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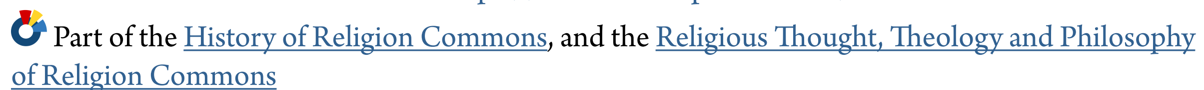
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MENORAH REVIEW

NUMBER 28 • CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • SPRING 1993

For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

Counterpart Communities

Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification
by David Novak
New York: Oxford University Press

A *Review* Essay
by Frank E. Eakin Jr.

Jewish-Christian dialogue is a topic of intense concern for numerous contemporary Jews and Christians. For Jews, this concern derives from many reasons, including a desire for productive acculturation without assimilation within a predominately Christian environment, the recognition that Jews are well served to have an intimate awareness of the thought process of the proponents of the dominant faith structure among whom they dwell, and an awareness that every effort must be expended to preclude the type of sociological-psychological-theological impetus characteristic of the early 20th century that resulted in the horrors of the Holocaust. For Christians, this concern for dialogue also is multi-faceted and derives from such divergent ideas as a growing appreciation for Christianity's roots within Judaism, from a sense of shared mission with Jews and from a sense of guilt because of complicity or inaction relative to the Holocaust. These motivations for dialogue are only partial whether one refers to the Jewish or the Christian community. However, the point is certain that the reasons are numerous, may be internally inconsistent and may be facade for authentic reasons, recognized or not.

The importance of this dialogue is exemplified by the serious academic work being done by scholars. One notes *Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present and Future*, edited by James H. Charlesworth (1990); A.R. Eckhardt, *Jews and Christians: The Contemporary Meeting* (1986); J. Oesterreicher, *The New Encounter Between Christians and Jews* (1986); Jacob Neusner, *Jews and Christians: The Myth of a Common Tradition* (1991); Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (1989); and Marc Saperstein, *Moments of Crisis in Jewish-Christian Relations* (1989), to mention only a few of the more recent and notable publications. Regardless of the motivation, therefore, both at the level of the academy and from that of individual Jews and Christians as well as their respective congregations, there is considerable attention being given to Jewish and Christian dialogue.

David Novak has offered a significant contribution to the Jewish-Christian dialogue in his *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification*. In this volume, Novak accomplished precisely what his title indicates. He responds to the arguments particularly of fellow Jews who reject Jewish-Christian dialogue; he draws on the doctrine of the Noahide Laws, those seven laws forming the basis for the relationship of the Jew with the non-Jew; he draws on his considerable background in rabbinic, theological and philosophical studies to formulate arguments supportive of the dialogue, giving special attention to Maimonides; he focuses on the quest for the Jewish Jesus, stressing the thought of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig; and, finally, he asserts his personal argument for a new theology of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Several points recur in Novak's presentation. On the one hand, he appropriately rejects the attitudes of relativism, syncretism and trumphalism, whether on the part of the Jew or the Christian. It is noteworthy that he presents these three attitudes as views embraced on occasion by both Christians and Jews. Many guilt-laden Christians would have assumed such attitudinal problems to be exclusively Christian, but Novak quite helpfully portrays the problem associated with either Judaism or Christianity. Novak further emphasizes that the dialogue must be such that either community can recognize itself in the description of the other. This is obviously crucial if the dialogue is to progress at all, for this caveat precludes both caricature and overtly false description.

An interesting aspect of Novak's presentation is his perception of Judaism and Christianity's common struggle against secularism. He quotes Jacob J. Petuchowski who stated: "Neither Jews nor Christians can really afford to be isolationists. In this pagan world of ours, we **together** are the minority 'people of God'" (p. 9).

Novak, in discussing Rosenzweig, affirms that the relationship of Judaism and Christianity might be seen in the analogy of the points of a star to the heart of the star. The heart of the star is Judaism, and that portion may exist whether or not the points are

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present, thus giving to Judaism a sense of primacy. The points of the star radiate from the center and are dependent on the center for their identity, and thus is the relationship of Christianity to Judaism. Christianity is the outward extension of Judaism and, therefore, one might argue the necessity of Christianity for Judaism's continuing meaning. In short, both faith communities are important for the existence and definition of the other.

Crucial to this dialogue is the presence of a particularistic faith commitment (clearly exemplified in Novak himself) on both sides of the dialogue and a willingness to accept the relationship with God on Judaism's part through the Torah and on Christianity's part through the Christ. It is remarkable to this reviewer that one so apparently traditional in his Jewish commitment cannot only argue persuasively to further the Jewish-Christian dialogue, but he does so in such fashion as to give status and value to the faith structure that has most often stood in an antagonistic relationship with his own faith.

Novak's conclusion is built on his earlier treatment of Maimonides. He essentially encourages both Judaism and Christianity to view the counterpart community as being that which might help the possibilities of the other community to emerge more fully and clearly. He argues this on the basis of a common Biblical ethic ("theonomous morality") that they share because of commitment to the law of Torah or the law of Christ, the culmination on Novak's part of an exciting intellectual adventure as he has marshaled his arguments and presented a convincing case.

Although this is an excellent book, lucid in its design and well-written in fulfilling its mission, it does seem that two things not developed in this book are important to Jewish-Christian dialogue. On the one hand, Novak does not deal with the issue of the State of Israel. The State is crucial for the identity of most contemporary Jews and any serious dialogue must necessarily confront this issue. Israel generally has not assumed in Christian circles the importance it has for Jews and, when crucial importance has been assigned to Israel by Christians, it has frequently been for the wrong reasons (i.e., Christian evangelical fervor that associates the established State with the Messiah's second coming). This is hardly a peripheral issue!

On the other hand, Novak does accept the importance of Christian Biblicism as a factor giving special impetus to the Jewish-Christian dialogue. What is not broached by Novak, however, is the radical necessity for Christians to look anew at the related issues of the nature of the authority derived from the Bible. Until these issues are resolved, an unfortunately large percentage of Christians will be precluded from Jewish-Christian dialogue because their theological overlay simply excludes accepting the possibility of dialogue rather than disputation with Jews.

Frank E. Eakin Jr. is Weinstein-Rosenthal Professor of Jewish and Christian Studies at the University of Richmond and a contributing editor.

Peace and Existenz

Dance, Dialogue and Despair: Existential Philosophy and Education for Peace in Israel
by Haim Gordon
Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press

A *Review* Essay
by James E. Lindsey

Among Haim Gordon's basic assumptions/convictions are the following: **(1)** That political activity alone provides only partial solutions; politics seeks to change the life of man without changing man himself, but people who have faced each other with enmity and alienation must learn to live together. **(2)** That in studying existential philosophy one cannot merely assume the standpoint of an objective disinterested spectator, for existential writings appeal to the freedom of the reader-appeal for him to act in accordance with what is learned. This, of course, opens the possibility of breaking out of stereotypical patterns of relating to other persons and the possibility of freeing oneself from the biases and prejudices regnant in one's environment. This, in turn, opens the possibility for true dialogue. **(3)** That Buberian dialogue can be learned and that a structured attempt to learn to relate dialogically, coupled with the study of existential writings, can become a powerful method for educating Jews and Arabs for peace.

Out of these convictions was born the Education for Peace Project. During a two-year period (1979-1981) students (roughly an equal number of Jews and Arabs) at Ben-Gurion University participated in the project. The book is essentially a report of the workings, successes and failures of that project.

The students were organized into groups of 20—10 Jews and 10 Arabs. Lead by an Arab and a Jew, they met weekly for structured lessons, directed readings, small group discussions and exams. In addition, they were divided into pairs who met weekly to work on joint assignments. These partners met individually every other month with a group leader to discuss problems and progress. The larger group also took field trips to various places including Egypt.

For the most part, the book is organized topically with each chapter containing an exposition of some theme from existential philosophy followed by excerpts from group discussions or interviews (presumably taped). While this organization enables the reader to grasp, fairly clearly, the mechanics of group functioning and provides glimpses of successes as well as failures, it does not allow one to follow or sense the **growth through time** of any of the particular groups or individuals. One does get a clear picture of the relevance of existential philosophy to human problems and especially to those addressed by the project. In the process, one also gains a new perspective on the tensions and problems of the Near East and on how terribly difficult it is to break down the barriers.

To one who has himself taught an Existentialism class at least once a year for the last 15 years, it is quite gratifying to see Existentialism taught so that the student is "confronted" by the material—invited to make personal decisions, change and grow—rather than being allowed (or encouraged) to **merely** assume an objective spectator's role. Gordon understands well the Kierkegaardian notion that thinking is a deed by means of which we become ourselves, so that detached, abstract thinking can be a means of evading responsibility for who we become and amount to forfeiture of control of our destinies. What is more, it would be difficult to read this book without being confronted, the same way as the project's students, with the same sorts of questions. Just as they were prone to discuss and complain about Arab-Jewish relations and were confronted with their lack of doing anything concrete about the situation, so is the reader—if not about the same problems, then concerning ones closer to home.

Being quite familiar with Buber's *I and Thou,* I was puzzled by the notion that true dialogue can be learned. In *I and Thou,* the I-Thou encounter must happen spontaneously and by grace; it cannot be brought about by contrivance. Gordon knows this and assures us that Buber, in other works, distinguished between I-Thou encounters and instances of genuine dialogue, the later being such that one could learn to engage in it. Gordon tells us that Buber himself did not say how except by vague remarks about self-education. We are given no specific references for these assertions except the title of one of Buber's later books, *Elements of the Interhuman.* Granting that Buber did make such a distinction, there should have been a very clear statement of the differences; there is none. Is genuine dialogue a less complete mode of relating than the I-Thou encounter? Having learned to engage in the former, is one more open to the occurrence

of the latter? Just what does Buber say about these things?

I am equally disturbed by Gordon's over-emphasis on confrontation in dialogue. It is one thing to be confronted by the written word or by a lecture but quite another to be directly confronted in dialogue. In some of the discussions, Gordon is so intent on confrontation that he is quite abrasive and rejecting. Indeed, he seems to dismiss the need to earn the right to confront through acceptance as well as understanding and does so through questionable appeals to Buber. Reading the reasons he gives convinces this reader that he confuses "identification with" with "acceptance" and "acceptance of the other's failing" with "acceptance of the other in spite of his failings." Thus, he almost seems to sabotage his own project (he partially accepts such a critique near the end of the book). The validity of this criticism aside, it must be admitted that the confrontations of his students confront the reader with the reader's weaknesses, so that the student's loss may be our gain.

One of the merits of the book is Gordon's willingness to call a spade a spade. He is unsparing in his criticisms of academic and political leaders whether Jew or Arab as well as of stereotypical patterns of behavior and thinking whether by Jew or Arab. One wonders, though, if he does not needlessly run the risk of losing the very readers who need to give heed to his message.

Throughout the book there is emphasis on the need of openness and a true giving of oneself to the other in the dialogical process. This, of course, necessitates the dropping of facades and defense mechanisms as well as giving up attempts to make an impression. This is necessary not only as a prerequisite to true dialogue but to the freeing of the individual to become himself (self-development is stifled when energy is thus wasted and misdirected). This theme is stated in several ways in the writings of Buber. Also, it is well-developed in the writings of Karl Jaspers, so the reader is surprised there is no mention of the study and use of his writings. Carl Rogers' ideas were dismissed in conjunction with the topic of confrontation in dialogue and psychotherapy, caricatured as encouraging adjustment, not the solution of problems. Could it be that the philosophical work of Jaspers, the psychiatrist, was dismissed because of a stereotypical bias on Gordon's part?

In spite of its failings, the project was somewhat successful, and this is a book that should be read by everyone interested in peace in the Near East. One finishes the book believing it is indeed possible for Jews and Arabs (or blacks and whites) to overcome suspicion, enmity as well as fear and live together peacefully. But one also comes away with a renewed concern of the deep entrenchment of stereotypical modes of behavior often supported by political bureaucracies and fundamentalist religion on both sides and even in ourselves.

Quite apart from its value in relation to peace in the Near East, the book is of significant value as a study in applied existentialism. Indeed, I will put it on the parallel reading list for my course.

James E. Lindsey is Professor of Religious Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University and a contributing editor.

The Meaning is in the Meeting

Encounter on the Narrow Ridge: A Life of Martin Buber
by Maurice Friedman
Santa Rosa, Calif.: Paragon Publishing

A *Review* Essay
by Earle J. Coleman

That Martin Buber's manifold accomplishments lent him a mythical status is evident from his meeting with the influential German philosopher Edmund Husserl in which the latter exclaimed, "The real Buber? But there is no such person! Buber—why he's a legend!" After his encounter with Buber, T.S. Eliot reported, "I felt then that I was in the presence of greatness." On engaging Buber in a discussion, the eminent American psychologist Carl R. Rogers wondered how Buber could know so much about human relationships without being a psychotherapist himself. The German-Swiss novelist and poet Hermann Hesse, himself a recipient of the Nobel Prize, nominated Buber for a Nobel Prize in literature—calling him "one of the few wise men who live on the earth at the present time." Greatly impressed by Buber's translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into German, a monumental task that he shared with his collaborator Franz Rosenzweig, Hess stated, "I must also name the Bible translation of Martin Buber, with the sincerity and strictness of its struggling for the word, one of the noblest strivings of the German spirit in our time." For many, such as Gershom Scholem, Buber's translation served as an invaluable commentary on the Bible. Even the atheistic existentialist, Camus, declared that he did not mind being called religious in Buber's sense of the word.

Buber's brilliance was indeed stunning. Speaking or reading a total of 10 languages, he, like all artists, created his own unique language. Commenting on the difficulty of translating his works into English, Buber once said, "Some of these words do not even exist in German!" Predictably, there were those who thought of Buber as being only an intellectual. As Buber often read while he walked, the town people said, "Professor Buber even thinks when he walks." But since his writings have profoundly moved countless readers, it is now obvious that Buber felt as well as thought during his walks. Despite Buber's considerable intellectual powers, he tended to favor the concrete, existential answer over the abstract one. As Friedman has perceived, while Socrates' dialectic is preoccupied with ideas, Buber's dialogue is concerned with personal encounters. Again, while Immanuel Kant argued that we are bound to the moral law, because it is prescribed by **reason**, Buber found **feelings** to be prescriptive. "I feel myself bound to do it [the Law] as far as I am addressed . . ." Thus, at times, Buber was more than an intellectual. At other times, he was less than an intellectual, as when he and Albert Einstein were quite pleased to discover they both enjoyed Ellery Queen mystery stories.

According to Friedman, the teenage Buber was drawn to mysticism through wrestling with questions about the infinite; e.g., does time have a beginning or an end? Both? Neither? For a period, he even contemplated suicide, since all the answers struck him as "impossible." Buber's mystical leanings were further influenced by figures such as Rabbi Nachman who, Friedman reports, "heard the voice of God in the reeds of the stream, in the horse that bore him into the forest, in the trees and plants, the mountain slopes, and the hidden valleys." Not surprisingly, non-Jewish influences on Buber included Francis of Assisi who addressed all expressions of God's creation as his brothers and sisters, even to welcoming "Sister Death." Scholem, an authority on Jewish mysticism, credited Buber with being the first Jewish thinker to perceive mysticism as a continuing element in Judaism. This was surely an important observation, for mysticism is a persistent strand in all the major religious traditions. Favorably disposed toward mysticism, Buber was, nonetheless, critical of certain expressions; e.g., he held that religious experience in which one is preoccupied with inwardness or interior events, like erotic experiences in which the soul is bent back on itself, must be superseded by a self-transcendence in which one goes beyond herself to encounter the other. In short, "all real living is meeting." Speaking with Carl Rogers, Buber indicated he was prone to change those whom he met but also to be changed by them. In Friedman's word's, "the individual finds the meanings of existence in the 'between'. . ." Thus,

Buber's life and thought constitute a reply to that most basic question: What is the meaning of life? The meaning lies in meetings, in "betweens," i.e., in relations between an I and a Thou, whether the Thou is that of another person, nature, art or the eternal Thou. "The narrow ridge," a recurring metaphor in Buber's writings, refers to the path one follows so that the I can meet a Thou and simultaneously become a full-fledged self. In fine, human existence is a journey and there is an abyss on either side of the way. Of course, the narrow ridge or way is a universal motif; it is the route to self-realization or salvation. In Chinese religion, *Tao* refers to this way; in Buddhism, there is the eight-fold path; in Hinduism, *marga* means the road to liberation; and, in an English Hymn we find: "Jesus, every day, keep us in the narrow way." In fact, it is just such fundamental themes that lend a touch of greatness to children's literature. Consider L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in which Dorothy travels on a yellow brick road that is fraught with obstacles and dangers. The narrow ridge is dangerous because relationships are always perilous; there are never any guarantees when an I confronts and acknowledges a free, spontaneous Thou.

Buber developed a dialogical philosophy of education. Rejecting what he called the funnel mode of education, according to which the teacher fills the pupil with knowledge, and the pump model (Socratic method), according to which the teacher draws forth knowledge from the student, Buber spoke of education as dialogue, with the student developing by meeting a Thou—be it a teacher, writer, artist or friend. No mere theoretician, as director of the Central Office for Jewish Adult Education, Buber greatly influenced all aspects of Jewish education and culture in Germany for five years. During the First World War, Buber recognized the significance of genuine dialogue, declaring that it posed "the central question for the fate of mankind." In fact, Buber refused to take sides on the 'cold war' between America and the Soviet Union because he believed that both parties assumed a monopoly on the truth and, thereby, thwarted all prospects for genuine dialogue.

Concerning what happens after death, Buber stoically wrote: "We do not know. So it behooves us to accept that it is the end of everything conceivable to us. To wish to extend our conception beyond death, to wish to anticipate in the soul what death alone can reveal to us in existence, seems to me to be a lack of faith clothed as faith." Still, Buber affirmed a qualified sort of individual immortality. "It is because things happen but once that the individual partakes in eternity. For the individual with his inextinguishable uniqueness is engraved in the heart of the all and lies forever in the lap of the timeless as he who has been created thus and not otherwise." Of course, this is not to say that one's personal identity in the form of self-consciousness survives death but that God, who temporarily sustains one's individual existence, persists. With death, along with the body, "this personal soul also vanishes. But He who was the true part and the true fate of this person, the 'rock' of his heart, God, is eternal."

Buber developed a dialogical philosophy of education . . . Buber spoke of education as dialogue, with the student developing by meeting a Thou — be it a teacher, writer, artist or friend.

Not surprisingly, Buber believed in a dialogical God. "If to believe in God means to be able to talk **about** him in the third person, then I do not believe in God. But if to believe in him means to be able to talk **to** him, then I do believe in God." Buber's eternal Thou is not just eternal; it is eternally a Thou, i.e., it is never knowable as an object. Moreover, God lacks any determinate gender, for "a sexually determined God is an incomplete one, one who requires completion; it cannot be the one and only God." As Friedman recounts, Buber was not hesitant to express himself forcefully on the subject of God. When he heard a young Paul Tillich, who was soon to become a world-known Protestant theologian, say that to unite a group of socialists, a substitute should be found for the word "God," Buber insisted it was impossible to eliminate this primordial word. After reflection, Tillich responded by conceding that Buber was correct! Because Buber regards God as a vital presence in this world, humans need not choose between the two: "Whoever goes in truth to meet the world, goes forth to God."

There is abundant evidence of Buber's interest in and regard for other religious traditions. During the First World War and the 1920s, Buber spoke of Taoist parables and principles. In 1924, he presented a seminar on Taoism in Amersfoort, the Netherlands. From 1926-1929, Buber, a Protestant and a Catholic co-edited a highly respected periodical, *Die Kreatur* (*The Creature*), which was devoted to Jewish-Christian dialogue. While Buber shared a deep fellow feeling with such Christians as Albert Schweitzer, he thought the church must surrender its missionary stance toward Israel and substitute love for mere tolerance or even understanding. It appears that the institution of the church, rather than any individual pope, shaped Buber's view that dialogue with a pope would be impossible. On the one hand, as Gandhi once wondered: "How can he who thinks he possesses absolute truth be fraternal?" On the other, Buber held that dialogue was not so much preoccupied with the other's ideas as with meeting the personhood of the other. Buber once remarked, "Heidegger is more to my taste than his writings." In short, he professed that the opinions that divide individuals need not be compatible with the closeness that comes from mutual presence, from meeting the being of another rather than from embracing her concepts.

Through lectures, a radio broadcast, poetry and prose, Buber sought to promote rapport between Jews and Arabs. In *Flight for Israel*, Buber addressed at length Arab-Jewish problems in Palestine. As a member of the League of Jewish-Arab Rapprochement, Buber lamented what he recognized as Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's insensitive treatment of Arab refugees. From the historical principle that the flourishing of one people will lead to the flourishing of neighboring peoples, Buber reasoned that Zionism would expedite the unification of Arab Nations. He renounced any narrow, political form of Zionism and insisted that Jews "must not be Zionists as one is a conservative or a liberal, but as one is a man or an artist." On his 60th birthday, one admirer wrote: "Zionism in Germany in its development and at its height is unthinkable without you."

Many severely criticized Buber for opposing the execution of the war criminal Adolf Eichmann, but fewer were aware of his two-fold justification. His general reason was that "Thou shalt not kill" pertains to the state as well as to the individual. Socrates would add that to harm another is to do violence to one's own soul. Buber's particular reason for pleading that Eichmann not be executed was that it was quite impossible for any punishment whatever to expiate his crimes. Moreover, Buber feared the German youth might interpret an execution as a way to expunge all the guilt associated with the Holocaust. Speaking with poignant honestly about Hitler's era, Buber never lost all faith: ". . .even in that time there was a holy meaning in history, there was God. . .only I cannot say how and where." Buber's disdain for "pigeonholing," or categorizing persons was demonstrated when a member of the Storm Troops stated, "Herr Professor we have signs: 'Jewish Business,' 'Jewish Law Office,' 'Jewish Doctor,' but none of them fits you. What sort of sign shall we put in your window?" Buber replied that the choice was not his because he had no label for himself.

He described the Nazi regime as an age of the "eclipse of God" or the "obscuring of eternity." As Buber asked: "Dare we recommend to the survivors of Auschwitz, the Job of the Gas chambers: 'Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever'?" Of course, Buber maintained that the eclipse occurs not in God

but between us and God. Rather than reject God, Buber was ready to embrace the only God he knew: "Though his coming appearance resembles no earlier one, we shall recognize again our cruel and merciful Lord." On first receiving confirmed reports of the extensive horrors of the Holocaust, Buber's life changed profoundly, for he later remarked that not a subsequent hour passed when he did not think of the atrocity. Still, no matter how dark the eclipse, Buber steadfastly believed the dawn would break.

The honors accorded to Buber were so many and so significant that he might have risked actually receiving all the praise he deserved were it not the case that a great thinker's contributions endure for centuries and can no more be fully appreciated than can masterpieces in art. Among the awards conferred on him were The Goethe Prize of the University of Hamburg in 1951 and the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 1953—an award that had been given to Albert Schweitzer. In 1957, Buber gave the Fourth Annual William White Memorial Lectures at the Washington (D.C.) School of Psychiatry. By 1960, German students had ranked Buber alongside Pope John XXIII in terms of spirituality. The same year Buber received the Culture Prize of the City of Munich and the Henrietta Szold Prize for his work in education. For his enormous contributions to Jewish studies, he received the Bialik Prize in 1961. Also, he was the first Israeli honored with membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Buber accepted the Erasmus Prize, named after the German philosopher and sometimes compared to the Nobel Prize, in 1963. In 1964, he received the Albert Schweitzer Medal. The recipient of numerous honorary doctorates, including one in medicine, for his philosophy of dialogue as it applied to doctors and patients, Buber was truly moved when students from Hebrew University made him an honorary member of their group. He responded by saying he had a drawer full of honorary degrees but this was indeed "a great honor." In 1978, a commemorative German stamp was issued that contained a picture of Buber together with his dates. In 1959, Dag Hammarskjold, U.N. Secretary, nominated Buber for a Nobel Prize in literature. According to a report from the Swiss Ambassador Ernst Simon, Buber failed to get the prize because a Swiss mediator in the Arab-Jewish war was assassinated by Jewish terrorists. In his poem "November," Buber painfully suggested that Jews were engaged in a violence that may be associated with that of the Nazis themselves.

Having previously written the three-volume, landmark study *Martin Buber's Life and Work*, Friedman has now contributed a meticulous, one-volume intellectual biography that, owing to its relative brevity of fewer than 500 pages, will certainly render Buber's life and thought accessible to a greater number of readers. Friedman's writing is as lean and to the point as Buber's life was sweeping and complex. With a gift for pellucid exposition and a keen eye for telling anecdotes, Friedman, who himself enjoyed a long-standing I-Thou relationship with Buber, is quick to graciously step aside, thereby allowing the reader to meet Buber through a rich selection of quotations.

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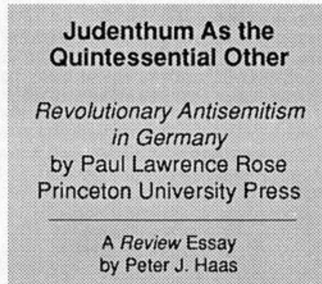

In looking at the 18th- and 19th-century roots of the Holocaust, one is not particularly surprised to see anti-Jewish sentiment among the conservative and anti-Enlightenment elements of German society. We can understand why for them the rise of a liberal, capitalistic non-Christian bourgeoise was a catastrophe. It is somewhat surprising, however, to find these same anti-Jewish sentiments to be just as vibrant among liberal thinkers and politicians. It would seem that those people who were calling for radical change, for the end of Church power, for the dissolution of medieval restrictions and for the development of democracy and capitalism would be the very people ready to regard Jews and Judaism in a new way. Yet we find again and again that these thinkers express the same attitudes about Judaism as do their conservative counterparts.

Rose shows that there is no contradiction here at all. His argument is that aversion to Jews and Judaism was a common element that cut across the German political and philosophical spectrum. The difference was merely whether one held that Jews could never be assimilated into Germany and so had to be segregated (the Conservative) or whether Jews could be induced to give up their Jewishness and so ultimately become productive citizens of Germany (the Liberals). In either case, Judenthum and Germanness were taken as a matter of course to be incompatible. Anyone who has lingering doubts about the truth of the assertion will come away thoroughly convinced by the evidence Rose gathers and interprets for us in this book.

If I could pick one sentence that sums up the thesis of the book, it would be in the first section of Chapter 14, well into the book's argument. There Rose states, "The critical mythology generated by these discussions changed Jews from being the deniers of God's Son to being the negators of human freedom and morality, of humanity and reason itself. **It thus became rational and liberating to be an antisemite** (emphasis mine). This was the foundation, not just of German but of all modern revolutionary antisemitism." Or, for a sightly different formulation on page 341 at the opening of Chapter 19: "The institution of an authentically German revolutionary 'free' state, whether Christian or atheistic, meant liberation from Judaism—and that meant the destruction of Judaism."

The notion shared across the board was that Judaism consisted of an alien ethic incompatible with all that Germany and German destiny stood for. So, for conservatives who felt the old Germany was being destroyed by outside forces, it was self-evident that at least part of the blame could be attributed to Judaism. For those who felt that a new, better Germany was coming into being through the impending revolution, Judaism represented the old ethic of religious obscurantism and ethnic exclusivism that the revolution was designed to overcome. In either case, Judaism was cast as the structural opposite of the highest aspirations and destiny of the German people.

In this book, Rose sets himself the task not only of convincing the reader that this is in fact the case, that even the "friends" of Jewish emancipation were committed to the destruction of Judaism, but to showing from where this thought came and how it developed. The journey is an intellectually fascinating one and one that includes many familiar names: Christian Dohm (author of *On the Civic Betterment of Jews*), Wilhelm von Humboldt, Kant, Johann Gottfried von Herder, Hegel, Fichte, Heine, Berthold Auerbach, Marr (who coined the word "antisemitism"), Marx and Wagner. In case after case, Rose begins his discussions noting that it might seem odd that a thinker so obviously dedicated to overthrowing the old ways, so deeply committed to human freedom, dignity and equality could yet turn out to harbor such a deep desire to stamp out Judaism. But, Rose reminds us again and again, if we stop seeing 19th-century European liberalism in our terms and see it for what it meant in **German** terms, there is no tension or contradiction here at all. Thinkers, in calling for the destruction of Judaism, were addressing themselves to that constellation of attitudes and ideas they found to be systematically different from what they regarded as the good and so, in the end, were being true to the most cherished ideals

of their particular brand of revolutionary liberalism.

Once this pattern of thought is clear, it also becomes clear why German Jewish leaders struggled to redefine Judaism in just the way they did. Although Rose does not address German Jewish thought in particular his description, nonetheless, provides a striking mirror image of 19th-century German Wissenschaft and Reform ideology. It is in fact almost possible to trace the intellectual development of German Reform Judaism by following the twists and turns of German liberal thought and imagination as sketched for us by Rose. It is clear that Jewish apologists knew of the arguments Rose analyzes and understood them as he does.

The reason Jewish response was so ineffectual, Rose's argument makes clear, is bound with the ambiguity of the German word "Judenthum." The word in German has three referents that the English language keeps separate. The first is the religion of Judaism, the second is the community of Jews (i.e., Jewry) and the third is Jewishness (p. xvii). German thinkers, theologians and politicians could talk about negative aspects of what they considered to be Judaism (the religion) but eventually just assumed that was an inherent part of Jewishness and so, ultimately, of Jewry. Insofar as "Judaism" meant values that excluded the ideals of liberal German revolutionary political thought, this Judenthum had to be eliminated; and eliminating Judenthum sounded exactly like eliminating Jewishness and Jewry. The result was that, while German Jewish writers were claiming that one after all could be both Jewish and a good German, German thinkers regarded this claim simply as, at best, a contradiction in terms and, at worst, as sheer gibberish.

Rose traces the evolution of late 19th-century racial antisemitism through a number of permutations. The roots, he claims, are in the Lutheran reformation in which, for the first time, both national self-consciousness and religious identity become fused. One of the results of this fusion was that the older theological anti-Judaism of the Church gave way to a new sort of thought in which human redemption turned on revolutionary conversion. The refusal of "the Jews" to accept Jesus originally is now repeated in their refusal to join in the great liberalizing revolution of the reformation. As before, the thinking went: it is the stubbornness of "Judenthum" that has been frustrating the advent of full human redemption (p. 10). Over the centuries this Lutheran animus gradually became mixed with German nationalism and humanism. That is, as the German nationalist and humanist revolutionary spirit grew, "Judenthum" continued to be seen as the structural opposite. By 1848, the German revolution meant the great emancipation of the German people into its new age of secular liberation. This revolution meant the supercession of all older forms of oppression (i.e., religion, law, bourgeois capitalism, self-centered ethnicity), all of which were essential characteristics of that way of being summed up in many minds by the term "Judenthum." For the liberating revolution to succeed, "Judenthum" had to be overcome and destroyed.

It was this secularized and liberal anti-Judenthum that was consistently and systematically misread by liberal-minded Jews. Wilhelm Dohm, for example, was regarded as a great champion of Jewish rights for his call to grant Jews civic emancipation. Yet his call for civic betterment was designed merely as a tool through which good Germans could destroy "Judenthum" (Jewishness?), thereby turning Jews into good Germans. The end result for Dohm was the end of Judaism. Yet the Jewish community enthusiastically endorsed his program, arguing that Jews could in fact be good Germans and **yet remain Jews**. The more Jews argued this point, the more they distanced themselves from liberals, who had to draw the conclusion from the Jews' devotion to Judaism that civic emancipation simply would not work in the way Dohm argued.

By the middle of the 19th century this sense of the unassimilatability of Judaism became mixed with emerging theories of nationalism and race. In these terms, Judenthum (Jews?) could not assimilate into German culture because they were a different nation or race. Insofar as the German evolution was the great liberalizing event of the German people—the move of Germans into the next stage of history—Jews by definition could participate only through the destruction of that which made them distinct (i.e., their Judaism). This was, of course, precisely what Jews were consistently refusing to do. It was not a far step from here to the notion that only people willing to give up their past so as to rise to the next stage of human destiny could be virtuous citizens of revolutionary Germany. The full-blown political antisemitism of the late 19th century was at hand.

There is no need here to rehearse the details of Rose's analysis. Suffice it to say that in case after case he demonstrates the cogency and power of the anti-Judaic myth within German revolutionary liberalism. In fact, if there is one fault with the book it is that it makes this point too often. The individual chapters, each devoted to a particular thinker or movement, read like independent essays. It comes as a jolt when, well into the book, chapters still begin by pointing out to the reader that it is really not surprising to find anti-Jewish mythology at work even in the thinker considered in the chapter at hand. Also, I found that the discussion from chapter to chapter did not always flow smoothly. There is a fascinating intellectual history being chartered here, but it seems at times as if the chapter subjects determine the flow of narrative, not the inherent dynamic of the history itself.

Nonetheless, this is a powerful study of the way myth works to shape the thought of a people over the centuries. Even with all its repetitiveness, it makes clear why the tradition developed as it did and why Jewish protestations not only did not help but often actually fueled the myth. For anyone trying to understand German/Jewish relations in the modern period, Rose's book is indispensable. He demonstrates beyond a doubt that part of what the German revolutionary ethic was all about was the overcoming of Judenthum.

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FOCUSING

"He who prays should direct the eyes downward and the heart upward."

TALMUD

When I focus downward
I usually see my running shoes
scuffed companions for self-made
marathons grocery store treks
tramps through the park.

Or maybe a stray teabag on the lawn left
by the rubbishmen or a beercan dropped
out of a passing car cigarette butt
bird's wing dirt-crusted snow.

Meanwhile my heart
that forbidden part of me that must
not be mentioned in poetry or even
referred to in intimate conversations

except as a cardiological phenomenon
that pumps blood beats right or wrong
and is the major cause of a major malaise
is supposed to be focusing upward.

So how can I pray
unless someone can revise my syllabus
reprogram me and give me pass-fail for
my limited visions

or maybe a linguistic transplant words
strong enough to stoke the eye's burnout
bypass the bellows
and find a way to sound their
praise so that both can function artlessly.

— Carol Adler

BOOK BRIEFINGS

***Editor's Note:** Inclusion of a book in "Briefings" does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue of* Menorah Review.

***Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present and Future.** Edited by James H. Charlesworth. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co.* This book records the reflections and dialogue of nine distinguished scholars who, by exploring past and present relationships between Christians and Jews, are enhancing the search for new means of communication and the development of a future in which Jewish-Christian bonds are stronger and closer. The contributors are dedicated to an honest and searching review of old attitudes as well as ideas to insure that a future free of bitter hatred and gross injustice is possible.

***Tough Jews: Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry.** By Paul Breines. New York: Basic Books, Inc.* For 2,000 years Jews saw themselves as a uniquely gentle and ethical people. Then came the Holocaust, the Six Day War and the era of the "tough Jew," an image that countless novels during the last two decades have affirmed. But there is a deep ambivalence among Jews regarding both toughness and gentleness. In an unsettling argument, Breines states that Jews today need the imagery of Jewish weakness and victimization to vindicate the "new" tough Jew. For the stance of Jewish toughness, which is helping to spread a dangerous spirit of mercilessness and moral immunity, is rooted, he points out, in anti-semitism. We need to examine the question of Jewish identity in the United States, particularly in relation to the Holocaust and Israel, much more deeply and self-reflectively, the author tell us. This book is an important means of helping us to do that.

***Dreamer of the Ghetto: The Life and Works of Israel Zangwill.** By Joseph H. Udelson. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.* The author presents a major new interpretation of Zangwill, an English-born Jewish literary and political figure who achieved fame as the chronicler of Anglo-Jewish immigrant life. His responses to the Jewish identity problem in the modern world remain contemporary, but his solutions are no more satisfactory now than when he first proposed them. This study of Zangwill's analysis gives us insight into the choices posed for modern Jewish identity and suggests the direction our efforts must take to resolve the dilemma.

***Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature.** Edited by David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.* This book opens a new window into Jewish imagination. Through 16 unusual selections from ancient and medieval Hebrew texts, sensitively made into English prose, otherwise unknown facets of the Jewish experience and tradition are revealed. This extraordinary volume is framed by two major original essays by the editors. Once drawn into the captivating world of rabbinic storytelling, the reader discovers many surprises, not the least of which is the deep connection between the values of classical Judaism and the art of imaginative narrative writing.

***Your People, My People: Finding Acceptance and Fulfillment As a Jew By Choice.** By Lena Romanoff with Lisa Hostein. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.* There are more converts to Judaism today than ever before, but neither the process nor the converts themselves are well understood. Culling from her own experiences as a Jew by choice and as a counselor to converts throughout the United States, Romanoff has developed a comprehensive approach to the many challenges posed by this growing phenomenon. This book provides insight into the choices and potential difficulties surrounding the conversion process itself, the options available and the challenges to families, rabbis and the Jewish community.

***Finding Our Way: Jewish Texts and the Lives We Live Today.** By Barry W. Holtz. New York: Schocken Books.* How do the great texts of Judaism speak to our situation today? Are they of more than historical interest? How might they address the religious concerns of people today? In this sequel to *Back to the Sources*, Holtz addresses the situation of people living in a predominantly secular world who want to explore the relation of Jewish teachings to the central issues in their lives, to the dilemmas religion has always tried to confront.

This unique introduction to Jewish learning shows us how to reconnect with the Jewish tradition by entering into a dialogue with its classical literature. Drawing on insights from the classical texts of Rabbinic Judaism, this book shows us how to use the sources to explore our thinking about God, prayers and ritual as well as interpersonal issues, such as charity, friendship and justice. It reveals the way in which the classical sources of Judaism can inform the quest for faith and meaning today.

***In the Lion's Den: The Life of Oswald Rufeisen.** By Nechama Tec. New York: Oxford University Press.* Few lives shed more light on the complex relationship between Jews and Christians during and after the Holocaust — or provide a more moving portrait of courage — than Oswald Rufeisen's. A Jew passing as a Christian in occupied Poland, Rufeisen worked as a translator for the German police — the very people who rounded up and murdered the Jews — and, repeatedly, risked his life to save hundreds from the Nazis. In this gripping biography, Nechama Tec recounts Rufeisen's remarkable story, illuminating the intricate connections between good and evil, cruelty and compassion, Judaism and Christianity.

***Freud and Moses: The Long Journey Home.** By Emanuel Rice. Albany: State University of New York Press.* This fascinating book is the story of an odyssey. It tells of the geographic, intellectual and religious journey that the Freud family, like thousands of other Jews, made out of the ghettos of Eastern Europe. It is the story of how the vicissitudes of this odyssey affected Sigmund Freud, his character, genius and creativity.

***Rabbis and Lawyers: The Journey From Torah to Constitution.** By Jerold S. Auerbach. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.* One of the most fascinating themes in American Jewish history is how Jewish immigrants became American Jews. Based on conventional answers, the foundations of American Judaism rest securely on fidelity to ancient Jewish values. But, according to this challenging new interpretation, American Jews are legitimate heirs to two legal traditions, Torah and Constitution, with title to two promised lands, Israel and the United States. In the author's view, immigrant Jews had to learn to reconcile their Jewish past with their American future. The terms of reconciliation required radical modification of the most enduring commitments within Judaism to the sacred law of Torah and the Holy Land of Israel. The author's analysis of how lawyers displaced rabbis as community leaders at the beginning of this century illuminates a decisive moment in American Jewish history.

***The Future of the Jews: A People at the Crossroads?** By David Vital. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.* In this challenging book, the author argues that the world of Jewry is coming apart, that the old reality of Jewish nationhood lies shattered, that Israel is increasingly isolated, fated to go its separate way apart from Jewish communities in the Diaspora. This incisive and provocative book describes and analyzes the waning of the Jewish nation, in an effort to lay the groundwork for a cooler, clearer view of the future of the Jews than has been proposed so far.

The Vatican and Zionism: Conflict in the Holy Land, 1895-1925. *By Sergio I. Minerbi. Oxford University Press.* The Vatican still refuses to have normal relations with Israel. But, as the author writes in this fascinating account, the Papacy has been consistently hostile to Zionism since before World War I. Vatican opposition to the formation of a Jewish homeland stemmed largely from traditional Christian anti-semitism, which in modern times took the form of an equation of Zionism with Bolshevism, and ancient theological doctrines regarding Judaism. Extensively researched and trenchantly argued, this book sheds new light on a critical but neglected episode in the history of Zionism and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Handbook of Hebrew Calligraphy. *By Cara Goldberg Marks. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.* Acclaimed artist Cara Marks offers both beginning and professional Hebrew calligraphers a detailed guide to this beautiful art form. All aspects of calligraphy are described: the materials and supplies needed, the techniques that must be mastered, design and layout, ideas for marketing, and selling the finished product. Throughout the book, numerous illustrations and explicit instructions provide the reader with a thorough understanding of each letter form.

Times Jewish Questions, Timeless Rabbinic Answers. *By J. Simcha Cohen. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc.* Contemporary life presents many questions that are the unique product of modern society. How can one find solutions to these questions that are consistent with traditional Jewish teachings? In this book, Cohen addresses many of these issues, providing halachic research on a variety of practical concerns, examining how the religious tradition can be either appropriately interpreted or inadvertently misconstrued in relation to a given situation. It provides a wealth of valuable information that readers can use throughout their daily experiences.

The Lord's Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth During the 18th Century. *By M.J. Rosman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.* The author shows the influence of Jews on economic, social and political life in the Polish, Ukrainian and Belorussian territories, and offers new perspectives on Jewish-magnate relations. He focuses on two major questions: What were the principal spheres of interaction between the Jews and nobility? What was the significance of this interaction for both parties? Drawing on sources and literature from archives and libraries in Poland, Israel and the United States, the author provides a richly detailed account of the socioeconomic development of early modern Europe's largest Jewish community.

The Emergence of Jewish Theology in America. *By Robert G. Goldy. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.* The author traces the birth and development of American Jewish theology from World War II to the present, taking into account its social, historical and intellectual roots as well as its revolutionary impact on the rabbinate and the Jewish intellectual community. Before 1945, there had been a strong anti-theological bias among American rabbis and Jewish intellectuals, who looked on Jewish theology as the vestige of a pre-modern era. After the war, however, many "third-generation" American Jews, affected by the Holocaust, became dissatisfied with Jewish liberal thought and sought an American Jewish theology that would be radical, existentialist and neo-Orthodox. Goldy focuses on four "fathers" of American Jewish theology — Herberg, Heschel, Fackenheim and Soloveitchik — explaining their understanding of the nature and function of Jewish theology as well as their influence on a new generation of Reform, Conservative and Orthodox theologians. A concluding chapter points to such recent trends as the emergence of Jewish feminist theology, the American-Israeli dialogue and the search for new philosophies of Judaism.

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