

**Sparks of Light:
Survivor Narratives Reflected through the Lens of Irving Greenberg's Theology**

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SPARKS OF LIGHT: SURVIOR NARRATIVES REFLECTED THROUGH THE LENS OF IRVING GREENBERG'S THEOLOGY

Introduction

There is an alternative for those whose faith can pass through the demonic, consuming flames of a crematorium. It is the willingness and ability to hear further revelation and to reorient. That is the way to wholeness. Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav once said that there is no heart so whole as a broken heart. After Auschwitz, there is no faith so whole as a faith shattered—and re-fused—in the ovens.

—Irving Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity After the Holocaust”

How does one make sense of life and religion after the Shoah?¹ How do Jews and Christians reconcile continued faith in God or religion with the murder of six million men, women, and children? For many, the Shoah has shaken faith to its foundations, as they struggle to define or redefine core beliefs. For more than seven decades, Christian and Jewish scholars, survivors and their descendants have reflected on the implications of the Shoah. For Christians, the focus has been a re-examination of Christianity—how Nicaea led to Auschwitz and how a “theology of love” could have instead allowed for

¹ Throughout this thesis, I will use the term *Shoah* to refer to the destruction of approximately six million Jews between 1933 and 1945 rather than the more commonly used term, “Holocaust,” except when quoting directly. The Septuagint uses the word *holokauston* to translate the Hebrew word *olah* meaning a sacrifice, which is wholly burned. Due to the problematic theological origin of the word “Holocaust,” *shoah*, a Hebrew word with biblical origins meaning “widespread disaster” or “calamity” seems preferable and avoids any interpretation of a sacrificial or redemptive theology. For instance, the word *shoah* is found in Isaiah 47:11, “There will come upon you suddenly a catastrophe (*shoah*), such as you have never known.” This is not to ignore that some Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox theologians, such as Reuven Katz, have used the image of the *olah* (a fire offering or whole sacrificial atonement) to explain the deaths of the innocent as an atonement for the sins of their generation or even for generations past, present and future. It is also important to note that in many ultra-Orthodox circles, the Shoah has been compared to the destruction of the First and Second Temples and thus is referred to as the *Hurban* (the destruction) or *Hurban Europa* (the Destruction of Europe).

cold indifference to suffering and a lack of compassion.² By repudiating theological antisemitism, the “teaching of contempt” embodied in the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition of the Church Fathers, many contemporary Christian theologians have engaged in the work of *teshuvah* (repentance).³

For many Jews, the Shoah has called into question the foundational elements of their religious and moral identity. Judaism teaches that God will protect and deliver Jews from evil, yet one-third of the world’s Jews were destroyed during the Shoah and God did not intervene.⁴ If God did not keep this promise, is it possible for the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people to continue unchanged? As the extent of the devastation and loss of life became clear in the aftermath of the genocidal assault of the Nazis and their collaborators, many survivors struggled with redefining a moral life. They remember the seeming ease with which former Christian neighbours betrayed them, and the failure of the Church to speak against the crimes the National Socialists committed against the Jews. In consequence, many Jews have been suspicious of Jewish-Christian dialogue and have questioned whether they should enter into such a

² The first ecumenical council of the Church in 325 CE forbade the observance of Easter on Passover. The Emperor Constantine remarked to the Council: “And in the first place, it seemed very unworthy for us to keep this most sacred feast following the custom of the Jews, a people who have soiled their hands in a most terrible outrage, and have thus polluted their souls, and are now deservedly blind.” See Wisconsin Lutheran College, “Emperor Constantine to all churches concerning the date of Easter,” *Fourth Century Christianity*, last modified 2017, accessed October 16, 2017, <http://www.fourthcentury.com/urkunde-26/>.

³ The unhyphenated spelling of the word “antisemitism” is now preferred by many scholars in order to dispel the idea that there is any such entity as “Semitism” which anti-Semitism” opposes. See “Fact Sheet on the Working Definition of Antisemitism,” last modified May, 2016, accessed September 18, 2017, https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/memo-on-spelling-of-antisemitism_final-1.pdf.

⁴ Every year, in the Passover *Haggadah*, Jews read, “This is the promise that has sustained our ancestors and us. For it was not one enemy alone who rose up against us to destroy us; in every generation there are those who rise up against us and seek to destroy us. But the Holy One, blessed be he, saves us from their hands.”

relationship. These are the difficult issues that have formed the core of post-Shoah theology for scholars. Many survivors who have documented their experiences have also addressed these questions in their written narratives or oral histories.

Most of the *She'erit hapletah* (the surviving remnant) of the Jewish people have continued to live as Jews.⁵ Whether they define themselves as secular, traditional, secular or even atheist Jews, most have chosen to retain some form of Jewish identity. Despite the trauma and loss that survivors have suffered, there are many examples of individuals who have given of their time, engaged in interfaith dialogue, and shared their narratives. Is it possible to find a post-Shoah theological framework that could encompass all of these definitions without diminishing any one of them? While much has been written about the experiences of survivors before and during the Shoah, we are only beginning to discuss their post-Shoah experiences and contributions in the several decades since 1945, and no one has reflected on their gifts to society by examining their narratives from a theological perspective.⁶ In the future, when no first-person witnesses to the Shoah are left to tell their stories, we will be left with their written, audio, and video narratives. Clearly, those who will be left to bear witness for them can tell their stories from a purely historical viewpoint. This thesis seeks to add a new option, a theological dimension through which to read and further appreciate their stories. It is a deeply Jewish perspective, but which invites interfaith dialogue through its pluralistic and inclusive

⁵ A biblical term found in Ezra 9:14 and Chronicles 4:43, which the Shoah survivors adopted to refer to themselves postwar.

⁶ Adara Goldberg's *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation*, examined the settlement of survivors in the years following the Shoah, focusing primarily on the early years. While she looked at the difficulties of reestablishing schools, synagogues and the issue of proselytization, she did not examine the experiences of the survivors or their descendants from a theological perspective.

post-Shoah paradigm.

This thesis will demonstrate that the theology of Irving Greenberg is well suited to express the theology implicit in the lives of many Shoah survivors, providing an opportunity to reflect theologically on their experiences both during and after the Shoah. The thesis will explore the work of Irving “Yitz” Greenberg, an American Jewish post-Shoah theologian, historian, and pioneer in the area of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Greenberg, a modern-Orthodox rabbi and historian, has continued to elaborate his post-Shoah theology over a period of more than four decades.⁷ Writing in 1993, Jewish scholar and philosopher, Steven T. Katz wrote, “no Jewish thinker has had a greater impact on the American Jewish community in the last two decades than Irving (Yitz) Greenberg.”⁸ Greenberg attempts to come to terms with the enormity of the tragedy without abandoning God or looking to particularistic, insular solutions. He does justice to the horrific experiences of Shoah survivors while continuing to believe in both God and humanity. Greenberg’s theology assumes that the Shoah must have consequences for traditional religious paradigms. His inclusive vision of *tikkun olam* (mending the world) is for humanity to take on a greater responsibility in the covenantal partnership. Since every human being is an image of God according to biblical tradition, Greenberg believes that restoring human dignity is implicit in *tikkun olam*, as that also sustains the Divine

⁷ Modern-Orthodoxy has become a rather fluid term to define a movement within Orthodox Judaism that attempts to bring together halakhic Jewish values with the secular world, for instance a philosophy that values both Torah and secular education (“*Torah Umadda*”—literally Torah and Science). Greenberg has decried the *haredization* (move toward ultra-Orthodoxy) of modern-Orthodoxy in both Israel and North America. See Irving Greenberg, “Two Doors Rabbi Soloveitchik Opened and Did Not Walk Through: The Future of Modern-Orthodoxy,” *Berman Jewish Policy Archive*, last modified 2010, accessed December 29, 2016, <http://www.bjpa.org/publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=21416>.

⁸ Steven T. Katz, *Interpreters of Judaism in the Late Twentieth Century* (Washington: B’nai Brith Books, 1993), 59.

image in appropriate dignity.⁹

Greenberg's post-Shoah theology is based on the Jewish idea that God acts in history; major historical events have become theological touchstones that have transformed and reoriented Judaism. These include the revelation at Sinai, the destruction of the First and Second Temples, the Shoah, and the establishment of the modern State of Israel. Among the other issues he addresses are the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people, the ethics of Jewish power, and the basic issue of dignity for every human being. He presents a distinct postwar model that expresses concern for the theological and socio-political implications of the Shoah for both Jews and Christians that is also applicable for other faiths because of its basic concern and acceptance for all human beings as equals. In this sense, his response reaches beyond Judaism. Among the contemporary responses, Greenberg's theology remains singular and especially apt as a theological framework and support for the narratives of the survivors, as this thesis will demonstrate.

Literature Review

Many theologians have attempted to respond to the very difficult issues raised above. It would be impossible to capture all their ideas in the space of a few pages before proceeding to Irving Greenberg's theology. However, Steven T. Katz ably outlines the major Jewish theological responses to the Shoah, dividing them into biblical and contemporary categories in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, a comprehensive anthology of Shoah and post-Shoah theology.¹⁰

⁹ Irving Greenberg and Shalom Freedman, *Living in the Image of God; Jewish Teachings to Perfect the World* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1998), 69.

The first section of this literature review comprises a summary of these responses. Among the biblical models (explanatory models that draw from biblical roots) outlined by Katz, the following ideas have been used as an attempt to comprehend Jewish suffering during the Shoah:

The first model is referred to as *mipnei chata'eynu*—"because of our sins" (we are punished). Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum was a proponent of this explanation.¹¹ For Teitelbaum, the Shoah was God's punishment for the sins of the Jewish people, but especially for the "sin" of Zionism. In this model, the Shoah is not only a divine punishment; Hitler and the Nazis are sometimes conceived of as instruments of divine will. It is difficult to imagine God exacting this kind of retribution. This model is particularly problematic for survivors who have lost parents, spouses, and children; it is unimaginable that any sin would warrant such punishment.

In the second model, called the "Burden of Human Freedom," God grants us free will and observes humanity with divine pathos but does not intercede. In order for human beings to mature and find the path to redemption, God cannot keep intervening. One can compare this to the role of a parent and a child. When the child is very young, the parent must intervene to keep the child safe, but at some point, the parent must allow the child to make mistakes in order for it to mature into adulthood. The Shoah then, becomes the ultimate example of humanity's inhumanity, according to theologians Eliezer Berkovits and Arthur A. Cohen¹² If God simply watches without intervening, it presents some

¹⁰ Steven T. Katz, Shlomo Biderman, and Gershon Greenberg, eds. *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 355–684.

¹¹ Teitelbaum was a leader of the Satmar dynasty of Hasidic Judaism and a fierce opponent of Zionism.

¹² Katz, *Wrestling with God*, 355–360.

difficult issues. God, after all, did intercede with Creation and the Exodus. Katz suggests that this model places God in a more passive role, which does not explain a more active role in earlier eras. Katz argues that the free will argument is a difficult model to adopt definitively, and muses whether God could have bestowed humans with a stronger inclination toward good. If we dismiss God's intervention in human history altogether, then why should Jews continue to pray for God's intervention? All but the most secular of Jews would feel abandoned.

The third model is called *hester panim* (the hiding of the face). This concept can be interpreted in two ways: the first suggests that God's face is intentionally hidden away from human sin. This first interpretation is derived from Deuteronomy 31:17-18 and Micah 3:4 which, similar to the *mipnei chata'eynu* model, link sin to God's absence.¹³ The difference between the two models is a passive punishment (a turning away) here, rather than God actively punishing His people. There is a sense that God also suffered and had to turn away from the sin of humanity. According to the second interpretation of *hester panim*, in which there is no implication of divine punishment, one can neither hold God responsible for the Shoah, nor for failing to intervene—there is no causal link. God's absence is not linked to sin. There is no explicable reason for this disappearance. Katz notes that we can find examples of this sense in Job 13:24, as well as in several of the psalms: 9, 10, and 13.¹⁴ These biblical examples illustrate the despair and confusion of human beings over God's absence. Eliezer Berkovits and Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote

¹³ Deuteronomy 31:17-18: "Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they shall be consumed, and many evils and troubles shall come upon them; so that they will say in that day: Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?" Micah 3:4: "They shall cry unto the Lord, but He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time, because they have practiced evil deeds."

¹⁴ Job 13:24: "Why do you hide your face from me and consider me your enemy?"

along similar lines, depicting their explanations as divine pathos; God suffers along with human beings.

Some adherents of this model believe that God's face will not always remain hidden. Berkovits, an Orthodox rabbi explains this by the rebirth of the State of Israel so soon after the Shoah. Berkovits' idea of redemption is described as a divine debt: "Divine Providence had no choice but to grant us a measure of national redemption to meet the national *Hurban* (destruction)." ¹⁵ Can such a *Hurban* be redeemed? A more detailed examination of Berkovits' theology is found in Chapter Two.

The fourth or "Suffering Servant" model is derived from the book of Isaiah, especially chapter 53. It is of course a Jewish interpretation of the suffering servant as the nation of Israel. There are several interpretations of this theology—the classic interpretation is that the righteous are atoning for the sins of the wicked, and are somehow satisfying God's judgment and anger. Most Jewish interpreters view God as suffering along with Israel in the midst of all this evil. Thus, the Jewish people are suffering both *with* and *for* God. Ignaz Maybaum has a more contemporary interpretation on this model by viewing Auschwitz as the modern Golgotha for humanity. The gas chambers replace the Christian cross. In his interpretation, Christians must first see the horrific sacrifice (the Jews), in order for God to reveal His mercy, and for them to become "true" Christians.¹⁶ This vicarious suffering is also explained by thinkers such as Heschel, who imagines God looking down on humanity as it stumbles along on its way to (messianic) redemption. A third interpretation has been offered by theologians such as

¹⁵ Eliezer Berkovits, "Crisis and Faith," *Tradition* 14, no. 4 (1974): 15.

¹⁶ Ignaz Maybaum, *The Face of God After Auschwitz* (Amsterdam: Polak & Van Gennep, 1965), 36.

Berkovits, Karl Barth, and Roy and Alice Eckardt: Israel suffers because of the Nations' anger that the Jews are God's chosen people.¹⁷ Katz asks us to question the logic of applying this model to the Shoah, wondering if God would really take six million lives in order to make a point.¹⁸

The fifth and final biblical model discussed by Katz compares the Shoah to the story of Job; Job suffers not because of his sinfulness but because of his righteousness. Job is not on trial, since he has done nothing wrong. Theologian Jonathan Sacks suggests that what Satan is really asking is whether humanity is worth redeeming. Satan is asking whether any human being is capable of loving God unconditionally.¹⁹ This is problematic as a post-Shoah model because at the end of the story, Job is rewarded for his faithfulness with a new wife and children. Human beings however, cannot be replaced and certainly not the six million men, women, and children who were murdered in the Shoah.

Katz also divides the newer, more innovative categories into six contemporary models explored by post-Shoah theologians. The first model is called the "Death of God" and is associated with Richard Rubenstein (explored in greater detail in Chapter Two). He wrote that the only logical response to the Shoah is to reject the entire Jewish theological framework, suggesting that neither an omniscient God nor the covenant exist anymore. Rubenstein no longer sees God as a redeemer who acts in history. The only remnant of Judaism that separates Rubenstein from atheism is his vision of a

¹⁷ Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke," 36.

¹⁸ Katz, *Wrestling with God*, 358.

¹⁹ Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal A Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press Books, 2005), 197. God has already presented Abraham with the ultimate test of unconditional love in the story of the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22). In consequence, God makes His covenant with Abraham and the Jewish people.

“demythologized” Judaism, which is in essence the preservation of community and peoplehood.²⁰ Rubenstein argues that after Auschwitz one could no longer claim that God was omnipotent, since “traditional Jewish theology had maintained that God is the ultimate omnipotent actor in the historical drama ... In the final analysis, omnipotent Nothingness is Lord of all creation.”²¹ Many survivors have written that their faith sustained them throughout the Shoah and afterwards, and would challenge Rubenstein’s ideas. Others may be angry with God then and now, but still be theists. Rubenstein’s ideas regarding God acting in history would clash with those who view Israel’s recreation so soon after the Shoah as a sign of God’s return to history, a sign of His care, and a biblical symbol validating the covenant.²²

Katz refers to the Greenberg’s “Voluntary Covenant” theology as the “Broken Covenant.” model.²³ This model will be explored in detail in Chapter One. Greenberg was not suggesting that God had broken the covenant with the Jewish people. In short, Greenberg concludes that the old era of a *commanded* covenantal existence with its commitments, truths, obligations and certainties had ended at Auschwitz and that a new era had then begun. In this era, the Jewish people have demonstrated that they have voluntarily chosen to renew and recommit to their covenant with God through their devotion to tradition, to tikkun olam or simply by virtue of having recreated life.

The third model, referred to as “Auschwitz: A New Revelation,” calls on Jews to

²⁰ Katz, *Wrestling with God*, 365. Rubenstein was responding to the Shoah; however non-Jewish thinkers such as Nietzsche wrote about the “Death of God” concept long before the Shoah.

²¹ Richard L. Rubenstein, “Symposium on Jewish Belief,” in *Wrestling with God*, 415–416.

²² Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke, 24–25.

²³ *Ibid.*, 361–362.

continue to believe despite the outrage of Auschwitz. It suggests we cannot understand why God permitted the Shoah but also argues that God was present in Auschwitz. This idea is associated with Emil Fackenheim. Just as God issued divine commands at Sinai, He issued a new 614th commandment out of Auschwitz. God's voice commands us to survive as Jews, so as not to offer Hitler a posthumous victory.²⁴ Fackenheim's central post-Shoah thesis argues that God's "commanding voice of Auschwitz" forbids Jews to hand Hitler a posthumous victory: God *commands* the Jewish people to survive (as Jews). He expresses this as an additional 614th commandment (in addition to the 613 traditional commandments). Secular or atheist Jews are not included in Fackenheim's post-Shoah theology, which is predicated on the belief in (and the necessity to obey) a divine commandment. Fackenheim leaves no room for a re-evaluation of Judaism, and one wonders if there are negative implications in relating the 614th commandment to Hitler. Does this mean that atheist Jews are in some way giving Hitler a posthumous victory? Would not an event such as the Shoah demand more than mere survival? And is it a command that God has the right to impose? Fackenheim's theology will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Two.

The fourth model is called "Ethical Demand;" it rejects any defense of God or divine punishment as well as what is referred to as "useless suffering." Theologians such as Emmanuel Levinas and Amos Funkenstein describe an ethical obligation to one another as the supreme ethical principle.²⁵ Levinas, like Fackenheim, places importance on faithfulness to traditional Judaism. (Funkenstein on the other hand, argued against the

²⁴ Katz, *Wrestling with God*, 361.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 366.

existence of God.) While Levinas recalls Fackenheim's obligation for Jews to observe the commandments as being key to their destiny, he attempts to provide universal significance, for Jews and non-Jews, believers and non-believers. The essence of this model, which is the obligations of human beings to one another, is one that can be accepted by all human beings. However, for the religious Jew (and Christian), that responsibility is based on certain basic beliefs rooted in sacred texts. Without that grounding and tradition, it would seem that something would be missing.

Katz describes the fifth model as "Mystery and Silence," conveying descriptions in the literary responses of the survivors themselves who have concluded that reason has its limits. Does thought ever reach its limit? Is silence a more respectful position once one has struggled with God, reproaching Him for His absence or even for His closeness (and failure to act)? Examples of this model are found in the writing of survivors such as Elie Wiesel.²⁶ Wiesel considered himself to be a messenger writing on behalf of the dead, but felt that the Shoah is a mystical event that cannot be described, even by survivors and spoke of a feeling of sinfulness in attempting to do it.²⁷ Katz points out that if we do not continue to speak, we risk the unintended consequence of making the Shoah irrelevant in future generations.²⁸ Historian Yehuda Bauer agrees with Katz and adds, "If the Holocaust is totally inexplicable, utterly mysterious ... then it is outside history ... absolute uniqueness leads to its opposite, namely total trivialization ..."²⁹ Bauer cautions

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Morton Reichek, "Elie Wiesel: Out of the Night," *Present Tense* 3 (1976): 42.

²⁸ Katz, *Wrestling with God*, 367.

that this theology can lead to a sense of fatalism, which leaves humanity open to a future of new genocidal assaults.

The final model is called “A Redefinition of God.” While the existence of God is not challenged, we must reimagine our notion of God after the Shoah. No longer is God a providential agent in human history, intervening and performing miracles. Likely inspired by a modern school of thought referred to as “process theology,” the most elaborate argument of this model was advanced by Arthur A. Cohen. He rejected the belief that “national catastrophes are compatible with our traditional notions of a beneficent and providential God.”³⁰ For Cohen, “if we begin to see God less as an interferer whose insertion is welcome (when it accords with our needs) and more as the immensity whose reality is our prefiguration...we shall have won a sense of God whom we may love and honour, but whom we no longer fear and from whom we no longer demand.”³¹ In Cohen’s theology, the death camps represent “a new event, one severed from the connection with the traditional presuppositions of history, psychology, politics, and morality.”³² However, if we remove God from history completely, If God no longer acts in history, it would appear to be difficult for practising Jews to recognize this God as the one to whom one prays for salvation. While Greenberg has given humanity a greater role in the covenantal partnership, he still looks to God to fulfil an important part of that

²⁹ Bauer underscores this point later in the article by writing of a “continuum on which we find mass murder, genocide, and Holocaust.” Yehuda Bauer, “Is the Holocaust Explicable?” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5, no. 2 (1990): 145, 154.

³⁰ Arthur A. Cohen, *The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 50. Followers of “process theology” have argued for a revision in the classical understanding of God’s active intervention in human affairs. They believe that God is neither omniscient nor omnipotent and that the difficult problems of theodicy have arisen precisely because humans have mistakenly believed that God possesses these qualities.

³¹ Arthur A. Cohen, *The Tremendum*, 97.

³² *Ibid.*, 10.

partnership, certainly as a partner in redemption.

While it is possible that individual Shoah survivors may or may not accept one or more of the theological responses outlined above, this thesis will demonstrate that only Irving Greenberg's model is inclusive enough to express the theology implicit in the lives of many Shoah survivors. Greenberg's many articles and monographs will form the primary source of the research, which is detailed in Chapter One.

Among Greenberg's many publications is his early response to the Shoah, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Shoah," which remains a major contribution to post-Shoah theology.³³ In this paper he speaks of the Shoah as a challenge to both Judaism and Christianity and describes this tragic chapter in human history as a call to both religions to look to new and revelatory ideas. He praises Christian theologians Alice and Roy Eckardt for their willingness to renounce triumphalism. Greenberg first introduces some of his concepts in this paper, discussing faith, Israel, ethical power, and secularism. He continues to develop these themes over many years. His other major papers are "The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History" (1987), in which Greenberg outlines his ideas about the historicity of the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people. He suggests that there have been three eras in the covenantal history of Israel marked by significant events of redemption and

³³ Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity After the Holocaust," in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?: Reflections on the Holocaust*, ed. Eva Fleischner and International Symposium on the Holocaust (New York: KTAV, 1977). Greenberg presented the paper in 1974 at the first major international ecumenical conference of such breadth on the Shoah, "Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?" According to the organizers "There has never been a conference like this ... Never before have the full implications of Auschwitz been publicly aired by Jew and Christian in dialogue in which Black rights and women's rights will be directly tied to the Jewish Holocaust experience." JTA, "Auschwitz Symposium Begins," last modified June 4, 1974, accessed February 18, 2017, <http://www.jta.org/1974/06/04/archive/auschwitz-symposium-begins>.

destruction and that the Shoah marks the beginning of the third era.³⁴ In the “Voluntary Covenant” (1987), Greenberg argues that after the Shoah, the covenantal relationship can no longer be commanded and externally imposed; it is now voluntary and has been renewed by the Jewish people.³⁵ Greenberg’s ideas on pluralism are developed in several essays, especially “Judaism and Christianity: Covenants of Redemption” (2000), “Judaism, Christianity, and Partnership after the Twentieth Century” (2000), “New Revelations and New Patterns in the Relationship of Judaism and Christianity” (1979), “Judaism and Christianity after the Holocaust” (1975), and “The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model” (1984), which is his Jewish theology of Christianity. His 2004 book, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity* offers a collection of essays and a reflection on some of his previous work.

Christian theologians, such as John T. Pawlikowski, and Roy and Alice Eckardt have responded to Greenberg’s theological contributions and influenced his theological reflection. This thesis will take into account that important dialogical intersection and will examine them in Chapter Two. However, it is especially Roy Eckardt’s earlier paper, “The Recantation of the Covenant,” which led Greenberg to elaborate his thesis on Voluntary Covenant. In this piece, Eckardt asked whether God had recanted of His covenant with the Jewish people, or if the covenant had been taken back, only to be offered again in a new form. Eckardt also called for God’s penitence, since it was the

³⁴ Greenberg, “The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History,” *Perspectives, CLAL: the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership* (1987):1–24, <http://rabbiirvinggreenberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/1Perspectives-3rd-Great-Cycle-1987-CLAL-1-of-3.pdf>.

³⁵ Greenberg, “Voluntary Covenant,” *Perspectives*, (1987):27-44, <http://rabbiirvinggreenberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/1Perspectives-3rd-Great-Cycle-1987-CLAL-1-of-3.pdf>.

covenant and its expectations that had set the Jewish people apart, leading them to be exposed to the murderous wrath that exploded in the Shoah.³⁶ Greenberg was very conflicted by this piece and reflected on it over a period of years before responding with his Voluntary Covenant thesis, which took Eckardt's idea in a different direction. Alice and Roy Eckardt's major post-Shoah thought has been encapsulated in *Long Night's Journey into Day: Life and Faith After the Holocaust* (1988), which mirrors Greenberg's theological response to the Shoah from a Christian perspective.³⁷ The Eckardts examine the theological meaning of the Shoah as a reorienting event, question the culpability of the Church, and search for new revelation. It is Greenberg's openness to interfaith dialogue and his ability to consider the theological reflection of his Christian colleague that truly sets him apart in this respect. Even today, it is rare to find Orthodox rabbis who think like Greenberg and who are willing to suggest that traditional paradigms can and should be changed.

Methodology

It is difficult to imagine the spiritual and physical strength it took to survive the Shoah and then to continue to retain any kind of faith in God or in humanity. Even more difficult to imagine is the trauma experienced by children who lived through the Shoah. Out of 1.6 million Jewish children living in the territories that the Nazis and their allies occupied during World War II, as many as 1.5 million were murdered. Of the one million

³⁶ A. Roy Eckardt, "The Recantation of the Covenant?" In *Confronting the Holocaust: The Impact of Elie Wiesel*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld and Irving Greenberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 159-168.

³⁷ Alice L. Eckardt and A. Roy Eckardt, *Long Night's Journey Into Day: A Revised Retrospective on the Holocaust*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).

Jewish children living in prewar Poland, only five thousand survived.³⁸ Yet many Shoah survivors have taken their tremendously difficult experiences and used them as a vehicle to engage in a lifelong task of tikkun olam. Whether they are observant or secular Jews, they have taken on the role of “senior partner” that Greenberg describes in his theology and actively have worked to redeem *this* world.

There are also some extraordinary individuals who inspire their community or who have left an indelible legacy of *hesed* (loving kindness) and tikkun olam to those who have read their works or have been inspired by their testimony and their deeds. The narratives of the three Canadian survivors, Stefan Carter, Pinchas Gutter, and Robbie “Romek” Waisman, were chosen to illustrate Greenberg’s theology. Their stories were selected among many as three examples who are representative of secular, traditional and observant Jews. Their postwar contributions to Canadian society are such that there is research material available on each subject in addition to the oral histories. Gutter and Waisman are among the children who survived Buchenwald. All three are Shoah educators and Waisman is also an Honourary Witness to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Finally, my role at the Freeman Family Holocaust Education Centre has led me to have interaction with each of them over the years.³⁹ Their stories will undoubtedly continue to inspire dialogue and tikkun olam, even after their deaths, through the work they have accomplished during their lifetimes.

In order to examine the survivor narratives through the lens of Greenberg’s

³⁸ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Plight of Jewish Children,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed May 20, 2017, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10006124>.

³⁹ Gutter and Waisman were guest speakers for large symposia. I have interviewed Carter for my collection of survivor narratives, *Voices of Winnipeg Holocaust Survivors* (Winnipeg: Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, 2010), and he has participated in several events of the Freeman Family Holocaust Education Centre and told his story to many university classes.

theology, the primary sources for this thesis will fall into two primary groups: the many articles and monographs written by Irving Greenberg over a more than forty-year period, which elaborate his theology and the published narratives of survivors, freely available through biographies, edited collections, videos, video testimony, and news stories.⁴⁰

Greenberg's theology, explored in Chapter One, will highlight the importance of the many contributions of these individuals. Chapter Two will include an overview of some of the ecclesial and ecumenical statements that are emblematic of the changes that have influenced many Jewish and Christian theologians, including Greenberg. These changes have also facilitated Jewish-Christian dialogue, which has included the participation of survivors.

The three survivors were interviewed at length during the 1980s and 1990s as part of Canadian projects and for the USC (University of Southern California) Shoah Foundation. Both the Canadian projects and the earlier USC Shoah Foundation interviews now form part of the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.⁴¹ Some have also contributed additional material since their earlier interviews. The stories of Stefan Carter, Pinchas Gutter and Robbie Waisman (Chapters Three, Four, and Five) will demonstrate that Greenberg's theology is an apt lens through which to examine Shoah narratives. While none of the three were conscious of Greenberg's theology, their lives

⁴⁰ Some survivors, such as Stefan Carter, have written their autobiographies. The March of the Living organization, which takes students and survivors to Poland each year, also has been compiling a video archive <http://molarchiveproject.com/videos/>. In some cases, feature length films are available, such as *Politische Pole-Jude: The Story of Pinchas Gutter* as well as *The Void*. In the case of well-known survivors and members of the Second Generation, online newspapers and journals are a welcome source of documentation, as their accomplishments have been duly noted.

⁴¹ The Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada is a full access point for the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, which includes the digitized testimonies of over 50,000 survivors, as well as the Canadian collections. More recent recordings of several survivors took place in 2013 as a combined effort between the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the Freeman Family Holocaust Education Centre of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada.

and accomplishments reflect its concepts as a lived theology. All three are Polish Jews who were pre-teens during the Shoah. Their stories exemplify Greenberg's assertion that any Jew who still defines himself or herself as Jewish in any way after the trauma of the Shoah, has voluntarily renewed the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people. These three survivors came from families of varying levels of religious observance—from the secular background of Carter, to the traditional Orthodox Jewish home that Waisman grew up in, to Gutter's family of Ger Hasidim.⁴² All three men grew up in an urban environment; ranging from middle class (Waisman) to the exceptional comfort that Gutter enjoyed as the child of a successful winemaker.⁴³ Their situation stood in contrast to many of Poland's Jews during the interwar period, the majority of whom lived in far less favourable circumstances.⁴⁴

Their wartime experiences share both similarities and dissimilarities. All three lived through the experience of the Ghetto. Both Carter and Gutter lived in the Warsaw Ghetto and Waisman and Gutter were incarcerated in the Skarzysko-Kamienna slave labour camp. Carter did not experience the brutality of the concentration camps, while Gutter and Waisman both suffered terribly in camps such as Buchenwald (both men) and Majdanek (Gutter). Gutter survived a death march. Today, Carter is a retired medical

⁴² The Ger Hasidim are a Hasidic dynasty, dating from the 19th century and originating from Ger, which is the Yiddish name for Góra Kalwaria, a small town in Poland. Its founder was the Hasidic rabbi, Yitzchak Meir Alter.

⁴³ The choice of subjects was based on the narratives; that all three are male had no bearing on my choice.

⁴⁴ See Bernard Wasserstein, *On The Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War* (Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 2012), for detailed descriptions of the situations of the prewar communities. The comfortable urban upbringing would not have had an effect on the thesis statement. Certainly, the stories of other survivors who came from different circumstances had similar wartime experiences and have richly contributed to Canadian society. Logically, those who possessed the skills of a labourer were considered useful to the Nazis and were less likely to survive a "selection" than a professor of literature, for instance.

researcher and has published two books. Gutter is a retired businessman, a cantor, and is featured in a multi-million dollar groundbreaking holographic exhibit. Waisman is also a retired businessman.

All three men have retained a strong Jewish identity, but they define and express that identity differently. While Carter is a secular Jew, Waisman and Gutter demonstrate a tremendous attachment for Jewish tradition, lovingly describing Jewish holidays and the Sabbath in their homes. All three express a strong attachment to the state of Israel. They have each enriched their communities and their country through their work and their contribution to interfaith dialogue, anti-racism, Shoah education and volunteerism.

The challenging issues of morality, faith, religion and interfaith dialogue are addressed in each of the three narratives. Each of the survivors demonstrates how one might define oneself as a Jew after the Shoah. They also illustrate how one might define and maintain moral values in the face of the ultimate immorality and they demonstrate that interfaith dialogue is a worthwhile endeavour. Each indicates in his own way that the covenantal partnership remains strong, but that its paradigms, in light of the Shoah, can no longer be defined in quite the same way as before the Destruction.

Chapter One

IRVING GREENBERG'S POST-SHOAH RESPONSE: THE SHOAH AS A THEOLOGICAL TOUCHSTONE

If the Jews keep the covenant after the Holocaust, then it can no longer be for the reason that it is commanded or because it is enforced by reward or punishment.

—Irving Greenberg, “Voluntary Covenant”

Introduction

This chapter will examine the theological framework of the thesis, Irving Greenberg's post-Shoah response. The first section will provide a brief biographical background. The second will illustrate the foundational elements of Greenberg's theology, which address the issues outlined in the introductory chapter. Greenberg's post-Shoah theology provides a blueprint for the post-Shoah reorientation required from both Judaism and Christianity in order to guide the world toward redemption.

Irving (“Yitz”) Greenberg

Irving (“Yitz”) Greenberg, born in 1933, is a Jewish-American theologian and scholar, and a modern-Orthodox rabbi. Educated at Harvard University with a PhD in History, he taught at Yeshiva University, at City University of New York and was a Fulbright visiting scholar at Tel Aviv University. In 1974, he founded CLAL, the National Center for Leadership and Learning, which was focused on promoting intrafaith (intra-denominational) Jewish unity and pluralism. He was a key leader in the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, having been named to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council by President Carter as an advisor to Elie Wiesel and later serving as its Chair from 2000 to 2002.

Greenberg grew up in a religious home and received a typically intensive and

insular religious education. When he began his post-secondary education and rabbinical studies (concurrently), he found the conflict of his early literalist religious training and his studies in science and history to be challenging. He began to immerse himself in the works of Protestant thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr whose approach sustained his own Jewish Orthodoxy.⁴⁵ Later, when he met Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik and was stimulated by his dialectical approach, he discovered that Soloveitchik's own theology had also been shaped by the approach of neo-orthodox Protestant thinkers. While Soloveitchik did not feel that Halakhah in its complete form is suited for our scientific-industrial society, he rejected a total withdrawal into an insular society as a means of protecting Judaism from the risks of modernity.⁴⁶

Then, in 1961, Greenberg spent a year in Israel that transformed his life. Arriving to teach (as a Fulbright visiting lecturer in American history), his timing coincided with the end of the Eichmann trial. Having passed up the opportunity to attend the end of the trial, he found himself immersed in reading about the Shoah during every free moment. The result was an overwhelming sense of crisis and despair: from an inability to understand how God could have allowed such a thing to happen to a real crisis of his faith—he found himself “drowning religiously.” He began recoiling from the very American history he had so dearly loved and that he was teaching, as he read that the United States had abandoned and betrayed the Jews of Europe.⁴⁷ As the year progressed,

⁴⁵ Greenberg, “Two Doors Rabbi Soloveitchik Opened and Did Not Walk Through.

⁴⁶ Irving Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004) 4–5.

he became convinced that he needed to change the academic focus of his professional career from American and modern intellectual history to an area where he could specifically address the issues which were now so important to him. He particularly wanted to deal with the issues posed by the Christian teaching of contempt. At that time, the academic field of Holocaust Studies was in its infancy.⁴⁸

Greenberg presented a first paper on the implications of the Shoah for Judaism in 1965, at an interdenominational conference organized by David Hartman, which took place in the Laurentians, north of Montreal. It was attended by Jewish theologians including Eliezer Berkovits (Orthodox), Jacob Neusner and Samuel Dresner (Conservative), and Emil Fackenheim, Jakob Petuchowski, and Eugene Borowitz (Reform).⁴⁹ The paper argued that Jewish-Christian dialogue is necessary to transform Christian thinking, to attempt to put an end to supersessionism, but also to transform Jewish thinking about Christianity.⁵⁰ In the wake of Vatican II's statement on the Church's relationship to Judaism in 1965, Greenberg emerged as a major advocate and active participant in Christian-Jewish dialogue. He was as much affected by his encounter with the history of the Shoah as he was by his dialogue with Christian theologians, whose

⁴⁷ An especially damning document was the "Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews," drafted by Josiah DuBois, aide to Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau Jr., who had uncovered a pattern of attempts in the State Department to thwart rescue efforts and block the flow of information about the Shoah to the United States. The report reached Roosevelt in January 1944. As a result, the War Refugee Board responded and likely saved the lives of 200,000 Jews and financed the work of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest. However, it was late in the war and Roosevelt, was facing an election that year and reacted only under strong pressure.

⁴⁸ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 6–7. Franklin Littell founded Holocaust Studies as an academic field at Emory University in 1959.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11–12. Unfortunately, Greenberg could not bring himself to publish this paper, which was at such an early stage in his career.

⁵⁰ "Supersessionism," also referred to as "replacement theology," refers to the belief that the New Testament supersedes or replaces the Mosaic covenant of the Hebrew Bible and that the Church has displaced the Jews as God's chosen people.

own theological framework was shattered and (like Greenberg) looked to new and sometimes radical responses. They showed him that one could remain faithful to one's tradition while finding radical and critical solutions. Greenberg is remarkable in his pluralistic outlook; he has even sought to redefine Judaism's understanding of Christianity.⁵¹ This thoughtful theological attempt to improve the nature of Christian-Jewish relations is transformative and it is very much a reciprocative response to positive dialogical relationships he developed with key Christian theologians and the *teshuvah* (repentance) they expressed. He believes that Judaism too, needs to reflect on its centuries-old negative image of Christianity in order to see a better way forward.⁵²

Greenberg met and became lifelong friends, dialogue partners (and sometimes, as Greenberg puts it, "scholarly foils") and co-workers with important Christian theologians such as John T. Pawlikowski, Franklin Littell, Edward Flannery, and most importantly Roy and Alice Eckardt. His views on Christianity have been deeply influenced by his dialogue with them as well as by some of the major Christian theologians of the twentieth century, such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Harvey Cox. Likewise, he has been an influential figure in the Christian world on theological issues of the Shoah, on the ethics of power, and on the relationship of the Jewish people to the Church. Of

⁵¹ In 2015, Greenberg wrote, "We understand that there is room in traditional Judaism to see Christianity as part of God's covenantal plan for humanity, as a development out of Judaism that was willed by God. "Groundbreaking Orthodox Statement on Christianity," The International Council of Christians and Jews, last modified January 1, 2016, accessed February 17, 2017, http://www.jcrelations.net/Groundbreaking_Orthodox_Rabbinic_Statement_on_Christianity.5222.0.html?L=8&page=4.

⁵² Irving Greenberg, "The Church as a Sacrament and as an Institution," in *Ethics in the Shadow of the Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Perspectives*, ed. Judith Hershcopf Banki and John Pawlikowski, (Franklin: Sheed & Ward, 2001) 78–80.

particular note is his influence on the Eckardts.⁵³

Greenberg's post-Shoah Response

The enormity of the Shoah led Greenberg to view it as a major point of reorientation in Jewish history and as a theological touchstone leading to radical transformation of some of the core paradigms of both Judaism and Christianity. While the Shoah is unprecedented, such reorientation has been a pattern to the Jewish people's response to crisis, such as after the destruction of the Second Temple. Greenberg based his theology on such previous reorientation in Jewish history. His post-Shoah theology can be sub-divided into several concepts, which help answer the questions outlined in the introductory chapter.

A Working Principle of post-Shoah Theological Discourse

Greenberg proposes a working principle as a means of verification, which must predicate any post-Shoah theological discourse: "no statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children."⁵⁴ Greenberg is referring to the Hungarian children who, after arriving at Auschwitz-Birkenau in the summer of 1944, were thrown live into the crematoria or onto adjacent fire pits, instead of being sent to be gassed.⁵⁵ Witnesses at postwar trials suggest that the Nazis may have burned the children alive for the purposes of economizing on Zyklon B gas as they hurried to kill as many Jews as possible with the tide of the war turning

⁵³ See Chapter Two.

⁵⁴ Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke," 23.

⁵⁵ Most of the 440,000 Hungarian Jewish deportees were sent to Auschwitz within an approximately two-month period, beginning in May, 1944, which meant the gas chambers were used at maximum capacity, killing up to 10,000 Jews per day. See S. Szmaglewska, in *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal (Nuremberg, 1947–49)*, 8:319–20.

against Germany. The amount saved per child was the equivalent of two-fifths of a cent. This is the ultimate antithesis of the fundamental claims of Judaism and Christianity, with respect to human beings being created in the image of God; the value of the lives of these children was reduced to almost nothing. If the basic paradigms of religious belief could be so easily ignored, one could not continue as if nothing had happened. This then, became a theological yardstick for Greenberg to judge every post-Shoah theology. It is an important reminder to consider for those reading survivor narratives as well.

The Shoah as the Third Era of Jewish History

In his monograph, “The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History,” Greenberg writes that Judaism is a Midrash on history itself—that both human life and history are rooted in God as humanity moves toward redemption, which in Judaism takes place in “actual human history.”⁵⁶ Greenberg points out that while the Shoah itself is unprecedented, there is a pattern to the Jewish people’s response to crisis as well as an evolving process of covenant and redemption. In order to move toward redemption, Judaism could not remain unchanged by these historical events. Examples include the Babylonian exile, and the destruction of the First Temple, which led to the emergence of sages and scribes as leaders. The prophetic literature (Ezekiel and Jeremiah) looks to a time when Israel will be gathered together once more under a Davidic (messianic) king. Similarly, at the time of the Jewish-Roman Wars, which ultimately resulted in the destruction of the Second Temple, some Jews looked to a new messiah. The Jewish Christians thought this messiah to be Jesus, while others imagined the fighter Bar Kokhba to be the messiah (see also page 51). According to Louis Feldman, Messianism played an integral role in the Jewish

⁵⁶ Greenberg, “The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History,” 1.

revolt against the Romans.⁵⁷ Still others looked to a new path for Judaism in this crisis, which became Rabbinic Judaism. In the years following the expulsion from Spain in 1492, Judaism once again looked for a theological response to their shattered world. Lurianic Kabbalah, the notion of *tikkun* takes on a sense of cosmic repair through the performance of mitzvot and other religious acts. Similarly, the Shabbetai Zevi false messianic movement and the growth of Hasidism were in large part a response to the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648 to 1649.⁵⁸

According to Greenberg, the full realization of the first orienting event, the Exodus, will take place in this-worldly history (on Earth). The teachings and traditions of Judaism carry the message of redemption, which in turn has been interpreted by Judaism and re-interpreted by other religions and even political movements over the course of history. However, there have been certain events of such magnitude that they have re-oriented Judaism and thus, following the notion of the Midrash, they affect the world's redemption. History, therefore is moving toward a final perfection:

In that age, the infinite value, equality and uniqueness of every human being will be upheld by the socio-economic realities of the world; there will be no oppression or exploitation; there will be adequate resources to take care for every single life appropriately. The physical, emotional, and relational aspects of the individuals' life will be perfected. Judaism dreams that life will win out so that eventually even sickness and death will be overcome.⁵⁹

Greenberg argues that the Shoah is an event of such shattering proportions that

⁵⁷ Feldman mentions that in the last books of Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, he lists at least ten Jewish leaders of the revolt who were likely regarded as messiahs. See Louis Feldman, "Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism in the First Century," in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development*, ed. Herschel Shanks, (Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society. 1992), 16.

⁵⁸ Zevi converted to Islam after his arrest in Constantinople. Many believe he suffered from a severe bi-polar condition, which led him to commit strange ritualistic and manic acts.

⁵⁹ Greenberg, "The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History," 1.

Judaism must respond to it (as it did to other such events) by transforming its basic paradigms, so that humanity may once again move toward the final perfection of redemption.⁶⁰ This idea honours the experiences and beliefs of survivors, whether they are practising or secular Jews. Greenberg's notions of reorientation and transformation respect Jewish tradition and history, but also provide a reason for human beings to reach out to others who have also suffered, whether or not they are Jewish.

Greenberg elaborates this idea further, explaining that there have been three cycles or eras in Jewish history that are important elements in the unfolding story of the covenantal partnership, each of them marked by reorienting points. In each of these three eras, God becomes more hidden and calls on humans to take on a greater role in the human-divine partnership. In a post-Shoah world, we no longer look for or expect *God* to bestow miracles upon His Creation; it is the duty of *humanity* to look after Creation.⁶¹

In the Biblical Era, the covenantal relationship is unequal and is marked by a high degree of divine intervention: God performs miracles, speaks directly to Israel through the prophets and eventually maintains the Divine presence at the Holy of Holies. During this period, the role of humans toward redemption is expressed in cult and prophecy.

The Rabbinic Era is preceded by the destruction of the Second Temple, the massive loss of life in the wars against the Romans, the disastrous fighting among fellow Jews, and the expulsion and sale into slavery of so many Jews, marking a crisis of faith and a reorienting point.⁶² God no longer intervenes directly in human history and the

⁶⁰ Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant," 1–2.

⁶¹ Greenberg, "The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History," 36.

covenant is reconfigured to become a more equal partnership, opening the door to human responsibility as well as initiative.

The Shoah marks the end of Rabbinic Era and the beginning of the Third Era of Jewish history. God is more hidden than ever before and the Jewish people are called upon to take on the senior role in the covenantal partnership. In this new era, God acts through human activity, rather than intervening directly. “Full responsibility is given to the covenanted human partner to redeem history—under and with God’s *hashgachah* (divine providence).”⁶³ Greenberg does not question God’s omniscience. Greenberg interprets God’s lack of intervention as a further sign of his withdrawal—and as a call for humans to take on more responsibility:

If God did not stop the murder and the torture, then what was the statement made by the infinitely suffering divine Presence in Auschwitz? It was a cry for action, a call to humans to stop the Holocaust, a call to the people Israel to rise to a new unprecedented level of covenantal responsibility. It was as if God said, “Enough, stop it, never again, bring redemption.”⁶⁴

A Voluntary Covenant

Greenberg elaborated his voluntary covenant theology as a thoughtful response to Christian theologian Roy Eckardt’s presentation of his 1974 “The Recantation of the Covenant” paper (see Chapter Two).⁶⁵ Greenberg argues that when Israel accepted the partnership of the Sinaitic covenant, it did so in blind faith without knowing the suffering

⁶² The Jewish Christians are likely to have viewed the destruction as a sign confirming that they were now the “true Israel” as well as a sign of God’s disfavour with the Jews for having rejected Jesus as the messiah. What began as a new articulation of the Jewish faith was rejected by mainstream Judaism but met with success amongst the gentile population.

⁶³ Greenberg and Freedman, *Living in the Image of God*, 39.

⁶⁴ Greenberg, “The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History,” 11.

⁶⁵ A. Roy Eckardt, “The Recantation of the Covenant?” in *Confronting the Holocaust: The Impact of Elie Wiesel*, edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld and Irving Greenberg, 159-168 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

that lay ahead. After all, God had promised to protect the Jewish people if they would serve God wholeheartedly. After the Shoah, the Jews could have rejected the covenant completely; however it is important to point out that Greenberg is not suggesting that God has broken the covenant with the Jewish people—the difference is nuanced, but clear. Greenberg writes, “By every right, the Jews *should have* (emphasis mine) questioned or rejected the covenant. . . . What happened to the covenant? I suggest that its authority was broken, but the Jewish people, released from its obligations, chose voluntarily to take it on again.”⁶⁶ In Greenberg’s understanding, the Jewish people have decided to recommit to the covenant. It is also important to refer to Greenberg’s footnote in which he carefully elaborates what he means by “broken,” and connecting it to Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav’s dictum. This nuanced explanation clarifies his thesis.⁶⁷ The Shoah and the death of six million challenge the traditional notions of salvation and redemption. Some survivors believed that God had failed them; yet what could they do with their Jewishness? No one else wanted them and their history and culture was all they had left to hold onto. No longer could the paradigm be a covenantal relationship of obedience and faithfulness out of fear of divine punishment or as a reward for faithfulness. Such an explanation would fail the test of Greenberg’s working principle: “no statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children.” And, since human beings are made in the Divine image, God must privilege human dignity and freedom over obedience.

⁶⁶ Greenberg, “Voluntary Covenant,” 35.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 43. Greenberg notes that the ” covenant shares Jewish fate; the Torah is not insulated from Jewish suffering . . . the covenant relates more totally to the human condition. This helps account for the extraordinary pull it exerts on this generation of Jews.”

Greenberg had explained God's lack of intervention (see above, page 31) as a call for humans to take on further responsibility and wrote of God's suffering Presence in Auschwitz.⁶⁸ The covenantal relationship could no longer be one of obedience, based on fear of divine punishment, because any divine punishment described in the sacred texts pale in comparison to the experiences of the Jews in the Shoah. Similarly, after the Shoah, it is clear that by remaining Jews, one risks exposing oneself and one's children to "ultimate danger and agony."⁶⁹ It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that after the Shoah, the commanded stage of the covenant demanding a higher standard of ethical behaviour from Jews had come to an end. However, God could lovingly ask for Israel's ongoing partnership. Some Jews were still devoted to Jewish tradition and the Torah—others to the idea of tikkun olam and social justice. Even the decision to recreate life after such overwhelming tragedy signifies enormous faith in ultimate redemption and meaningfulness. Released from the imposed obligations, Greenberg suggests that the Jewish people have chosen to continue its covenantal mission. Freely given, the renewal of the commitment is stronger than ever.

He refers to Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav's words: "there is no heart so whole as a broken heart." Greenberg adds, "After Auschwitz, there is no faith so whole as a faith shattered—and re-fused—in the ovens."⁷⁰ He is explaining that the covenant between God and the Jewish people has been strengthened after the shattering experience of the Shoah, and if anything, it is now even stronger.

⁶⁸ Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant," 36.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁰ Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke," 24–25.

That said, the era of voluntary covenant is also “a covenant of being,” defined by actions as opposed to the strict observance of the classical *mitzvot* (commandments). This demonstrates a voluntary recommitment, whether by an observant Jew, or even one who is professing atheism. The theological language of covenant that was appropriate before the Shoah no longer applies; the denial by the atheist of his or her Jewishness illustrates the hiddenness of the Divine and the reorientation and subsequent revelation in the post-Shoah era.⁷¹

While all Jews *could* have turned away from any notion, secular or religious of a Jewish identity after the Shoah, for survivors, it is an especially important recommitment. The decision to recreate life and have children signifies a belief that redemption is possible. Greenberg also points to the active participation from both secular and religious Jews in the creation of the modern State of Israel, a biblical symbol validating the covenant.⁷² This is not to say the six million were sacrificed in exchange for the modern State of Israel, in exchange for redemption. That theology would fail the test of Greenberg’s working principle.

A Covenant of Redemption

A voluntary covenant is also a call for humans to create a redemptive society as they assume the primary responsibility of ensuring that redemption will one day take place. The restoration of human dignity is not merely the counterpoint to the idolatry of the Shoah; it is a responsibility to fix the brokenness of the post-Shoah world. When the covenant becomes voluntary, redemption is no longer a singular goal, imposed by God.

⁷¹ Ibid., 38.

⁷² Ibid., 36

Those who voluntarily renew their covenant take upon themselves the responsibility to influence others to engage in tikkun olam. Greenberg points out that traditional Judaism has been problematic in this respect: “religious leaders have spent much energy in trying to rebuild the pre-destruction reality rather than sanctifying the new everyday.”⁷³

Greenberg is clear that any theological response must take into account the implications of the Shoah and its challenges to previously accepted Judeo-Christian beliefs: that religion is predicated on divine justice and retribution. It is difficult if not impossible to uphold the validity of such a concept, neither for the punishment of the innocent who died, nor the lack thereof for the many who were complicit. Therefore, “the encounter with the event leads to a transformation of the categories that themselves are used to judge and to incorporate religious responses.”⁷⁴

Moment Faith

For many survivors, the issue of continued faith after the Shoah is a difficult one. There are moments of joy in the lives they have rebuilt, but also moments of great difficulty as they remember the tremendous loss and pain they have suffered. Greenberg has responded to the times in his life when his faith was tested with his concept of “moment faith,” describing a post-Shoah dialectic of faith and uncertainty or even despair. In his 1973 paper, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity After the Holocaust,” Greenberg wrote of “moment faith”—moments when a Redeemer (God) and visions of redemption are present, interspersed with times when the

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

flames and smoke of burning children blot out faith.”⁷⁵ Greenberg writes that for some, while one may keenly feel God’s presence at certain moments, there is a reality to the expectation that during times of chaos, of genocide, one may not live in that presence. This dialectic of faith and uncertainty is to be expected in a post-Shoah world. This also ends all certitudes of positions, which existed for many Jews before the Shoah. The dichotomy between the secular or even atheist Jew and the observant Jew is no longer as easily demonstrated. It is a position that is particularly important for survivors. It allows those who have experienced a tremendous trauma and loss to accept that periods of great sorrow may test their faith. “Moment faith” allows one to respond to the tragedy of loss as well as the redemptive victory of the survivors. Greenberg equates an ability to live within the dialectic of moment faith with an ability to live with pluralism, and “without the self-flattering, ethno-centric solutions, which warp religion, or make it a source of hatred for the other.”⁷⁶

This thesis expands upon Greenberg’s interpretation of “moment faith.” It suggests two additional possibilities for his original concept. During the darkest hours of the Shoah, when some survivors experienced moments of surprising courage and decency from the most unexpected of sources, those experiences may have helped to have momentarily provided them with a sense of comfort and a sense of God’s Presence. While the act of inexplicable courage came from another human being—the rarity of these acts and their seeming incomprehensibility allow for a sense of God’s Presence. The second suggested interpretation is to provide a means to describe situations that do

⁷⁵ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 27.

⁷⁶ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 27.

not seem to have any reasonable explanation, but which had a positive impact on the survival of the individual.

Renewal and Remembrance

According to Greenberg's 1995 article, "The Unfinished Business of Tisha B'Av," "the classic Jewish response to catastrophe is to renew life."⁷⁷ Throughout Jewish history, Jewish sages have attempted to interpret catastrophic destruction as a difficult stage on the covenantal path toward final redemption. However, they ensured that these tragedies, many of which are traditionally remembered to have taken place on the ninth day of the month of Av, the same date as the destruction of the both Temples are properly mourned. The rabbis created many rituals to commemorate these tragedies and these rituals provide an outlet for grief within certain limits.⁷⁸ Greenberg reminds us that the modern rituals, memorials and other forms of memorializing the Shoah allow for a respectful mourning and remembrance of the six million. These new paradigms include adding a special *El Male' Rahamim* (God full of mercy) prayer dedicated to their memory to the *Yizkor* (memorial) services and Yom Hashoah memorial events.⁷⁹

Tikkun Olam and the Image of God

How do we recreate, define and maintain morality after all limits of morality have been broken? Greenberg seems to be telling us that the only way we can do this is to

⁷⁷ Irving Greenberg, "The Unfinished Business of Tisha B'Av, *Jewish Chronicle*, August 4, 1995, 23, <https://www.thejc.com/archive/1.256474?highlight=The+unfinished+business+of+Tisha+B%27Av>.

⁷⁸ These rituals include fasting on Tisha B'Av and breaking a glass at every wedding ceremony.

⁷⁹ The original El Male Rahamim prayer is also recited at funerals. According to Encyclopedia Judaica, it is thought to have originated in the Jewish communities of Western and Eastern Europe, when it was recited for the martyrs of the Crusades and the Chmielnicki massacres. See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "El Male Rahamim."

rediscover the innate image of God that we hold within ourselves. Greenberg views the qualities of life such as freedom, relatedness, and freedom from oppression, poverty and sickness, as inherent to the nature of the image of God. “Since it is the task of religion (and all religions) to uphold, protect and advance the sacred image of God, then religion must also pursue and uphold these values. Conversely, the dignity of the image of God is scorned by violence, oppression, poverty, and degradation.”⁸⁰ In this way, when humans participate in tikkun olam, every human will have achieved the fullest realization of the image of God.⁸¹

Greenberg’s vision of tikkun olam calls upon humans to do everything to eliminate all discrimination that reduces or denies the image of God in the other. He cautions that religion itself sometimes participates in the process of the devaluation or denial of the absolute dignity of the other and reminds us that if we remain as bystanders, we are also participants in the process. He mentions as examples, “rabbis who deny the dignity of women out of respect for tradition and popes who deny birth control for the starving millions out of a need to uphold the authority of the magisterium.”⁸² He also castigates those, especially some religious Jews, “who use religion as an excuse to morally impugn every other religious group but their own and are tempted thereby into indifference at the Holocaust of others.”⁸³ This provides an opportunity to respond to those Jews who have ignored the plight of non-Jews who are suffering.

⁸⁰ Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, 18.

⁸¹ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 162–163.

⁸² Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 44–45.

⁸³ Greenberg, “Judaism, Christianity, and Partnership after the Twentieth Century,” in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, ed. Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 27.

Secularism and Human Dignity

Inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's ideas of "religionless faith," Greenberg writes that the sacred is more present than ever in the secular.⁸⁴ Any activity that advances the cause of human dignity is one that also advances tikkun olam and moves us closer to redemption. It does not matter whether the activity itself appears to be in the secular realm or whether the person who is initiating this tikkun is Jewish or not, since every human being is made in God's image.

After the Shoah, in a time where God is so hidden, he suggests that there are many areas that may appear to be in the secular realm, but which are holy acts and move us toward redemption. Among these are improving the economy, curing disease, combatting modern slavery—acts which may on the surface appear to be secular. Greenberg calls these acts of "holy secularity."⁸⁵

But in the profoundest sort of way these activities are where God is most present. When God is most hidden, God is present everywhere. If when God was hidden after the destruction of the temple, one could find God in the synagogue, then when God is hidden after Auschwitz, one must find God in the street, in the hospital, in the bar. And that responsibility of holy secularity is the responsibility of all human beings.⁸⁶

The End of the Religious/ Secular Dichotomy

Greenberg suggests that the Shoah has put an end to the religious/secular dichotomy. He applies this concept to both the perpetrators as well as the victims. The

⁸⁴ Greenberg, "*For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*," 29.

⁸⁵ See Greenberg, "The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model." *Quarterly Review* 4, no. 4 (1984): 20.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

categories of meaning have been dissolved and turned upside down as both believers and neo-pagans participated in the Shoah. The Nazi, Himmler, was a neo-pagan who linked “de-Christianization” with “re-Germanization,” yet he still referred to a higher being (so that his SS men would not be like the atheistic Marxists).⁸⁷ The *Deutsche Christen*, a schismatic faction of German Protestants, supported Nazi ideas about a superior Aryan race. Many called for the removal of any Jewish traces from the Old Testament, removed Hebrew words like 'Hallelujah' from hymns, denied the Jewish ancestry of Jesus, and defrocked any clergy who had Jewish ancestors.⁸⁸

In Nazi Germany, secular authority unchecked was transformed into absolute authority. A value-free system of science, technology and culture united together to create the framework for a bureaucratic campaign of mass murder. Yet, in the post-Shoah era, secularity must be an important factor to be respected as one way of defining a Jewish identity. As well, by creating the State of Israel, a biblical symbol of redemption, both secular and religious Jews took responsibility for the continued existence of the covenant; thus the line between secular and religious is blurred.⁸⁹ However, as he examines secular Israeli society, Greenberg is critical of those (secular) Israelis who are cognizant of the importance of preventing another Shoah; yet fail in their responsibility to

⁸⁷ Greenberg, “New Revelations and New Patterns in the Relationship of Judaism and Christianity,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 16, no. 2 (1979): 260.

⁸⁸ For more on the *Deutsche Christen*, see Doris Bergen’s *Twisted Cross: The German Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Bergen argues that the *Deutsche Christen* were not a marginal group and that they occupied key positions in the Protestant Church. Her research also shows how quickly their members were reincorporated into postwar life, some who were given professorships at theological schools.

⁸⁹ Former Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, a secular Jew, quoted extensively from the Bible and was inspired by it as a source of Jewish history and a mandate for the rebirth of the State. See Jerrold S. Auerbach, “Ben-Gurion Recognized Biblical Claim to Israel,” *New York Times*, last modified January 8, 1997, accessed September 24, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/08/opinion/1-ben-gurion-recognized-biblical-claim-to-israel-078662.html?mcubz=3>.

build a redemptive society, based on dignity for all.⁹⁰

Intrafaith Pluralism

Another important theological interpretation of the voluntary covenant is its theological implication for intrafaith pluralism: “Pluralism is not a matter of tolerance made necessary by living in a non-Jewish reality, nor is it pity for one who does not know any better.”⁹¹ While Greenberg defines himself as modern-Orthodox, he emphasizes that all denominations lead toward the same goal (of redemption) and that it is important to respect the choices and commitments that each individual makes for himself or herself. He understands the notion of voluntary covenant as the theological basis of (intrafaith) pluralism. Therefore, he calls on Orthodox Jews to recognize that their own commitment to uphold the entire tradition is a voluntary one which, while it can be modeled, cannot be demanded of others: “Thus, the Orthodox must accept and respect the commitment and contributions of the other movements of Judaism. It is only when the validity and legitimacy of others is recognized that the shortcomings of Halakha can be admitted and corrected.”⁹² An example of this is the feminist correction of Halakha, which he describes as an “attempt to move more urgently toward the covenantal goal of humankind being in the image of God, which implies equality for women, rather than a rejection of the concept of obligation or of the traditional feminine positive roles.”⁹³

Further highlighting the importance of intrafaith pluralism is the experience of the early postwar immigration of Shoah survivors to Canada: Adara Goldberg notes the

⁹⁰ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 22.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁹² Greenberg, “Voluntary Covenant,” 39.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

breadth of religious practice from Hassidic to liberal Judaism to secular among the survivors as well as a need to “negotiate their religious practices within a Canadian Jewish society that did not necessarily endorse their traditions.” Some survivors went as far as building their own “survivor congregations” in Toronto.⁹⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, Canadian Jewish institutions often questioned the accreditations of the European-trained Orthodox survivors who had worked as ritual slaughterers, rabbis, and cantors before the war.⁹⁵ Greenberg’s notions on intrafaith pluralism are significant for survivors who have often redefined their religious identity in a post-Shoah world, and as Judaism continues to explore its own religious practice.

In *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)* 5:20, we find the following: Every controversy which is for the sake of Heaven will endure in the end; and every one which is not for the sake of Heaven will, in the end, not endure.” Arnold Wolf criticizes Greenberg in the religious journal, *Sh’ma*, in response to the “Voluntary Covenant” paper.⁹⁶ In it, he accuses Greenberg of having “systematically deconstructed Judaism, in favour of a political teleology whose consequences are clear enough: voluntarism means liberation from duty.” He refers to Greenberg’s ideas of human responsibility as “less

⁹⁴ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 116, 141–146. The two Toronto congregations are Congregation Habonim and Kehal Machzikei Hadas-Clanton Park. Kehillat Machzikei Hadas-Clanton Park was established along traditional Orthodox norms. Habonim Synagogue was founded in 1954, by a group of 150 Central European survivors based on the ritual of European Liberal Judaism that they were familiar with, and which was different from the North American Reform movement, exemplified in Toronto by Holy Blossom Synagogue. The synagogue would later feature the first female cantor in Canada, operatic mezzo-soprano, Esther Ghan Firestone. In 1994, Habonim defined its values and philosophy: “Judaism is an agent for the advancement of social justice for all members of the human race, irrespective of gender, religion, race or colour and that Judaism reaches fulfillment through service to all humanity.” This is certainly synonymous with Greenberg’s vision of pluralism and tikkun olam.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁹⁶ The title of Greenberg’s 2004 book, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity*, is derived from this aphorism.

God.”⁹⁷ Wolf is confusing “less God” with a “hidden God” which is not a new concept. Greenberg has drawn on the traditions of Lurianic Kabbalah’s *tzimtzum* (contraction).⁹⁸ However, Greenberg’s idea of the redistribution of responsibility for tikkun olam in the covenantal partnership does not mean that God is less present. Greenberg has responded to the accusations of heresy by some of his ultra-Orthodox colleagues and has continued to insist on the importance of pluralism.⁹⁹ A careful reading of his theology makes it clear that the notion of voluntary covenant does not replace, repudiate or supersede the original covenant. It only underlines the basic principle of Judaism that all humans are created in the image of God and therefore all their prayers are heard and accepted by God.¹⁰⁰ He does not advise that Jews should *not* observe the commandments (as Wolf suggests, by saying that Greenberg has “liberated them from their “duty”). Rather, Greenberg has created room for a wider intrafaith tent.

The Modern State of Israel and The Ethics of Jewish Power

The creation of the modern State of Israel is a topic that appears in many areas of Greenberg’s writings. Most importantly, he views this event so soon after the Shoah as God’s return to history, a sign of God’s care for the Jewish people, and a biblical symbol, validating the covenant. “Coming after the incredible destruction of the Holocaust, the creation of Israel and the rebuilding of Jewish life constitute an unparalleled reacceptance

⁹⁷ Arnold Jacob Wolf, “The Revisionism of Irving Greenberg,” *Sh’ma* 13, no. 254 (1983): 105-107.

⁹⁸ Lurianic Kabbalah, inspired by 16th century mystic Rabbi Isaac Luria, is based on an elaborate doctrine of *tzimtzum*—“contraction”—in order for the universe to be created, God had to make room for it by abandoning a region within Himself. It is primarily through the writing of Luria’s student and disciple, Rabbi Hayyim Vital, who took careful note of Luria’s extemporaneous lectures, that the details of Lurianic Kabbalah are known.

⁹⁹ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 33–35.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

of the covenant.”¹⁰¹

Greenberg is cognizant of the importance of the delicate balance between having enough power to survive and defend the Jewish people and the ethical use of this power. From the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, a culture of passivity slowly developed based on the Talmudic notion that God made the Jewish people swear not to revolt against the nations in which they were exiled (Talmud *Ketubot* 111a). During the Shoah, rebellion and fighting did take place on a limited scale. However, it was the absence of Jewish power, coupled with the one-sided power against them, as well as the religious notion noted above that determined the fate of the victims. Greenberg is suggesting that another element of necessary reorientation after the Shoah includes a new ethic of power.

The ethic of power is first defined by the following principle: “no one should ever be equipped with less power than is necessary to assure one’s dignity. To argue dependence on law, or human goodness or universal equality is to join the ranks of those who would like to repeat the Holocaust. Anyone who wants to prevent a repetition must support a redistribution of power.”¹⁰² While power must come with limits, moderation and ethics, Greenberg is just as insistent that in our role as covenantal partners, there are theological consequences if we think we can rely on prayer alone: “to pray to God as a substitute for taking power is blasphemous.”¹⁰³ This is also another expectation in the post-Shoah era when God is more hidden, namely, for humans to take fuller and more

¹⁰¹ Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, 92.

¹⁰² Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 54.

¹⁰³ Greenberg, “The Relationship,” 20.

active responsibility for the achievement of the covenant.

With the creation of the modern State of Israel, Jews are now in a position of exercising power. Greenberg is clear that power must not be abused. He cautions that the Shoah must not be used as an excuse for triumphalism and warns against the use of indiscriminate strength—power must only be used as is necessary for survival and self-defence and warns of turning other people into victims of Jews.¹⁰⁴ He calls for an eventual Palestinian state with Israel seeking maximum Arab autonomy in the West Bank “by encouraging the emergence of Indigenous leadership willing to live in peace with the Jewish state.”¹⁰⁵ He also identifies a free and unfettered press and religious pluralism as key to an ethical power structure. He cautions (Israeli leadership) “that turning Arabs into refugees or into victims of violence is to continue the Holocaust, not oppose it.” At the same time he is critical of groups that have sought to delegitimize Israel by using such accusatory terms as “crucifying Palestinian children.”¹⁰⁶

Greenberg describes “the reborn State of Israel as this fundamental act of life and meaning of the Jewish people after Auschwitz.”¹⁰⁷ However he cautions against the rising tide of Messianism and absolutism in certain Israeli Orthodox circles.¹⁰⁸ He notes the dangerous texts that give license to expel or kill Arabs as the reincarnation of Amalek and which equate a return of any inch of land with a disobedience of God’s command. He

¹⁰⁴ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 22.

¹⁰⁵ Greenberg, “The Ethics of Jewish Power,” 28.

¹⁰⁶ Greenberg, “To our Presbyterian Brothers and Sisters,” *The Times of Israel*, June 26, 2014, accessed February 27, 2017, <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/to-our-presbyterian-brothers-and-sisters/>.

¹⁰⁷ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 43.

¹⁰⁸ Greenberg, “Yitzchak Rabin and the Ethic of Jewish Power,” *CLAL: the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership*, 1995: 1–28, http://rabbiirvinggreenberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Perspectives_Rabin_red.pdf.

blames absolutist, uncritical thinking as having paved the way for the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin in 1995.¹⁰⁹ Greenberg mentions that there has been an upsurge in the writing of dangerous tracts based on this type of uncritical thinking in Orthodox circles.¹¹⁰ Greenberg also appeals for a critical and careful interpretation of even the most difficult texts.¹¹¹

A final comment on ethical power notes Greenberg's discussion of Amos 3:2: "Of all the families of the Earth I have known you singularly, therefore I will call you to account for all your sins." Does this mean that Israel is held to a higher standard than other nations? His response is that after the Shoah, neither God nor humanity has the right to demand that Israel justifies its existence with a *perfect* morality.¹¹²

Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism

Greenberg submits that pluralism is rooted in the *Imago Dei* concept originating from Genesis 1:27 ("So God created humankind in His own image. In the image of God [*B'tselem Elohim*] He created them; male and female, He created them.").¹¹³ This is further underscored in the Mishnah and in the New Testament.¹¹⁴ Every human being has

¹⁰⁹ Greenberg, "Transformation of the Core Paradigm," 226.

¹¹⁰ One such tract is *Torat Hamelech* (lit., The Teaching of the King), an extremist terror tract providing halakhic approval for murder of non-Jews in certain instances.

¹¹¹ Examples of this can be found in the Torah: 1 Samuel 15:3: "Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys." Also, Deuteronomy 20:16–18: "Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. "But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord your God."

¹¹² *Ibid.* 32–33.

¹¹³ My translation.

been created in the Divine image and is therefore of infinite value, equal and unique. If we do not accept an individual as an equal or if we engage in “othering,” we are rejecting him or her as an image of God. The absolutism of some religious claims also is a denial of equality. Pluralism is an opportunity for Judaism to shun absolutist notions from within and to work with members of other religions toward a common goal of tikkun olam. In the past, encounters with other faiths often resulted in attempts at the conquest of one by the other. Many Jews continue to believe that Judaism requires what they see as the “protective tariff of gentile hostility and cultural inferiority” in order to survive.¹¹⁵ Greenberg is clear that one may experience the power, the validity, and the nurturing value of another faith system without sacrificing the same qualities one experiences in one’s own religion.¹¹⁶ This is what differentiates pluralism from relativism.

Greenberg’s development of the *B’tselem Elohim—Imago Dei* concept is foundational to his assertion that “at the end of human life (as Judaism understands redemption), when tikkun olam has been achieved, every human life will attain his or her fullest expression as a creation in the image of God.”¹¹⁷ It is a reaction to the failure of human beings to respond to the magnitude of suffering and the failure to value human life. To consider human beings as “subhuman,” is to scorn the image of God. For many survivors, the *B’tselem Elohim* idea has become an implicit part of their work, as they

¹¹⁴ “Judaism and Christianity do not merely tell of God’s love for humanity, but stand or fall on their claim that the human being is, therefore, of ultimate and absolute value. (“He who saves one life it is as if he saved an entire world”—Talmud *Sanhedrin* 37a, “God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son”—John 3:16.) “It is the contradiction of this intrinsic value and the reality of human suffering that validates the absolute centrality and necessity of redemption, of the messianic hope.” Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 9.

¹¹⁵ Greenberg, *Living in the Image of God*, 26.

¹¹⁶ Greenberg, “Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism: In the Image of God and Covenant,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34, no. 3 (1997): 388–389.

¹¹⁷ Greenberg, “The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History,” 1

reach out to help those in need, viewing all people according to Greenberg's definition.

Greenberg's post-Shoah theology is uniquely pluralistic. It evokes a mechanism of protection against absolutism, fundamentalism, hatred and indifference. Greenberg defines pluralism as "the living together of absolute truths/faiths/systems that have come to know and accept their own limitations, thus making room for the dignity and truth of the other."¹¹⁸ Greenberg's ongoing dialogue with Christian theologians allowed him to express comfortably the true essence of pluralism—that one can engage in dialogue and honour other faith traditions while still "leaving room to say 'no' to other religious faiths and moral value systems."¹¹⁹ Within this definition, he calls on Jews to embrace both intrafaith and interfaith pluralism.

Continuing along this line of reasoning, Greenberg supports his theory with traditional Jewish texts. As all humans are made in the image of God, so they are all partners in perfecting the world and as redemptive faith communities. The manner in which God is able to achieve this is through the Divine-human partnership of the Noahide covenant. This covenant is with humanity and precedes the covenant with Israel. Greenberg also reminds us of God's "plural chosenness" by recalling Isaiah 19:24–25: Isaiah promises that God will redeem Egypt—the very nation that more than once enslaved the people of Israel. The day will come, says Isaiah, when Israel will be blessed along with Assyria and Egypt. "Blessed be my people, Egypt, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel, my inheritance."¹²⁰ Isaiah is saying that even the Jews' worst

¹¹⁸ Greenberg, "Transformation of the Core Paradigm," 251.

¹¹⁹ Greenberg "Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism: In the Image of God and Covenant," 389.

¹²⁰ Greenberg and Freedman, *Living in the Image of God*, 80.

enemies someday will be singled out to play a role parallel to Israel's in tikkun olam. Greenberg is careful to remind us that the idea of chosenness does not mean superiority; rather it suggests having a unique role to play. Therefore the concept of "plural chosenness" means that since redemption is not reserved for one group, it follows that God's redemptive love (chosenness) is available to humanity.¹²¹

From the universal Noahide covenant emerges a theory of particular covenantal relationships that include other religions: "When other peoples walk in Israel's footsteps, they, too draw forth the Divine abundance from the wells of blessing."¹²² Greenberg reverses the classic image: "Then, it was God's purpose that a shoot of the stalk of Abraham be grafted onto the root of the Gentiles. Thus, non-Jews could be aware that they were rooted in God also and they could then bear redemptive fruit on their tree of life."¹²³ Greenberg provides examples of how this theology of pluralism should be applied. For instance, the act of election places on Israel the responsibility to make the Promised Land "a microcosm of economic equality, righteousness, justice and equal treatment before the law for all, citizen and stranger alike."¹²⁴

Greenberg also notes Abraham as an example of a universalist father of many nations as well as the father of a family that stands alone. Citing his pure faith and his attempt to intervene on behalf of Sodom in contrast with Noah's passive acceptance of God's decision to wipe out all life on Earth, he develops an argument for the obligation of all human beings to be responsible for one another—Jews or non-Jews; this is inherent

¹²¹ Ibid., 79–80.

¹²² Ibid., 145.

¹²³ Ibid., 149–150.

¹²⁴ Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant," 47.

in the rich yet complex notion that is pluralism.¹²⁵

In his 2006 commencement address to Sacred Heart University, Greenberg speaks of a post-Shoah “theological revolution and recalibration of Judaism and Christianity for the purpose of tikkun olam.”¹²⁶ In that speech, he continues to elaborate on his theology of covenant—in this case, he details how choosing to live life qualitatively as opposed to quantitatively, we are assuring the final triumph of life.¹²⁷ In his speech, Greenberg speaks of the importance of choices regarding the environment and public health. He brings attention to global warming, resource stripping, and pollution, arguing that it is humanity’s responsibility to collectively, to choose life—if we do not intervene in the destruction that is taking place, then we are bringing about “a triumph of death.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Greenberg, “Judaism and Christianity: Covenants of Redemption,” 144–146.

¹²⁶ Irving Greenberg, “Choose Life,” Commencement Address, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, last modified May 14, 2006, accessed March 27, 2017, <http://rabbiirvinggreenberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Talk-Sacred-Heart-University-Speech.pdf>, 2.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3. He refers to the following passages: Deuteronomy 30:16, 19: “Behold, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil...in that I command you this day to love the Lord your God... and to keep God’s commandments. I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore, choose life that you and your children may live...” Matthew 22:36, 37: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Matthew 22:39: “Love your neighbour as yourself” (echoed in Leviticus 19:18).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Referring to current genocides, he speaks of the importance of speaking out, as silence only enables the murderers. However, he cautions the use of force that is employed in intervention, lest that intervention result in torture or unjustifiable death. He ends his address by noting “there are no neutral acts in life, and no moment in life without choice.”¹²⁹ Greenberg has also spoken and written about the importance of the work of museums such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the link between the preservation of memory and preventing genocide (which translates as *tikkun olam*): “Is remembering in itself fulfillment of our responsibility to the victims? Is the act of memory so human that it is self-validating and needs no further application to life to be justified or relevant? Would victims of the Holocaust themselves ask us to remember as a sufficient way of honouring their suffering and lives?”¹³⁰

If there can be any criticism of Greenberg’s pluralistic expression, it could be his failure to view Islam with the same pluralistic vision with which he has understood Christianity. In 2004, he blamed the wave of antisemitism sweeping through the Muslim world over the Middle East conflict and also criticized Islam’s failure to modernize.”¹³¹ This presents a very monolithic view of Islam, which excludes the many different expressions of Islam and the positive statements, and the very good work in interfaith dialogue that has been accomplished by groups such as the Elijah Interfaith Institute in Jerusalem. Islam of course, like Judaism includes many different ways of observance and

¹²⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹³⁰ Irving Greenberg, “Remembrance and Conscience: A Sacred Bond, transcript of address marking the 53rd Anniversary of the United States Genocide Convention,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, December 5, 2001, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/speakers-and-events/all-speakers-and-events/remembrance-and-conscience-a-sacred-bond>.

¹³¹ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 100.

interpretation, by Shia, Sufi, Sunni, Salafi and Wahabi Muslims. Within some of those groups, practice varies; thus, Islam has observed many changes, such as a handful of female-run mosques. Greenberg's statement is also predicated on a view that religion as opposed to politics is the only issue that fuels antisemitism in the Middle East. However, Greenberg *is* correct that there are few voices in Muslim countries speaking out against antisemitism.

New Revelation in the Relationship of Judaism and Christianity

While many Jewish scholars (including Greenberg) have lamented Christianity's difficult history with Judaism, Greenberg's singular reflection on Orthodox Judaism's delegitimization of Christianity and his willingness to explore a positive theology of Christianity is exceptional and courageous. In 1984, Greenberg proposed a radical theological challenge to Jews: a positive Jewish theology of Christianity.¹³² Asking Jews to focus not only on Christian failure and the Christian tradition of teaching of contempt, he reminded them that the Shoah must not be used for triumphalism, and that Judaism's moral failures must also be applied to Jews. As such, he asked whether it was possible for Judaism to have a more affirmative model of Christianity.¹³³ As it had been for Christians, it was a challenge for Jews to give up absolutist and monopolistic claims,

¹³² In 2002, then Chief Rabbi of the U.K. Jonathan Sacks found himself accused of heresy (*apikoros*) by his colleagues over this sentence in the first edition of his book, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2002) 55. "In the course of history, God has spoken to mankind in many languages: through Judaism to Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims ... truth on earth is not, nor can it aspire to be, the whole truth ... in heaven there is truth, on earth there are truths. Therefore each culture has something to contribute." The London Beth Din (rabbinical court said that the book was "open to an interpretation that is inconsistent with basic Jewish beliefs." While Sacks insisted that he had been misunderstood, he promised to rephrase these sections in later editions in "less ambiguous phraseology." See "Chief Rabbi Accused of Heresy Over Book," *The Guardian*, last modified October 26, 2002, accessed January 26, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/oct/26/religion.books>.

¹³³ Greenberg, "The Relationship," 4.

which recognize Judaism as the only valid relationship to God.

The response to Greenberg's article came some five years after its publication. The Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) accused Greenberg of heresy. They distorted his nuanced theological argument and falsely accused him of engaging in Christological thinking and there is no record available of their reasons for their accusations.¹³⁴ There is no evidence of any such ideas in Greenberg's article. It echoes what many Jewish scholars, such as Amy-Jill Levine, Peter Schaëfer and Daniel Boyarin, would write in later years. The difference is that Greenberg was an Orthodox rabbi writing in the 1980s. For some of the more fundamentalist members of the RCA, especially at that time, any positive reference to Jesus would have been considered to be heretical (for many, it still is).

In the article, Greenberg carefully avoids relativism and notes where Christianity and Judaism diverge in their beliefs. However, he also suggests that one important area that separate the two religions—the belief in the Incarnation—operates out of classical biblical modes—“the need to achieve redemption, the desire to close the gap between the human and divine which includes divine initiatives, etc. Therefore, he suggests, even though one can argue that Incarnation is improbable and violative of other given biblical principles or that it is unnecessary in light of the continuing career of the Jewish people—

¹³⁴ See Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity*, 31-35. Up until then, no one in the Jewish community had noticed the article in *Quarterly Review*. Greenberg did lecture on his ideas about Jesus as a failed messiah in interfaith dialogue groups. An ultra-Orthodox man who happened to hear one of Greenberg's lectures “denounced” him to the RCA. It would appear, rather ironically, that at one point, a decision was made to stop the process to “convict” Greenberg of heresy, because it would have a negative impact on Christian-Jewish dialogue, in which he was so active (and yet in which the Orthodox were not participating). Greenberg suggested that the Orthodox community was not ready to be reshaped by his ideas. They forced him into an agreement not to accept ritual honours in non-Orthodox synagogues but he is clear that all denominations are valid partners in the covenant of the Jewish people.

if this option was intended for Gentiles, and not for Jews, one could hardly rule it out.” What Greenberg is saying is that God has many messengers.¹³⁵ While Greenberg was subjected to tremendous criticism and censure from the Orthodox community, he has not backed away from his engagement in interfaith dialogue.

Greenberg begins by introducing Christianity from a Jewish perspective: both religions emerged from the Abrahamic covenant and out of the Exodus in a prophetic interpretation of an event that promises future redemption. Christianity, then, was imagined or divinely inspired as a way of bringing the covenant of tikkun olam to the Gentiles.¹³⁶ As well, each faith can be enriched by the other. He is careful to specify that an acceptable model allows both religions to respect the full nature of the other in all its faith claims.¹³⁷

Greenberg suggests that at times of great despair and setbacks, Jews have traditionally looked to messiahs and presents Bar Kokhba as one of many examples. While hailed as a messiah by Rabbi Akiva, Bar Kokhba failed to bring about redemption because his rebellion was crushed. Greenberg presents Jesus in the same way.¹³⁸ He accuses the rabbis of erring in their description of Jesus as a “false messiah” rather than a “failed messiah.” In this sense, he compares Jesus to other “failed” biblical figures, such as Abraham, Moses and Jeremiah, all of them, figures “at the heart of the Divine and

¹³⁵ Greenberg, “The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity,” 19.

¹³⁶ Greenberg, “Covenants of Redemption,” 155.

¹³⁷ Greenberg, “The Relationship,” 5.

¹³⁸ Harvey Cox, responding positively to Greenberg’s “failed messiah” interpretation, adds, “Jesus was without a doubt, the most influential failure in history.” See Harvey Cox, *Common Prayers: Faith, Family, and a Christian's Journey Through the Jewish Year* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 144.

Jewish redemption.”¹³⁹

While the supersessionist beliefs in the aftermath of 70 CE have led to the teaching of contempt, proselytism and violence, Judaism, though it reacted from a defensive stance, has also repudiated Christianity as a false religion and has developed its own version of a teaching of contempt around the narrative of the virgin birth.

By 2015, Greenberg, having gained support for his ideas from a number of modern-Orthodox rabbis, co-authored an ecumenical statement with Rabbis Eugene Korn, David Rosen and Shlomo Riskin. Signed by twenty-eight Orthodox rabbis, it puts Christianity in a distinctly Jewish and positive theological perspective.¹⁴⁰

(W)e acknowledge that Christianity is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations... In separating Judaism and Christianity, God willed a separation between partners with significant theological differences, not a separation between enemies... We understand that there is room in traditional Judaism to see Christianity as part of God’s covenantal plan for humanity, as a development out of Judaism that was willed by God.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

Irving Greenberg’s post-Shoah theology is pluralistic and it invites engagement by Christians, Jews and other faiths. He has provided a remarkable post-Shoah response,

¹³⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁴⁰ The statement was criticized in ultra-Orthodox circles. For example, Rabbi Yair Hoffman refers to it seventeen days after its publication as “a mischaracterization of both history and Jewish theology,” and reiterates again that “dialogue with Christian groups can and does lead to devastating results.” He condemns the initiative as a serious violation, and calls on the various Orthodox bodies to analyze it and issue statements condemning it. Yair Hoffman, “The New Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity: An Analysis,” *The Yeshiva World News*, December 20, 2015, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/headlines-breaking-stories/371619/the-new-orthodox-rabbinic-statement-on-christianity---an-analysis.html>.

¹⁴¹ There have been forty-three subsequent signatories. For the full statement see: Irving Greenberg, Eugene Korn, Shlomo Riskin and David Rosen, “To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians,” *The Center for Jewish Christian Understanding*, Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity, last modified December 3, 2015, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://cjcuc.com/site/2015/12/03/orthodox-rabbinic-statement-on-christianity>.

which inserts the Shoah into the core paradigms of Judaism (the Sinaitic covenant, the historic pattern of crisis—reorientation); yet it is accessible to survivors whether they are secular or observant. The inclusivity of his vision is courageous on the part of an Orthodox rabbi, since he looks at Christianity as a division willed by God, rather than as a heresy, which has been the traditional Jewish interpretation. Nevertheless, he has gone from a position of being a lone progressive voice in the Orthodox world, accused of heresy in the 1980s, to a leader among the American modern-Orthodox movement of Judaism whose name is synonymous with tikkun olam and prominent on issues of theological importance.¹⁴² He continues to publish, and others continue to write about him.¹⁴³ He remains deeply engaged in interfaith dialogue, as is evidenced by his many lectures at Christian universities, despite his age—now in his mid-eighties.

¹⁴² A recent example is Greenberg's prominence in an article condemning Donald Trump, in August of 2016. See Guest columnist, "Orthodox Rabbis Condemn Donald Trump's 'Hateful Rhetoric and Intolerant Policy Proposals': Irving Greenberg and Daniel Goodman (Opinion),"Cleveland.com, last modified August 19, 2016, accessed February 27, 2017, http://www.cleveland.com/opinion/index.ssf/2016/08/orthodox_rabbis_condemn_donald.html.

¹⁴³ Greenberg published *Sage Advice: Pirkei Avot*, a commentary to Ethics of the Fathers, in March 2017. *A Torah Giant: The Intellectual Legacy of Rabbi Dr. Irving (Yitz) Greenberg*, edited by Shmuly Yanklowitz has a publication date of January 25, 2018.

Chapter Two

KEY VOICES IN SEARCH OF A COVENANTAL PLAN FOR HUMANITY

If God has called Christianity into existence, Jews want to help it cope with history because it is our desire too that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

—Irving Greenberg, *Ethics in the Shadow of the Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Perspectives*

Introduction

The first section of this chapter will examine the theology of three Jewish theologians, in order to show by way of contrast why Greenberg's theology is singular and particularly apt for the survivors addressed in this thesis. The second section looks at a selection of Christian ecclesial and ecumenical documents that have arisen since 1965, in order to demonstrate the results of the interfaith dialogue that Irving Greenberg and others have been involved in, and the openings it may create for broader Jewish engagement in dialogue with Christians, and vice versa. The final section of this chapter examines three Christian theologians, who were particularly important for the nature and tenor of Greenberg's theology and its aptness for survivors.

Three Jewish Theological Responses to the Shoah: A Closer Look

As early as 1974, Greenberg examined several post-Shoah theological responses in his paper, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity After the Holocaust." He responded to the positions of theologians Emil Fackenheim, Eliezer Berkovits and Richard Rubenstein:

All were important responses, yet fell afoul of the dialectical principle. By providing a definitive interpretation of the Shoah, their response subsumes the tragedy under classical categories. Neither classical theism nor atheism is adequate to incorporate the incommensurability of the Shoah; neither produced a consistently proper response; neither is credible alone—in the presence of burning

children.¹⁴⁴

This section will address the positions of these three theologians and compare them to Greenberg's theology.

Emil Fackenheim

Emil Fackenheim's theology is expressed in several monographs and articles, but especially in his 1982 study *To Mend the World*. Fackenheim, a Reform rabbi and theologian, was born in Germany in 1916, arrested on Kristallnacht, and interned for a brief time in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. He escaped to Great Britain, where he was arrested at the outbreak of World War II. Fackenheim was sent to Canada in 1940 along with other Germans, both Jews and non-Jews who were designated as "enemy aliens" and spent time in an internment camp in Quebec. He later studied and taught at the University of Toronto.¹⁴⁵ Like Greenberg, Fackenheim argued that the Shoah is one of the central "epoch-making events" in Jewish history, and that like Sinai and the destruction of the two Temples, it is a "root experience," and is revelatory.¹⁴⁶ However, unlike Greenberg, Fackenheim situates God as being present in Auschwitz in order to

¹⁴⁴ Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke," 26–27.

¹⁴⁵ Canada agreed to accept 2,284 refugees from Nazism, most of them Jews, from Britain. The men, between the ages of 16 and 20 had found asylum in Britain. When suspicion arose that there were spies among them, they were arrested, interned, and deported to internment camps at several locations in Canada. Though Britain admitted it had made a mistake, discriminatory immigration policies in Canada kept the men, including Fackenheim, Rabbi Erwin Schild (recipient of the Order of Canada, the *Offizierkreuz* Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany), and Alfred Bader OBE. Gregory Baum, the Catholic theologian, had escaped to England in 1939. Although he had been raised as a Christian, the Nazis considered him Jewish because of his Jewish mother, and he too was interned as an enemy alien. For more information, see "Enemy Aliens: The Internment of Jewish Refugees in Canada 1940–1943," *Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre*, last modified 2012, accessed May 31, 2017, <http://enemyaliens.ca/accueil-home-eng.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 9.

issue a new commandment, while Greenberg sees God as suffering and waiting for humanity to take action against evil. Fackenheim's "commanding voice of Auschwitz" forbids Jews to hand Hitler a posthumous victory: God *commands* the Jewish people to survive (as Jews) *just as they always did*. He expresses this as an additional 614th commandment:

We are, first, commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. We are commanded, secondly, 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.¹⁴⁷

Greenberg leaves room for Jews to despair of God—at least from time to time—with his concept of "moment faith." Fackenheim says that secular Jews will hear the commandment, "though perforce they leave it unidentified."¹⁴⁸ Greenberg, on the other hand writes of a covenant that can be defined by actions rather than only by the strict observance of the commandments and also refers to holy secularity. While Greenberg does not ask Jews to ignore the mitzvot, he is cognizant of the contributions of secular Jews who may not observe them, but who contribute to tikkun olam in many other ways. While Fackenheim might have understood his theology to include non-theistic or secular Jews, they might not accept his interpretation as "having heard the commandment, though perforce they leave it unidentified." On the other hand, the concept of holy secularity would appear to be a more inclusive response. For Greenberg then, the

¹⁴⁷ Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought*, 213.

¹⁴⁸ Fackenheim, "Jewish Faith and the Holocaust: A Fragment," *Commentary* (1968): 32.

observance of the classical commandments can no longer be the only option of covenantal definition for *all* Jews.¹⁴⁹

Fackenheim's passage referring to Hitler is particularly problematic. First of all, Fackenheim refers to Hitler's "victory at Auschwitz." The murder of nearly a million Jews was not a victory. Hitler's plan was to annihilate every Jew everywhere. It would also seem questionable to connect Hitler's name to the survival of Judaism. Traditional Judaism teaches that the most horrific of Israel's enemies are successive manifestations of the biblical Amalek. We do not survive to spite Amalek. In fact, in Deuteronomy 52:17-19, while we are told to remember what Amalek did, we are told to blot out Amalek's name from under the heavens. Hitler was but a cog in a well-oiled machine of evil by virtue of the systematic nature employed by the Nazis and their collaborators to eradicate the Jewish people - from political oppression, judicial and economic discrimination to the use of scientific, racial, and cultural theories and arguments which required the mobilization of every institution of Nazi Germany's political and civil society. Amalek was a people, not a person. Fackenheim's use of Hitler's name while it may be symbolic on the one hand is dangerous – it allows later generations to associate one evil person with the idea of the Shoah rather than what it was that made the Shoah unprecedented in nature. Greenberg's theology provides positive reasons for continuing the covenantal partnership and embracing a Jewish identity.

Redemption through tikkun olam is a concept that many post-Shoah theologians address. Greenberg suggests that it is humanity's role to take on the responsibility to bring about redemption. Fackenheim's theology is a more passive idea: it is enough to continue to be practising Jews and to survive. Fackenheim invokes the Lurianic concept

¹⁴⁹ Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant," 38.

of cosmic rupture when he speaks of tikkun olam, but he adapts it:

For centuries, the Kabbalists practiced their tikkun, their “impulse below”—“Torah, prayer and mitzvot”—calling forth an “impulse from above:” in the Holocaust their bodies, their souls and their tikkun were all indiscriminately murdered. No tikkun is possible of that rupture, ever after. But the impossible tikkun is also necessary ... Is the world different or the same because the Buchenwald Hasidim decided to buy the *tefillin*, and found in them an elixir of life? Or because the Warsaw Ghetto fighters fought? A tikkun here and now is mandatory, for a tikkun then and there was actual. It is true that because a tikkun of that rupture is impossible we cannot live, after the Holocaust, as men and women have lived before. However, if the impossible tikkun were not also necessary and hence possible, we could not live at all.”¹⁵⁰

The Kabbalists believed that by observing the commandments, they could heal the cosmic rupture (tikkun olam). Fackenheim suggests that to bring about a *tikkun* (repair) we must return to the Torah, the covenant and the observance of the commandments. The example of the Buchenwald Hasidim who sold their bread to buy *tefillin* (phylacteries) serves to illustrate devotion over pragmatism. In fact, Judaism teaches that the preservation of human life overrides virtually any other religious consideration (Leviticus 18:5 and Talmud *Yoma* 85b). While prayer is important, survival is more important.

In contrast, Greenberg’s entire theology is a transformative response; faith can no longer be commanded. It is too much to expect the Jewish people to go on after the Shoah as if a third of their people had not been murdered. Throughout his 1974 piece, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Shoah,” Greenberg criticizes any rabbinic tradition that would seek to go on unchanged. For Greenberg, there is no commanding voice of Auschwitz: “a Presence need not formally

¹⁵⁰ Fackenheim, *To Mend the World*, 218, 254. The reference to the Buchenwald Hasidim refers to a story about a group of Hasidim from Lublin who exchange four rations of bread in exchange for a confiscated set of *tefillin* (phylacteries) and then “prayed with an ecstasy which it would be impossible to experience again in their lives.” It was the mitzvah of the *tefillin* that prevented them from losing faith.

command.”¹⁵¹ Greenberg is referring to the increasingly hidden nature of God after Auschwitz, who has suffered along with His people. In Greenberg’s opinion, God is no longer the commanding voice of the Bible; he prefers to portray God as a divine Presence when Israel is suffering. He refers to Talmudic sources, which say, “Whenever Israel was exiled, the Shekinah was with them ... so when they will be redeemed in the future, the Divine Presence will be with them.”¹⁵²

Fackenheim, like Greenberg, called on Christianity to reevaluate itself, but unlike Greenberg, did not ask the same of Judaism: “No Christian tikkun is possible unless the rupture is recognized.”¹⁵³ Greenberg however, also challenged Jews to imagine a radical new perspective on Christianity. Fackenheim admits his examples of tikkun are parochial; saying, “the Holocaust itself is parochial.”¹⁵⁴ Fackenheim’s response, written well after the era of *Nostra Aetate* does not appear to have considered how Judaism might now reflect on Christianity. Years later, his name does not appear on the list of 220 rabbis who signed *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*, a Jewish document addressing the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, the tikkun that Fackenheim described can only be fragmentary—there is no vision of a wider idea of mending the world *together*, or addressing problems of poverty, racism, sexism, etc. Nor does he address the problems of the reinterpretation of Jewish texts where they

¹⁵¹ Greenberg, “The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History,” 11. Greenberg continues, “Indeed it does not command if a command means an order in words from the outside. The fact that I relate to the presence of God means that I sense more clearly the expectations, I feel more obligation and motivation and I am more deeply moved than any words or formalized commands can express.”

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Fackenheim, *To Mend the World*, 280.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 264.

are problematic.

For Fackenheim, the link between Christianity and Zionism after the Shoah cannot be questioned: “Christians, we have seen, must be Zionist, on behalf not only of Jews but also of Christianity itself.”¹⁵⁵ Fackenheim has seemingly ignored the Arab Christians living in the West Bank whom he could ask to believe in peace but perhaps not Zionism. Greenberg on the other hand, is also prepared to hold Israel to a high moral standard and speaks on the ethical use of power, and compares absolute power to idolatry.¹⁵⁶ He calls on Christians to join together with Jews to “work for a just peace, based on dignity, equality and security for two peoples in two nations (with full rights for all minorities).”¹⁵⁷

Eliezer Berkovits

Eliezer Berkovits was born into an Orthodox family in Transylvania. He studied at the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin and after ordination studied philosophy at the University of Berlin, receiving a doctorate in 1933. He left Europe just before the Shoah and assumed the chairmanship of the Hebrew Theological College in Skokie, Illinois, in 1958. Berkovits’ work *Faith After the Holocaust* combines two classical models—the concept of free will and that of *hester panim* (see review of biblical models in introductory chapter). It would appear that Greenberg has been influenced by some of Berkovits’ ideas of free will and *hester panim*, but Berkovits sees no reason for looking to the Shoah as a justification for a transformative examination of Judaism, and

¹⁵⁵ Fackenheim, *To Mend the World*, 303.

¹⁵⁶ Greenberg, “The Ethics of Jewish Power,” in *Beyond Occupation: American Jewish, Christian, and Palestinian Voices for Peace*, (Boston: Beacon, 1990) 22–74.

¹⁵⁷ Greenberg, “To Our Presbyterian Brothers and Sisters,” <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/to-our-presbyterian-brothers-and-sisters/>.

he certainly rejects interfaith dialogue. While rejecting the idea of divine judgment, Berkovits suggests that God turned away while the Shoah was taking place, allowing it to happen. He argues that unless human beings are left to their own devices in moments of both destructive evil as well as creative goodness, free will is impossible. He concludes: “That man may be, God must absent himself; that man may not perish in the tragic absurdity of his own making, God must remain present. The God of history must be absent and present concurrently.”¹⁵⁸

Berkovits begins *Faith After the Holocaust* by undermining the responses of anyone who did not experience the Shoah (which he did not). It appears to be an attack on anyone (such as Greenberg) who might suggest that the Shoah could be a touchstone for change: According to Berkovits, “Those who were not there, and yet join with self-assurance the rank of disbelievers, desecrate the holy faith of the believers.” Later, in the book, he uses harsher language, writing, “The disbelief of the sophisticated intellectual in the midst of an affluent society—in the light of the holy disbelief of the crematoria—is obscenity.”¹⁵⁹

Unlike Greenberg, Berkovits does not view the singularity of the evil of the Shoah. While he sees it as a horrific chapter of Jewish history, he recalls other great tragedies and notes that God creates both good and evil, citing from Isaiah, “I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am the Lord that doeth all these things.”¹⁶⁰ Who then, is the God of

¹⁵⁸ Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust*, 107

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 9, 69.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 76-85. Isaiah 45:6-7

Auschwitz? Berkovits theological response is that God must hide His face (*hester panim*) in order to allow human free will. In this respect, there are some similarities to Greenberg's theology. Greenberg writes that God was waiting for humans to intervene to stop the evil of the Shoah. Berkovits attests to the survival of the Jewish people as God's presence in the world, which is their primary reason for continuity despite the extent of their suffering. Greenberg looks to a love of Jewish tradition, the Torah and a dream of redemption. However, Greenberg understands this as a human-divine partnership. Berkovits understands the eclipse of God's presence—His “turning away”—as a response to the catastrophic evil that was taking place during the Shoah. Berkovits suggests that the face of God has finally been revealed again in 1948 (the opposite of the hidden face model), demonstrating that the end of the terrible period of God's “hiddenness” had arrived with the establishment of the State of Israel: “We have seen a smile on the face of God.”¹⁶¹

While Greenberg (and other theologians, both Jewish and Christian) have engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue, and have made tremendous strides toward interfaith understanding and *teshuvah*, Berkovits dismisses the value of dialogue between the two religions outright; claiming there is no room for it. In fact, he not only rejects Jewish-Christian dialogue, he criticizes those who are ready to engage in it:

There are, of course, Jews who are only too eager to undertake such a dialogue. They are either Jews without memories or Jews for whom Judaism is exclusively a matter of public relations, or confused or spineless Jews unable to appreciate the meaning of confrontation in full freedom. For Jewry as a whole, an honest fraternal dialogue with Christianity is at this state emotionally impossible. The majority of the Jewish people still mourn in a very personal sense. In a hundred years, perhaps, depending on Christian deeds toward Jews, we may be

¹⁶¹ Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust* (New York: KTAV, 1973), 56.

emotionally ready for the dialogue.¹⁶²

Greenberg notes the divergent paths that he and Berkovits have taken in responding to Christianity's role in the Shoah.¹⁶³ Berkovits is prepared to read Christian theology but rejects the idea of any dialogue or transformation; he believes Christianity's behaviour toward Jews has made it unfit for a dialogical relationship. Without room for dialogue, there can be no reconciliation. Berkovits also appears to have ignored the many Christians (and Muslims) who saved Jewish lives out of a sense of *religious* conviction. These included village priests and nuns, papal nuncios and even an entire village; but also the "ordinary people" sitting in the pews.¹⁶⁴

Richard Rubenstein

Richard Rubenstein is an American Rabbi who was born into a secular family. He began his studies at the Hebrew Union College (Reform), but moved to the Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative) at the same time Abraham Joshua Heschel joined the faculty. He also received a PhD from Harvard Divinity School. He has worked as a Rabbi, a chaplain to Jewish students, and a professor of Religion. Christian philosophers

¹⁶² This does not mean to ignore the complexity of supersessionist belief that often prevailed even among those who spoke out against Nazi tyranny against the Jews such as in the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who described Judaism as having "died giving birth to Christianity." See Stephen R. Haynes, "Bonhoeffer, the Jewish People and Post-Holocaust Theology: Eight Perspectives; Eight Theses," *Studies in Jewish Christian Relations* 2, no. 1 (2007): 36–52.

¹⁶³ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 6–7.

¹⁶⁴ Among the many clergy who were declared Righteous Among the Nations were Angelo Rotta, the wartime papal nuncio to Budapest, and Andrea Cassulo, the wartime papal nuncio to Bucharest. Other papal nuncios played significant roles in saving many Jews during the Shoah, including Angelo Roncalli (later Pope John XXIII), as well as Giuseppe Burzio, the Vatican Chargé d'Affaires in Slovakia, and Filippo Bernardini, nuncio to Switzerland. In France, after the Vélodrome d'Hiver round up, there were denouncements from the pulpit. Fourteen Jesuit priests are named Righteous Among the Nations from various countries. The village of Chambon-sur-Lignon has been collectively honoured by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations; as was its leader, Pastor Andre Trocme, who saved the lives of between 3000 and 5000 Jews.

and theologians such as Friedrich Nietzsche (in the 19th century) and Thomas J.J. Alitzer (in the 20th century) also posited the Death of God theology. However, Rubenstein's theology is particularly Jewish because he argues that with the death of God, Jews must look to ritual, community and rites of passage for consolation and meaning: "It is precisely because human existence is tragic, ultimately hopeless and without meaning, that we treasure our religious community."¹⁶⁵

Rubenstein's "Death of God" theology was in part his response to an interview he had in 1961 with Dr. Heinrich Grüber, Dean of the Evangelical Church in Berlin. Grüber had opposed Nazism (and had almost perished in Dachau because of it), testified at the Eichmann trial and worked postwar on fostering Jewish-Christian reconciliation. Rubenstein was shocked by Grüber's belief that the Shoah was God's punishment for the crime of deicide. During this interview, Grüber told Rubenstein that the death of the six million was God's will, quoting Psalm 44:22—"For Thy sake are we slaughtered every day." When pressed by Rubenstein, Grüber admitted that he viewed Hitler as an instrument of God's anger against the Jews, just as Nebuchadnezzar and other "rods of God's anger" had been used in the Bible. Then, he compared the defeat of Germany to the fall of Jerusalem—a punishment for the sins of the German people, using the same verses from Hosea that Jews had used for generations.¹⁶⁶

Rubenstein, deeply affected by the interview, looks to traditional texts and decides that the God of Jewish tradition must be dead, since an alternative explanation would mean that Grüber's explanation was correct:

¹⁶⁵ Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 68.

¹⁶⁶ Rubenstein, "A Visit with Dean Gruber," *The Reconstructionist* 28, no. 12 (1962): 12–19.

Traditional Jewish theology maintains that God is the ultimate, omnipotent actor in the historical drama. It has interpreted every major catastrophe in Jewish history as God's punishment of a sinful Israel. I fail to see how this position can be maintained without regarding Hitler and the SS as instruments of God's will. The agony of European Jewry cannot be likened to the testing of Job. To see any purpose in the death camps, the traditional believer is forced to regard the most demonic, anti-human explosion of all history as a meaningful expression of God's purposes.¹⁶⁷

Rubenstein eventually concludes:

God really died at Auschwitz (in the sense that) nothing in human choice, decision, value or meaning can any longer have vertical reference to transcendent standards. We are alone in a silent, unfeeling cosmos...Morality and religion can no longer rest upon the conviction that divinely validated norms offer a measure against which what we do can be judged.¹⁶⁸

Greenberg does not ignore the very real difficulty of silence and problematic response from within the Christian community. He recalls that the 1947 Darmstadt *Message Concerning the Jewish Question*, only two years after the end of the Shoah in which German theologians seemed to blame the Jewish victims. While its authors called on German pastors to reject all forms of antisemitism and to be cognizant of the Jews' "special link" with God, they (like Grüber) ascribed Jewish suffering to the Jewish rejection of Christ:

"That since Israel crucified the messiah, it rejected its own election and its own destiny ... Through Christ, and since Christ, the chosen people is no longer Israel but the Church ... The Church is waiting for the erring Children of Israel to resume the place reserved for them by God ... The fate of the Jews is a silent sermon, reminding us that God will not allow Himself to be mocked. It is a warning and an admonition to the Jews to be converted to Him, who is the sole hope of salvation."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 223.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁶⁹ Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past*, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2004), 196–197. This is not to be confused with the later Darmstadt Declaration.

Rubenstein writes, “Jewish history has written the final chapter in the terrible story of the God of History; that the world will *forever* remain a place of pain ... and *ultimate defeat*.”¹⁷⁰ Greenberg was critical of the definitiveness of Rubenstein’s conclusions and its hopelessness going forward. At the same time, he underscored the fact that after the Shoah, “the relationship of the God of the covenant cannot be unaffected.” Rubenstein leaves no room in his theology for the believer and he leaves no room for belief in God’s return to history (such as the recreation of the State of Israel).¹⁷¹ Greenberg, like Rubenstein, realizes that the Shoah is a touchstone for change. Greenberg however, refuses to respond with hopelessness. He disagrees with Rubenstein’s definitive loss of hope and argues that Rubenstein’s theology is predicated on a theology of an omnipotent (but now dead) God.¹⁷² Greenberg provides for moments where faith is challenged (“moment faith”), which is respectful of the deep trauma and loss which affects survivors, but also those who were not present in the Shoah.

Ecclesial and Ecumenical Statements

In the decades since the Shoah, there have been many Christian voices calling for a meaningful re-examination of Christianity and its relationship to Judaism, renouncing supersessionism and proselytism. As early as 1947, the International Council of Christians and Jews met in Seeligsburg and issued a joint statement denouncing antisemitism. Since then, more than one hundred ecclesial and ecumenical statements have been issued. Many individual theologians have responded as well. This section is

¹⁷⁰ Rubenstein, “Homeland and Holocaust,” in *The Religious Situation 1968*, ed. Donald R. Cutler, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) 61.

¹⁷¹ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 26–27.

¹⁷² Greenberg, “Judaism and Christianity After the Holocaust,” 533.

meant to examine a few of those statements that stand out as examples that connect well to Greenberg's theology.¹⁷³

Nostra Aetate

Of all the statements, *Nostra Aetate* has received the most attention, and is considered a turning point in Jewish-Christian relations, both because of its intrinsic radicalism in Christian history, and because it became doctrine. The Second Vatican Council produced *Nostra Aetate* in 1965, a work that began under the guidance of Pope John XXIII, and was brought to fruition under Pope Paul VI.¹⁷⁴ It was a groundbreaking document that changed forever the relationship between the Catholic Church and Judaism, repudiating the charge of deicide and antisemitism and affirming that the covenant between God and the Jewish people has not been abrogated. However, *Nostra Aetate* continues to describe the Church as the “new people of God,” which may be interpreted as having supersessionist overtones. Greenberg notes that “the great theological leaps” that were circulated in the 1969 working document, “Reflections and Suggestions for the Application of the Directives of *Nostra Aetate* (n. 4),” were diluted in the final document.¹⁷⁵ The earlier document declared that as far as Christian relations

¹⁷³ For a full exploration of ecclesial and ecumenical statements, see chapter 2 of Katie Rebecca Leggett's doctoral thesis, “Reconsidering Otherness in the Shadow of the Holocaust: Some Proposals for Post-Holocaust Ecclesiology,” PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, last modified 2015, <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/10595/Leggett2015.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹⁷⁴ Part four of the document specifies that although some of the Jewish authorities at the time of Jesus and those who followed them pressed for his death, neither all the Jews of that time, nor all Jews in our time can be held accountable and “the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God.” It rejects the notion of the abrogation of the covenant, with a new covenant formed by the Church. It also decries all displays of antisemitism made by anyone at any time.

with Jews are concerned, “all intent of proselytizing and conversion is excluded.” The final directive did not include this, although its author, Cardinal Willebrands, has echoed this viewpoint on many occasions.¹⁷⁶ While a number of conferences of Cardinals and Bishops have reiterated the intent of the earlier documents, categorically rejecting any need for a mission to the Jews, others have called it into question.¹⁷⁷ Recent statements made by some Catholic theologians that suggest that *Nostra Aetate* has no doctrinal authority are not only worrisome but are anachronistic. Cardinal Avery Dulles has defended active missionizing to the Jews. In 2002, he disputed that Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God, writing, “that to recognize this would imply that Jews are not obliged to recognize the new covenant.”¹⁷⁸ Greenberg’s response to this was, “Dulles is like the centrist Orthodox (Jews). He is not from the reactionary wing ... but (like the centrists) he has not faced up to the full implications of pluralism.”¹⁷⁹

We Remember

A 1998 Vatican document, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, responds to its horrors, but does not consider the link between the teaching of contempt and the

¹⁷⁵ “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, (n.4).” The 1975 guidelines promulgated by the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with Jewry, which were based on the earlier working document did not include the directive on proselytizing and conversion. This is problematic as it left the door open for comments such as those expressed by Cardinal Avery Dulles (see next page).

¹⁷⁶ David Rosen, “*Nostra Aetate*, Forty Years after Vatican II: Present and Future Perspectives,” In *Conference of the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with Jewry, Rome, Italy*, last modified October 27, 2005, accessed February 28, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20051027_rabbi-rosen_en.html.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Eric J. Greenberg, “Conversion Diversion,” *New York Jewish Week*, November 15, 2002, <http://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/conversion-diversion/>.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Shoah. It fails to mention the issue of Vatican responsibility, a continuing source of tension, and the role of Pius XII.¹⁸⁰ It does not address the direct connection between the Church's blood purity laws and the Shoah.¹⁸¹ It also fails to directly link the Church's history of racial antisemitism and its ghettoization of the Jews to the Shoah.¹⁸² *We Remember* blames 19th century racial antisemitism on nationalism. While the document asks "whether the Nazi persecution of the Jews was not made easier by the anti-Jewish prejudices imbedded in some Christian minds and hearts," it places the responsibility of the Shoah squarely on the shoulders of a "thoroughly modern neo-pagan regime, whose roots were outside of Christianity and, in pursuing its aims, it did not hesitate to oppose the Church and persecute her members also." The roots of German racial antisemitism are clearly rooted in the Spanish *limpieza di sangre* (purity of blood) legislation that began in the Catholic Church in the 16th century. Jews were excluded from positions of importance in public life and some religious orders required aspirants to prove they had no "Jewish blood" until the 20th century.¹⁸³ Rosemary Radford Ruether refers to the

¹⁸⁰ The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*. last modified March 16, 1998, accessed March 15, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_16031998_shoah_en.html.

¹⁸¹ These laws date back to the Statute of Toledo or *Limpieza di Sangre* in 1449, which prevented anyone of Jewish blood (i.e. converts) from holding office or benefice in that jurisdiction. The statute was promulgated by the archbishop of Toledo in 1547.

¹⁸² The Jews were compelled by the government of the Venetian Republic to live in the very first ghetto, in 1516. However, it was Pope Paul IV's bull of 1555, *Cum Nimis Absurdum*, which ordered the Jews of Rome to live in a ghetto. The bull also imposed economic and religious restrictions and Jews were forced to wear yellow identifying headwear. In 1998, Cardinal Cassidy, the document's principal author said, "the ghetto, which came into being in 1555 with a papal bull, became in Nazi Germany, the antechamber of the extermination." The bull was in force until 1870. See James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword*, 376–379.

blood purity regulations as “the ancestors of the Nuremberg Laws.”¹⁸⁴

Bearing Faithful Witness

The 2003 statement of the United Church of Canada, *Bearing Faithful Witness* moves beyond the Vatican documents by rejecting supersessionism and proselytism outright: “It is not obvious that God’s promises to the Jews need fulfillment beyond that which is given in the Jewish texts themselves. Promises to give children, generations, land, and a great heritage are all fulfilled; only the end-time (eschatological) promises of communal peace with justice and of international reconciliation are not accomplished, but neither are they fulfilled in Christianity.”¹⁸⁵

Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity

In 2002, a group of 220 Jewish rabbis and scholars issued *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*, calling on Jews to re-examine their

¹⁸³ Ibid, 82. The Sixth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) passed a resolution in 1607, which restricted their membership to any Jewish converts going back five generations. As late as 1946, the S.J. would temper this wording only by referring to “doubt of the character of his hereditary background.”

¹⁸⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 203.

¹⁸⁵ United Church of Canada Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations: United Church of Canada General Council, *Bearing Faithful Witness: United Church-Jewish Relations Today* (Etobicoke: Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations), last modified 2003, accessed January 3, 2017, http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/study_bearing-faithful-witness.pdf, 17. Since the document’s adoption by General Council, there have been a few articles written in response. The document is relatively unknown outside of the United Church of Canada and it is doubtful that most lay members today are aware of it. The UCC represented approximately 6% (just over 2 million) of the Canadian population in the 2011 census. By comparison, almost 39% of Canadians said they were Catholics, and 1% said they were Jews.

understanding of Christianity; it included Greenberg's signature.¹⁸⁶ The statement is a direct response to the Christian ecumenical statements. However, the document ignored the shortcomings of *We Remember*, and referred to Nazism as "a phenomenon that was not Christian and not an inevitable outcome of Christianity."¹⁸⁷ While the statement acknowledges, "too many Christians participated in or were sympathetic to Nazi atrocities against the Jews," it ignores the active participation by Catholic clergy in violence against Jews such by the Ustaše-run concentration camp at Jasenovac.¹⁸⁸ Encouraged by the Jewish document, a response quickly followed from a group of Christian scholars, *A Sacred Obligation: Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People*, which urges Christians to reflect on their faith in light of the statements in *Dabru Emet*.¹⁸⁹

In the second decade of the 21st century, many denominations of Christianity still

¹⁸⁶ National Jewish Scholars Project. *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*, last modified July 15, 2002, International Council of Christians and Jews, accessed March 1, 2017, http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html. "In the decades since the Holocaust, however, Christianity has changed dramatically. An increasing number of official Church bodies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, have made public statements of their remorse about Christian mistreatment of Jews and Judaism. These statements have declared, furthermore, that Christian teaching and preaching can and must be reformed so that they acknowledge God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people and celebrate the contribution of Judaism to world civilization and to Christian faith itself."

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Yet Greenberg notes some of the shortcomings of *We Remember*. See Greenberg, "Transformation of the Core Paradigm," 225.

¹⁸⁸ The best-known example is Franciscan Friar, Miroslav Filipović- Majstorović, convicted in 1946 for war crimes. During his trial he admitted to having overseen the murder of between 20,000 and 30,000 (Jewish, Roma, and Serbian) prisoners. See Collections, "Miroslav Filipovic-Majstorović (center) poses with two Ustasa guards at the Jasenovac concentration camp," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, accessed September 25, 2017, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1139410>.

¹⁸⁹ Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations, *A Sacred Obligation: Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People: A Statement by the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations*, Boston: Center for Christian-Jewish Learning, Boston College, last modified September 1, 2002, accessed March 1, 2017, http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/sites/partners/csg/Sacred_Obligation.htm.

actively engage in proselytism and on Good Friday, the difficult passages in the Gospel of John are read without any meaningful explanation in most churches.¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, Greenberg's exciting invitation to Jews, (especially coming from a modern-Orthodox rabbi), elaborated in 1984, to reconsider their own understanding of Jesus and Christianity has not yet been accepted in the mainstream. To date, there have been no ecumenical statements from the Eastern Orthodox Church addressing antisemitism, deicide, the Shoah or the Church's relationship with Jews.

It also remains problematic that these ecumenical statements have not deeply examined the ethics of the Church's silence during the Shoah, choosing instead to blame antisemitism as the sole cause. Therefore, while historians acknowledge the persecution of the Roma and Sinti, the Communists, and homosexuals, no ecumenical statements have discussed the Churches' silence on these matters.

Some 50 years after *Nostra Aetate*, many Christians and Jews are still unaware of the many ecumenical statements which have been elaborated from Catholic and Protestant Churches during these decades and which were meant to have marked positive steps forward in the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Until the entire community of Christians—including those sitting in the pew—is aware of the changes, these statements will not affect complete healing and reconciliation and will be assumed to have relevance only in the context of bilateral dialogue.

It is impossible to ignore the reality of the modern State of Israel in a theology of reconciliation: for the most part, Christian-Jewish dialogue has been well-served by

¹⁹⁰ The best-known example is John 8:44: You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Christian theologians engaged in the study of the Shoah who are prepared to engage as dialogue partners at a time when many Jews have felt alienated by mainstream Christianity, especially following the victory of the Six-Day War. Christian Shoah theologians are also likely to view post-Shoah empowerment in the State of Israel in a similar way as many Jewish theologians—as God’s return to history and a sign of God’s care for the Jewish people. These theologians do not look to Jewish nationalism as a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Jesus. It is another reason why Greenberg’s encounter with Christian theologians was so important to the elaboration of his theology. Several ecumenical statements also addressed the importance of Israel in their texts.¹⁹¹ The 1974 Vatican directive also omitted the connection between fidelity to the covenant and the land of Israel, which had been mentioned in the working document.¹⁹²

Greenberg was inspired by the Christian statements denouncing antisemitism and supersessionism, because he interpreted them to be a sign of *teshuvah* (repentance). This led him to sign the Jewish statements such as *Dabru Emet* and to co-author the 2015 statement, “To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians.”¹⁹³ In addition to these, he has stated and restated how important he views

¹⁹¹ The General Synod of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands deeply examined the significance of the relationship between Israel of the “Old Testament” and the modern State of Israel. “Today the State of Israel is one of the forms in which the Jewish people appear. We would be talking in a void and closing our eyes to reality, if today we were to think about the Jewish people without taking the State of Israel explicitly into consideration.” General Synod of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands, *Israel: People, Land and State: Suggestions for a Theological Evaluation*, Dialogika, last modified June 1, 1970, <http://www.cjcr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/protestant-churches/eur/743-rcn70june>.

¹⁹² Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 128.

¹⁹³ Irving Greenberg, Eugene Korn, David Rosen, et al., “To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians,” *The Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation*, last modified December 3, 2015, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://cjcuc.com/site/2015/12/03/orthodox-rabbinic-statement-on-christianity/>.

a Christian-Jewish partnership with a view to mending the world:

All Jews have a fundamental stake in Christianity. I believe in covenantal pluralism. God cannot achieve God's goals—and Jews cannot achieve Jewish goals—without Christianity's role in the mission and vice versa. So we are partners in tikkun olam. Furthermore, if God has called Christianity into existence, Jews want to help it cope with history because it is our desire too that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.¹⁹⁴

Irving Greenberg's Dialogue with Christian Theologians

The next section examines Greenberg's encounter with Jewish-Christian dialogue, beginning in the 1960s and how the radical responses of his Christian partners have shaped his theology. In particular, Greenberg writes of the important impact of Roy Eckardt on Greenberg's own theology and how it led to his own idea of a covenant that could no longer be commanded. It will also look at how that dialogue has in turn shaped the theology of his Christian counterparts.

Greenberg's decision to enter into Jewish-Christian dialogue in the early 1960s followed his shattering encounter with the Shoah during his year in Israel, during which he spent much time immersed in reading about it. His intention was to convince Christians to end their teaching of contempt; at that time, in the pre-*Nostra Aetate* era, Christian liturgy, and teachings were still rife with anti-Jewish images and ideas. He quickly realized that his Christian partners in dialogue shared his motivations. They were committed to purify Christianity of the dangerous and negative representations that had contributed to the Shoah and were intensely self-critical. Greenberg described them as carrying on the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible: "I came to see that Christianity (or any religion) that could generate such honest, unsparing self-criticism,

¹⁹⁴ "The Church as a Sacrament and as an Institution," in *Ethics in the Shadow of the Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Perspectives*, ed. Judith Hershcopf Banki and John Pawlikowski, (Franklin: Sheed & Ward, 2001), 71.

such genuine repentance, such a willingness to transform some of the most basic traditions in order to do justice to the Jewish people, had to be respected—even honored. The prophetic traditions lived—in these people.”¹⁹⁵

Greenberg summarized his anger with Christianity and his disillusionment with modernity in his first major piece on the Shoah, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity After the Holocaust,” presented in 1974. It looked at the Shoah as a re-orienting event. However, it would be Christian theologian Roy Eckardt’s work that would affect Greenberg so profoundly, leading him to respond with his own reflection, and the conclusion that the covenant between God and the Jewish people could no longer be *commanded*.

In the 1970s, Greenberg was invited to the World Council of Religions in Sri Lanka. While there, he visited a village where a group of brain-damaged children were being cared for by a Norwegian who had given up his former comfortable life to care for them out of Christian conviction. Greenberg realized that he had not appreciated Christianity’s demands for what he had previously considered to be “devotion beyond human capacity.” He understood that Judaism needed to admit its own negative view of Christianity, and to redefine its relationship with it. He also admitted that many Jews held negative views about Jesus and Christianity.

Alice and Roy Eckardt

Roy and Alice Eckardt were professors at Lehigh University in the Department of Religious Studies (Roy Eckardt died in 1998). Roy was the Chair of Religious Studies and an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. Along with Franklin Littell,

¹⁹⁵ Alan L. Berger, *Post-Holocaust Jewish-Christian Dialogue: After the Flood, Before the Rainbow* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 10.

John Pawlikowski, and Greenberg, the Eckardts served on the United States Holocaust Memorial Council as special advisers to the Chair, Elie Wiesel.

As early as 1948, Roy Eckardt was seeking a theology that would rid Christianity of any vestiges of antisemitism. A review of his book, *Christianity and the Children of Israel*, which outlined this early post-Shoah response, was somewhat dismissive of these ideas, and described him as “well-intentioned,” suggesting “there would be no antisemitism if all men thought as did John Dewey, Gandhi, or St. Francis of Assisi.”¹⁹⁶

Roy Eckardt presented his paper “The Recantation of the Covenant” two years after Greenberg delivered his 1974 “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire” paper, at an interfaith conference hosted by Greenberg’s organization, the National Jewish Center for Jewish Learning and Leadership (CLAL). In this paper, Eckardt began by arguing that God responds to events in history; he asked whether it is possible that God has now recanted the covenant with the Jewish people or whether He has reintroduced it in another form. Eckardt supported his thesis by proposing several interpretations. He argued that by making the Divine covenant (of demand) with the Jewish people and electing them as his chosen people, by expecting them to be a light unto the nations, God had exposed them to the murderous fury that resulted in the Shoah. He enters a moral indictment against God, who in Eckardt’s view, allowed His chosen people to be “transubstantiated into vermin, and to less than vermin—and by His permission.”¹⁹⁷ God, he said, must repent, as he had not protected His chosen people. He described the end of a

¹⁹⁶ Irving Kristol, “Christian Theology and the Jews,” *Commentary*, last modified April 1, 1948, accessed March 29, 2017, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/christianity-and-the-children-of-israel-by-a-roy-eckardt/>.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

covenant of demand as a logical consequence of the judicial-moral trial of God.

Greenberg was enormously conflicted by Eckardt's conclusion. On the one hand, it is a justification of Jewish suffering and a condemnation of God's abandonment. Yet, Greenberg wondered whether Eckardt's suggestion God should recant of the covenant would imply an idea of replacement theology. He began to have doubts about interfaith dialogue. Could these deeply implanted beliefs ever be removed from the subconscious of believing Christians? As he struggled with the contradictions of Eckardt's long record of espousing (positive) revisionist Christian theology as a response to Christian antisemitism and his feelings of betrayal in response to Eckardt's paper, Greenberg slowly reconciled his inner conflicts. Eckardt was clear that this is not what he is thinking:

Even though my own rejection of the Christian supersessionist view of the Jewish Torah preceded my involvement with the Holocaust, that involvement has effected a crisis in my thinking on the covenant. . . . The Godforsakenness of Jesus has become non-absolute, if it ever was absolute, for there is now a Godforsakenness of Jewish children that is the final horror. It was in the *kingdom of the night* that the Torah was taken back: this fact determines eschatologically all other presumed transformations of the covenant.¹⁹⁸

Eventually, Greenberg compared Eckardt to the biblical Jeremiah and Job in challenging God's justice. He realized that Eckardt was correct in challenging God and demanding repentance and agreed that the covenant of *demand* or of *command* has ended. He also agreed that after the Shoah, God no longer has the right to insist that Jews live by a higher standard, as this could result in their being exposed to greater danger. However, freed from this obligation, Greenberg concluded that *most* of the *She'erit hapletah* of the Jewish people *have* recommitted voluntarily to the covenant—continuing to live as Jews (however they may define their Jewishness). They have done so for different reasons—

¹⁹⁸ Roy Eckardt, "Recantation of the Covenant," 163–164.

out of a vision of tikkun olam, out of a dream of redemption, or out of a love for tradition. However, this time, it was with the full knowledge of the risk this covenant entails.¹⁹⁹

In their major work on the Shoah, *Long Night's Journey Into Day: A Revised Retrospective on the Holocaust* (1988), the Eckardts not only established the Shoah as a reorienting event, they created a new terminology for dating events before and after the Shoah, in the same way that Christianity has used B.C. and A.D. for dating events before and after the year of the birth of Jesus: They suggest B.F.S. (Before Final Solution) and as F.S. (in the year of the Final Solution.)²⁰⁰ While the Exodus and Sinai are positive theological revelations, they defined the Shoah as a negative revelatory significance—an “anti-Sinai.”²⁰¹

The Eckardts adamantly condemned any teaching that links Jews to the death of Jesus in the New Testament. They argued, “Christian historicizing of eschatological reality is a foundation of Christian antisemitism.”²⁰² As well, they emphasized the link between the millennia of these teachings and their culmination in the Shoah. The Eckardts also noted the impact of biopic films, which continue to reach far more people than church services.²⁰³ They pointed to Haim Cohn’s 1967 study, *The Trial and Death of*

¹⁹⁹ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 26–27.

²⁰⁰ The Eckardts point to 1941 as the “killing phase,” coinciding with the systematic murder of Soviet Jewry by the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads), but they propose an alternative date of 1942 for “F.S.” The Wannsee Conference (1942) formulated the destruction of the Jews in concrete procedural terms. According to historian Christopher Browning, “There is still considerable difference of interpretation on at least two issues concerning this transition to the systemic and total mass murder of Soviet Jewry; first the relative roles of regional and local authorities on the one hand, and Hitler and central authorities on the other, and second, the historical context of euphoria or growing frustration and desperation.” Christopher R. Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30.

²⁰¹ Eckardt and Eckardt, *Long Night's Journey Into Day*, 67.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 140.

Jesus, which looked beyond the Gospels and argued on both juridical and historical grounds that the notion that Jesus had been charged and found guilty of blasphemy upon his own confession by the Sanhedrin, which would put him at risk of capital punishment, “runs hard against no less than seven well-established provisions of Jewish law.”²⁰⁴ For the Eckardts, the issue is not one of proving fact; the New Testament, like the rest of the Bible, is not a historical document—in this case, we are dealing with polemical, evangelical tracts.²⁰⁵ The problem then, is not how scholars interpret it, but how many Christians have been wedded to a literal interpretation, which has led to the incitement to murder, as Good Friday sermons led to pogroms.

The Eckardts reflected on the very theology of the cross in a post-Auschwitz world: They picked up on the same theme as Greenberg—of the 1944 burning alive of Hungarian Jewish children:

The questions Christians must face is whether there is an absolute Godforsakenness that transcends and overcomes the Christian claim regarding Jesus’ experience... The Godforsakenness of the Jewish children is a final horror that bears within itself an ultimate *Einzigartigkeit* (uniqueness): Their passion stands in judgment upon making Jesus’ passion the foundation of Christian faith. At most, the continuing representation of Jesus’ crucifixion in this way reflects

²⁰³ Ibid., 128. The reference here was to Franco Zeffirelli’s 1977 film, *Jesus of Nazareth*. The book predated Mel Gibson’s 2004 highly criticized film, *The Passion of Christ*.

²⁰⁴ See Haim Hermann Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 53, 95-98, 101-102, 105. Cohn, a Supreme Court Justice and scholar, argued that it was the Romans who tried and executed Jesus, basing his argument on several important points: 1) that the Sanhedrin was not permitted to try cases outside the Temple precincts in a private home; 2) that criminal cases could not be conducted at night; 3) that the Sanhedrin would neither sit nor bring criminal charges against a defendant on the eve of a holy day; 4) that no one may be convicted based on his own testimony or based on his own confession; 5) that two qualified eyewitnesses would have been needed in order to convict a person accused of a capital offence; 6) that these witnesses would have been required to have warned the accused both of the criminality of the crime he intended to commit and the penalty of its legal consequences; and 7) that the meaning of the “blasphemy” is the pronouncing of the name of God (uttered only once a year in the Holiest of Holies inner sanctum of the Temple by the High Priest); it is irrelevant what alleged blasphemies are uttered as long as the Divine name of God is not expressed.

²⁰⁵ Eckardt and Eckardt, *Long Night’s Journey Into Day*, 130.

pre-Holocaust theology; it is not theology “after Auschwitz.”²⁰⁶

Certainly, the Eckardts’ position is as extreme a notion for many Christians, as Greenberg’s is of Jesus as a “failed messiah” in the Jewish world. Like Greenberg’s idea, it challenges to Christians to think and to reflect, and could be utilized as tools of healing with which to foster positive interfaith dialogue.

The Eckardts condemned proselytism as another form of genocide and welcomed the emergence of Jewish power and a return to history in the recreation of a nation state.

Their theological response is perhaps best summarized in the following paragraph:

Judaism is better equipped to survive the Holocaust than a Christianity that continues to insist that the world's redemption has already occurred, while accommodating itself to the vilest forms of cultural religions; a Christianity that by and large maintains a triumphalism which strives if not for racial genocide for Jews, then for religious genocide through conversion; and a Christianity that interprets human affairs as having little significance other than “spiritual” in the parenthesis between the resurrection and the *Parousia*, while having sold its soul to the sword of Constantine ... Moreover, Judaism is not faced with the same threat to its integrity with which the church is faced as perpetrator of, or complicitor in, the genocidal program.²⁰⁷

The Eckardts have clearly had the greatest impact on Irving Greenberg of any of the Christian theologians. The importance of this must be noted as it highlights the degree of Greenberg’s openness to interfaith dialogue and pluralism. His identification as an Orthodox rabbi certainly adds to the singularity of his stance. In his 1984 article in *Quarterly Review*, Greenberg wrote: “The most powerful proof of the ongoing relevance of Christianity is the work of people like Alice and Roy Eckardt whose fundamental (and radical) critique of Christianity is surely one of the most sustained and devastating moral

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 135, 183.

²⁰⁷ Alice L. Eckardt, “The Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Responses,” *Journal of The American Academy of Religion* 42, no. 3 (1974): 454–455.

analyses in its history. But their work and others like them (Rosemary Ruether and Eva Fleischner) is both healing and affirming of Christianity.”²⁰⁸ Twenty years later, in his book, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity*, he reaffirms their impact:

Earlier in the century, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr, speaking philosophically out of the Christian tradition, had given Judaism an unprecedented level of dignity as a religion. But their analysis did not approach the level of self-criticism and revision of classical Christian thought that the Eckardts articulated in light of Judaism’s experience at the hand of Christianity. Perhaps for the first time in the history of Christian theology, the Eckardts’ analysis put the two religions on a truly equal plane. This allowed them to root out every lingering residue of antisemitism, religious triumphalism, stereotype, and caricature in Christian thinking and to purge them mercilessly. I could hardly match their spiritual intensity.²⁰⁹

John Pawlikowski

John Pawlikowski, OSM, is a Catholic theologian who has long been a leading figure in Jewish-Christian dialogue.²¹⁰ Among his many activities and achievements, he directs the Catholic-Jewish Studies Program at the University of Chicago. He has written extensively on the Shoah and its implications for Christian theology and has echoed Greenberg’s thoughts that the Shoah “has destroyed simplistic notions of a commanding, all-powerful God.”²¹¹

Pawlikowski reflected on decades of Christian-Jewish dialogue in his article, “Toward a Theology for Religious Diversity: Perspectives from the Christian-Jewish Dialogue.” In this article, he has picked up on Greenberg’s ideas of the Shoah as a

²⁰⁸ Greenberg, “The Relationship,” 4.

²⁰⁹ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 19.

²¹⁰ Members of the Servite order use O.S.M. (*Ordo Servorum Beatae Mariae Virginis*) as their post-nominal letters. They are also known as members of the “Order of the Servants of Mary.”

²¹¹ John Pawlikowski, “Christology after the Holocaust.” *Encounter* 59, no. 3 (1998): 359.

reorienting event and on Greenberg's concept of voluntary covenant. While Pawlikowski has clearly been influenced by Greenberg's ideas of a post-Shoah shift in the Divine-human relationship, he views it from a Christian perspective: "Both tended to place the onus of salvation and the power of salvation decidedly on God, but since the Holocaust, salvation has become much more a shared ideal in which both God and humanity must assume a role."²¹² Pawlikowski has diverged from Greenberg on the choice of words to describe God's role in a post-Shoah world: He wonders if Greenberg's theology "has left us too much on our own" when he suggests that the covenant is no longer *commanded*. Pawlikowski has proposed the idea of a *compelling* God as an alternative to a *commanding* God, for a relationship that will be "healing, strengthening and affirming and that buries any need to assert our humanity through our destructive, even deadly use of human power."²¹³

In another article, Pawlikowski labeled the new post-Shoah relationship between humans and God as a "liturgical encounter with a compelling God, together with a consciousness of such realities as sin, freedom, dependence, solidarity, vulnerability and oppression," without which he sees little chance of influencing human decision-making.²¹⁴ Pawlikowski then reflected on Greenberg's notions on the (Jewish) ethical use of power in a post-Shoah world from an ethical and theological perspective. While dismissing some sources of power, such as nuclear weaponry, as immoral, he accepts Greenberg's premise of the use of ethical power as a necessary element of the Jewish

²¹² Pawlikowski, "Toward a Theology for Religious Diversity: Perspectives from the Christian-Jewish Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26, no. 1 (1989): 142.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 146.

²¹⁴ Pawlikowski, "Christian Ethics and the Holocaust: A Dialogue with Post-Auschwitz Judaism," *Theological Studies* 49, no. 4 (1988): 662.

return to history.

In other articles, Pawlikowski has revealed the ongoing critical reflection on Catholic-Jewish relations and appreciation for Greenberg's work. He noted the important work by Greenberg on a Jewish concept of Jesus as a "failed" but not "false" messiah.²¹⁵ Forty years after *Nostra Aetate*, Pawlikowski reflected that the lack of ecumenical Christian discussion regarding the theological identity of the Jews is problematic. He has noted many comments made by Church officials since Vatican II that are antithetical to *Nostra Aetate*.²¹⁶ Pawlikowski believes that while a complete shift to a pluralistic theology of Christianity vis-à-vis Judaism and other religions may not be attainable, it is nevertheless an obligation to pursue the issue in the interests of interreligious understanding and relationship.²¹⁷

Greenberg's interaction with Christian and Jewish theologians has had an important impact on post-Shoah theology but also on interfaith dialogue. He is perhaps the only Jewish theologian whose theology has been so clearly and deeply influenced by his encounters and dialogue with Christian theologians, an especially rare outreach for an Orthodox rabbi. His ideas and writings provide a context for survivors with which to reengage with Christians and Christianity. Examples will be seen in the following chapters as we explore the lives of three survivors.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 104.

²¹⁶ Pawlikowski, "Reflections on Covenant and Mission Forty years After *Nostra Aetate*," *Cross Currents* 56, no. 4 (2007): 74–75.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 67.

**SURVIVOR NARRATIVES:
A REFLECTION OF IRVING GREENBERG’S THEOLOGY**

Chapter Three

STEFAN CARTER: REMEMBERING THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

It would indeed be wonderful if in the future, humans were “Righteous.” That might entail application of empathy to our fellow human beings and accommodation of their need for recognition. Now it is but a hazy dream in a distant future and it might not be feasible or even desirable, if it would entail interference with the innate drive for recognition that fuels human striving and defines what it means to be human.

—Stefan Carter, *From Warsaw to Winnipeg: A Personal Tale of Two Cities*

Introduction

Stefan Carter was born Stefan Andrzej Reicher in Warsaw, Poland on March 25, 1928. He is a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, rescued thanks to the heroic act of his cousins who spirited him out of the Ghetto and arranged shelter for him at a number of Polish Christian homes. Carter would later immigrate to Canada and become a renowned vascular specialist, an author, and a Shoah educator who gives generously of his time. From his earliest interview in the late 1980s, his words and his actions have continued to convey an inclusive and pluralistic spirit, coherent with Greenberg’s notion of tikkun olam: He has responded to his experience in the Shoah by looking to forge relationships with people of all backgrounds, by championing the cause of those who are in difficult circumstances. He also reminds us that we are responsible for the stewardship of the Earth; he worries about its future and calls attention to the current state of the environment.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Humankind’s stewardship of the Earth is noted in Genesis 2:15.

Prewar Life

As an only child, Carter came from a comfortable home with domestics and nannies. His family comprised the approximately ten percent of mostly assimilated Polish Jews, who spoke only Polish at home. They identified strongly as Poles and many, like Carter's family, were avowedly secular.²¹⁹ His mother worked as a secretary and his father was a chemical engineer. While they separated when he was young, their relationship was such that when the war broke out, his safety and care was their primary concern.

In his interviews and memoirs, he recalls family vacations to the Baltic seashore and to the resort town of Zakopane at the foot of Mount Giewont in southern Poland. Although he does not consider his family to have been among the wealthiest of Warsaw, Carter contrasts his early life with that of the poor and overcrowded living conditions he witnessed in some of the ultra-Orthodox neighbourhoods.

Greenberg writes that after the Shoah, the dichotomy between the religious and secular no longer exists. In Carter's case, he was raised in a very secular home as far as religious observance is concerned; yet Jewish identity was very clear. He retained this strong identity after the Shoah. In Carter's family religion was not overtly rejected—his family's identification was primarily that of secular and mostly assimilated Jews. However, that is not to say that assimilation meant a distancing from any involvement with Judaism; it meant Carter's early prewar years were spent as a secular Jew, very much aware of his identity, surrounded by a large Jewish population. While his home life was secular, he did receive a Jewish education. His parents chose to send him to a Jewish

²¹⁹ Nechama Tec, *Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland: When Light Pierced the Darkness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 12.

elementary school, where he studied Jewish history and learned about the Bible, but his mother decided not to “overburden” young Stefan with the Hebrew language. Carter’s family never attended synagogue and they did not celebrate the holidays, though he was aware they were taking place around him in Warsaw.²²⁰ It is important to note that even a family as secular as Carter’s sent him to a Jewish school.²²¹ It illustrates Greenberg’s notion of the Jewish people’s link to their tradition, which was expressed in many different ways.

The centrality of Israel and ethical power in Greenberg’s theology is illustrated at several reprises in Carter’s narrative. Carter recalls sport as an important element of his childhood. His father, a great sports fan, followed the Jewish boxing and football clubs of Maccabi and Gwiazda. These popular clubs were Zionist in ideology and orientation and had their origins at the first Zionist congresses at the turn of the twentieth century, when Max Nordau, called for a historical renewal of *Muskeljudentum* (muscular Jewry), as a response to growing nationalism and exclusion from other sports clubs. Gwiazda (“star”) was linked to the Zionist left.²²² Thus, even though the family was secular in their religious observance, their link to Jewish identity and to Zionism is clear even through a secular activity such as sport. After the Shoah, Carter would proudly attend his son’s participation in the Maccabiah games in Israel, carrying on the connection of his early

²²⁰ The Jewish prewar population of Warsaw —350,000 — constituted approximately thirty per cent of its total population of 1.3 million. It was the second largest Jewish community in the world at the time, New York City being the largest in numbers of Jewish inhabitants. However, even at its peak, in the early 1950s, the Jewish population constituted no more than one quarter of the total population of New York City. Signs of Jewish holidays in such a large population as Warsaw’s were evident, from the booths Jews built as outdoor extensions to their apartments on the Sukkot holiday, which Carter mentions, along with the branches and other materials sold by street vendors to build these, to the vendors at Passover who would be selling matzah, and other products.

²²¹ Not all Jewish children attended Jewish schools. Often, children attended public school and attended separate religious classes after school.

life.

We can see here that the secular-religious dichotomy that Greenberg supports had its roots in these prewar Zionist groups that would come to nourish the life of the survivors as well as those who went on to build the State. These clubs were also the first sign of moving away from a two thousand year old culture of Jewish powerlessness, which began to develop during the traumatic period following the destruction of the Second Temple. After the disastrous defeat and loss of life of the Bar Kochba Revolt, the Rabbis' primary goal was to protect the Jewish people. They elevated powerlessness into a positive value and the Talmud therefore favoured submission, warning against rash rebellion.²²³ The rabbis, as Greenberg points out, take on a new responsibility in the covenantal partnership as they lay out these instructions. The sports clubs took their name from an earlier time of Jewish power, invoking the name of the Maccabees, the armed rebel group that founded the Hasmonean dynasty.

Carter presents another example, which illustrates the importance that Judaism represents as an identifying factor for him, what Greenberg refers to as a covenant of being. He recounts the story of his uncle, Dr. Edmund Rosenhauch, who refused to convert to Christianity, despite the distinct advantages this would have brought to him. Rosenhauch, a renowned ophthalmologist in Kraków, who had published many journal articles, had risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the medical corps of the Polish army, a rare distinction for a Jew. He was offered the Chair in Ophthalmology at Jagiellonian University, with the proviso that he convert to Christianity. Carter notes his

²²³ Also see in the Talmud, *Bava Kamma* 93a, we see, "A man should always be among the persecuted, rather than among the persecutors; for among fowls, none are so persecuted as turtle-doves and pigeons, and yet Scripture qualifies them as an offering upon the altar."

uncle refused to do so.²²⁴ Despite the assimilated and extremely secular nature of their family and the high profile position of Chair of a department at a prestigious university, it is clear, that to Stefan's family, their identity as Jews remained an implicit and essential feature of their self-definition. While the Orthodox community before the Shoah would have deplored the arch-secularism of a family like Carter's, Greenberg's words are particularly applicable in describing their Jewish identity: "the theological language of covenant that was appropriate before the Shoah no longer applies."²²⁵ Carter is particularly proud of his uncle's decision and highlighted the sentence in which he notes his uncle's refusal to convert in bold font.²²⁶ Rosenhauch's sons would later be responsible for saving Carter's life.

Wartime Experiences

Several key aspects of Greenberg's theology, such as the transformation of core paradigms, the responsibility of humanity in the covenantal partnership and pluralism, are particularly evident when examining Carter's wartime experiences. Carter owes his life to Christian Poles who risked their lives to save him, to physical changes he underwent to hide his Jewish looks, and to the inexplicable decision on the part of his father to refuse to have him circumcised, as is the practice in even the most secular of families. Carter and his family were confined to the Warsaw Ghetto by late September of 1940. After his mother was sent to Treblinka, Carter's cousins, Tadzik and Zdzich Rosenhauch, who were on the Aryan side, contacted him in the Ghetto. In a heroic effort, they arranged for

²²⁴ Millo, *Voices of Winnipeg Holocaust Survivors*, 29.

²²⁵ Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant," 38.

²²⁶ Millo, *Voices of Winnipeg Holocaust Survivors*, 29.

him to be included in a work detail and spirited him out of the Ghetto. They arranged for him to find shelter with a series of Christian Poles who accepted Carter into their home. Carter recalls spending much of his time at the home of Miss Zofia Różycka and her elderly mother reading her extensive literary collection. Miss Różycka had a male friend who would come to visit and was aware of Carter's existence; there was no attempt to hide him within the apartment—it was a safe space.

However, two neighbours who had met Carter may have betrayed him and in 1944, two members of the Polish police arrived at the apartment, and asked him to accompany them to the precinct.²²⁷ Carter pleaded illness, as he was understandably frightened. The policemen decided to make quick work of their identification by asking him to drop his pants. Carter was saved by his father's refusal to have him circumcised, which was at that time—and is still—extremely rare today.²²⁸

The word “circumcision” in the religious sense is *brit milah* (the covenant of circumcision) in Hebrew, and marks the sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people (Genesis 17:10-13). Genesis 17:14 commands spiritual exclusion for those who do not observe this mitzvah. Yet, it was the non-observance of the commandment that saved Carter's life. So how do we look at this inexplicable decision on his father's part? While certainly not suggesting that this commandment, which is so basic to

²²⁷ The involvement of the Polish police in the roundup and killing of Jews is detailed throughout Jan Grabowski's book, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). The current Polish government has introduced legislation to “defend the good name of the Polish nation,” and threatens a prison term of up to three years for anyone such as Grabowski who would suggest the Polish state was complicit in Nazi crimes.

²²⁸ There was, beginning in the 19th century, a small minority of Jews who chose not to circumcise their sons and held an alternative religious ceremony called *brit shalom* (covenant of peace) to welcome the child into the Jewish community. They argued that Moses is reputed not to have circumcised his son. However, there is no evidence that Carter's father held any such ceremony, or that he did not circumcise his son based on any religious argument. Carter speaks of the possibility of aesthetic concerns.

Judaism, should not be observed, one could use it as an example to illustrate Greenberg's ideas on the transformation of our core paradigms. It was, after all, the non-observance of a commandment observed by the most secular of Jews, which saved Carter's life.

Greenberg writes that God's "infinitely suffering Divine Presence" in the Shoah was a call for human beings to greater partnership and responsibility: "You act to ensure that it will never again occur. I will be with you totally in whatever you do, whatever you go, whatever happens, but you must do it."²²⁹ Humanity could not stop the Shoah, but small examples of human responsibility *are* reflected with every attempt to survive and resist. One such example is the surgery that Carter underwent under very difficult circumstances, which helped him survive. After the experience described above with the Polish police, his cousin decided that Carter's rather aquiline nose would put him in danger and might also further endanger Różycka and her mother who were risking so much to protect him. Both Tadzik and Zdzich displayed a great deal of courage by refusing to report to the Nazi authorities as Jews. As many Jews resisted in many different ways, this reflects the human responsibility that Greenberg describes. In addition to everything else Tadzik had already done for Carter, this particular plan, accomplished in the midst of wartime Warsaw took a great deal of courage and creativity.

Greenberg's notions of pluralism are illustrated by Carter's desire to honour the Christians who protected him as well as the courage and heroism of those who helped save other members of his family or, in the case of his cousin Tadzik, fought in the Warsaw uprising. Here, he does not differentiate between saving Jews and Christians. Tadzik and his Christian girlfriend Danuta Krzeszewska died as heroes during the Warsaw uprising while carrying a wounded woman to safety from a hospital that was

²²⁹ Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant," 36.

under siege. Carter also notes the heroism of Danuta's mother Florentyna Krzeszewska who helped arrange to hide his uncle and aunt in a convent. His cousin, Zdzich, aunt, and uncle survived the war.

Carter has honoured the heroism of Miss Różycka, and the two other Polish women, Hanka Herfert and her mother Zofia, who helped save his life during the Shoah. He initiated a "Righteous Among the Nations tree of life" project on a wall outside the Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre and donated the first plaque. An evening to honour his rescuers and other Christians who rescued local survivors took place in Winnipeg in 2011. Thanks to his efforts, Yad Vashem declared Różycka, Hanna and Zofia Herfurt Righteous Among the Nations in 2015. On April 20, 2017, Danuta and Florentyna Krzeszewska were declared Righteous Among the Nations in a special Yad Vashem ceremony, which took place in Warsaw. Again, it was Carter who initiated the process.

Another example of how Carter illustrates Greenberg's notion of pluralism is his rare and unusual relationship with the Polish community in Winnipeg: Carter has been a welcome and repeat visitor at the Ogniwo Polish Museum where he has lectured and read poetry in Polish. There is very little interaction between the Jewish and non-Jewish Polish communities. The Polish-Jewish survivors remember the antisemitism they experienced and the failure of most Christian Poles to come to their help during the Shoah. Carter's relationship with the Winnipeg Polish community is an exceptional example of pluralism, as he was conscious of the rampant antisemitism in Poland. The kindness of those who risked their lives to protect Carter cannot be overstated. Greenberg's notion of pluralism argues that all human beings are responsible for one another—Jews or non-Jews. This

supports the idea of the Righteous Gentile and those who helped Carter. Carter honours the memory of these Christian individuals who were willing to act when so few others were.

It is essential too, to put into perspective the singular heroism of Stefan's rescuers and consequently of Carter's willingness to reach out to Polish Christians. Recent scholarship by Jan T. Gross, Jan Grabowski, and others have reinforced survivor testimony that Poles betrayed, denounced and murdered Jews in large numbers, often their former friends and neighbours, and often those who came to them seeking refuge. The Church, too, was complicit. Grabowski quotes survivor Symcha Hampel who had gone into hiding during the war: "The priests often discussed the Jews in church and thanked God that these parasites were gone once and for all. They were grateful to Hitler for having done the dirty work (for them)."²³⁰ Even those Polish Christians who hid Jews were reticent, if not terrified to reveal their righteousness postwar for fear of retribution from their fellow Poles. Some had to go into hiding. Józef Gibes was one of these. When his wife, Józefa, also a 'Righteous Among the Nations', died, Polish "partisans" threatened to kill anyone who dared attend the funeral. The priest refused to follow the coffin to the grave.²³¹ In an ultimate and final message, they sprayed Józefa's body with bullets, as it lay in the open casket before the funeral, saying: "You old Jewish whore, you should have been shot much earlier!"²³²

²³⁰ Yad Vashem Archive, collection M.1.E/950, Dr. Symcha Hampel, "Życie pod knutem okupanta" (Life under Occupier's Whip). Quoted in Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 4-5.

²³¹ One of the very few statements by the Catholic Church in Poland during the Shoah was made by the Archbishop of Kraków, Stefan Sapięha, who noted that he regretted the negative impact that the extermination of the Jews had on the morale of Polish youth. The letter of Archbishop Sapięha to "His Excellency Mr. Governor General and Minister of the Reich, Dr. Frank, in *Księga Sapeżyńska*," ed. Jerzy Wolny, v. II, (Kraków, n.p., 1987), 43. Quoted in Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 128.

Postwar Life

After the war, Carter changed his name from Reicher to Carter, after a favourite book character of his cousin Tadzik (detective Nick Carter), because he did not wish to have a Germanic sounding name. He worked hard to catch up on the years of education he had missed and learned English in the hope of immigrating to North America. Carter was sponsored by the family of a Jewish nurse his cousin Zdzich had met while working as a physician in a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) camp. After a lengthy process, he ended up in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

We find another example of the end of the religious/secular dichotomy that Greenberg writes about by examining how Carter sought out the help of a rabbi for help with a secular issue, early after arriving in Canada, while choosing to forego rabbinical assistance for what most would consider an important Jewish life-cycle event. Carter had already begun studies in pre-medicine in Poland. When he looked for assistance in continuing his studies at the University of Manitoba, it would be reasonable to presume that he would have sought the support of the Jewish medical community; instead, he contacted the rabbi who headed the local Hillel organization.²³³ Despite his experiences and despite his own secular identity as a Jew, his reflex was to seek out the help of the religious leader of the campus Jewish organization. Yet, when Carter met Emilee, the Jewish woman who would become his partner in life, they decided to be married by a justice of the peace, rather than by a rabbi (of any denomination). While he viewed the Hillel rabbi as a leader in the community, he saw no room for the religiosity inherent with

²³² Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 163–164.

²³³ Hillel is a Jewish student organization operating on university campuses internationally to meet the social and religious needs of Jewish students. In some communities, this includes (or included at one time) the services of a “Hillel rabbi.”

the mitzvah of *kiddushin* (the marriage ceremony).

Carter 's contributions to medicine and medical research illustrate Greenberg's ideas of " holy secularity." ²³⁴ He had an illustrious career as a vascular specialist and researcher as well as a teacher at the Faculty of Medicine. His skills were such that he was called upon to be a member of the team that performed the first open heart surgery in Manitoba. Carter is a soft-spoken, humble man who needs to be prodded to speak of his achievements. In general, it is necessary to look to others or to do research in order to discover his contributions to medicine and research.

Over the years, Carter has, like many other survivors, generously shared the difficult story of his war years with many groups, an example of Greenberg's notion of pluralism. For instance, he continues to do so by speaking to high school and university students, who are studying about the Shoah and antisemitism. One event at which Carter spoke stands out not only as an example of pluralism, but also as an example of Greenberg's idea of the Shoah as a theological touchstone. In 2016, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) held an event marking the 22nd anniversary of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis. The museum invited two keynote speakers: Mr. Joseph Ngoga and Carter. Ngoga, a Tutsi, returned home one night in 1994 to discover that his entire family had been murdered by Hutu neighbours. The sixteen-year old survived the rest of the genocide by pretending to be a Hutu. Carter, of course, had survived the Shoah by pretending to be a Christian from the time he escaped the Ghetto until liberation. It was expected to be a powerful afternoon of sharing and discussion: The press release for the event explained the importance of Carter's participation: "When

²³⁴ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 159.

human rights are violated, there is always pressure to cover it up. But silence and denial help the oppressors, setting the stage for more violations. When survivors and their allies speak out, the cycle can be broken.”²³⁵

However, no one at the museum had expected the conversation to take quite the turn it did. To put the experience into historical context, it is important to note the racial policies of Aryan superiority, which targeted Jews, the Roma and the Sinti in particular. In classrooms, Nazi teachers measured skull size and nose length and also recorded the colour of their students’ hair and eyes in order to differentiate between Aryan and non-Aryan students by racial theory. As well, the German government confiscated all passports of Jews in 1938 and any new passports were stamped with a “J” to identify their holders as Jewish. The Nazis were not the only group applying racial theory during the 1930s. After the defeat of Germany in World War I, Rwanda-Burundi fell under the colonial control of Belgium. Beginning in 1933, the Belgian colonists arbitrarily classified the population as Hutus and Tutsis according to measurements of height, length of nose, skull and eye shape. Compulsory ID cards were introduced. Under Belgian rule, the Hutu suffered discrimination and the Tutsis were favoured.²³⁶ The ID classification system in Rwanda not only contributed to the inter-ethnic strife, it was a death sentence for Tutsis during the Rwandan genocide at roadblocks.²³⁷

²³⁵ Canadian Museum for Human Rights, “Survivors of Rwandan Genocide, Holocaust Come Together to Share Stories at Awareness Event,” press release, last modified April 5, 2016, accessed March 26, 2017, <https://humanrights.ca/about-museum/news/survivors-rwandan-genocide-holocaust-come-together-share-stories-awareness-event>.

²³⁶ Rwandan Stories, “Colonialism,” last modified 2011, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://www.rwandanstories.org/origins/colonialism.html>.

Carter described his own wartime experience when his curved nose had endangered him and how he had undergone surgery in order to make him look “less Jewish.” Mr. Ngoga told the audience that during the genocide, many Tutsis attempted to stuff tissue up their nostrils in an effort to make their noses look more like that of the Hutu, which are broader. Many Rwandans were struck by the convergence of the two stories and one remarked that when Carter spoke, “he forgot that Carter was white.”

The genocide in Rwanda took place some six decades after the Shoah and six decades after the racial policies in Rwanda enacted by the Belgians. While many, especially (retired) General Roméo Dallaire, have spoken out on the failure of the United Nations and the world to respond to the genocide in Rwanda, most of the world once again acted as bystanders. Dallaire, speaking at a panel discussion on indifference which compared the Shoah to the genocide in Rwanda, said we are more willing to intervene in violations against humans we recognize as similar to ourselves and he has often asked if we perhaps believe that “some humans are more human than others.”²³⁸ Carter’s testimony that day, much like General Dallaire’s words suggest that by allowing such slaughter to take place, we scorn the dignity of the image of God. Greenberg explains that, since every human being is created in the Divine image and is unique and of equal and infinite value, then the degradation or denial of this value must not be accepted. However, he reminds us that we no longer live in Eden and must take responsibility for

²³⁷ Jim Fussell, “Group Classification on National ID Cards as a Factor in Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing”(paper presented at the Seminar Series of the Yale University Genocide Studies Programme, New Haven, November 15, 2001), accessed April 1, 2017, http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/AboutGen_Group_Classification_on_National_ID_Cards.pdf.

²³⁸ “Romeo Dallaire and Patrick Desbois in Dialogue: Indifference and the Fragility of Civilization” (panel discussion presented by the Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre, Winnipeg, May 2, 2013). Dallaire compared the eventual intervention in Srebrenica, a white population, to the failure to intervene in Rwanda.

ensuring that universal justice is achieved by the actions of human beings.²³⁹ Carter's statements that day at the museum and his ongoing caring support of others is an example of how the light of Greenberg's theology is refracted like a prism through the multiple attributes of actions such as Carter's and those of other survivors.

There are many examples in Carter's narrative, which support Greenberg's assertion that the rebuilding of the State of Israel after the catastrophe of the Shoah is significant for both secular and religious Jews as a voluntary reaffirmation of their covenantal relationship. In the displaced persons camp after the war, there was much talk about going to Palestine. As a child in elementary school, Carter had learned about the history of the ties of the Jewish people to the land that would become the modern State of Israel. He decided not to attempt to go to (British Mandatory) Palestine because his uncle, aunt and cousin Zdzich had received visas to settle in New York and he wished to be near them. However, Carter's attachment to Israel was genuine and has remained so. Carter speaks movingly of his visit to Israel in 1985, following a medical conference in Athens at which he was presenting a paper. Carter's son was participating in the Maccabiah Games, an international Jewish sport event. He mentions visiting the main sites devoted to the memory of the Shoah, but also the sacred sites of the three Abrahamic religions in Jerusalem as well as Jewish historical sites such as Masada.²⁴⁰ Many Jews who are less pluralistic in their outlook have no interest in visiting Christian or Muslim sites and some

²³⁹ Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, 18–19. Greenberg has also stressed the connection between remembering the Shoah and speaking out on contemporary genocide. He did this in an official capacity during his role as Chair of the Board of Directors of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum from 2000–2002 during national Yom Hashoah remembrance ceremonies.

²⁴⁰ Stefan A. Carter, *From Warsaw to Winnipeg: A Personal Tale of Two Cities* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2011), 142.

believe visits to churches are forbidden.²⁴¹ It is clear that Carter combines a strong identification with Israel and Jewish history with a pluralistic outlook, such as Greenberg describes.

Carter has also spoken out on behalf of Israel. In a letter to the editor to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, dated April 23, 2010, referring to the use of the term “apartheid” in reference to Israel, and the Israel Apartheid events on university campuses, he links the practices of the European settlers against the Indigenous peoples and supports an earlier letter in which the writer suggests that our treatment of Indigenous people today would constitute apartheid. He notes with irony, that it is in fact Jews who have been segregated more than other groups dating back to the first instances of Jews being segregated in the ghetto in medieval Venice. He writes, “it is ludicrous to single out the Jewish state for the discourse of ‘apartheid’ practices. It indicates how pervasive antisemitism—‘the longest hatred’—is in society, and it is most regrettable that Israel Apartheid Week has been condoned by various organizations including institutions of higher learning.”²⁴²

When asked how the world can respond to the terrible injustice visited on the Jewish people, Carter’s response mirrors Greenberg’s notions of how we are to recreate, define and maintain morality after the Shoah. For Greenberg, fighting against violence, oppression, and poverty and the protection of the earth is the very definition of tikkun

²⁴¹ A 2008 survey of Jews in Israel found 37 per cent of respondents believed Jews are forbidden to enter churches. The Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, which promotes interfaith harmony, says it still refrains from taking Jewish children into churches. Some religious Jews still uphold the ruling of Judaism’s medieval scholar, Maimonides, that Christianity, but not Islam, is idolatrous. See “Israel and the Pope: Still an Awkward Relationship,” *The Economist*, May 24, 2014, accessed April 2, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21602749-popes-visit-should-improve-jewish-christian-relations-no-easy-task-still>.

²⁴² Stefan A. Carter, “Longest Hatred,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 27, 2010, accessed March 26, 2017, http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/letters_to_the_editor/92162314.html.

olam. Greenberg does not restrict this to Jews; he believes that it must become a concept shared and practised by all religions.²⁴³ Carter's actions also reflect Greenberg's statements on remembrance and renewal: our responsibility to remember the Shoah and also to prevent other genocides. In 1988, when Carter was being interviewed for the first time, he said, "There is a relationship between the Shoah and the methodical destruction of life in Nagasaki and Hiroshima that was necessary to end the war. Remembering this chapter of history is important in order to guard against human beings doing such things to humanity again in the future." He adds, "It must not be forgotten—it almost destroyed the Jewish people and could happen again, not only to Jews, but to others."²⁴⁴ He believes that his experiences during the Shoah have contributed to an awareness that what is most important in life is one's personal attributes and relationship to other people, not one's cultural, religious or ethnic background. Carter has throughout his life cultivated friendships with people from many backgrounds and has made a point of reaching deep within himself to fight against any kind of discrimination. Carter has continued to speak out on human responsibility and late into his eighties works to ensure that others remember the Shoah. In late July of 2013, inspired by a similar march in Poland to remember the beginning of the deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka, he walked from his home to the Holocaust Monument at the Manitoba Legislature, a distance of approximately seven kilometres. The following year, a group of some forty individuals from the Jewish and interfaith community joined him, this time meeting at the

²⁴³ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 162–163.

²⁴⁴ Stefan A. Carter, interview by Nadia Rubin, for The Winnipeg Second Generation Group (video), July 26, 1988, interview Code 53622, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive Online, accessed March 24, 2017, <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=56951&returnIndex=0#>.

Canadian Museum for Human Rights before proceeding on to the monument. Carter described life in the Warsaw Ghetto, but also spoke about present-day concerns, including the environment. The latter is a reminder of Greenberg's reference to our responsibility to choose wisely in our stewardship of the environment, lest we risk making the earth uninhabitable.²⁴⁵

Although Stefan Carter does not specifically use the term *tikkun olam*, it is implicit to the way he lives his life, from sharing his life story with group after group of students to his concern about other minority groups such as our Indigenous people to his concern for the future of our planet. When asked about religious observance in his 1988 interview, Carter replied that he is not religious, has never been religious and will not become religious but that being religious is only one aspect of being Jewish. He affirms his Jewish identity and adds he believes it important for the Jewish people to continue their (Jewish) expression, religious or otherwise, in order to remain a distinct group.

In 2017, at a presentation in a United Church in Winnipeg, Carter's talk again reflected Greenberg's notions of pluralism and *tikkun olam*. Carter spoke about the importance of building a better world and recalled the difficult circumstances of Canada's aboriginal people. In his book, *From Warsaw to Winnipeg: A Personal Tale of Two Cities*, he speaks of the importance of education and dialogue. He would like to see meetings of Polish and Jewish groups in Canada. He notes the suffering of many groups before during and since the Shoah and mentions the Indigenous groups in the Americas and Australia and hopes that all of these stories will one day be included in the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. "Extreme suffering must be acknowledged and there is no

²⁴⁵ Greenberg, "Choose Life," 6.

competition for martyrdom.”²⁴⁶ Carter’s commitment to reconciliation is exemplary. Many survivors, even those who were hidden, remain understandably suspicious and particularistic as a result of the trauma they endured. Carter’s response mirrors Greenberg’s own journey to reconciliation with Christianity. Carter has given the community many gifts, from his talent as a researcher and medical specialist to his ongoing commitment to remembering the Shoah to human rights and the preservation of our planet.

Conclusion

Jan Grabowski’s research demonstrates that many Poles actively participated in the murder of Jews, due to bigotry. Story after story demonstrates a decision to murder neighbours, former friends or strangers. Grabowski does not recount stories of bystanders; rather, of betrayal and hate. In fact, fear of denunciation or murder by Poles was the greatest deterrent for escape to the Aryan side from the ghettos.²⁴⁷ The kindness that Carter experienced from the women who hid him was all the more exceptional when compared to the status quo. As a result, most survivors have a difficult relationship with Poland and Poles.

Carter chooses to honour the memory of the more than six thousand Poles who are Righteous Among the Nations. He does so as well by reaching out to the local Polish population, as a fellow Pole, yet identifiably as a Jew. The March of Memory in 2014 brought together Jews and non-Jewish Poles to mark the date of the first deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto. The participation of the Poles was in large part an outcome of

²⁴⁶ Carter, *From Warsaw to Winnipeg*, 169. The CMHR opened three years after the publication of Stefan’s book.

²⁴⁷ Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 7.

Carter's outreach to that community. *Teshuvah* (repentance) can come in many forms, both expressed outright and simply by being present on such a march, listening to Carter tell his story, and then listening to the cantor invoke the *El Maleh Rahamim* prayer in memory for the six million victims of the Shoah at the foot of the Shoah monument. The march, planned together with Stefan to include the prayer (his choice as well as mine), expresses his identification as a Jew and fits neatly into Greenberg's expression of a "covenant of being." Carter's choices of how to live as a moral and religious person after the Shoah are clearly aligned with Greenberg's theology. His engagement in dialogue has not only been remarkable; it has encouraged further possibilities of connection between the two communities, such as an exhibition on the Lodz Ghetto held at the Ognivo Museum in 2015, which was co-sponsored by the Holocaust Education Centre and Ognivo.

Chapter Four

PINCHAS GUTTER: REMEMBRANCE IS THE SECRET OF REDEMPTION

I tell my story for the purpose of improving humanity, drop by drop by drop. Like a drop of water falls on a stone and erodes it, so, hopefully, by telling my story over and over again I will achieve the purpose of making the world a better place to live in.

—Pinchas Gutter, *Politische Pole-Jude: The Story of Pinchas Gutter*

Introduction

Pinchas Gutter was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1932 to a deeply religious family of Ger Hasidim, who owned one of the largest wineries in prewar Poland. He was raised in an insular religious atmosphere where faith and religious observance were not questioned. Gutter was orphaned by the age of ten, when the family was deported from the Warsaw Ghetto to the extermination camp of Majdanek. Upon arrival, he was separated from his twin sister Sabina and his mother Helena who were murdered in the gas chamber. His father shared their fate that same day. In addition to Majdanek, Gutter was incarcerated in Skarzysko-Kamienna (a slave labour camp), and in Buchenwald, Colditz, Częstochowa, and Theresienstadt concentration camps. He also endured a death march. As well, he experienced more incidents of antisemitism as a child than Carter had, because he was so easily identifiable as a Hasidic child by his dress and by his *pe'ot* (sidelocks). Yet none of this has distanced him from Judaism or a dialogue with non-Jews. There are many sources of information about Gutter's story, including his detailed testimony, two videos, a holographic exhibition and an immersive virtual reality film. He is also featured in historian Martin Gilbert's comprehensive study of the child survivors

of Buchenwald who were flown to England.²⁴⁸ Drawing on their earlier shared experiences, these survivors have continued to share lifelong friendships despite the distance between them. Gutter eventually moved to Canada. He serves as a cantor in the Kiever Shul, a modern-Orthodox synagogue in Toronto, and also gives of himself to his community and to the larger civil society, committed to a just and pluralistic world.

Prewar Experiences

Pinchas Gutter's earliest memories of Jewish tradition and family are very important to him and they form a significant part of his presentations to young people. Greenberg refers to the Jewish people's love of Torah, tradition and dream of redemption. This has provided them with a framework for living and maintaining a religious and a moral life despite the tremendous suffering they endured. Gutter has exemplified these ideas throughout his life. He began to study the Torah at the age of two and a half and Talmud at age five in the *heder*, the elementary religious school for Jewish children. Gutter recalls their family being close to the Gerer Rebbe and attending his "court" to ask the Rebbe to pray for his grandfather who was ill.²⁴⁹ Gutter's father had no secular education, but his mother had attended a *Gymnasium*, the equivalent of public high school, which was rare for a woman from a Hasidic family.

Early on, despite Gutter's insular upbringing, he showed signs of Greenberg's

²⁴⁸ Martin Gilbert, *The Boys: Triumph Over Adversity* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997). Soviet troops found 451 Jewish children when they liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, and American troops discovered 904 Jewish child survivors in Buchenwald on April 11 that same year. Gilbert has written in detail about the rehabilitation of the children who were taken from Buchenwald to the United Kingdom after the Shoah and traces their later experiences as adults, including annual reunions. See pages 7, 129–30, 248–249, 368, 464–469 for Gilbert's information about Pinchas Gutter.

²⁴⁹ Gutter recalls the grandeur of the Hassidic court and refers to the Gerer Rebbe as resembling a "holy Prince." See Pinchas Gutter, interview by Paula Draper, Holocaust Remembrance Committee, Toronto Jewish Congress, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 1993. Accessed March 31, 2017, <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=57913&segmentNumber=0#>.

pluralistic vision and desire for dialogue. It was not advisable (for safety reasons) for Jews to approach a church. Gutter, however, loved music and from the time he was a small child, delighted in both liturgical and classical music. Before the war, he developed double pneumonia and needed to go to the mountains to recuperate. He was sent alone and lived among Poles. One Sunday evening, after attending one of the many concerts in the area, he passed a church and heard beautiful liturgical music from inside. Creeping up to the doorstep, he crouched down on his knees to listen. A Pole, who noticed him and identified him by his clothing, viciously hit him and accused him in ugly language of defiling the steps of the church. Gutter had little contact with non-Jews, other than the building supervisor of the apartment where they lived (and which they owned). After the war, his cousin returned to the building and the wife of the superintendent warned him that out of respect for Gutter's father, she would not kill him now but would do so if he ever should return. He comments further that the antisemitism he experienced during the war at the hands of Poles was worse than that at the hands of the Nazis because the Poles "enjoyed it." Yet, this has not stopped him from engaging in dialogue, going back to Poland time after time with young people, and especially students and educators from private Catholic schools.

Greenberg writes about the Shoah transforming Judaism's core paradigms. Religious Jews in Eastern Europe such as Gutter's family did not view Zionism as merely a political movement by secular Jews. The Gutter family owned the largest winery in Poland, dating back 400 years. His grandfather was a lay leader in the Ger Hassidic community and owned vineyards in Palestine. The family had intended to move to Palestine, but his grandfather, upon visiting the vineyards in 1938, on the eve of the

Shoah, discovered that young women, dressed “immodestly,” were tending the vineyards. Unhappy with the secular form of Zionism that he witnessed, he sold the vineyards and told his family that they must wait until the messiah comes before going to Palestine, thus unknowingly sealing their fate. Gutter and some of his religious relatives would later go to Israel after the Shoah. The same paradigms were no longer relevant.

Wartime Experiences

The Warsaw Ghetto

Gutter’s early education and love of Jewish tradition helped him survive the trauma he faced from 1939 to 1945. When the Nazis ransacked his family’s winery, and beat his father within an inch of his life, it was decided that the family would go to Warsaw where it was deemed to be safer. Pinchas, Sabina and his mother left Lodz for Warsaw pretending to be non-Jews. This meant Gutter’s sidelocks needed to be cut. His father arrived months later as he could not travel by train, which was forbidden to Jews. He could not “pass” as a non-Jew.

Greenberg’s definition of tikkun olam refers to working toward a world free from oppression, violence, poverty and illness. Since the Shoah, Gutter has given so much of his time to helping others and to ensuring the dignity of others. Perhaps what he observed in the Ghetto in those early years inspired him later in life. He speaks of walking through the Ghetto and seeing people buying cakes, while outside the shop people died of hunger. He saw halls where people were dancing, while outside, Jewish police were pushing people to go to work details on the Aryan side.

A moving example of what Greenberg describes as feeling God’s Presence in the midst of suffering is illustrated by Gutter’s moving recounting of the last Yom Kippur he

spent with his father in the Warsaw Ghetto. By that date in 1942, people were aware that the transports from the Ghetto were going to Treblinka and reports of the mass murder at the killing centres had leaked out. On Yom Kippur, the men and boys had found a hiding place in an attic in the Warsaw Ghetto. Gutter's father took his tallit and covered both their faces and began chanting the Kol Nidre prayer. He held his son against him, weeping and praying for deliverance and there they remained for twenty-four hours. Gutter recalls this with tremendous emotion every time he prays on Yom Kippur. Throughout that same day, the Nazis forced the Jewish Police to round up several hundred Jews. From their vantage point in the attic, through the slats in the roof, Gutter and the others could see outside. They could hear the machine gun fire as they prayed. They could see the naked and half-naked corpses stacked up like logs. While Gutter felt paralysed—unable to move, he was supported by prayer and his father's comforting embrace. While the traditional prayers for deliverance would have certainly been all the more fervent that Yom Kippur, one is left with the impression that Gutter and the others felt God with them, and suffering with them, and not an unfeeling observer. Whenever Gutter speaks to students and in his videos, he says that each year, when he dons his tallit and leads his congregation in the ancient Kol Nidre prayer, he says he is reminded of this other Kol Nidre night so long ago.

Gutter remembers his parents preparing the bunker as a hiding place and attributes their efforts to hold on as a religious endeavour.²⁵⁰ This is what Greenberg has referred to as a responsibility to choose life, in his article of the same name, noting that the

²⁵⁰ The responsibility to survive is linked to Deuteronomy 30:19: "This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."

command in Deuteronomy is an act of “volition, commitment, and love.”²⁵¹ He recalls a visit from Rabbi Krall, who had been hiding on the Aryan side. Krall tried to convince Gutter’s mother to take the children and hide as well, passing as Poles. Gutter’s father could not pass as a Polish Christian. Helena refused to leave her husband. Krall told them, “You must not allow yourself to be called (to the *Umschlagplatz*) because to be called is to be dead.” He also remembers his parents telling him that he must outlive Hitler.

Deportation to Majdanek

Gutter describes examples of kindness and sacrifice by his parents that are synonymous with Greenberg’s thoughts on the importance of dignity. Greenberg is also clear that if we are bystanders, we participate in the denial of their dignity. Conversely, by restoring their dignity, we work toward tikkun olam. On the eve of Passover in 1943, Gutter and his family were hiding in the bunkers. Eventually their bunker was rooted out during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. They were taken to the police station and witnessed harrowing atrocities over the next days, most of them committed by Latvian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Polish auxiliaries. Gutter viewed many beatings and saw young girls being taken out of the room and then returned in terrible condition. He did not understand at the time that they had been raped. In the midst of this horror, the extreme kindness, courage and humanity of his parents stood out: they had somehow filled a sock with sugar and distributed small amounts of it to the children who were there.

²⁵¹ Irving Greenberg, “Choose Life,” 2.

Soon after their arrival at Majdanek, Gutter remembers the ultimate sacrifice of his mother Helena, who ran to be with her daughter, his sister Sabina during the chaos of the selection. He never saw them again and remembers only Sabina's beautiful blonde hair. How do we define such a high degree of morality in the midst of such immorality? Writing in 2002, Greenberg reminds us that *gemilut hasadim* (acts of loving kindness) is tied to the religious duty to emulate God's ways. He points to the Tanakh, noting Deuteronomy 28:9: "The Lord will establish you as His holy people as He swore to you, if you observe the commandments of the Lord, your God, and walk in His ways." Greenberg adds that the "Talmud and the later *Mussar* (ethical) and philosophical traditions also placed great emphasis on the religious duty to walk in God's ways."²⁵² Gutter's parents exemplified this behaviour by attempting to sustain the dignity and the life of the children who were suffering around them. In these moments of trauma, Gutter witnessed his parents practising an extraordinary example of *gemilut hasadim*.²⁵³ Helena and Menachem Mendel, Gutter's father, acted with God-like love and generosity at one of the most difficult moments in their family's life.

The wonderful story of Gutter's secret moonlight bar mitzvah ceremony in Częstochowa is another example of the deep love for Jewish tradition and hope for a renewal of that reality that Greenberg speaks of, which not only helped Jews to survive but to renew their faith after the Shoah.²⁵⁴ Gutter had survived the initial selection at

²⁵² Greenberg, "Personal Service: A Central Jewish Norm for Our Time." *Contact: The Journal of Jewish Life Network* 4, no. 1 (2001): 2, <http://rabbiirvinggreenberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/AJ-gemilut-chassadim.pdf>.

²⁵³ The bestowing of acts of loving kindness (*gemilut hasadim*) are those done without expecting anything in return. An example of this concept is burying the dead. The person one buries can never return the favour.

Majdanek by listening to his father's instruction to pretend he was eighteen years old.

The ten-year-old was tall for his age. Alone in brutal conditions, he managed by his wits and courage.

One day, when Gutter was twelve, his father's friend, Godil Eisner, a rabbi, discovered him and by moonlight performed a bar mitzvah ceremony (for some reason he thought Gutter was thirteen), with *tefillin* that he somehow possessed in the concentration camp. Gutter says that this connection to Jewish tradition gave him the hope to continue.

One cannot help but think of Fackenheim's reference to the Buchenwald Hasidim, who sold their portions of bread in order to buy confiscated *tefillin* so that they could pray with ecstasy and hold onto their faith. We do not know how Eisner came to be in possession of the phylacteries; however Gutter's narrative presents examples of pragmatism and a strong will to survive over all.²⁵⁵

During the war, Gutter witnessed other sporadic acts of loving kindness and was able to bestow some upon others. These moments, in the midst of the brutality of the concentration camps further support Greenberg's concept of "moment faith." These are the moments when human beings can remember that even in the midst of this maelstrom of evil, there were moments of decency. Such examples help to answer the difficult questions of how one continues to have faith or maintain one's moral values after such

²⁵⁴ Greenberg, "Transformation of the Core Paradigm," 218–219. Greenberg speaks of religious and secular beliefs and traditions that gave people hope to continue, as evidenced by witnesses at the Eichmann trial.

²⁵⁵ Ironically, after the war, in Windermere, Pinchas was accused of lying about his age by the authorities at the Jewish hostel (orphanage). Gutter was only thirteen, but he had a hard time proving his age as he had survived the selection at Majdanek by saying he was older. He was told that he must not begin his new life by lying, and it was only when a rabbi from Switzerland arrived who knew his family and who could attest to Gutter's real age that he could get on with his life in the new programme for the orphans. It was a brutal awakening for this young child who had lost his family to be treated in this manner, but it proved to be the first of many such experiences.

evil. When Gutter was in Majdanek, he became so ill with spotted typhoid that he could not go out to work, and his fellow prisoners hid him beneath the straw. When the work details went out, the Jewish police and his Ukrainian counterpart inspected the barracks. The Jewish policeman who was checking the bunks discovered him, but at the risk of his own life, declared that no one was there, which saved Gutter's life.

Colditz and a Death March to Theresienstadt

Moved to another camp at Colditz, the newly arrived prisoners were asked who were the young ones among them. It did not make sense to admit this, but for some reason, which he explains as providential, Gutter stepped forward. He is convinced that there is no other explanation. This is another example of Greenberg's "moment faith." It is also an example of Greenberg's reference to God's Presence and comfort, which may have given Gutter the confidence to step forward. Gutter was taken to work in the camp kitchen where he was able to obtain extra food. As well, Gutter was also able to help his father's friend Godil Eisner, who had ensured that Gutter became a bar mitzvah in Częstochowa, and who had also been in Colditz, to survive, by secretly giving him food when he returned to the barrack. One of the guards at Colditz forced Gutter to steal food for him, which endangered Gutter, but on the subsequent death march to Theresienstadt, this same guard gave Gutter some food, helping to keep him alive.

Liberation

In writing about the covenant after the Shoah, Greenberg says, "The Shoah made clear the overriding need to end all circles of hatred that surrounded and isolated groups of others. The isolation not only made Jews vulnerable but also tempted bystanders into indifference and silence. Responding to the Holocaust created an overwhelming moral

need to restore the image of God to the other.”²⁵⁶ For many survivors, it is difficult to distinguish between the civilian population who were bystanders and the Nazis who actively persecuted them.²⁵⁷ The reaction of Gutter and his friends to the suffering of the German civil population at Theresienstadt illustrates a first step toward the restoration of morality that Greenberg describes. When the Russians at Theresienstadt liberated them, Gutter and his friends rushed out and observed long columns of German civilians being chased out of Czechoslovakia. They experienced sadness at seeing these German civilians being abused, and extraordinarily— pitied their suffering. It did not matter who they were because Gutter and his friends understood the meaning of suffering. None of his friends wished to participate in this. There was no sense in revenge against this civilian German population of Czechoslovakia. Despite the terrible suffering Gutter and his friends had endured at the hands of Germans, they still recognized that these men, women and children were created in the image of God and ought to be treated with dignity.

Postwar Search for a New Life and a New Vision

Gutter’s postwar experiences provide us with several examples of Greenberg’s theology. Gutter was one of approximately five thousand children to have survived the concentration camps. He was sent as part of a group of 732 child survivors to England after his liberation from Theresienstadt to a hostel (orphanage) in Windermere for

²⁵⁶ Greenberg, “Judaism and Christianity: Covenants of Redemption,” 154.

²⁵⁷ Daniel Goldhagen argues that most members of the German population were “willing executioners” in his 1996 book, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996). The book was primarily a response to Christopher Browning’s 1992 book, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993). Browning argued that the men of the Unit 101 killed out of obedience and peer pressure. Several prominent Shoah historians, including Raul Hilberg, and Yehuda Bauer have strongly criticized Goldhagen’s research methods.

rehabilitation and recovery.²⁵⁸ Gutter veered away from Hasidic Judaism toward modern-Orthodoxy after the war, not because he abandoned Hasidic Judaism, but through a series of negative experiences in the postwar period that led him away from it. Here we see several examples of Greenberg's call for a respect for intrafaith pluralism. After Gutter arrived in Windermere, Rabbi Weiss, who was in charge of the children at Windermere, and aware of his Ger Hasidic background convinced him to attend the Etz Hayim Yeshiva, which was an ultra-Orthodox (Litvak) yeshiva, but not a Hasidic yeshiva. However there is severe tension between the streams of Litvak and Hasidic ultra-Orthodox Judaism and this affected Gutter. As the sole Hasidic student within this Litvak environment, Gutter was singled out and for the nine months he spent there, his fellow students, the women who worked there and the teachers abused him. He rebelled and left. He then went to a *Hashomer Hatzair* ("the young guard") hostel (orphanage), run by members of a secular-Zionist movement. He was not happy there either and decided to board with a Jewish family and go out to work. He was fourteen years old at the time. He moved in with the Diamond family, who was modern-Orthodox. They kept a kosher home, did not drive to synagogue, although they would take the car to Brighton after services. Gutter got used to this way of life. Eventually, his (Orthodox) cousin, Rabbi Krall, came to fetch him and asked him to move to France with him and his family, where he stayed until he turned eighteen.

As soon as he turned eighteen, in 1951, Gutter moved to the new State of Israel and volunteered for the Israel Defence Forces, serving for three years. Here we see the

²⁵⁸ Gilbert, *The Boys: Triumph Over Adversity*, 272.

illustration of Greenberg's idea of a paradigm shift—from powerlessness to ethical power. Gutter also worked at Yad Vashem for a time as a technical assistant in the library. He did not make *aliyah* (immigrate), but felt that he needed to give actively to Israel at that important time in its history. Unlike his grandfather, and like Greenberg, he accepted secular Zionism and the important role that secularism played in building the country. Like Greenberg, he sees the rebuilt State of Israel as a sign of redemption after the Shoah and it is an important feature of his faith. The transformative process of a Ger Hassid to an IDF soldier is not to be underestimated. Only an experience as overwhelming as the Shoah would allow such an enormous redefinition and reorientation.

Gutter also speaks of observing his own “personal form of religiosity” after moving to Israel. One day, when he was serving in the military, he decided to visit a Gerer Hasidic *shtibel* (little house) in Tel Aviv.²⁵⁹ Without asking why he was there, and judging him simply by his clothing (his uniform) and his lack of beard and sidelocks, the Hasidim likely assumed that he was a secular Israeli. Most Hasidim oppose the existence of the secular state of Israel.²⁶⁰ One of the Hasidim, rolled a prayer shawl into a ball, threw it at him and yelled at Gutter to leave. Gutter decided that he would never be a Hasid again. One could say that Hasidism abandoned Gutter, rather than the opposite.

Greenberg's reflections on intrafaith pluralism and his plea for Orthodox Jews to respect and uphold the commitments of other traditions as well as the basic dignity of

²⁵⁹ A *shtibel* is a small communal house of prayer, often as small as a room in a private home or business.

²⁶⁰ Some ultra-Orthodox who serve in the IDF have met with attacks from their own communities for the reasons explained here and also because they view the army as a secular institution which takes young men away from study and puts them into contact with “immodest” behaviour. See Judy Maltz, “Soldier Son of Former U.S.-Israeli Lawmaker Attacked by Ultra-Orthodox Mob in Jerusalem,” *Haaretz*, last modified June 11, 2017, accessed June 11, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.795076>.

others resonate here. He also connects the message of covenant as a basis for pluralism that is as valid for intrafaith as it is for interfaith pluralism: “Even the Divine Absolute must accept its own limits and respect and make room for others.”²⁶¹ Greenberg has warned against the insularity, self-righteousness and false pride that the various denominations of Judaism have often modeled which results in the kind of acrimony with which Gutter was treated. He comments that after the Shoah, it does not matter whether one is Orthodox, Conservative, Reform or secular, as long as one is ashamed of it.²⁶² At first blush this statement might seem to be odd, at the very least. However, what Greenberg means is that one must always seek to correct the shortcomings of one’s own beliefs, rather than to compare them to what one perceives to be the worst of another denomination (or another faith).²⁶³ The Hasidim at the shtibel in Tel Aviv acted in contradiction to the exponents of genuine Hasidism itself, as its proponents are supposed to strive to live their faith by doing good deeds (*gemilut hasadim*) rather than dwell on theoretic speculations.²⁶⁴ They decided that he was not “one of them,” judging him by his outward appearance and therefore rejected him. They did not welcome him as a Jew who wished to pray with them, and instead, insulted his dignity. They denied the image of God in him, according to Greenberg’s definition, as did those at the Etz Hayim Yeshiva, whose treatment of him was contradictory to an understanding of Jewish tradition and the

²⁶¹ Greenberg, “Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism,” 393.

²⁶² Greenberg, “Transformation of the Core Paradigm,” 221. Perhaps Greenberg was inspired by the text in the Mishnah *Nega'im* 2:5: “A person can see any blemishes, except for his own.”

²⁶³ Joseph Telushkin, “Foreward,” in Freedman and Greenberg, *Living in the Image of God*, xix.

²⁶⁴ Dow Marmur, “Pinchas Gutter is a Holocaust Survivor Who Learned to Cope,” *The Star*, last modified August 17, accessed April 20, 2016, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2014/08/17/pinchas_gutter_how_a_holocaust_survivor_learned_to_cope.html.

many references (*mitzvot*) in the Tanakh, which command kind treatment of orphans.

Gutter turned to modern-Orthodoxy and has for many years served as the voluntary *chazzan* (cantor) at the Kiever Shul, a synagogue located in the Kensington Market area of Toronto, which was built in 1927. The synagogue describes itself as having “a welcoming attitude that is respectful to all... and evokes a genuine sense of roots and spirituality for all who enter her doors.”²⁶⁵ Gutter has (implicitly) chosen a synagogue amongst the many available in Toronto, which defines Greenberg’s intrafaith theology.

Devotion to Dialogue

Greenberg understands Christian-Jewish dialogue as a response to Christian *teshuvah*. However, as a practising Orthodox Jew, he does not sacrifice the power, validity and nurturing values of Judaism while taking part in interfaith dialogue.²⁶⁶ Gutter, like Greenberg, generously shares his Judaism and his testimony with others but never ventures into relativism. At the time of Gutter’s first interview in 1993 he had never been back to Poland and said he never wanted to go back there and did not even want to think about it as a physical entity. Now he takes Jewish and non-Jewish students from many different religious and cultural backgrounds on the March of Hope and Remembrance. His first trip with others to Poland was with the (Catholic) College of St. Elizabeth (New Jersey) accompanying students, bishops and nuns in 2005. He has been asked to accompany the March of the Living, which takes Jewish students, but he prefers to go with non-Jewish students. He says he suffered so much at the hands of Catholics in

²⁶⁵ The Kiever Shul: A Hidden Jewel in the Heart of the Downtown Jewish Community, accessed April 9, 2017, <http://www.kievershul.com/index.html>.

²⁶⁶ Greenberg, “Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism,” 388–389.

Poland but that the warmth, and empathy that these students have shown him has allowed him to work through the emotions that were in him that made it difficult to relate. Since then, he has developed a close relationship with this group and has spoken at various events such as on the date of Kristallnacht and has accompanied them to Poland several times. During these trips, he has movingly sung both liturgical and secular songs on more than one occasion in the beautiful medieval-era Tykocin synagogue in Poland.²⁶⁷ Once he began to speak about the Shoah, he wanted to demonstrate that even people who had suffered such trauma could do good for other people. From bad could emerge good—that there is goodness in us—and about the importance of memory. Moreover, Gutter has become active in interfaith dialogue and was a longtime member of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. Gutter’s actions mirror Greenberg’s response to his encounter with Christians and the positive and even radical effect that this had on his own response to the Shoah.

Gutter has been at the forefront of looking for new ways to ensure that future generations will remember the Shoah. He is the subject of a pilot project, which is the first interactive exhibit creating holographic images of Holocaust survivors that can converse with viewers and answer questions about their experiences.²⁶⁸ In 2016, Gutter traveled back to Majdanek again to participate in the filming of *The Last Goodbye*, an

²⁶⁷ The Jewish population of Tykocin, numbering approximately 1700 people, was massacred in the nearby Łopuchowo forest on August 25, 1941 by an *Einsatzcommando* (mobile killing unit).

²⁶⁸ The project is called “New Dimensions in Testimony” and was developed in collaboration between the University of Southern California’s Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) and the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. Twenty-five hours of video footage with Gutter answering 1700 questions were filmed. A holographic image of Gutter sits in a chair, and visitors are able to ask him questions. With an aging and dwindling survivor population, this is a particularly innovative way for people to continue to interact with and learn from Shoah survivors. Gutter was not aware of the questions ahead of time as he wished to respond as spontaneously as possible. The interviews are filled with the music of his childhood. For instance, one can ask “him” what his favourite childhood songs are, and he responds by singing them.

immersive virtual reality testimony. “I think that you have to confront pain to be able to heal it,” Gutter says in the film. “Unless you have somebody that can say, ‘I was here, I saw this, this was done to me,’ I don’t think people would accept it as the gospel truth.”²⁶⁹ The confrontation with pain he cites is not only his own—in returning to Majdanek—but that of every person who puts on the virtual reality headset and experiences his pain. It is a necessary step to the healing power of *teshuvah* that Greenberg has described. This is especially important, as there are fewer and fewer witnesses—the survivors. For *teshuvah* to continue, the Shoah must be remembered.

Remembering is almost a religious act in Judaism. Gutter links the secular with the religious and the importance of remembering the Shoah with the theme of “never again.” “Remembrance is the secret of redemption, while forgetting leads to exile,” Gutter says, quoting the Baal Shem Tov, the 18th century founder of Hasidic Judaism.²⁷⁰ They are also the words written above the exit from the history museum at Yad Vashem, commemorating the Shoah in Jerusalem. This closely echoes Greenberg’s perspective and the important place of tradition and history in his theology. These words do not only refer to the historical remembrance of the Shoah, but also to our remembrance of Jewish history. They echo the link to the Exodus itself and the reading of the Exodus story each year at Passover. We recount this story to remember the redemption from exile and

²⁶⁹ *The Last Goodbye* premiered at The Tribeca Film Festival in April 2017. It was co-produced by the USC Shoah Foundation. The photoreal experience allows participants using virtual reality headsets to virtually walk with Gutter through Majdanek as he relates his story. See Davinda Hardawar, “The Last Goodbye’ is the VR Holocaust Memorial We Need Today,” *Engadget*, last modified April 22, 2017, accessed July 25, 2017, <https://www.engadget.com/2017/04/22/the-last-goodbye-vr/>.

²⁷⁰ Thomas McMullan, “The Virtual Holocaust Survivor: How History Gained New Dimensions,” *The Guardian*, last modified June 18, 2016, accessed April 5, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/18/holocaust-survivor-hologram-pinchas-gutter-new-dimensions-history>.

slavery and pass it on from generation to generation. At the end of the Passover Seder is the sentence, “next year in Jerusalem.” The exile recounted is not only a physical one but may be interpreted as a spiritual exile as well. If the Jewish people forget its history, it becomes spiritually exiled. In Hasidic texts, redemption has a dual meaning: individual redemption (*geulah peratit*), which is distinct from the messianic or collective redemption (*geulah kelalit*).²⁷¹ The quote “next year in Jerusalem” may also be interpreted as a reminder that final redemption may not take place until we have achieved tikkun olam for all inhabitants of the earth. Gutter explains the quote, “exile means forgetting,” to mean that you can do whatever you like... “remembrance leads to understanding and once you understand good and the bad – you have choices.”²⁷²

The children who survived the camps and were brought to England formed an international philanthropic society in 1963 called the ‘45 Aid Society, that has remained active and in communication with each other. Their goal is to raise awareness, to support one another and to give back to society. The personal service that Greenberg speaks of as a fundamental Jewish obligation and means to uphold tikkun olam are clearly defined by the ‘45 Aid Society’s goals.²⁷³ They reunite once a year on the anniversary of their liberation in 1945. A short video celebrating their jubilee year refers to some of these projects, but also depicts the intense commitment to rebuilding Jewish lives and families that Greenberg explains as continued faithfulness to the covenant. This sentiment is

²⁷¹ Byron Sherwin, *Finding Faith in Meaning: A Theology of Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 153.

²⁷² Thomas McMullan, “The virtual Holocaust survivor: how history gained new dimensions.”

²⁷³ Among the charities they have adopted to support are “Barnardo’s,” which helps the United Kingdom’s most vulnerable children, teens and their families, the “Micha Society for the Education of Deaf Children in Haifa and Northern Israel,” the funding of an ambulance in Israel, as well as supporting refugee initiatives.

reinforced by Gutter’s comment in his 1993 interview to historian, Paula Draper, providing further evidence of the extraordinary efforts displayed by the survivors: “A lot was said after the war about the lack of resistance—that Jews went like lambs to the slaughter. The heroic resistance of Jews remaining human beings right through until after the war is the greatest act of heroism you could ever wish for.”²⁷⁴ The fiftieth anniversary also served as an opportunity for the members of the ‘45 Aid Society to remember their murdered loved ones. In the dedication page to his family, Gutter wrote a message that echoes Greenberg’s call for pluralism and tikkun olam: “Let’s hope that there will be an end to suffering for all the oppressed people of our world.”²⁷⁵

Gutter also volunteers much of his time to his community, in projects, which ensure the dignity of his fellow human beings and that are reflective of Greenberg’s notions of tikkun olam. He is an honorary Jewish chaplain with a Toronto prison; he also serves as a chaplain with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, volunteered at the Women’s College Hospital, and served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Baycrest Centre Foundation as well as President of the Men’s Service Group. Gutter worked on the Mayor’s Committee on Aging, was Chair of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (a legal aid clinic for disadvantaged seniors). He says he tries to alleviate other people’s suffering as much as possible, certainly another example of tikkun olam.

Gutter has said that as a religious person, he believes in “Jewish humanism.” Gutter clearly outlines a pluralistic position of tikkun olam here which is evocative of Greenberg’s reference to Abraham as a “pacesetter for humanity,” a reference to

²⁷⁴ Pinchas Gutter, interview by Paula Draper.

²⁷⁵ “‘45 Aid Society 50th Annual Dinner and Ball,” Souvenir Brochure, April 30, 1995.

pluralism.”²⁷⁶ He considers that the first humanist to walk this earth was *Avraham Avinu* (our father Abraham): “He was the first person who was concerned about other human beings. He was the first person to take on a Deity and to say—‘Listen, you cannot destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.’ He started arguing with God—if there are fifty righteous people—you cannot destroy the whole world—he was concerned for others. And I would say that it is the beginning of Judaic culture.”²⁷⁷ Gutter is describing Abraham as an early role model of what human beings must ascribe to: a caring empathetic being who is not a bystander (even if he must confront the Divine). This compares to what Greenberg describes as our responsibility to care about others, and to defend their rights as human beings. In Abraham’s time, when the covenantal relationship was as a junior partner, Abraham spoke up and asked God to protect the righteous. Now, according to Greenberg’s theology, as we take on a greater responsibility in our covenantal role in this post-Shoah era, humanity must not wait for God to act. It is humanity’s responsibility to defend the rights of our fellow human beings and to ensure that humanity is not destroyed.

Conclusion

Gutter’s many contributions have left a lasting impression on so many of those with whom he has come into contact. In May of 2014, United States President Barack Obama received the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation’s Ambassador for Humanity Award. In his acceptance speech, he quoted Gutter and spoke about the groups of Canadian and American students that Gutter has taken to Poland and the many

²⁷⁶ Greenberg, “Judaism and Christianity: Covenants of Redemption,” 144. Greenberg was comparing Abraham to Noah’s passive of the Divine decree to wipe out human life.

²⁷⁷ Pinchas Gutter, interview by Paula Draper.

groups of young people to whom he has recounted his story of faith and survival. Obama quoted Gutter's powerful words, which evoke Greenberg's concept of the individual's fundamental obligation to do his or her part to perfect the world and thus redeem it: "I tell my story for the purpose of improving humanity, drop by drop by drop. Like a drop of water falls on a stone and erodes it, so, hopefully, by telling my story over and over again I will achieve the purpose of making the world a better place to live in."²⁷⁸ It is likely that Gutter's drop-by-drop analogy refers to a Talmudic story of Rabbi Akiva who observed drops of water eventually causing a hole to form in a rock. Rabbi Akiva concluded that if something as soft as water could affect rock in this manner how much more so could the words of the Torah have an affect on his heart.²⁷⁹ Gutter ends his talks with students by leaving them with a final message, which beautifully illustrates how survivor narratives invite us to take responsibility in tikkun olam—to perfect the world—or as Gutter has expressed it, to improve humanity: "I am carrying a torch of well-being and goodness. Despite the fact that it could have been a bitter one, I believe that my torch should be like the Olympic torch, a torch that brings goodwill on Earth."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Eli Rubenstein, *Witness: Passing the Torch of Holocaust Memory to New Generations* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 2015), 63.

²⁷⁹ Avot D'Rabbi Natan 6.

²⁸⁰ Eli Rubenstein, *Witness*, 63.

Chapter Five

ROBERT “ROMEK” WAISMAN: A BOY OF BUCHENWALD

How did they learn to talk again? I know of their grief and bereavement. How did they learn to love again? I know of their rage. How did they regain compassion? How did they learn to play again and pray again?

—Dr. Robert Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Postwar Lives*

Introduction

Robert (Robbie) Waisman was born Romek Wajzman on February 2, 1931 in Skarzysko-Kamienna, Poland. Fourteen percent of its 19,700 inhabitants were Jewish on the eve of World War II; of the 1500 Jewish children who lived there, only three or four survived. Waisman and his sister Leah were two of those children and the only members of their family of eight to survive the Shoah. Waisman, one of the “Boys of Buchenwald,” was found among the 904 child survivors at the camp on April 11, 1945 by American troops. Three months later, he was sent to France along with 426 other child survivors of the camp to an orphanage in the French countryside. Historians, psychiatrists, and psychologists have examined this particular group of child survivors closely because of the presence of individuals who later became well known, such as author and Nobel laureate, Elie Wiesel and (former) Chief Rabbi of Israel, Israel Lau.²⁸¹

The additional information provided by those who have studied this group helps to

²⁸¹ Of particular interest is Judith Hemmendinger and Robert Krell’s book, *The Children of Buchenwald: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Postwar Lives* (Jerusalem: Gefen House, 2000). In 1984, Hemmendinger published *Les enfants de Buchenwald: que sont devenus les 1000 enfants juifs sauvés en 1945?* (The Children of Buchenwald: What Became of the 1000 Jewish Children Rescued in 1945?). The book was republished in 2000 in English with supplementary material, translated by Robert Krell. Hemmendinger directed the Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE) orphanage from 1945 to 1947 and later wrote her doctoral thesis (University of Strasbourg) based on her experiences at the OSE. It is entitled “Rehabilitation of Young Camp Survivors after the Death Camps.” Krell, a Dutch child survivor and psychiatrist now living in Vancouver, has treated many child survivors and their families. Krell founded the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre and is a close friend of Waisman. The book traces the psycho-social adaptation of the Buchenwald child survivors. A chapter is dedicated to the story of Robbie Waisman.

provide a fuller picture of Waisman's earliest post-Shoah experiences.

Moving to Western Canada, Waisman eventually settled in Vancouver. After thirty-three years of silence, Waisman began to speak out about his experiences when he heard that Eckville, Alberta high school teacher James Keegstra was teaching his students that the Shoah was a hoax. Since then, he has become a leader as a human rights educator and philanthropist who has been recognized across North America. Waisman is a Past President of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre and has lectured in many venues including schools, universities, prisons, churches and synagogues. In recent years, he has shared his story with survivors of the Canadian Indian residential schools. Since 2008, he has spoken to thousands of survivors and their children, as well as addressing the tragic legacy of the residential school system in his talks with students across Canada. Waisman is the only Shoah survivor to be named an Honorary Witness for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.²⁸²

There are many examples in Robbie Waisman's story, past and present, that illustrate Greenberg's theology. Through his work today with survivors of the Indian residential schools, Greenberg's notions of pluralism, of human dignity and of "moment faith" are clear. Waisman has provided the many residential school survivors he has addressed with the tools to heal, as he did so many years ago. His shared experience of pain, dehumanization, marginalization, and his struggle with faith has resonated with thousands of his listeners. In turn, he has benefitted from the traditional ceremonies in

²⁸² The term witness here refers to the Indigenous principle of witnessing, whose meaning varies among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. "Generally speaking, witnesses are called upon to be the keepers of history. In Indigenous tradition, when an event of historic significance occurs, witnesses are asked to store and care for the history they witness and most importantly, to share it with their own people when they return home." See "Honorary Witness," *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, accessed April 30, 2017, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/reconciliation/index.php?p=331>

which he has been invited to take part. Waisman also spoke on several occasions with Leon Bass, the African American soldier who entered Buchenwald the day of his liberation. Their relationship is another lens through which we can examine the notions of pluralism and human dignity as expressed by Greenberg. For young Romek, today in his 80s, the warm religious traditions of his childhood sustained him even through the difficult times when the young boy had doubts about God and his faith. He maintains a traditional Jewish home, practising Conservative Judaism. His devotion to the State of Israel has remained an integral part of his life.

Prewar Life in Skarzysko-Kamienna

Whenever Waisman speaks about his very difficult experiences in the Shoah, he begins by recalling his early life. Much of it is linked to his memories of Jewish tradition and the memories of Shabbat and holidays. Much later, Waisman would speak about how important these early foundational experiences were for his ability to heal after the Shoah. Greenberg speaks of the Jewish people's love for its history, its tradition and its dream of redemption, which have given it the strength to continue in a covenantal relationship with God. Waisman describes a warm family life in a middle-class home and being very close to his four brothers and sister, as well as an Orthodox Jewish upbringing. His earliest memories are suffused with the beauty of traditional Friday night Shabbat dinners to which family and friends were invited. He warmly recalls the High Holy Days, and the security he felt being wrapped in his father's *tallit* and the voice of the cantor singing the traditional liturgy. Waisman remembers the solemnity of the Kol Nidre service on the Eve of Yom Kippur and recalls his mother Rivka's attentions to him as a small boy too young to fast; she would bring him a small snack to eat. Waisman also

recalls the Jewish literary culture that enriched his young life: his father, Chil, would read aloud from authors such as Shalom Aleichem and young Waisman waited with anticipation to delve independently into the rich and flourishing Jewish culture.²⁸³ As well, his family was active in Zionist organizations such as the Beitar youth movement, and Waisman looked forward to joining these groups when he got older.²⁸⁴ Here, we see the importance that the dream of the restoration and the redemption of Israel that Greenberg speaks of was a force in both secular and religious families.²⁸⁵ It is also reflective of Greenberg's ideas of Jewish empowerment.²⁸⁶

Greenberg argues that pluralism is grounded in the deep structures of Judaism and religious life. He adds that all humans and the Divine are partners in the perfection of the world.²⁸⁷ The Orthodoxy of Waisman's childhood did not preclude him having both Jewish and Christian friends who welcomed him in their homes. They shared each other's holidays. When the war broke out, everything changed. He recalls being in grade two on the last day of classes before Easter. A group of Christian children including his friends accused him of killing Christ and beat him badly; it represented his first taste of antisemitism and his loss of innocence. His relationship with his friends was forever changed; he could no longer trust them.

²⁸³ (Pronunciation of Chil is *Khil*).

²⁸⁴ Beitar was a Revisionist Zionist youth movement founded in Riga, Latvia in 1923, based on the ideology of Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky. The groups were a source of the first recruits for Jewish regiments that fought alongside the British (the Jewish Legion) in World War I. Beitar grew quickly in popularity in Eastern Europe. Youth were encouraged to make "aliyah" (immigrate, literally "to go up") to Palestine by legal or illegal means, and were taught Hebrew language and culture and, self-defence. It encouraged the creation of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan.

²⁸⁵ Greenberg, "The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History," 13.

²⁸⁶ Beitar militia groups played a role in the resistance of Nazi forces in World War II.

²⁸⁷ Greenberg, "Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism," 386, 394.

Wartime experiences

Skarzysko-Kamienna

The situation worsened when the Nazis came to Skarzysko-Kamienna. At the age of eleven, Waisman was sent to work in the ammunition factory. His mother and the remaining Jews of the ghetto were deported to Treblinka, where they were murdered upon arrival. In the factory, under brutal conditions, Waisman worked assiduously, stamping 3,200 anti-aircraft shells each day. His brother put cardboard into Robbie's shoes to make him appear taller and would pinch his cheeks to make him appear healthy. He describes the terrible circumstances in the barracks—the lice, vermin, and rats, the lack of sanitary facilities, and the typhoid fever, which decimated the prisoners. His brother Avrum fell ill, and while he eventually recovered sufficiently to return to work, he was selected for execution. Waisman begged an SS officer who had previously displayed a measure of kindness toward him to spare his brother, but he would not listen. Avrum was placed on a truck and taken to the woods and Waisman heard the machine gun fire as his brother was being killed. Soon after, Waisman lost sight of his father. He later learned that his father had witnessed the shooting of another son, Chaim. Waisman believes that his father lost the will to live.

One can certainly understand Chil's despair and his inability to go on, after having lost two sons. It is Waisman who then courageously chose life. "Every major catastrophe," Greenberg reminds us, "has led to the falling away of some Jews as they lost faith, but every major tragedy has also led to revival, as other Jews strove harder to match tragedy with hope."²⁸⁸ In reviewing these terrible moments, Waisman is also able to remember the kindness the SS officer had shown him in the past and wonders whether

²⁸⁸ Irving Greenberg, "The Unfinished Business of Tisha B'Av, 23."

the man had no choice but to be merciless in refusing to spare Avrum, lest the other Nazis question his behaviour. This is an example of Greenberg's concept of "moment faith," an example of continuing to believe in the kindness of a human being who had caused him tremendous grief. Waisman's deep understanding of his father's pain and its possible consequences has helped him to empathize with others who have experienced severe trauma, as we will observe when we examine Waisman's interaction with survivors of residential schools.

Waisman experienced other moments of inexplicable kindness in the midst of such evil that are further illustrations of "moment faith." In Skarzysko-Kamienna, he was often sent to collect the bill of lading from the office. Waisman had fallen ill with typhoid and had lost a great deal of weight, which left him in danger of being selected out for execution. One day, the camp secretary, who he describes as blonde and either Polish or German, yelled at him to take the paperwork and leave. When he got outside, he discovered hidden in the package, bread, butter and marmalade. She was risking her life (and taking a leap in faith that he would not jeopardize her by mentioning her kindness to anyone else) by providing him with this food. Her actions were instrumental in restoring Waisman's health and prevented him from meeting the same fate as his brother. He also remembers that there were individuals who treated him with kindness after the execution of his brother and the disappearance of his father, even some members of the SS; some would give him a little extra food.

On another occasion, in Przedbórz, another camp where prisoners were forced to do very hard labour, many prisoners simply gave up and committed suicide by walking away, knowing they would be shot. Prisoners had become desensitized to the casual

killing. “After a while, it was a routine thing to see death all around us,” Waisman said. “We lived with it. It was life that was the exception.”²⁸⁹ One day, a prisoner handed Waisman his shovel and began to walk away. The SS guard called out to him, but he continued to walk away, resulting in his execution. Turning to Waisman, the SS guard asked him to follow him. Waisman was certain he was about to be shot. Instead, out of range of sight of the other prisoners, he handed Waisman an apple. Waisman cannot explain the gesture. Was it out of kindness because of Waisman’s tender age? Out of guilt because of the murder he had just committed? Nevertheless, there is a spark of humanity in the latter story and true courage in the former story.

Waisman has also interpreted these experiences of kindness as a divine message to continue living. This is synonymous with Greenberg’s explanation of God being in the camps as an infinitely suffering divine Presence. While Waisman’s faith was tested during those very traumatic and horrific years, moments like this were a sign to him that God had not abandoned him completely. The Divine spark was there and present. Certainly, his earlier upbringing led him to these conclusions and would also lead him back to faith after a period of healing. He would have moments of doubt, but at that particular point in time, he was certain of God’s Presence.

Buchenwald

Transported to Buchenwald, Waisman experienced another moment of courage and humanity. In the final days before liberation, SS guards proceeded with mass evacuations as well as executions of prisoners. Waisman and other children were ordered

²⁸⁹ Waisman, Robbie, Interview by Fran Starr, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, last modified November 27, 1996, accessed April 16, 2017, <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=24372&segmentNumber=0#>.

to line up outside their barracks. “An SS officer wanted all the Jews to step forward. He was yelling. I can still hear his voice.” However, Wilhelm Hammann, an adult communist political prisoner who had been appointed head of the barracks, intervened and saved Waisman’s life along with many others: “Willy stepped in front of my friend Abe and myself and yelled, ‘*Ich habe keine Juden* (I don’t have any Jews). There are children of all nationalities in this group — Czechs, Poles, and Ukrainians — but there are no Jews.’ In my mind, I always honour Willy’s memory. I pray for his soul. If it hadn’t been for him, we would have died.”²⁹⁰ Yad Vashem has subsequently honoured Hammann as Righteous Among Nations.

In attempting to define and maintain one’s moral values, these examples exemplify what Greenberg refers to as the dialectical revelation of the Shoah. He explains that the Shoah challenges the claims that compete for our modern understanding of loyalties.²⁹¹ The irresolvable tensions and guilt that we must all live with are the only morally tenable way to proceed: for survivors, for perpetrators who have survived, and for the subsequent generations of both groups.²⁹² These rare experiences are also illustrative of Greenberg’s concept of “moment faith.” They are the singular moments amongst the burning flames that make it possible to believe not only in God, but also in humanity. They also suggest that even in the midst of the most unprecedented evil, there are sparks of goodness. The Nazi who gave Waisman the apple, even if for a brief moment, whether acting out of guilt, or pity, recognized him as a human being, resisting

²⁹⁰ Paul Hyde, “Holocaust Survivor to Speak on Tolerance, Understanding,” *Greenville Online*, last modified November 7, 2015, accessed May 3, 2017, <http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2015/11/07/holocaust-survivor-speak-tolerance-understanding/75374332/>.

²⁹¹ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 22.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

the Nazi doctrine of dehumanizing all Jews. Just as importantly, Waisman, who had been treated so brutally, looked for human qualities in a man that tortured him and murdered his comrade.

Liberation

Greenberg reminds us that if we do not accept an individual as an equal or engage in “othering,” we are rejecting him or her as an image of God. This idea is well illustrated by Waisman’s story of liberation. On April 11, 1945, the 6th Armored Division, comprised of African-American soldiers was the first group to enter Buchenwald.²⁹³ The first soldier Waisman saw was Leon Bass. From the date of his induction, Leon, an African-American, had faced institutional segregation. Bass wondered what it was he was fighting for until he entered Buchenwald. He saw the terrible condition of the prisoners: “I wasn’t prepared for that. I could never be prepared for that. The Nazis denied these people everything that would make life liveable. I had no idea what they had done to be treated this way.”²⁹⁴ He had entered filled with anger, but upon seeing the emaciated and ill prisoners, he understood that he shared their pain and suffering and finally understood what it was he was fighting for.²⁹⁵ Waisman had never seen anyone who was not

²⁹³ Earlier in the day, the starving and emaciated prisoners had already staged a revolt and taken control of the camp. On the morning of April 11, 1945, Buchenwald prisoners stormed the watchtower, killing some SS guards; many guards fled into the nearby woods. The camp underground resistance had sent a message in Morse code to the Allied forces and had received a message from General Patton’s Third Army of its impending arrival. US soldiers arrived in the afternoon of April 11, 1945 but Buchenwald was liberated by the prisoners themselves. The first soldiers to arrive were the African-American soldiers with the 183rd Combat Battalion (attached to the 6th Armored Division of the US Third Army). The following day, the 80th Infantry Division arrived.

²⁹⁴ *Robbie Waisman and Leon Bass Ph.D: A Story of Survival and Liberation* (Video of lecture, Center for Faith Studies, April 13, 2013, Omaha), accessed May 1, 2017, <https://nestapa.info/vid?v=65kvq9BTYVE>.

Caucasian, and as those who had oppressed him were white, he concluded upon seeing Bass, that angels must be black. This is a most natural illustration of Greenberg's definition of pluralism. Robbie, who was only fourteen years old at the time, had no concept of discrimination, "othering," or racism, other than his own victimization because of it. He ascribed the most heavenly definition one could give to Bass, not for a moment thinking that his colour could prevent him from being defined as an angel; rather, he preferred to think that the absence of whiteness must be a wonderful heavenly sign. Years later, Waisman would continue to draw on his pluralist notions in his work with the Indigenous community.

Many years after the Shoah, Waisman reconnected with Bass and they spoke about their experiences for many years to both Jewish and Christian groups. Their message reflected Greenberg's ideals of tikkun olam and interfaith pluralism as they spoke against discrimination of all kinds and their common and intersecting story. Despite his very difficult betrayal early in life by his Christian friends, Waisman was able to reach out again through Bass to a Christian audience who wanted to hear their story. His interaction with Christian students and adults and their embrace of him have resulted in a positive relationship with Christianity.

Greenberg reimagines Jewish self-definition as a result of the post-Shoah transformation of theological paradigms. This is clearly seen in Waisman's liberation story. In those first days of liberation, Rabbi Herschel Schachter, an American Army Chaplain, rolling in on a Jeep, addressed Waisman in Yiddish and explained that he was a

²⁹⁵ When Bass returned to civilian life, he returned to segregation. During his 2005 address to the Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre's Holocaust Symposium for high school students at the University of Winnipeg, he spoke of being forced to sit at the back of the bus—his military valour seemingly having no importance. Once again, he was judged as inferior because of his colour. It would take many years before the Civil Rights Act officially ended segregation (1964) in the United States.

rabbi. Waisman's image of a rabbi was that of a man with a long beard and traditional garb—and certainly not a soldier. The very idea was foreign to him, yet positive. Schachter was a liberator and a strong figure attached to what could be considered the most secular of organizations—the military. It would be an image that he could refer to later on as he accepted a pluralistic idea of denominational Judaism that was very different from what he grew up with, yet which preserved the traditions he so cherished. It also gave him a sense of ethical power and dignity. As survivors renegotiated their own identity within the spectrum of Jewish denominational practices available in Canada that were new to them, the respect for intrafaith pluralism that Greenberg refers to became for many an essential component of their ability to reconnect to their faith and observance.

Postwar: A Return to Life in France

After the end of the war, Waisman and the nearly 1000 young survivors of Buchenwald waited for three months in the camp with nowhere to go. Finally, the *Oeuvre de secours aux enfants* (OSE), a Jewish relief organization for children based in Geneva that had been active during the war in the rescue of Jewish children, arranged for them to be sent to France, Switzerland, and England.²⁹⁶ When Waisman speaks of the most difficult moments during the war and after, he describes the memories of these earlier years as a glimpse of heaven that provided him with the template to survive and to relearn how to live. He recalls coming out of the darkness of the terrible abyss after the war, knowing that what he and his friends, “the Buchenwald Boys,” had learned at home was

²⁹⁶ Without any clothing other than the concentration camp striped uniforms they were found dressed in, many of the children were outfitted in Hitler Youth uniforms. The conductor had been instructed to stop whenever the children wished to stop to enjoy the countryside; however the locals mistook the children for Germans and attacked the train, adding to their trauma.

not lost.²⁹⁷ Waisman searched for a sign of God's existence in the camps, waiting for God to rescue him. Eventually, he began to doubt whether God even existed. He stopped praying and for a time lived a somewhat agnostic life in the immediate postwar period, not caring even about kosher food. He experienced a period of anger, as did the rest of his friends.²⁹⁸ One is reminded of Greenberg's reworking of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav's words: "There is no heart so whole as a broken heart. After Auschwitz, there is no faith so whole as a faith shattered—and refused—in the ovens."²⁹⁹ At this point, Waisman's faith has been certainly tested by his traumatic experiences and losses. Yet, we will see that it is the memories of Jewish tradition that guide him back to embrace Judaism and God.

Judith Hemmendinger, a social worker and survivor herself, directed the OSE homes for the Buchenwald children from 1945 to 1947 in France. Hemmendinger describes the intense anger and rebellious behaviour issues of the boys, which highlights the survivors' return to society and their exceptional contributions to it. They would barter sheets and other supplies from the orphanage in Ecouis at the neighbouring farms and one child even stole puppies, which he sold. Waisman recalls setting fire to their beds, needing an outlet for the intense anger that consumed them.³⁰⁰ Years later, Waisman would remember these responses when he reached out to the Indigenous community and their tragic residential school experiences. Each could resonate and identify with the other; they shared a history of suffering and a loss of dignity. At the

²⁹⁷ *Robbie Waisman and Leon Bass Ph.D.: A Story of Survival and Liberation.*

²⁹⁸ Hemmendinger and Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald*, 28, 56.

²⁹⁹ Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke," 24.

³⁰⁰ *The Boys of Buchenwald*, directed by Audrey Mehler, DVD, Canada: Paperny Films, 2002.

same time, they recognized each other (just as Greenberg described) as equals, of infinite value and unique.

Waisman recalls that expert after expert dismissed them as having no future—they had been too traumatized and they believed these children could not be rehabilitated. Some experts claimed they must be psychopaths, selfish or mean-spirited in order to have survived.³⁰¹ Many had to relearn to respond to their names, as they were taught that their identification was only as a number. Waisman and the other boys had been so dehumanized that they had to relearn how to be a human again. Waisman describes his behaviour and that of his fellow child survivors of Buchenwald like “little animals.” They had to relearn how to love, how to be normal and have normal feelings. They were referred to as “*les enfants terribles*” and were not expected to live past the age of forty. Yet, their ranks include not only the famous successes such as Elie Wiesel and Israeli Chief Rabbi “Lulek” Lau, but also physicists and physicians, businessmen and artists, rabbis and scholars. Most have become devoted fathers and husbands.³⁰² They have recreated Jewish life in every sense as Greenberg describes in his definition of Voluntary Covenant.

Waisman believes that it was the love of Jewish tradition that he learned in his childhood that provided him and others with such a firm foundation during the prewar years. These early memories aided his ability to heal and also his desire to recommit to Judaism. It is, as Greenberg describes, the love of their heritage, which allowed these teen survivors to recommit to their faith. It provided a means of healing that would sustain

³⁰¹ Hemmendinger and Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald*, 8.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

them as they moved forward. Hemmendinger describes a particular moving experience, the first Shabbat after her arrival, as the boys sang traditional songs around the table, with “stern faces.” She noted the fire and intensity with which they sang.³⁰³ In his early piece, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire,” Greenberg recalls the passage from Lamentations 3:21-22: “What pulls the narrator through is the sudden memory of past goodness: ‘This, I recall to mind, therefore I have hope: the Lord’s mercies, for they are not consumed.’ The Exodus memory is sustaining.”³⁰⁴ Greenberg also points to the grief, anger and hopelessness expressed in the earlier verses (3:8-18). He is suggesting that anger, despair, and hopelessness in light of such destruction are necessary steps on the road to repairing the relationship with God, but that our positive foundational memories allow for that repair to take place. Despite their anger and suffering, the children would have had a much more difficult recovery without their foundational memories. In Waisman’s case, his doubt, anger and even rejection were followed by a conscious decision to re-enter the covenantal relationship on his own terms. He speaks of a desire to respect and honour the memory of his home and the sustenance it has provided with throughout the most difficult times of his life.

Robert Krell reflects on the overwhelming resilience and determination, the relatively low number of suicides and hospitalizations and ability of so many of these severely traumatized children to do so well:

As a child psychiatrist who has seen many children ravaged in their developmental years, some in childhood, others in adolescence, I am overwhelmed by the accomplishments of the Buchenwald children ... Where did they find the courage? Did it come from memories of a loving home, a family

³⁰³ Ibid., 33.

³⁰⁴ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 40.

Shabbat, familiarity with traditions? How did they recapture the before and link it to the after? How did they cross the abyss and make it to the other side? ³⁰⁵

Krell's suggestion, (see also, the quote at the beginning of this chapter) which contrasts the successful adaptation and rehabilitation of the Buchenwald children to that of other children who have undergone adolescent trauma, is linked to their foundational attachment to Jewish tradition. It is an excellent illustration of the Greenberg's theology of voluntary covenant.

Greenberg speaks of the rebirth of the State of Israel so soon after the destruction of the Shoah as one of the most important signs of the Jewish people's voluntary reaffirmation of their covenantal relationship. During Waisman's time in France, he would see many of the Buchenwald children begin to leave for new homes, as one by one, many discovered relatives abroad who wished to bring them to live with them in the United States, Canada, Australia, and South America. However, for other children, such as Waisman, the dream remained to make a life in (British Mandatory) Palestine. ³⁰⁶ Then and throughout his life, Israel has represented an affirmation of hope and a sign of redemption and rebirth to Waisman. He certainly remembers with longing the Zionist home of his childhood he grew up in and the Beitar group that his brothers had frequented. Waisman speaks of his attachment to Israel as one of the important ways he

³⁰⁵ Hemmendinger and Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald*, 9.

³⁰⁶ Hemmendinger and Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald*, 90. Many took great risks in attempting to get through the British blockade. Some had relatives there but most did not. Eleven of the Buchenwald children were aboard the ill-fated SS Exodus. Waisman's friend, Lulek, Israel Meir Lau, who would later become Israel's Chief Rabbi, arrived in Haifa with his brother Naphtali, on July 17, 1945, one of the many children who arrived on the illegal ships. Palestine was still under British mandate and legal immigration was extremely restricted. The SS Exodus was intercepted, rammed, and towed to Haifa harbor. Its passengers were sent back to Europe. None of its passengers agreed to disembark in France and were eventually sent to a DP camp in Germany.

defines himself today as a Jew.

Waisman's wish to live in Israel was thwarted. He managed to sneak aboard one of the boats that were destined for Palestine with the other children, only to find himself ordered off with his belongings in tow. Furious, he would later find out that Rachel Minz, a member of the Jewish Socialist Bund group that believed in a strong Diaspora, and who had worked with the children in the orphanage, had him removed. Instead, arrangements would be made for him to be sent to Canada in 1948. Waisman was accepted as one of the thousand orphans granted entry by the Canadian government in a decision reached in 1947.³⁰⁷

Waisman and the Buchenwald Boys remain strong in their ties to Israel and Zionism. Waisman and several of the other "boys," including Elie Wiesel, gathered in France fifty-five years after the date of their liberation from Buchenwald. In the final scene of the documentary, *The Boys of Buchenwald*, which traces their story and their return to the orphanage in France where they began to rebuild their lives, the "boys," now in their eighties, dance a joyous Hora (traditional Israeli dance) and sing a song that contains only five words: *David, melech yisrael, chai vekayam* (David, King of Israel lives and endures).³⁰⁸ The text of the song has its origins in the Talmud, which compares David's kingship to the waxing and waning of the moon. The song suggests that the Jewish people will always endure and is generally interpreted as a promise of redemption. The reunion in France did not end there; fifty-five years to the day that they

³⁰⁷ Canada had one of the most restrictive immigration policies toward Jews before and during World War II. See Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys 1982). The story of the postwar permission to allow in 1,000 Jewish war orphans is outlined in two books: Ben Lappin, *Redeemed Children* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963) and Fraidie Martz, *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada* (Montreal: Véhicule, 1996).

³⁰⁸ Mehler, *The Boys of Buchenwald*.

were liberated from Buchenwald, on April 11, 2000, the Boys of Buchenwald traveled to Jerusalem. It is significant to note that their journey was not complete without marking their liberation in Jerusalem. Israel represents for them, as Greenberg describes, “a fundamental act of life and meaning of the Jewish people after Auschwitz.”³⁰⁹

An Honourary Witness

Waisman’s role as an Honourary Witness for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is definitive of several of Greenberg’s key theological concepts. As a survivor, Waisman is a pioneer in dialogue with the Indigenous community and other survivors have since followed his lead.³¹⁰ His engagement with the Indigenous community and commitment to fight racism illustrate Greenberg’s concepts of *tikkun olam* and the task of religion to uphold the image of God. It also evokes Greenberg’s idea that “memory is not a sufficient value; rather it is a primary paradigm leading to obligations and actions, both ethical and ritual.”³¹¹ Waisman has also described a very pluralistic understanding of Indigenous culture and spirituality.

In the camps, Waisman’s fellow inmates imagined that those who might survive would live in a paradise, free from racism and antisemitism. Since he was so young, and had a better chance of survival, he was asked to bear witness. After more than thirty years of silence, Waisman heard that James Keegstra, an Eckville, Alberta high school teacher

³⁰⁹ Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke,” 43.

³¹⁰ Nate Leipciger is an example. See Kathleen Charlebois, “Holocaust Survivor Shares Emotional Story with Students,” *Kenora Daily Miner and News*, last modified September 27, 2016, accessed October 9, 2017, <http://www.kenoradailyminerandnews.com/2016/09/27/holocaust-survivor-nate-leipciger-shares-emotional-story-with-students>.

³¹¹ Greenberg, “Remembrance and Conscience: A Sacred Bond, Transcript of Address Marking the 53rd Anniversary of the United States Genocide Convention,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, December 5, 2001, accessed October 10, 2017, <https://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/speakers-and-events/all-speakers-and-events/remembrance-and-conscience-a-sacred-bond>.

had been teaching that the Shoah was a hoax and had a flashback of the long ago promise.³¹² He decided he needed to talk to students and share his story and tell them that it could happen again. He has since spoken to thousands of students in schools, juvenile offenders in prison and at anti-racism outreach programs involving First Nations. He is committed to spreading his message in an effort to combat hatred and racism through education. Waisman became involved with the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, (VHEC) and met fellow survivor, child psychiatrist and author Robert Krell. Despite the trauma he suffered due to the inhumanity of so many human beings, Waisman chooses to reach out to humanity and engage in tikkun olam. As much as Waisman suffered, he is doing all he can to alleviate the suffering of others.

Waisman was named to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2011 because of the countless hours he has dedicated to working with survivors of the tragic legacy of Canada's residential school system. His original gesture of outreach to the Indigenous community came about as a result of hearing about another incident of hate. This time, Indigenous leader, David Ahenakew, a former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, war veteran (Korea) and recipient of the Order of Canada, directed his remarks to reporter James Parker, of the Saskatoon Star Phoenix newspaper. He referred to Jews as "a disease," and praised Adolf Hitler for having "fried" six million

³¹² Keegstra taught his students that the Jews had created the myth of the Shoah in order to gain sympathy and also that Jews were inherently evil. He also taught of a Jewish global conspiracy, which he said was rooted in the Talmud. In 1984, Keegstra was stripped of his teaching certificate and charged under the Criminal Code with "wilfully promoting hatred against an identifiable group" by teaching his students that the Holocaust was a fraud and attributing various evil qualities to Jews. He described Jews to his pupils as "treacherous, "subversive", sadistic, money-loving, "power hungry and child killers." He taught his classes that the Jewish people seek to destroy Christianity and are responsible for depressions, anarchy, chaos, wars and revolution. According to Keegstra, the Jews "created the Holocaust to gain sympathy" and, in contrast to the open and honest Christians, were said to be deceptive, secretive and inherently evil. He taught his students the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy whose blueprint allegedly came from the Talmud. He was eventually convicted of hate speech by the Supreme Court of Canada. See David Bercuson and Douglas Wertheimer, *A Trust Betrayed: The Keegstra Affair* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1985) 6.

Jews during the Second World War.³¹³

Waisman decided he needed to reach out to the Indigenous community after hearing Ahenakew's words. The Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) began the healing process by inviting eighteen First Nations chiefs and elders on a trip to Israel. Visiting Yad Vashem, they explored the history of the Shoah as the tragedy of the residential schools and the common history of cultural genocide.³¹⁴ Once back in Canada, the CJC contacted Waisman and requested he speak to the Dene Nation at Fort Providence, in the Northwest Territories.

He had no hesitation to reach out to engage in dialogue and tikkun olam. For Waisman, the shared history of suffering brought them even closer together. Since spending time in Fort Providence and later in Inuvik, he has made "wonderful friends and has become acquainted with Indigenous spirituality. He has been among those advocating for the incorporation of the schools' history in the curriculum of British Columbia's schools. "I have a lot of hope from our young people...they should learn about the Indian residential schools; it is part of our history."³¹⁵

Waisman's intention is to help with the healing process for those who had suffered in the Indian residential schools. He notes that Indigenous children were deprived of the nurturing care of their parents, grandparents and communities and often inadequately clothed and fed. As well, he has learned that they were subjected to

³¹³ Ahenakew later claimed that he did not hate Jews, "just what they do to people," but he was stripped of his Order of Canada award. He would later blame the Jewish community for being responsible for the Second World War. "Obituary: David Ahenakew Dies at 76," *The Globe and Mail*, August 23, 2012, accessed April 26, 2017, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/david-ahenakew-dies-at-76/article4309886/>.

³¹⁴ "Jews and Aboriginals Make a Powerful Team," *Canadian Jewish News*, January 26, 2015, accessed April 26, 2017.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

physical, mental, and sexual abuse. Their oppression and exploitation resonates with what Waisman has suffered. These are issues that Greenberg says affects the world's redemption. Therefore, by helping to heal them, Waisman is helping to move the world toward redemption, according to Greenberg's theology.³¹⁶

An example of Greenberg's notions of pluralism is found in Waisman's description of that first visit to a First Nations community, in which he recalls participating in a fire ceremony. Nearby, there was a memorial inscribed with some six hundred names of children buried in unmarked graves. Totally involved in the atmosphere, it helped him communicate—for the first time with the spirits of loved ones lost in the Shoah. When he spoke about his own experience, many of the residential school survivors who had never spoken about their own stories came forward. They spoke in six different dialects from different tribes. Translators were provided with listening devices so that everyone could understand. Those in the room shared their sadness. Waisman's own experience allowed him to connect with their suffering and sadness. The ceremony likely reminded Waisman of his difficult experiences. The ceremony was very moving, yet did not in any way impose on his Jewish tradition, which is how Greenberg defines pluralism.

For several years, during the term of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Waisman toured Canada together with its Chair, Chief Justice Murray Sinclair, and met with thousands of residential school survivors in order to share his story and hear theirs. Waisman made an important recommendation that was adopted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission based on his own experience. He had never been able to speak directly to his children about his painful experiences during the Shoah, and they

³¹⁶ Greenberg, "The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History," 1.

first heard his story when he began to speak to groups of students. Therefore, he recommended that whenever he and Sinclair go into a community, residential school survivors bring the second generation along to hear their testimony in order to help in the healing process: “From the perspective of residential school survivors,” he said, “often the most important process of reconciliation that they wanted to engage in, that they needed to engage in, was to apologize to their own families for how they behaved after residential schools and to be given an act of forgiveness by their children, their spouses, their family members.”³¹⁷ Waisman also makes an important statement to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences when he explains that it was his early nurtured home environment and memory of tradition that has helped him heal. He understands the difficulty of residential school survivors who were robbed of this early experience, many who were removed from their homes as infants. Here again, is an example of Waisman’s pluralism and efforts at tikkun olam.

In the wake of the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Waisman has said that he hopes young Canadians will learn about the tragedy, which took place in their country and be taught to respect human dignity and diversity. He has also referred to his work in bringing healing to the residential schools survivors as a “sacred duty and responsibility.”³¹⁸ By giving a message of hope and encouragement that they, too, can survive and thrive, he says he is “honouring the memory of the 1.5 million

³¹⁷ Renee Ghert-Zand, “Holocaust Survivor Helps Canada’s Kidnapped Aboriginals Heal,” *The Times of Israel*, last modified December 17, 2015, accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/holocaust-survivor-helps-canadas-kidnapped-aboriginals-heal/>.

³¹⁸ Marites Sison, “Holocaust Survivor Offers Message of Hope,” *Anglican Journal*, September 19, 2013, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/articles/holocaust-survivor-offers-message-of-hope>.

Jewish children who were murdered.”³¹⁹

Conclusion

Robbie “Romek” Waisman’s message of hope and encouragement serves as an excellent example of how he has embraced the good in humanity that he rediscovered during the years he spent with the other boys in France and extended it to provide healing for thousands of human beings so many years later. He is a pluralist par excellence, whose response to the Indigenous community illustrates Greenberg’s notions on pluralism as well as tikkun olam. He is fulfilling his role as being an active partner with his “God-like capacities to complete the world,” rather than waiting for God to intervene.³²⁰

Greenberg views pluralism as a key corrective factor to the abusive tendencies built into traditions of ultimate meaning.³²¹ The abuse that occurred in the residential schools can be attributed similarly to the ultimate meaning of the Church-run schools and their rejection of Indigenous spirituality and culture. Waisman’s work reflects Greenberg’s call for a commitment for people of faith to restore God’s image in a post-Shoah world, thereby recognizing the pluralistic vision that God intended. Waisman continues to work very hard to end discrimination of Indigenous peoples, to share his own story with them, and to make common cause by bringing Indigenous and Jewish people together. He honours Indigenous spirituality in a profound, personal and meaningful way, without losing sight of his own tradition. Therefore, in this meaningful

³¹⁹ Cheryl Rossi, “Caring Canadian Award Humbles Holocaust Survivor,” *Vancouver Courier*, last modified January 7, 2014, accessed May 19, 2017, <http://www.vancourier.com/news/caring-canadian-award-humbles-holocaust-survivor-1.781111>.

³²⁰ Greenberg, “Judaism and Christianity: Covenants of Redemption,” 142.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

way that reflects Greenberg's theology, he leaves room for multiple truths.

Thesis Conclusion

As long as Hanukkah is studied and remembered, Jews will not surrender to the night. The proper response, as Hanukkah teaches, is not to curse the darkness, but to light a candle.

—Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*

How will we relate and reflect upon these narratives when the survivors are gone?

It is a question that those involved in Shoah education and remembrance have considered for some time. This thesis sought to add a new option, a theological dimension through which to reflect upon their experiences and further appreciate their post-Shoah contributions to society. It has demonstrated that Irving Greenberg's theology is well suited to express the theology implicit in the lives of many Shoah survivors, providing an opportunity to reflect theologically on their experiences both during and after the Shoah. It is a deeply Jewish perspective, but which invites interfaith dialogue through its pluralistic and inclusive post-Shoah paradigm. As we witness a global increase in antisemitism, historical revisionism and Shoah denial, the responsibility to remember, to educate, and to transmit these stories seems even more important. While those who will be left to bear witness for the survivors might transmit their stories from a purely historical viewpoint, there are situations, particularly those of interfaith dialogue, when the added dimension of a Jewish reflection would enrich these opportunities.

With Irving Greenberg's pluralistic framework, it is possible to introduce a theological reflection on the experiences and the achievements of Shoah survivors, adding a new contribution to the scholarly literature. This thesis invites new introspection and dialogue, especially on the part of Christians and Jews. While this has been primarily a Jewish-Christian dialogue over the years, multifaith dialogue is growing, particularly in

North America.³²²

The introduction to this thesis notes the ongoing struggle for humanity to respond to the impact and implications of the Shoah. Approximately 52,000 survivors have provided their testimonies to the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. Among these are more than 4,000 narratives provided by survivors who settled in Canada.³²³ Some survivors differ in their outlook from Carter, Gutter, and Waisman, and remain filled with anger, especially against their neighbours who were complicit in the murder of their families. Yet Greenberg's theology is also an apt a lens through which to reflect upon their narratives. They too have rebuilt their lives and whether practising, secular, or atheist Jews, most have continued to identify with the Jewish community and contribute to the community-at-large. There were also some survivors who for one reason or another, converted to Christianity after the Shoah. This cohort is too diverse and has not yet been examined in enough detail to allow for inclusion in this thesis. Some retained some identification with Judaism, while others did not, while still others returned to Judaism when they approached old age. Further research is needed.³²⁴

Without survivors present to answer questions, survivor narratives will take on even greater importance. A suggestion for the practical application of this thesis's ideas is as a useful tool as members of the Second and Third Generation will likely become the leading voices for transmitting these stories in the future. An example of this is sharing both the stories of the survivors and the experiences of members of the second and third

³²² See Mehnaz M. Afridi, "The Lost Stories of Muslims in the Holocaust," *Oxford University Press's Insights for the Thinking World*, last modified January 27, 2015, accessed January 23, 2018, <https://blog.oup.com/2015/01/muslims-holocaust-remembrance-day/>.

³²³ Statistics are from The Visual History Archive as of May 28, 2017. <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/quickSearch/resultList>.

³²⁴ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 151–167.

generation of Shoah survivors with residential school survivors as a way of continuing the work of tikkun olam begun by Shoah survivors such as Robbie Waisman and Stefan Carter. Even as “never again” rings more and more hollow, there will be more opportunities for healing work by sharing narratives as well as theological perspectives with the survivors of other genocides as well.

The topic of sexual violence against both male and female Shoah survivors is documented in testimony and studied by historians.³²⁵ With a few rare exceptions, survivors rarely touch on this topic in public. Perhaps, it might be left to future generations to share these stories in an effort to help to provide healing for other victims of sexual violence. Reorientation and the ongoing work in tikkun olam are front and centre in Greenberg’s theology. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the application of this thesis can be on the one hand used as a tool with which to reflect upon survivor narratives from a theological perspective, but also as a moral roadmap for future generations.

Greenberg’s post-Shoah response has provided us with a detailed guide of how Jews could begin to imagine to live a meaningful Jewish life, being fully engaged with non-Jews after the enormity of the genocidal assault and the many centuries of antisemitism that culminated in an attempt to annihilate every Jew everywhere. By reflecting on survivor narratives through the lens of his theological response, it is possible to understand their experiences, their courage and their contributions from a deeply Jewish perspective, which honours them and the memory of those who did not survive.

³²⁵ At the time of writing this conclusion, the Azrieli Foundation announced an academic conference, “Buried Words: A Workshop on Sexuality, Violence, and Holocaust Testimonies,” for the autumn of 2018 in Toronto, Canada, featuring Canadian scholars.

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