschwitz, Stein suggests that the Nazis *did* recognise ethical and legal restrictions binding them to their victims. This is attested by the complicated rituals employed to dehumanise the victims and render them superfluous, as well as the need to create a complicated social machinery to deal with the problem. Because Rubenstein does not discern the clinical facts that found expression in bureaucratic compliance, he becomes guilty of bureaucratic reductionism which leads to ethical relativism.

Stein undermines Rubenstein's entire emphasis upon bureaucracy. He believes that emotional elements are not eliminated from official business at all. The very impersonal orderliness of the Nazis attests to emotionality by the fact of its eradication from everyday business. Through the mechanism of isolation, affect can be split off with scotomised perfection. Eradication of Jews and Gypsies occurred because the 'final solution' was the chief item on the Nazi agenda and *not* because Germany was knee-deep in bureaucratisation. From the very beginning, German bureaucracy was subordinated to the Nazi *ethos*. In addition to this, behind the apparent emotionless bureaucracy lay an irrational fervour, conviction and commitment without which the charismatic *Führerprinzip*, perhaps the highest 'good' in Nazi *Deutschtume*, would not only have been unnecessary, but ludicrous. The Nazis revealed their irrationality by attempting to conceal it in the guise of uncompromised rationality.

Stein challenges Rubenstein's view that the Holocaust is unique and incommensurable with anything else in history, suggesting that magnitude and scale are part of our own fantasy of the

Holocaust which we use to view it as such.⁴² In Stein's view the form, scale and apologia for sacrificial carnage vary widely from age to age and from culture to culture. If the history of childhood and culture reveals anything, it is the startling fact that things get worse, not better, the further back one goes. As a concomitant, Stein questions Rubenstein's assertion that there once prevailed an ethic of 'knightly comradeship', of mutual respect between adversaries. There was a great deal of hostility, suspicion and anxiety in previous forms of warfare for which different psychological mechanisms were employed.

Rubenstein mislocates the source of the Holocaust by seeing it ultimately in the biblical tradition. Stein sees the source in something far more basic than the Judaeo-Christian tradition, namely, in the human condition itself with the exploitability of childhood and the subsequent regression to its fantasies in adulthood. Various ethno-national groups have indigenised the Judaeo-Christian tradition differently and in different times it has manifested itself differently within the same community. In Germany itself there was a waxing and waning of anti-Semitic imagery. However, what became neutralised in normative German culture, became reprimativised under trauma. The defeat of Germany in World War I served as a trauma which precipitated the regressive solution wherein Hitler, the bound delegate of his mother, became, in turn, the bound delegate of the German masses. Childhood experiences, individual and group defences of an era, play a decisive role. The German culture's ethos therefore was the source of the problem. Italy, for example, was a wretched failure in persecuting Jews.

42. It is worth noting that Stein is deeply critical of Jewish behaviour patterns and sees Judaism as a martyrology. Within this context he views Auschwitz as one of a series of unconsciously self-imposed Jewish catastrophes. See 'Judaism and the Group Fantasy of Martyrdom: The Psychodynamic Paradox of Survival Through Persecution', *Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Fall 1978, pp. 151 - 210. The severity of Rubenstein's accusation that Jews have a servile consciousness though bearing some similarities to this view, pales into insignificance by comparison. Stein and Rubenstein have conflict over this issue. See 'Psychohistorians Discuss Psychohistory'. 'Comment by Richard L. Rubenstein', pp. 543 - 555, and Stein's reply, pp. 565 - 569, especially pp. 568 and 569. *Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Spring 1979.

German culture, therefore, must be examined with particular reference to family life and childhood which

- (1) made for cathexis of German symbols and institutions (including bureaucratic rationality, father leaders and anti-Semitism), and
- (2) the meaning of the post-World War I trauma which made for the fateful marriage of Hitlerian charisma and bureaucratic efficiency.⁴³

Nazi bureaucracy was a revolutionary one which transformed traditional German bureaucracy into a Nazi bureaucracy. Hitler was essential to enable the embodiment of the German ethos. When the Nazis purged the world of subhuman excrement, they did so not in the name of bureaucracy but for the honour of the fatherland and the *Führer*. The text which motivated the sacred struggle was not the Bible but Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Indeed, the struggle was perceived as sacred. The entire society became sacralised and its bureaucracy was invested with the *mana* and mission of the *Führer*. Stein sees Nazism as a contemporary 'ghost dance', a variant on millenarian movements and not at all unique in human history. Each ghost dance proposes and attempts to set out its own 'final solution' to the human condition, to replace the exploitability of infancy with omnipotence of thought and action.

Rubenstein suggested that the Judaeo-Christian tradition, German culture and bureaucratic rationality added up to the secular ingredients for the rise of Nazism. Stein sees it in terms of a dereistic crisis cult which occurred as a result of epidemiologically shared failure of defence. Although in Nazism the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the German ethos and bureaucratic structure are far from irrelevant, their meaning is redefined by a dysjunctively *new* cultic ethos which

43. The psychopathological nature of the entire Nazi venture is supported by Erich Fromm, in *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1965. He analyses Hitler's evil as deriving from severe mental illness. Hitler was motivated by inclinations directed against life, namely, necrophilia, malignant narcissism and symbiotic incestuous fixation to his mother. These tendencies, when predominant and in combination, form a nucleus of severe mental illness or the syndrome of decay as opposed to the syndrome of growth. A leader's or a society's choices for good or evil are determined by the relative strength of these unconscious forces.

taps into the deepest conflicts of German childhood. The crisis of a 'crisis cult' is inseparable from childhood traumata. Regression occurs, only now with adult bodies, adult cognitive capacities and adult abilities to attempt to coerce reality to conform to fantasy. Nazism's mechanisms appear more rational than those of other cultures such as in Melanesians or American Indians, but this was only because the Nazis were able to use techniques of the cultural system of the West so successfully. Rabid ethnocentrism is not new, and certainly not limited to those who adopted the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The ethnographic and historical record is filled with the detritus of those whom society's 'normals' declared to be dangerous, and hence, superfluous.

In his early thought, Rubenstein, in my opinion, gave a convincing account of the psychodynamics behind Nazism's murderous anti-Semitic explosion emphasising its *irrationality*. The fragmented German identity which hankered after a cohesive *Volksgemeinschaft*, led to the perception of the Jew as alien and as deicide. The Nazis wanted to destroy the Jews for the very crime they wished to perpetrate, namely, deicide, and to extrude from themselves unconscionable wishes in the form of the Jews. The Jews were expelled as faeces and the camps became the *anus mundi*. Hitler, as leader, was the enraged *Mühtersonchen* who never outgrew his regressive hankering for the unrestrained gratification of the anarchic desires of childhood.

Rubenstein's shift to a bureaucratic emphasis and calculating rationality, therefore, seems to have resulted in a distortion of his original views. Stein finds it impossible to fit everything neatly into Rubenstein's procrustean evolutionary schema as put forward in *The Cunning of History*. He therefore does not see the work as a scientific explanation of history but as a fantasy about history. Regarding Rubenstein as the Kafka of the macrocosm, he views Rubenstein's evolution of evil as making absolute sense when based on the Kafkaesque model of the world as an uncontrollable, murderous, mechanical monster. Bureaucracy is Rubenstein's monster and its origin and destiny is the Judaeo-Christian tradition. For Rubenstein the universe 'is peopled by impersonal judgments made by invisible judges, unappeasable superstructures, implacable High Commands, remote and elusive powers. There is no Yahweh, but His Court never goes into

recess, His Law becomes more inscrutable, and His Judgment only increases in severity'.⁴⁴ This, according to Stein, is the familiar Freudian family romance displaced onto the cosmos or society. *The Cunning of History* is a cultural text, part of history in need of interpretation. It is not historical explanation.

It must be noted that Stein's emphasis is psychohistorical and he therefore stresses the underlying psychological dynamics behind the Holocaust, perceiving in it nothing particularly unique in terms either of the event or of human behaviour. However, when viewed from a Jewish theological perspective, one feels inclined to side with Rubenstein on this issue, seeing in the Holocaust an event which is unique and which is 'unassimilable' into Jewish history. When examined against traditional theodicies, it proves to be a 'dysteleological surd',⁴⁵ involving needless and inexplicable human suffering with no discernible purpose. The Holocaust can be explained by the utilisation of several disciplines or combinations thereof such as psychology, history, sociology, economics. Rubenstein has attempted to do this with some convincing and provocative results. However, in theological terms it remains permanently elusive. Rubenstein's despair of the God of history, therefore, is eminently understandable.

Rubenstein's God-concept and Insightful Paganism

The death of God movement, according to Rubenstein, is the theological movement with the most vitality and insight as it has faced most openly and truthfully the question of the divine-human encounter in our time. For Rubenstein this encounter is non-existent. Along with

44. Ibid. p. 226.

45. This term, as Louis Jacobs points out, was coined by Edgar Sheffield Brightman to describe meaningless suffering or suffering which is totally irrational and makes no sense.

See Louis Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith. An Analytical Study*, Vallentine Mitchell, London, 1964, p. 144.

It has also been used by Byron L. Sherwin to describe the Holocaust in 'Elie Wiesel and Jewish Theology', op. cit. p. 43.

the biblical tradition and all its fruit, he has rejected the God of history as a 'dread illusion'. His God-concept contains no theistic elements in it and is drawn from the concepts of Tillich's 'Ground of Being', Freud's 'Thanatos' and the God of the Jewish mystics as characterised by *tsimtsum* or divine withdrawal. It bears similarities to the Buddhist concept of Nirvana, and, in my opinion, the Hindu Goddess Kali. It has some authentic Jewish roots, but it is ultimately unsatisfying from a Jewish viewpoint. For Jewish practice one of the indispensable features for worship is the 'personality' and theistic nature of God. Everything that makes traditional Jewish worship specifically and distinctively *Jewish* becomes non-sensical without the metaphor of a divine Person, in a covenant relationship of mutual responsibility and love with human people. Authentic Judaism, therefore, must have a concept of a personal God, a theistic Ultimate rather than a non-theistic Ultimate. The use of a concept of a personal Ultimate is at the living heart of the Jewish symbol-system.⁴⁶

God as the Great Goddess

There are two noteworthy features of Rubenstein's concept of deity in relation to femininity. Firstly, from his earliest work he has considered the goddess principle in deity to be prior to the male principle historically. He insisted that the primal crime was not primal enough and Freud should have taken into account the possibility that the first form of deity was feminine. Secondly, he has always emphasised the maternal quality of deity as being indispensable. He has elaborated little on his concept of God as the Holy Nothingness and the corollary that there is no afterlife and no ultimate redemption. His notion of God as the Great Mother deserves some discussion. God,

46. This argument is put forward by Rita M. Gross in her article 'Steps Toward Feminine Imagery of Deity in Jewish Theology', *Judaism*, Vol. 30, No. 2, Spring 1981, p. 185.

It will be noted that I argue for the reasonableness of Rubenstein's emphasis on religious practice *without* a personal God concept which characterised his position of the nineteen sixties. See, in this connection, Marc E. Samuels' article 'In Praise of Doubt', *Judaism*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Fall 1971, pp. 456 - 459. However, I do point out the logical strain that Rubenstein's position imposes.

on the one hand, is beyond masculinity and femininity, but, on the other, God is the Cannibal Mother who gives life to all only to consume all. Earth gives forth life only to take her own back into herself at death. Every grave is thus the open mouth of the Great Mother. 'In the beginning, as babes we ate of the mother's substance; in the end we are all destined to be eaten by her. Hers alone is the final victory.'⁴⁷

The concept of a female God is shocking to many in the Jewish and Christian tradition,⁴⁸ yet views have been put forward that we need to give greater prominence to the feminine aspects of deity for a better understanding of God and for the greater participation of women in religious life.⁴⁹ It has been argued that the masculine elements of God have become over emphasised at the cost of feminine aspects because of the androcentric character of Jewish society. Whilst language is basically inadequate in describing or expressing God, it tells us about those who create and use God language. The intensely masculine emphasis in the traditional Jewish God-concept expresses the profound and long standing alienation between women and femaleness, and the central issues of Jewish religious tradition. All existent feminine attributes of God have been imbedded in patriarchal contexts.⁵⁰

Theories have been proposed which assert that the original civilisations of the world were gynarchic and that they were presided over by an omnipotent Mother Goddess. Periods of matriarchy have been characterised by a golden age of plenty, of progress and of peace.

47. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 142.

48. Himmelfarb expresses his horror at Rubenstein's assertion that the only God he believes in is the cannibal Mother Goddess of earth, and retorts: 'Is it the poet Robert Graves speaking or a Jewish theologian? This must be some kind of outcry. To quote a French poet, "Take eloquence and wring its neck.".' 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', p. 76.

49. See Rita M. Gross, 'Steps Toward Feminine Imagery of Deity', cited above, pp. 183-193, and Felicity Edwards 'The Doctrine of God and the Feminine Principle', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 37, December 1981, pp. 23-37.

50. See Gross, 'Steps Toward Feminine Imagery in Deity', pp. 185 and 189.

Paradise was lost with the masculist revolution which was accompanied by the emphasis on a masculine Sky God. Peace and plenty was replaced by warlike materialism. The Mother Goddess was replaced by a stern and vengeful God.⁵¹

Elizabeth Gould Davis attributes the present depressed state of women to the masculist Judaeo-Christian tradition. Society made after the pattern of man is advanced in mechanical invention but is involved in a whirling confusion and strife which, on its human side, is an utter failure. With the imminent final flare of universal violence and despair which may result in global cataclysm, Davis advocates the return to the Mother Goddess worshipped by early man. There is a semblance of similarity between this view and Rubenstein's assertion that the Bible and the biblical God lie behind much of man's present destructiveness.

Whether there is real merit in thecries such as that of Davis, there is no question about the attraction of the Hebrews to a female goddess figure in the Bible, and possibly her attraction lay in more than mere fertility. The Hebrews found difficulty in suppressing goddess worship. There are at least forty places in the Hebrew Bible in which goddess worship among the Hebrews is mentioned, even after the patriarchal editing of later times. According to Rubenstein, the Earth Mother never entirely lost her hold over the children of Israel, even in rabbinic times.⁵²

Roman poets speak intuitively of a time, in the not too distant past, before the birth of the gods, when earth had been a semi-paradise of peace and tranquillity, presided over by an omnipotent Goddess. Lucretius recalls the vanished time when 'terror and darkness were dispelled' by the goddess 'mother of the gods, sole mistress of all things, without whom nothing can be glad and lovely'.⁵³ Life affirmation, therefore, seems to be a strong corollary to goddess worship.

51. One may see such an argument in the militantly feminist book *The First Sex*, by Elizabeth Gould Davis, Penguin Books, 1972.

52. Rubenstein, 'Response to the "Commentary on Homeland and Holocaust"', pp. 106, 107.

53. Quoted by Davis in *The First Sex*, p. 65, from Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Transl. by H. A. J. Munro, Bell Publishers, London, 1929.

Rubenstein, though emphasising the female aspect of divinity, takes the goddess concept much further than the life-giving, peaceful aspects of her nature as put forward by the feminists. He stresses both her benevolent and her destructive, all-consuming nature. He perceives in the rabbinic *Aggadah* a deep terror of the Cannibal Mother, the hideous ogress, suggesting that the rabbis preferred the measure and justice of the Father God to the infinitely more terrifying prospects associated with the life-giving but all-incorporating Mother Goddess who is both womb and tomb. In this respect his view of deity is rich and all-encompassing, making provision for the dark and destructive aspects of divinity. I find it strikingly similar to the great Hindu Goddess who in her terrifying, destructive modes is known as Kali or Durga, and who in her benevolent, compassionate, life-affirming role is known by her devotees as Uma (Mother) or Parvati. She is meaningful to her devotees in both modes as life-giving preserver and as evil destroyer. An important difference, however, is that in some manifestations of Hinduism a theistic relationship is possible with this Goddess whereas this would not be possible with Rubenstein's Mother Goddess.

Rubenstein has not exploited the feminine aspect of deity to the full, particularly with regard to the more life-affirming qualities associated with such a deity. Nor has he elaborated upon his view of deity as the Holy Nothingness. He appears to have moved away from concern with deity to a consideration of the *absence* of God in the affairs of men. In his analysis of our world, he now reflects on the irrelevance of God in political, sociological and economic decision making and problem solving.

In 1971 Charles W. Steckel confessed his regret that Rubenstein's promising, almost brilliant mind had not found a different language to convey his message. Steckel asserted that he could possibly come to an understanding as to why Rubenstein, by joining the ranks of contemporary Protestant radical theologians, had sentenced God to die, 'but', he stated, 'I cannot understand why he continues to disturb Him. To describe "God after-the-death-of-God" as "Holy Nothingness", or the "omnipotent Nothingness is Lord of creation", tells the reader

nothing at all, certainly about Nothingness.⁵⁴ It seems as if Rubenstein, over a decade later, has now ceased even 'to disturb Him' preferring to examine the dynamics of a radically secular world in which God could and has died for him.

I believe that the female elements of deity should be reasserted, but if Jewish worship is to remain satisfyingly meaningful, it would have to remain within a theistic context. Perhaps this is one reason why Rubenstein could ultimately not maintain his emphasis on the performance of Jewish ritual. The resultant logical strain may prove to be ultimately unsatisfactory and too difficult to sustain.

Insightful Paganism

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what Rubenstein means when he espouses an 'insightful paganism' as the only viable path open to modern Jews. In the nineteen sixties this was to be accompanied by historic forms of Jewish religion which he has now abandoned. Milton Himmelfarb has made the fallacious observation that it is not clear which form of paganism Rubenstein is advocating, the ancient form or the modern form of atheism or idolatry as expressed in Nazism.⁵⁵ Indeed, any sensitive reading of Rubenstein cannot fail to reveal that it is the ancient form of paganism which he commends.

His defence of paganism as such is refreshing. Too often religious forms are condemned in relation to biblical monotheism without taking adequate cognisance of their value and life-affirming qualities. Rubenstein possesses an unusual capacity to elevate that which has for centuries been maligned. He does this with both paganism and Jewish priestly religion with interesting and provocative results. Merely to shake staid and fondly held presuppositions is in itself a service. It raises the level of debate above commonplace clichés and platitudes.

54. Steckel, Charles W., 'God and the Holocaust', *Judaism*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Summer 1971, p. 281.

55. Himmelfarb, Milton, 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', pp. 66, 67.

Rubenstein opts for the earth divinities and the realities to which they point because they alone offer men the opportunity to celebrate the human condition which, following Sartre, Camus and Genet, he regards as entirely enclosed within the fatalities of an absurd earthly existence. Man lives in a meaningless cosmos which offers no hope. Man suffers of necessity, not as a result of the punitive visitation of the God of history. Life is bracketed between two oblivions, offering no redemption, afterlife or messiah.

Man, furthermore, has rendered nature meaningless. Through radical secularisation he has developed an advanced technology which has led to man's own redundancy and irrelevance. It seems as if Rubenstein is suggesting that through radical secularisation the natural world has become so demystified and abused that he would wish to put the demons, or more specifically, divinity, back into nature. As I perceive his message, it seems to be a quest for a renewed appreciation of the natural world and a celebration of the dionysian aspects of life.

Bodily gratification, Rubenstein avers, should not be delayed to a time or world hereafter. Man should live life to the full, for this is the only life he will ever have, but at the same time, he should be aware of the implications of the choices he makes and thereby the actions he performs. Men and women should not be libertine, but responsible in their actions. He sees rabbinic Judaism as having instituted a repressive pattern of behaviour. The Jew is thus left with the awesome decision of 'picking and choosing' in respect to the Torah which must result in tension, anxiety and guilt. Rubenstein pinpoints the dilemma of modern secularised Jews who indeed are faced with terrifying freedom before the Torah.

Putting the gods back into nature, though I believe it to be tempting, yet ultimately unnecessary, as the biblical view *demands* respect for nature as the creation of God, may lead to a renewed respect for the natural world and a halt to our onslaught on nature through technology, and the resultant pollution of our environment which threatens our continued existence on this planet. Rubenstein seems to reflect the sentiments of William Wordsworth:

The world is too much with us;...

*It moves us not. - Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.*

Although technology cannot be reversed. Rubenstein seems only to be asking for a renewed respect for the world through an insightful paganism in order to modify our destructiveness.

Indeed, the Bible led to secularisation which enabled the development of an advanced technology. The demystification of nature meant that the natural order could be exploited, investigated and improved. Man needs to be reminded that he was endowed with responsible dominion and stewardship over the earth. One need not return to paganism to realise that man has a responsibility for the world in which he lives and that this responsibility was given in the biblical view of creation. The glory of nature can be maintained, and *should* be maintained within the biblical world view.

In this context one could cite the words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

*...earth's crammed with heaven
and every common bush afire with God
but only he who sees takes off his shoes
the rest sit around it and pluck blackberries.*

Rubenstein's desire to put the gods back into nature is diametrically opposed to the biblical view of creation. Although paganism is attractive, it cannot be maintained *with* the biblical view. Man need to return to the true intentions of the Bible in relation to creation and nature in order to promote science and retain a responsible attitude to the world.

C H A P T E R X

*On the impulse of a moment I forsook you...
In sudden anger
I hid my face from you for a moment;
but now have I pitied you with a love which never fails,
says the Lord who ransoms you.*

Isaiah 54:7, 8.

*On that day a scion from the root of Jesse
shall be set up as a signal to the peoples;
the nations shall rally to it,
and its resting-place shall be glorious.*

Isaiah 11:10

RUBENSTEIN AND A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF HISTORY

Rubenstein stands diametrically opposed to the biblical view of revelation and history. He has challenged the most basic assumptions of Judaism: that there is a creator God who revealed himself in history and continues to direct history toward a consummate end. Rubenstein's approach is naturalistic and functional. His challenge to the God of history originated from his refusal to accept the view that the Holocaust was a punitive divine visitation. His initial grappling with the question of God and the death camps led him to the inescapable conclusion that the God of history is dead. In his view, inability to break faith with the God of history causes Jews rather to 'believe in a cosmic sadist, more malignant than Satan in his dealings with mankind than deny the traditions of our fathers'.¹

1. Rubenstein, 'God As Cosmic Sadist', *Christian Century*, Vol. 87, No. 30, July 1970, p. 922.

It seems that during the nineteen sixties Rubenstein himself was unwilling to abandon all the traditions of his ancestors and that Jewish practice, emphasising the priestly aspects of it, could be maintained even though some logical strain may have resulted in so doing. In his current thinking he appears to have abandoned a programme for ongoing Jewish practice. Not only does he leave little room for Jewish practice but there is a disturbing element in his most recent thought which goes beyond a responsible choice of action in the face of freedom. His radical pessimism forces him to foresee a global cataclysm in which the world as we know it will cease to exist. Apocalyptic pessimism causes him to advocate a total catholicity in Judaism including a Sabbatian form of antinomianism. He exhibits an irresistible pull toward what seems to be a radical antinomianism.² He no longer offers a viable programme of action

2. In 'Jewish Theology and the Current World Situation', *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, Rubenstein citing a thirteenth century Kabbalistic text, the *Reya Mehemma*, contrasts the two Torahs, the Torah of the Tree of Life and the Torah of the Tree of Knowledge. A first set of tablets was given to Moses which was in harmony with the pristine state of innocence of Adam before the fall. This, the Tree of Life, was the original Torah. There was no need to hold in check the powers of impurity and death by means of prohibitions and restrictions. In that Torah revelation and redemption coincided. When the first tablets were smashed, their letters 'flew away'. The second set of tablets was bestowed on Israel by Moses. These were an expression of the Tree of Knowledge which reduced Israel to obedience to a Torah involving prohibitions, restrictions and commandments, a Torah indispensable to a world governed by the powers of evil. This is the Torah which Rubenstein has identified with the socio-cultural inheritance of the man of Yavneh. The author of the *Reya Mehemma* looked forward to a day of redemption when the Tree of Knowledge would be displaced by the original Torah of pristine innocence, the Torah of the Tree of Life. Rubenstein asks in this light, 'is it not possible that the aeon of the Apocalypse, which began for Israel with the Holocaust, has brought the old Torah of the Tree of Knowledge to an end and that the condition in which we find ourselves justifies our *seizing for ourselves* the original Torah of the Tree of Life in which all is holy and *all is permitted*, so that henceforth, we may be the final arbiters of what we choose for ourselves in our modes of behavior and our choice of religious existence'. p. 25. (my emphasis).

See also Scholem, Gershom, *Kabbalah*, Library of Jewish Knowledge, Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1974, pp. 156 ff.

In connection with Adam's fall and the loss of innocence in the Kabbalah, see also p. 124.

for Jews, calling for a radical act of disbelief accompanied by the development of individual talents to enable people, Jews among them, to survive in an increasingly savage world. His current views, though they are provocative, and though they expose the total rot which has eroded our civilisation, simply are too pessimistic to offer any realistic programme of action or thought for Jews.

He displays, on the one hand, a Nietzschean will to power, a distaste for any form of impotence which has led him to castigate his people, often unfairly. It frequently has been observed that he shows a marked indebtedness to Nietzsche.³ This is most obvious in Rubenstein's terminology concerning the death of God. It also is apparent in Rubenstein's contrast between the servile consciousness and the lordly consciousness which may be paralleled in Nietzsche's slave morality as opposed to the master morality. Nietzsche saw in the ethical standards of the Judaeo-Christian tradition the essence of slave morality. However, as the undergirding factor behind slave morality, God, is now dead, slave morality should be overcome by the efforts of man, the *Übermensch*, who himself becomes God in the promulgation of the ethics of master morality. 'The distinguished type of human being feels *himself* as value-determining; he does not need to be ratified; he judges that *he* is the something which gives honor to objects; he *creates values*. This type honors everything he knows about himself; his morality is self-glorification. In the foreground is the feeling of fullness, of power....It is the powerful men who *understand* how to accord honor : this is their art, the domain of their invention.'⁴ Nietzsche's obvious admiration

3. For Nietzsche's views concerning the death of God, slave morality as opposed to master morality, and the need for humanly created ethics, see Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Joyful Wisdom*, (Transl. by Thomas Common, T. N. Foulis, Edinburgh & London, 1910) with particular reference to the well-known parable of the Madman in *The Joyful Wisdom*. op. cit. pp. 167 - 169. See also *Beyond Good and Evil*, A Gateway Edition, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1955 (Eighth Printing 1969), particularly pp. 202 - 206.

4. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 203, 204.

Rubenstein has addressed himself to the problem of ethics in the absence of divinely validated norms in his book *Morality and Eros*.

for the Greek sense of aristocracy and the heroes of German and Scandinavian legends is reflected in Rubenstein's admiration for paganism and its values.

Rubenstein, at times, seems to be influenced deeply by Hegel who criticised the Jewish religion as affecting a radical dehumanisation of man, reducing him to the condition of a slave blindly submitting to an oppressive legalism imposed by an external authority in the name of an omnipotent transcendent God. The God of the Jews is thus an authoritarian master and the Jews themselves an isolated, alienated people.⁵ On the other hand, he seems to be searching for some form of divinity which will end the state of godlessness which plagues him and the world. He is attempting to break out of the 'Iron Cage' of godlessness, maintaining that the world of the death of God is not permanently viable, though what is to follow remains a mystery. He also, in my opinion, exhibits a nostalgia for authentic Jewish tradition and for the time when traditional moral restraints were operative.⁶

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5. See Masterson, Patrick. *Atheism and Alienation*, Pelican Books, Middlesex, 1973, p. 47.

Rubenstein is aware of Hegel's negative evaluation of Judaism. See *Power Struggle*, pp. 156 f. Yet he seems to be influenced deeply by this negative evaluation.

6. Rubenstein gives a strong impression of this nostalgia and admiration when, for example, he talks of the intuitive psychological wisdom and security of the tradition from which his parents alienated themselves as a result of their deracination from Judaism. See *Power Struggle*, p. 39.

He also talks of the 'majesty of traditional religion' both Jewish and Christian. See *Power Struggle*, p. 39.

In *Power Struggle* pp. 100 f., he talks of the 'moral authority of thousands of years of tradition' which characterised his teacher Rabbi Hutner. Twenty five years later he regretted that he could not have remained permanently a disciple of Hutner. Of all his religious teachers, Hutner retained Rubenstein's greatest respect.

In *Power Struggle*, p. 184, he mentions the 'inner dignity and the moral integrity of Yochanan's honest religious faith', and finally when discussing his complicated relationship with his first wife he laments the fact, 'we had no larger structure into which we might insert ourselves'. *Power Struggle*, p. 79.

When looking at Rubenstein's theological development and what he has to offer, it seems that in the face of disaster and human suffering, the Jew has three choices open to him.

Firstly, there is the course of the Rubenstein of the nineteen sixties, an abandonment of the God of history and any notion of chosenness, accompanied by a retention of Jewish rituals and sacred texts. Judaism would serve a function in the life of the individual, marking the crises of life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, death, as well as the sacred seasons of Judaism within a community, thereby endowing religious practice with meaning. Thus a rationale for the maintenance of Judaism and Jewish practice was put forward.

Secondly, and far more radically, there is the way of the Rubenstein of the nineteen seventies, an increasing distrust in the world, a rejection of Jewish practice as dysfunctional in the light of its repressive behaviour patterns and its failure to function in the face of the Holocaust, a radical probing of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and its source, the Bible, as the ultimate cause behind the modern world's destructiveness. In fact, no realistic programme for religious practice is offered as diaspora Judaism, he believes, is doomed. Rubenstein's function at this time seems rather to expose the causes of our malaise than to propose a way to deal with the religious dimensions of living.

Thirdly, there is the 'normative' Jewish path based on biblical insights upon which our generation can build a modern faith that can sustain the spirit without demanding the abdication of the mind. It cannot be over-emphasised, however, that there is no possibility of judging Rubenstein from this perspective. The premises of biblical faith and Rubenstein's naturalistic, functional approach are diametrically opposed. One must consider the normative Jewish views (a) as the base line from which Rubenstein has departed, and (b) to indicate a viable alternative to Rubenstein's radical stance.

God and Human Suffering

In my opinion, the Holocaust presents *particular* problems in relation to theodicy primarily because it was directed at the Jews, God's chosen people, and because of its sheer dimension. It can, however, be

argued that there is a form of moral blindness in seeking different theological answers for this particular evil in relation to other forms of human suffering.⁷ At which point, it may be asked, does a sin against humanity become monstrous, at six million victims, at three million or at one million? Is not the suffering and death of a single child a calamity before the throne of God? Does the Holocaust differ in quality from other massacres of Jews throughout history, or from other humanly inflicted sufferings such as the conscious and systematic starvation of millions during the early years of Soviet Russia, or the thousands of deaths in Bangladesh and Biafra? The question revolves around whether it is the statistical yardstick which must be used in determining the dimensions of human suffering and whether this poses a special challenge to faith in God. The problem of Jewish and general human suffering is perennial and did not arise for the first time with Nazism. It, therefore, is incumbent upon us in the interest of intellectual and moral honesty to examine the insights at which man arrived in earlier periods of human agony.

In addition to evil, one of the most pressing problems of our time is the threat imposed by our advanced technology. We must determine to what extent we can affirm man's power and his limits in a technological world. For mainstream Judaism, biblical insights form a basis for constructing a view of human life and destiny capable of sustaining Jews in the face of the evils of existence and our terrifyingly advanced technology.⁸

The Biblical Tradition

The Judaeo-Christian tradition (with few exceptions, Process-theology, for example), is unanimous in affirming a God who created the world *ex nihilo*, who revealed himself and thereby called forth history as the arena of his purposive activity. History, in which he reveals

7. Robert Gordis puts forward this argument in 'A Cruel God or None - Is There No Other Choice?' *Judaism*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Summer 1972, pp. 278 f.

8. In the brief description of the biblical tradition which follows I am in substantive agreement with the approaches of Robert Gordis, 'A Cruel God or None?', cited above, pp. 277 - 284; Seymour Siegel, 'Theology for Today' *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1974, pp. 37 - 60, and Samuel E. Karff, 'Man's Power and Limits in a Technological Age', *Judaism*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Spring 1974, pp. 161 - 173.

himself is linear and is directed toward a final consummation and redemption in the future. Thus, the basic concepts of the Jewish world-view revolve around the triple chord of creation, revelation and redemption.⁹

Creation

The doctrine of creation plays a most important part in the biblical-rabbinic world-view. It asserts that God is the ontological basis of all that exists. He is at once creator and sustainer of the world which he judged to be good. Creation therefore asserts the meaningfulness and goodness of being which is associated intimately with the biblical view of man. The biblical view of man in creation is essential in searching for an answer to evil in the world.

Firstly, the divine gift of human dominion over the earth is seen as conditional. Man is accountable to God for his stewardship over nature. As the rabbis affirmed, Adam was charged with responsibility for caring for the world. 'Behold, all which I have created is for your benefit, but beware lest you despoil and destroy my world, for if you do there is no one who will repair it after you.' (*Kohélet Rabbah* 7:28). As man can and does destroy, he might be in danger of destroying the world. His power, paradoxically, is the ultimate confirmation of his finitude. The boundary lines between the power of the Creator and man's power has shifted. Even as man makes his technological conquests, he reveals his limitations. Man has made remarkable strides in conquering space but with so much of our galaxy unconquered, man still can peer from his space-ship and ask:

'When I look up at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers
the moon and the stars set in their place by thee,
what is man that thou shouldst remember him,
mortal man that thou shouldst care for him?' (Psalm 8: 3 - 4).

Secondly, man's privilege of freedom is both fateful and perilous. Freedom makes man the most noble of creatures and also the most dangerous.

9. This triple chord forms the basis of Franz Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1971.

The rabbis asserted that 'All is in the hands of heaven except the fear of heaven.' (Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 33b).

With man's technological prowess he can tamper with this freedom through genetic engineering and through conditioning programmes.¹⁰ Man's humanity and dignity lie in his genuine freedom to choose between good and evil. He is a covenant partner able to say 'yes' or 'no' to his Creator. His power to say 'no' renders his 'yes' all the more significant. Man has a responsibility in the social as well as the physical arena. Evil can be seen not as the act of God but as the will of man. In its view of man the Bible confronts the secular world with three ringing affirmations:-

- (1) Man is free.
- (2) His freedom and dignity include the power to enhance or betray his covenant. (There can be no freedom to do good without the power to think and do evil.).
- (3) In the present, pre-messianic days, before man's evil impulses have been fully tamed, virtue remains not only as an achievement but as a struggle from which no person is immune.

Man in the twentieth century is free to wreak unbelievable technological horrors upon the world and his fellow man. But, equally, his powers for good have been enlarged by the modern age. He need not accept all forms of suffering as ineluctable elements of the human condition. War, poverty, racial injustice and social oppression need not be considered as ineradicable aspects of man's condition. Man's major virtue in the modern age can be his refusal to acquiesce that evil is inevitable.

10. B. F. Skinner, in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, Knopf, New York, 1971, puts forward a case for social conditioning to eliminate free choice and make goodness automatic, thereby denying the reality of freedom and dignity as an illusion.

Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, op cit., is a fictional account of this type of conditioning which removes free choice from the individual and, thereby, his humanity. Technological tampering with genetics by which genetic endowments could be programmed as well as an asexual form of human production known as cloning has been posited. See Paul Ramsey, *Fabricated Man - The Ethics of Genetic Control*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1970.

Unlike Plato, who regarded war as the permanent condition of mankind, the biblical prophets looked forward to a time when war would cease and poverty be overcome. Man can choose to develop his potentiality for good with the realisation that pain and destruction remain the prelude to a new heaven and a new earth.

Thirdly, death is man's ineluctible encounter with his own creatureliness. All hope for *transcendence* of death depends on God's power and love. Death forces man to come to the realisation that he is *not* God. Death has been seen as punishment for disobedience, but, equally important is its role in man's encounter with creatureliness. Even in an age of technology, man remains a meaning-seeking creature who yearns for ultimate validation of his life which can be bestowed only by the ultimate source of his being. Death of God theologians, whether they celebrate or mourn the death of God, anticipate with more certainty than ever the inevitability of their own death.

Fourthly, man's right and duty to confront evil in the world is a deeply ingrained biblical and Jewish tradition. Biblical faith does not interpret man's cruelty, which reached its apex in the Holocaust, as a punitive visitation of God that must be borne in submission. Jewish religious thought is replete with challenges against God accompanied by demands that he adhere to his own moral law. From Abraham's 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?' through Jeremiah's question, 'Why do the wicked prosper and traitors live at ease?' and the protests of Rabbi Yitzchak of Berdichev, to the contemporary Job, Elie Wiesel, God is confronted by man on behalf of man's suffering brother. Challenge and protest has been a persistent theme throughout Judaism.

Fifthly, there remains a core of mystery in evil. Although the Bible and post biblical Judaism offer many positive answers to the problem of evil, the book of Job prevents men from forgetting that a core of mystery in evil always remains. A profound insight of the Bible is that after all legitimate explanations have been advanced, there remains an irreducible element of mystery. In the 'Speeches of the Lord' (Job, Chs. 38 - 41), the poet(s) presents the triumphant affirmation of the natural order, and by *implication* persuades us that the moral order, too, has pattern and order, though it may be veiled from man.

for both aspects of reality are the creation of the one God who is both Lord of nature and God of history.

Lastly, there is the concept of the interdependence of mankind. Each human being is created in the divine image as a creature of dignity with the command to love his neighbour as himself, and all men are unified by being derived from a single creator. We are all brothers in a merciless as well as a merciful way. Robert Gordis relates the graphic parable of the rabbis which affirms that as we are all in the same boat, one man cannot bore a hole in it with the excuse that it is only under *his* seat that he is making the hole!¹¹ He also points out that the interdependence of man is not merely a pious abstraction. Israel's role as the suffering servant came to be seen *not* merely as a result of its sins but because of its role as teacher and witness to God's law of justice, freedom and peace. Deutero-Isaiah is not enunciating the concept of vicarious atonement, but the reality of vicarious suffering which is a fact of life and a datum of human experience.¹²

Revelation

God reveals himself to man in two modes, through historic events and through the sacred documents of our traditions. The Christian theologian, A. A. van Ruler, points toward a convincing theodicy through his acceptance of the full reality of divine revelation, and thereby the reality of history. The meaning of history should be found in the divine acts of the revealing of sin as the guilt of man, and the reconciliation of his guilt. God is present in the world in the depths of human sin and universal depravity. By virtue of the presence of God in the world sin is exposed and qualified as guilt.

The Christianisation of the world took place through the indispensable instrument of the Torah which is the medium between revelation and existence. Israel had a revealed knowledge about sin and guilt through the Torah. Paul saw the role and destiny of the people Israel as bringing to light the guilt of the world. According to Van Ruler God gave the Law to Israel with this purpose. The Torah had more than a moral function. It not only revealed sin, but it actually called it forth and declared it to be guilt. The presence of God in the world

11. Gordis, 'A Cruel God or None?', p. 283. 12. Ibid. pp. 282, 283.

renders the world sinful and guilty and it is for this purpose that God revealed himself to Israel and was present in their midst. Not only would they come thereby to a knowledge and recognition of sin and guilt, but the world itself would be revealed to be sin and guilt. The presence of God in the world through the Torah causes a sinful and rebellious world to sin and rebel against the divine will and intentions. The essence of history is a 'permanent syntax of guilt and reconciliation'. History itself is the process of divine redemption. History must be interpreted in terms of a militant struggle in which God often appears to be the loser. The kingdom of God, therefore, is not to be understood in an ideal sense, but in a dynamic sense. God appears on the scene of reality, thereby rendering existence historical. The cycle of nature is broken and orientated toward its future. In guilt and reconciliation the enigma of history is not solved but expressed. The deepest function of the Torah, according to the full intention of God, is to be a living instrument of God for his liberated people to live according to his will and therefore to realise their true humanity.

Jewish values, on the whole, place less emphasis on man's inescapable sinfulness. Man has two impulses, a *yetzer hatov*, the good impulse, and a *yetzer hara*, the evil impulse. He is expected to serve God with both his *yetzers*. God called even the evil impulse good, for 'were it not for the *yetzer hara*', said the rabbis, 'no man would build a house, take a wife and beget children'. (*Bereshit Rabbah* 9:7).

The primary event through which God revealed himself to his people was the Exodus. The accompanying doctrines of covenant and *choshen* remain the most persistent notions in Judaism, even among secular Jews. Even the Holocaust has not shaken these notions decisively. It is important to note that there is a difference between the utterances and questions of the theologians and the actual belief of Jews.¹³

13. This is an observation which is made frequently by students of Judaism or theologians. See, for example, Charles W. Steckel 'God and the Holocaust', pp. 282 ff.; Seymour Siegel, 'Theology for Today', p. 46, and Eugene Borowitz, 'The Post-secular Situation of Jewish Theology', *Theological Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1970.

For Judaism the Torah is the best defence against the *yetzer hara*. The rules of morality are not seen as a burden but as fences of roses which direct Jews toward right behaviour. The nomian principle of Judaism has been attacked consistently and misunderstood. Paul implied that the Law makes us aware of our guilt and that Judaism did not provide the means for expiation of that guilt. In modern times there again has been a tendency to attack the nomian principle as crippling rather than liberating. In troubled times, times of great upheaval, theologians like Rubenstein suggest that each individual should find his own way. The antinomian quality of troubled times is hastened by prophets of doom, a category in which we may place Rubenstein.

It is the belief of several modern Jewish theologians that the classical concepts of Jewish theology, correctly understood and properly explicated, far from being outdated, represent the most authentic and effective way of coping with the threats, ambiguities and promises of the contemporary world. It can be argued, therefore, that the authentic Jewish response to troubled times should be just the opposite of antinomianism. In times of stress, it is more necessary than ever to hold fast to Jewish Law, particularly in the ethical area. According to Seymour Siegel, in times such as ours, we need firm principle and not personal taste.¹⁴

Rabbinic thought interprets human evil as deriving from God. It is God's responsibility but not his immediate will. Man's evil resulted in the expulsion from Eden. Likewise God was driven from the world by the evil in men (*Bereshit Rabbah* 19:7). The *Shekhinah*, the indwelling nearness and presence of God is exiled by evil and only can be brought back into the world by the righteous deeds of humanity. Observance of Torah, in the rabbinic view, is the primary way to reunite man and God. Rubenstein's perception of our godless world is not unlike the rabbinic view that human evil has exiled God from human activities. However, the rabbis offered a moral path by which to find God. Rubenstein turns in the very opposite direction toward antinomianism.

14. Siegel, 'Theology for Today', pp. 49, 50.

Redemption

Judaism is painfully aware of the gulf which exists between what *is* and what ought to be. Though it is glaringly obvious in historical time, it will be overcome in the 'end of days' in the messianic promise which may be seen as one of the glories of Jewish faith. The Torah is for the time between the times. It is a Torah for those who have a *yetzer hara*, which will be extirpated in the messianic era.

Many utopians believe that redemption has been reached, while radical pessimists believe that the earth is about to explode or end in Malthusian horror. The result of the first view is the loosening of restraints and the polymorphous sanctity which false messianists propagate. The apocalyptists urge men to seize the day and overthrow the Torah.

Normative Judaism attempts to avoid both these extremes. It promises a time of redemption which urges us not to despair. The time will be brought about by God and not by human efforts. We should avoid the twin pitfalls of despair and utopianism and thereby have the power to generate social action which gives Jewish messianism its power. Siegel regards messianism as 'certainly the single most valuable concept which Hebraic religion bequeathed to the world. Of course, the price we pay for this extraordinary idea is the possibility of its distortion'.¹⁵

Zionism should not be viewed as premature messianism, although it first saw itself as a secular messianism. Zionism has physically saved the Jewish body and the Jewish soul. It has allowed the possibility of Jewish autonomy and Jewish creativity. 'But it did not bring redemption. It cannot bring redemption through secular means. It can bring *yeshuah* (a rescue and a victory) but not a *geulah* (a redemption)'.¹⁶ The re-establishment of the State of Israel represents the re-entry of the Jewish people into history. It is the expression of the secularisation of Jewish interests, and as such, it should be welcomed, but according to Siegel, becomes dangerous when it assumes messianic proportions. 'In a paradoxical way, the State of Israel will conform more to our religious concepts, the more secular it

15. Ibid. p. 51. 16. Ibid. p. 52.

becomes.¹⁷ In pre-messianic times all states should be secular. This will finally be overcome by the ideal state envisioned by the prophets with the coming of messianic redemption.

Normative Judaism thus revolves around the triple chord of creation, revelation and redemption. In its basic assumption it affirms man's freedom, dominion over the earth and covenant responsibility toward God, man and the universe, accompanied by the trust and hope that God will overcome the present ambiguities of existence. It offers a faith for living in and through the present ambiguities. Authentic Jewish faith challenges meaninglessness and proposes a programme for living which validates and affirms life. In the face of meaninglessness and suffering it offers meaning and hope. Faith is a risk which life tests. 'This risk, this faith, is our destiny as Jews. We are born into a whole system of thought and life, of precept and covenant. We are severely tried. But out of the despair comes hope.'¹⁸

It is this hope that perhaps must be incorporated into the life and thinking of Jews and must be transmitted by theologians to those who look to them for guidance.

17. Siegel, 'Theology For Today', p. 52.

18. Ibid. p. 53.

C O N C L U S I O N

In this thesis I have examined the reactions of Rubenstein to the Holocaust with his ensuing pessimism. In addition, responses of other Jewish, as well as Christian theologians have been considered.

Berkovits and Borowitz commend an ongoing Jewish faith *despite* the Holocaust. Fackenheim commends an ongoing Jewish faith *because* of the Holocaust. The 'commanding presence' of God forbids Jews to despair as Jews lest Judaism perish and Hitler is handed a posthumous victory. Indeed, the survival of Judaism *is* of inestimable importance particularly after the Holocaust. Fackenheim also believes that Jews can and should hope. Buber speaks of the 'eclipse of God', a hiding God who turned his face when his people were being slaughtered, a view which is consistent with the biblical view of God and with the ambiguities of human existence. Wiesel, unable to affirm or deny God, resorts to question and protest, affirming that Jews must not despair even in a Holocaust universe.

On the whole, the problem revolves around the question of how to remain Jewish and affirm Jewish values after the Holocaust. The predominant response has been in favour of the maintenance of Jewish belief and practice accompanied by a grappling with theodicy. Not one of the 'solutions' to the problem of God and the death camps is entirely convincing. Some explanations are less inadequate than others.

Equally, Christian responses remain incomplete and inadequate. Hick's 'vale of soul-making' is not convincing in the light of the enormity of the Holocaust. Simon and Moltmann's 'pathetic' theologies, emphasising the suffering, crucified God, while in line with Jewish thought, may give some comfort to the believer, but would not have been meaningful for the Jewish victims of the Nazi onslaught. Roth's protest and questioning, echoing Wiesel, are valuable in that he asks

for a reassessment of basic Christian claims which have had such destructive consequences in relation to Jews over the centuries. Van Ruler's theodicy, which represents God as struggling with man's recalcitrance and freedom in the crucible of history, with God often appearing to be the loser, gives rein to man's total depravity and sinfulness and God's struggle for the ultimate redemption of the world.

Ultimately the questions remain: Where can Jews stand in relation to ongoing Jewishness after the Holocaust? How can Jews relate to the world around them? Can there be dialogue and mutual understanding between Judaism and Christianity? Does the Holocaust not only challenge belief in God but also trust in one's fellow man, particularly in that man has so betrayed his freedom, and that much of the propaganda to arouse German action was based on a distortion of our religious inheritance, both Jewish and Christian?

Rubenstein has responded honestly and courageously to the questions raised by the Holocaust. He also has responded compassionately. *After Auschwitz* attests to a *Mitleid* with the Holocaust victims, a characteristic which Irving Greenberg regards as stamping Rubenstein as specifically Jewish.¹⁹ He certainly was one of the very first theologians to concern himself with the theological implications of the Holocaust.²⁰ When he wrote *After Auschwitz* other Jewish theologians were writing as though they did not live in the same century as the Holocaust and the re-establishment of the State of Israel had taken place. His initial message was one by which

19. Greenberg, Irving, 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', p. 99.

Ironically, Arthur A. Cohen in his commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust* (I feel incorrectly), asks Rubenstein for 'more gentleness, more compassion, more love...for these are times when, with all our right to anger, we must also be forbearing with ourselves, with others, with God'. p. 91.

20. Greenberg commends him for giving the first synthesising statement after the Holocaust and the State. It is an attempt which should be honoured and which cannot be dismissed. As the prophetic vision transcended the moment after the Exile in 586 B.C.E., Greenberg suggests 'Rubenstein has spoken first. I believe that Jewish theology will yet transcend the moment.' *Commentary on Homeland and Holocaust*, pp. 100 f.

Judaism could continue, by which Jews could continue to practise Judaism even without God. He mourned the death of God. One could feel his genuine despair, and his cry of agony was almost audible. His sensitive, courageous probing into the causes of the Holocaust and his abandonment of God and the concomitant loss of a meaningful universe, affirmed his existential despair as well as his determination and courage to face the world and death alone, un comforted by hope or by meaning. He urged his co-religionists to do the same rather than to submit to belief in the God who acts in history.

Whether one can agree with his views or not, one cannot avoid being moved by the sincerity and severity of his struggle. One often feels moved to a point of silence, for who can *prove* his position in relation to God to be wrong? However, from the point of view of constructive theology for Jews, his message of the nineteen sixties had some value. His psychoanalytic rationale for the maintenance of Jewish practice had a convincing quality. His current thinking has become increasingly analytical. He probes relentlessly to find the causes of the Holocaust challenging our most fundamental religious text, the Bible, to expose the underlying causes for the evolution of a world view which allowed a Holocaust to take place. He sees the Bible as the root cause behind radical secularisation of consciousness as a result of which massive programmes of population riddance can be enacted with impunity. God has become increasingly distant from his thought as he probes our godless *world*. His present message is overwhelmingly pessimistic. While he displays a concern and compassion for mankind, he is disinterested in the future or survival of Judaism, particularly diaspora Judaism. He asserts that all of us 'must find new ways of being true to what is unique in our inheritance'.²¹ There is a great deal of insight in this statement as it would tend to prevent Judaism from becoming static, but I am not convinced that his antinomian options do not distort what *is* unique in the Jewish inheritance. It would seem that a minimal requirement for a *Jewish* theologian would be a concern for the survival and well-being of Judaism, even if it survives under a different form with a different mode of witnessing to that which now prevails. However, as Judaism

21. Rubenstein, *Power Struggle*, p. 189.

always, even in biblical times, has been characterised by a nomian quality, and as Rubenstein distances himself from this quality increasingly, attacking it as servile, submissive and repressive, I feel that he, at the same time, is distancing himself from the basic framework of Judaism. He is moving toward a world theology, by which I mean a concern for the future of the world, the stemming of man's destructiveness, in order to avert a global cataclysm. This he attempts to do by gaining and giving insight into the causes which lie behind man's destructiveness, and which seem to lie in the Judaeo-Christian tradition itself. Rubenstein's present recommendations do not present a viable theology for living as *Jews*. Thus, his present stance as a Jewish theologian fails us as he fails to give a programme for ongoing Jewish existence.

His one-sided emphasis on power, his distaste for impotence and his unrelieved pessimism lead him to focus on the negative aspects of normative Judaism. This selective, one-sided focus attests to a biased subjectivity. He, in fact, does not appear to have been able to transcend his subjectivity in his theology. Although subjectivity is a component of all theology, and his particularly subjective approach has given rise to sensitivity as well as to the revelation of several truths within his tradition, and therein contains value and merit,²² ultimately, over-emphasis on the subjective tends to falsify objective reality.

To confront Rubenstein's thought is to confront honesty and courage. He refuses to be a 'yes-man' and will reveal the tensions behind his tradition even at the cost of being cast out by his own community. His protests are of great and disturbing importance. He shakes the very foundations of biblical faith in search of an answer to the most

22. S. Daniel Breslauer, in 'Alternatives in Jewish Theology', *Judaism*, Vol. 30, No. 2, Spring 1981, pp. 233 - 245 contrasts normative 'systematic' theology and responsive 'experiential' theology, Rubenstein being an exponent of the latter type. Breslauer suggests that responsive theology encourages a more fluid view of Judaism and Judaic experience. p. 234. Although this type of theology is precarious it is this very quality which can lead to creativity in theology. See p. 245.

pressing problems of the twentieth century. As Jacob Neusner suggested, the abuse to which Rubenstein has been subjected serves as a testimony to the compelling importance of his contribution.²³ The time has come to halt acrimonious bickering within the Jewish community and heed an honest voice, even if its message is not pleasing to us. Accusations that Rubenstein has made statements only to prove a point, and more seriously, that he has proven a point only to enhance his reputation,²⁴ must be recognised as both false and patently vicious. Snide comments that Rubenstein has no right to speak of the Holocaust because he is not a survivor carry little weight, for refusal to speak, even of the unspeakable, may lead us to a repetition of the catastrophe through ignorance. Fackenheim's assertion that Rubenstein 'does not know whereof he speaks'²⁵ is cruelly unjust. Few theologians have taken the trouble to probe the causes of the Holocaust in terms of its meaning for Jews and in terms of its meaning for the world with such relentless honesty, academic inquiry and existential involvement as has Rubenstein. One need not agree with his conclusions to perceive the thoroughgoing care, intellectual honesty and painful grappling which led to them.

Rubenstein highlights an important truth when he talks of the fructifying and destructive interrelationships between Judaism and Christianity. He insists on a recognition of the complicated way in which apparently alien worlds, Judaism and Christianity, have shaped, and continue to shape one another. He has not rejected Judaism,²⁶ but will not allow any man, dead or alive, to define what Jewish

23. Neusner, Jacob, *Understanding Jewish Theology*, KTAV, 1973, p. 184.

24. See Himmelfarb, 'Commentary on *Homeland and Holocaust*', pp. 64 f.

25. Fackenheim, Emil, 'The People Israel Lives', *Christian Century*, May 6, 1979. See also Rubenstein, 'God as Cosmic Sadist', *Christian Century*, July 29, 1970, p. 921.

26. This was stated in *Power Struggle*, p. 187, published in 1974. Although he has had a fruitful encounter with Asia and has found meaning in participation in some Eastern rites (he visited the Shinto shrine at Ise in 1980 and the Shinto shrine at Izumo in 1981), and is attracted also by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri, as far as I am aware, he has not rejected Judaism.

(Personal communication, Letters dated 21 August 1981 and 20 June 1980).

existence should mean for him. Likewise, he refuses to reject Jesus or Paul, as they too, are part of his personal history and his people's history. However, he will not be told what Jesus should mean to him. As a Jew, he knows intuitively what it means to be a sacrificial victim. He does not accept a simplistic view of the relationship and tensions between Judaism and Christianity.

The time has come for Jews to listen to Jews, no matter how radical their differences. The time has also come for Jews to listen to Christians and for Christians to listen to Jews in search of a responsible theology of history by which, with full cognisance of our fundamental and mutual differences, we can seek a life of mutual respect and meaningful co-existence. This is the only viable counter-position to that offered by Rubenstein. Ironically, it also reflects some of his deepest concerns. Ultimately, by any reading, Jewish or Christian, the Torah is the revelation of God. It has lasted through millennia of struggle, aggression, hope and faith. It remains intact as the word of God as instruction not only for Jews, but also for the world at large. Deeply imbedded in the Torah is the notion that the Jews are the chosen people, but that ultimately, this chosenness was to be seen in terms of the instruction of the world.

For the Jews the Torah has remained a living reality under various historical circumstances as interpreted through the prism of the Talmud. For the Christian it remains a living reality through the revelation enshrined in the New Testament. Two traditions claim the authenticity and validity of the Torah as the living word of God through two different interpretations of it, the Talmud and the New Testament. The Torah was given to the Jews in history and has gone through the crucible of history. It delivered God's promise, but has faced us with humanly insurmountable ambiguities. Somehow, we need to come to a new understanding of the role of Torah in the world, to see the revelation to the Jews in terms of world-historic significance. For, 'what is "new" in the New Testament?' asks Ben Engelbrecht. It neither contains a new Gospel, in the sense of another Gospel from that contained in the Old Testament, nor does the New Testament antiquate the 'Old'. 'The "newness" of the New Testament is only to be understood in the sense that God acted anew,

not apart from the Torah, but *with* the Torah, and for the sake of the Torah and its ultimate realisation. The fact that God acts in ever new ways with His Torah, is not accidental to the Torah but essential to it. Only the Torah, nothing else, remains the immutable world-plan of God.'²⁷

It is historic *fact* that the Torah broke the bonds of Jewish particularism to embrace universality in the Christianisation of the gentile world. This fact must be seen responsibly by both Christians and Jews.²⁸ We have, and share, a divine promise. Yet we are faced with the ambiguities of history, with mutual misunderstanding and distrust.²⁹ Biblical faith affirms that God will vindicate his Torah and establish a kingdom of peace. For those who find their answer to the problems of the world in the Bible, God will be the victor and will overcome the chaos of historical existence. Many Jews, despite the Holocaust, are able to accept the biblical world view which asserts that the Torah is the immutable but dynamic word of God. It is incumbent on those who can to preserve this belief and to hand it down to future generations.

The opposing view, that adopted by Rubenstein, is that history has no direction and has been characterised by negativity and meaningless suffering and chaos. There is no life beyond the earthly existence

27. Engelbrecht, Ben, 'The Holy Spirit and the Torah'. Paper read at the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Conference held at the University of Birmingham, 21 - 24 September 1981.

28. David Novak in 'A Jewish Response to a New Christian Theology', *Judaism*, Vol. 30. No. 1, Winter 1982, pp. 112 - 120, marks with appreciation Paul van Buren's attempt to reassess Christian theology and attitudes towards Judaism in the light of the Holocaust. Van Buren seeks a responsible attitude to a shared theology of history and a renewed Jewish-Christian dialogue.

29. Norman Solomon's Paper, read at the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Conference held at the University of Birmingham, September 1981, and entitled 'On the Damage Done to One's Own Theology by Stereotyping Other People's' dealt with the problems suggested in the title. Solomon is not as concerned with the prejudice that stereotyping arouses against the *misperceived* religion as with the damage it causes to its *own* adherents. For example, the early Christian attitude to Jewish 'Law' as something to be shunned was a 'distortion of the essence of Christianity itself, and a direct result of its early attempt to define itself against a stereotyped and unsympathetic view of Judaism'.

we have been given. There is no redemption, no messiah, and in the final analysis, no hope. The God of history is more than powerless, he is a nihilist sadist and the catastrophes of historical existence, culminating in the Holocaust, have proven this to be so. The world in which we live is one devoid of meaning and purpose.

Which *Weltanschauung* can we choose? Rubenstein affirms the difficulty which many would experience with living in a meaningless cosmos without hope. Is there any possibility of opting for a synthesis between these opposing, contradictory views? It seems that Rubenstein's message of the nineteen sixties attempted a compromise. He vehemently rejected any notions of chosenness and he rejected the God of history. God, as an illusion, had proved to be functional for two thousand years of diaspora existence, but in the face of the Holocaust, this illusion had become radically dysfunctional, and therefore, dead. The Torah, a human document which recorded the Jews' encounter with the divine (illusion?) had become the only guide to authentic Jewish selfhood. Observance of the Torah was the Jew's path to authenticity.

All the written traditions should be preserved intact and handed down to future generations. Rubenstein placed a refreshing emphasis on the priestly sacrificial aspects of Judaism, seeing in the observance of them a psychological function. Guilt could be overcome through ritual observance. The communal confession of corporate guilt would serve to remove the futility from the *Yom Kippur* service. He emphasised the anarchic irrationality in man and his need for ritual observance and confession of guilt. Although he did not deny the need for ethics, his pessimistic view of man led him to give priority to priestly ritual in Judaism. He interpreted *kashruth* (the dietary laws) which forms the cornerstone of the Jewish household, in terms of the tremendous psychological importance of orality and the fact that orality is highly emotionally over-determined. Most importantly, he stressed the indispensability of performing ritual within the Jewish community.

Marc E. Samuels affirms that Rubenstein accepts (or accepted) fully 'the whole institution of Jewish national and religious life'.³⁰ He

30. Samuels, Marc E., 'In Praise of Doubt', *Judaism*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Fall 1971, p. 458.

had rejected the God of history through compassionate and religious reaction to the Holocaust. 'However, religious *living* and commitment, with a philosophy that lacks a strong conviction in the existence of God, or a philosophy that permits doubt in the actual existence of a Supreme Being, nonetheless, could be perfectly acceptable'.³¹

Rubenstein's insistence that the Torah should remain intact and immutable for all generations pin-pointed very cogently the dilemma of the secularising Jew. He is confronted with the immutability of the Torah, and yet has the fearful freedom to choose those aspects of Torah observance which can be most meaningful to him. This is an increasingly real and acute problem for secularising Jews, one which results in greater or lesser tension, depending on the degree of religious faith in the individual. There is no doubt that for the sceptic or the naturalist who nevertheless feels tied to the Jewish community and a genuine sense of 'belonging', Rubenstein's approach as set forth in *After Auschwitz*, could prove to be a meaningful form of Jewish existence. Samuels suggests that only the fundamentalist and the religious fanatic seem to have the need to ascribe the origin of rituals, observance, customs and ceremonies to divine authorship. 'The enlightened religionist does not have to rationalize and justify his observances by ascribing them directly, or even indirectly, to God. He practices religious observances because of their sometimes cosmic, national, cultural and geographical meaning. They help make life, or Judaism, more meaningful and, thus, more beautiful.'³² With full understanding for those, who as a result of the Holocaust, or for any other reason, have lost faith in God, but find meaning in Jewish practice, one wonders for how many, and for how long, such commitment is possible. The main problems of Rubenstein's approach are that it offers no hope, no ultimate meaning, and it results in a logical strain which is imposed by the absence of a transcendent reality to which the ritual is addressed.

31. Ibid. p. 456.

32. Ibid. pp. 456 and 457.

Ultimately, Judaism in its truest sense, rests on faith in a redemptive future. Jewish survival was based on practice *and* hope. This vision kept Judaism alive throughout its two thousand years of diaspora existence. In the interests of Jewish survival, and in the pursuit of genuine human values which the Bible undeniably demands, perhaps the biblical answer is the answer which provides us with the most realistic programme for meaningful life and practice. It presents us with ambiguities and tensions, and does not supply the final answer in relation to the Holocaust, but other answers are equally, or even more inadequate. The life-attitude of the Jews should not be one of introversion because that of which they are the bearers, namely, the Torah, remains something of world-historical significance. Only this can be believed to be the *praesentia realis* of God in the world, by which he struggles to express something of his image, and thereby, the rudiments of true humanity in existence, and by which he ultimately will redeem the world. There will always be a tension between Jewish separateness and Judaism's world-historic mission, but with a view to fulfilling its vocation in the world, provisionally and fragmentarily, it should retain the belief that God himself ultimately will fulfil his Torah when he establishes his kingdom of justice and peace on earth.

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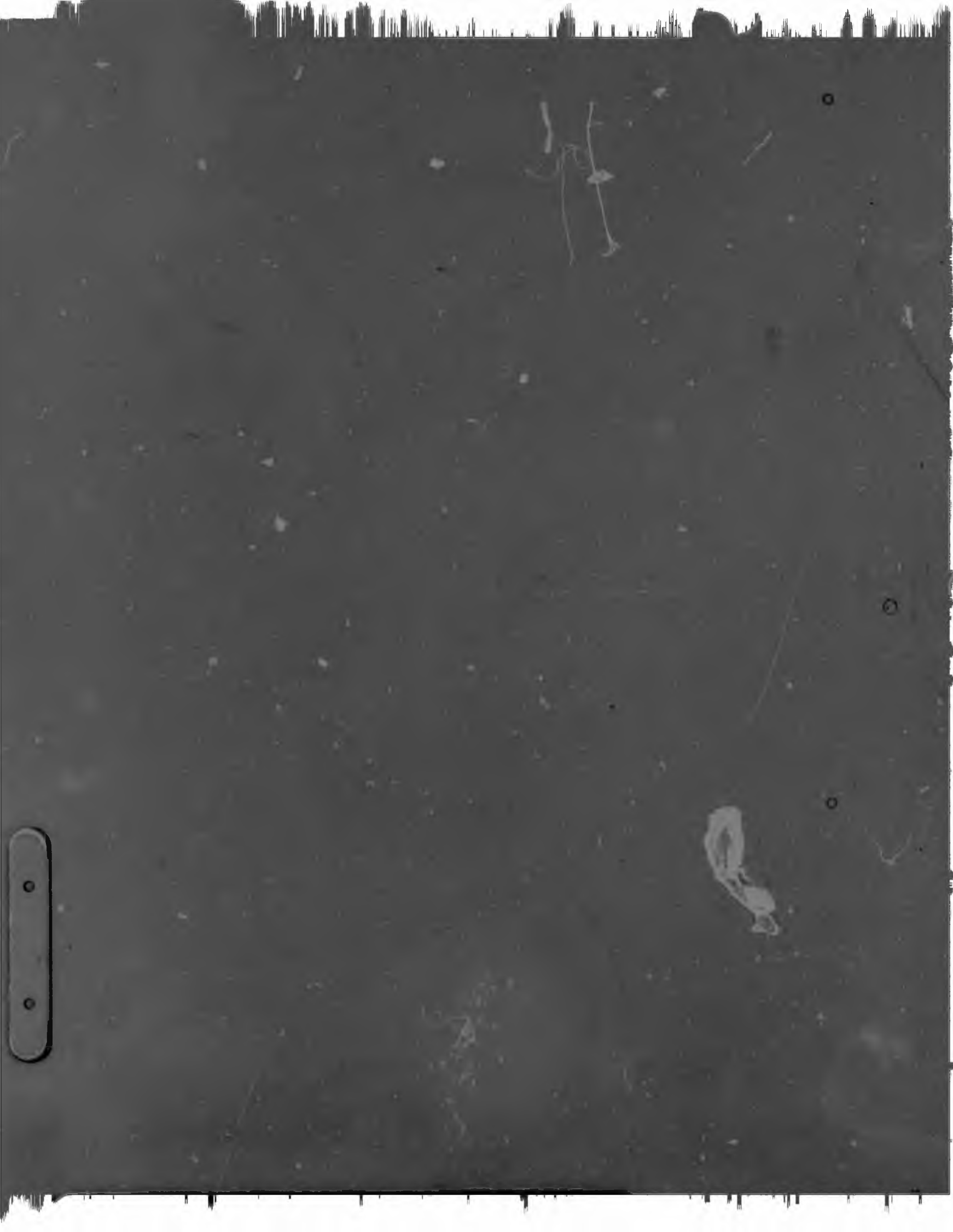
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