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## Repositioning The “Holy Remnant” of Israel: German Jewish Negotiations with Christian Culture on the Eve of the Holocaust

Marc A. Krell\*

\*University of California, Riverside,

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# Repositioning The “Holy Remnant” of Israel: German Jewish Negotiations with Christian Culture on the Eve of the Holocaust

Marc A. Krell

## **Abstract**

By maintaining the spiritual centrality of Israel as God’s “holy remnant,” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, unwittingly perhaps, entered into negotiations with Jewish thinkers over their continued theological and cultural relevance to German society. This paper focuses on the Jewish side of these negotiations by examining the work of three Jewish thinkers who helped shape them, Franz Rosenzweig, Hans Joachim Schoeps and Martin Buber. Despite their divergence from one another, the theological approaches of Rosenzweig, Schoeps and Buber represent a common attempt to map out the course of twentieth-century Jewish identity construction based on a shared, but at times unacknowledged engagement with Christian thought and culture. Their writings constitute a mutual opposition to the perceived failure of their forbearers in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to balance Jewish particularity and universalism, while at the same time reflecting a desire for varying degrees of mutual coexistence with their Christian contemporaries. Ultimately the work of Rosenzweig, Schoeps and Buber confirmed Bonhoeffer’s portrayal of the continuing validity of Jewish existence in relation to God during the Holocaust, while at the same time providing models for a later, dialogical mapping of Jewish identities vis à vis Christianity in an increasingly multicultural, post-Holocaust world.

**KEYWORDS:** Bonhoeffer, Holocaust, Jewish identity

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Marc A. Krell

University of California, Riverside

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## 1. Introduction

God abundantly shows his faithfulness by still keeping faith with Israel after the flesh, from whom was born Christ after the flesh, despite all their unfaithfulness, even after the crucifixion. It is his will to complete the salvation of the world, which he began with the election of Israel, through these selfsame Jews (Rom. 9-11). Therefore he continues to preserve a “holy remnant” of Israel after the flesh, which can neither be absorbed into another nation by emancipation and assimilation, nor become one nation among others as a result of the efforts of Zionist and other similar movements, nor be exterminated by Pharaoh-like measures. This “holy remnant” bears the indelible stamp of the chosen people....<sup>1</sup>

In drafting this first edition of the chapter on “The Church and the Jews” for the Bethel Confession of 1933, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Wilhelm Vischer assessed the Jewish-Christian relationship in the early years of Nazi Germany, and in doing so, insightfully articulated the very debate among German Jews since the Weimar era regarding their political and theological position vis à vis German Christian culture. In the above quotation, Evangelical theologians Bonhoeffer and Vischer expressed their theological ambivalence toward the Jews as the physically elected yet spiritually displaced people of God. While unwilling to countenance the pending reality of Nazi extermination, these German Evangelicals left the Jews with no viable political option, rejecting the extremes of assimilation and self-

emancipation in favor of conversion, thus providing a Christian theological backdrop for Jewish identity construction on the eve of World War II. Ironically by the advent of Nazi Germany, Jewish thinkers had already mapped out those same parameters when constructing Jewish identity, creating a spectrum ranging from the assimilation of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to the spiritual nationalism associated with religious socialism to the ahistorical eschatology and concomitant anti-Zionism associated with dialectical theology. Bonhoeffer had taken a major role in the Bethel Confession’s August working group yet ultimately rejected its final version in November 1933 because it did not affirm the continuing status of Israel as the Chosen People. By maintaining the spiritual centrality of Israel as God’s “holy remnant,” Bonhoeffer, unwittingly perhaps; entered into negotiations with Jewish thinkers over their continued theological and cultural relevance to German society.<sup>2</sup> This paper will focus on the Jewish side of these negotiations by examining the work of three Jewish thinkers who helped shape them, Franz Rosenzweig, Hans Joachim Schoeps and Martin Buber.

Each of these thinkers struggled to understand and portray Jewish uniqueness in relation to their surrounding Christian culture and God. They were each raised in the assimilated German-Jewish subculture of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* while ultimately rebelling against its theological attempts to historicize religion at the expense of Jewish particularity. In their efforts to prove their affinity with German Protestant culture in the Wilhelmine period, liberal

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes 1928-1936*, ed. Edwin H. Robertson, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 241. Cf. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke*, Bd. 12. Berlin 1932-1933, herausgegeben von Eberhard Bethge (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1986), 402-ff.

<sup>2</sup> On the complex and contentious history of the Bethel Confession, see Guy Christopher Carter, “Confession at Bethel, August 1933—Enduring Witness: The Formation, Revision, and Significance of the First Full Theological Confession of the Evangelical Church Struggle in Nazi Germany” (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1987). See Stephen Haynes, *The Bonhoeffer Legacy: Post-Holocaust Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 74-80, 175, n. 46.

Jewish proponents of Reform Judaism had presented a dual history of Judaism and German Christian culture in Jewish terms that demonstrated their common conceptions of humanity and ethical behavior.<sup>3</sup> Yet, they argued that Judaism had already planted the seeds of ethical monotheism in the West and possessed this idea throughout history, whereas Christianity was a “paganized version of Judaism which betrayed the message of its Jewish founder” and persecuted Jews throughout history. In fact, these modern Jewish thinkers participated in what Susannah Heschel has described as a “counterhistory” of Christian scholarship reflected in their exploitation of Christian narratives to construct their own identities, demonstrating a dialectic between fascination and aversion for Christian ideas. Ironically by portraying Jewish theology in universal terms as the seed of ethical monotheism in western history, the scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* ultimately diluted Jewish particularity as a contemporary religious community and essentially transformed it into an historical consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Marginalized by their neo-Orthodox contemporaries, these reform-minded Jewish scholars were forced to compete with their liberal counterparts in the

Protestant community for intellectual supremacy by resorting to apologetics and polemics to define themselves.<sup>5</sup>

In his 2004 book *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany*, Christian Wiese presents substantial evidence to suggest that the members of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* “with a few exceptions, did not find a partner who was willing to recognize Judaism as a relevant and legitimate cultural factor in German society and to respond to it, let alone to take it seriously as a dialogue partner,”<sup>6</sup> thus confirming Gershom Scholem’s classic negative characterization of a perceived German-Jewish symbiosis as a “cry into a void” in his 1962 essay, “Against the Myth of a German-Jewish Dialogue.”<sup>7</sup> Wiese concludes that German Protestant anti-Judaism had a “fatal connection with growing antisemitism” characteristic of the Nazi racist hatred of Jews in the Holocaust.<sup>8</sup> However, in his review of the German edition of Wiese’s book, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland—Ein Schrei ins Leere*, Henry Wasserman argues that Wiese’s evidence does not necessarily support Scholem’s thesis and should not be attributed with such significance. Instead, he claims that many of Wiese’s own findings actually indicate the opposite; a primitive type of dialogue had begun to emerge. He points to a gradually developing type of dialogue

<sup>3</sup> See Marc A. Krell, *Intersecting Pathways: Modern Jewish Theologians in Conversation with Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7. See Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1999), 77.

<sup>4</sup> Susannah Heschel, “Jewish Studies as Counterhistory,” in *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, ed. David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susannah Heschel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 102-103, 108. Cf. Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 6-7; Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 36, 48-49; Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews*, 77.

<sup>5</sup> See Christian Wiese’s portrayal of the relationship between the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and their liberal Protestant colleagues in *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Christian Wiese, *Studies in European Judaism Series*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri, no. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 341-350.

<sup>6</sup> Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*, 429.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-4; Gershom Scholem, “Against the Myth of a German-Jewish Dialogue,” in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 61-64.

<sup>8</sup> Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*, 433.

illustrated in three examples presented by Wiese: First Wiese discusses the effort by the Protestant scholar Wilhelm Bousset to educate himself more about Second Temple Judaism after being criticized by Felix Perles for mischaracterizing and demeaning Judaism based on his reliance upon secondary sources alone. Next, he describes the effort to translate the entire Mishnah into German by Protestant scholars Oscar Holtzman at Giessen University and Georg Beer at Heidelberg that was initially criticized by Viennese Jewish scholar Victor Aptowitzer as a disguised polemic, leading to a eventual recruitment of Jewish scholars to participate in the project. Finally, he outlines various proposals, most of which however failed to materialize, to institute academic positions in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* just prior to World War I.<sup>9</sup>

Yet Wasserman appears to reserve even greater skepticism for what he perceives as Wiese's claim, "...that a burden of criminal responsibility should be borne by Wilhelmine academic Protestant theology for the murder of European Jewry committed a generation later because of its alleged silence, unresponsiveness, and unwillingness to hold a dialogue with *Wissenschaft des Judentums*."<sup>10</sup> Wasserman points to the fact that the silence of powerful, cultural majorities in response to the protests for recognition of powerless ethnic and religious minorities is as common today as it was in Wilhelmine Germany, but it is uniquely problematic to use this as a justification to attribute guilt for the murder of six million Jews. When examining Wiese's book and Wasserman's critique, one can detect a certain ambiguity regarding the word dialogue and how it applies to the German Jewish-Protestant relationship during the Wilhelmine period as well as the implications of this

<sup>9</sup> Henry Wassermann, "The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and Protestant Theology: A Review Essay," *Modern Judaism* 22 (2002): 94.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

encounter for the Holocaust. It appears that both Wiese and Wasserman are willing to admit that there was some level of communication or conversation occurring between the Jewish and Protestant camps, but it is clear that the type of interaction displayed does not fit neatly into the category of dialogue. Based on this discussion, I would argue that dialogue is intrinsically the wrong focus here, and instead the emphasis should be on cross-cultural identity construction. By examining the encounter between these two groups as a type of cross-cultural identity construction, one no longer has the burden of proof to demonstrate whether or not these Jewish and Protestant thinkers were actually engaged in a mutually affirming dialogue or not. Instead, one can affirm with certainty that these theologians were defining themselves in dialectic with each other, demonstrating a tension between fascination and aversion for each other's ideas reflected in their exploitation of each other's narratives to construct their own.

I have argued further in *Intersecting Pathways* (Oxford 2003) that the Jewish and Christian construction of dueling counterhistories in the modern period is part of a larger dialectical symbiosis fueling the construction of Jewish and Christian identities in relation to each other throughout history and producing a common discourse that reflects mutual antagonism, ambivalence and ultimately dialogue.<sup>11</sup> That is why I disagree with Wasserman's attempt to universalize and disassociate the Jewish-Protestant encounter in the Wilhelmine period from the Holocaust. It is clearly simplistic to attribute Protestant scholars in the Wilhelmine period with guilt for the later extermination of six million Jews during the Holocaust based on the "silence and disregard" they expressed toward Jewish scholarship. However, Wilhelmine Protestant efforts did attempt to define Christianity by ignoring and subsequently invalidating

<sup>11</sup> Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 5-12.

Jewish existence as part of a uniquely shared history of dialectical symbiosis. Theological anti-Judaism consequently provided a clear foundation for the racial Nazi antisemitism of the Holocaust.

In the Weimar years leading up to the Third Reich, Rosenzweig, Schoeps and Buber each began to position themselves in opposition to the rational essentialism of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in an attempt to revitalize Jewish identity as a living religious community in relation to Christians and God. They all embarked on an existential path toward Jewish self-identification, yet their shared route would ultimately give way to divergent pathways reflecting their ambiguous political and theological status vis à vis German Christian culture.

## 2. Rosenzweig's Dualistic Historiosophy of Judaism and Christianity

Rosenzweig accused liberal Jewish thinkers like Hermann Cohen of translating Jewish theology into the idiom of Christian history and culture without realizing that Judaism is ontologically distinct from Christianity.<sup>12</sup> Yet in his 1921 book, *The Star of Redemption*, he constructed a dialectical theology using the same type of eschatological discourse as the Protestant thinker Karl Barth in the second edition of his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Barth viewed Christianity to be an unhistorical phenomenon that actually belongs to an *Urgeschichte*, a prehistory that is both protological and eschatological. In reaction to the development of "Cultural Protestantism," Barth agreed with Swiss theologian Franz Overbeck's contention that Christian historical existence is essentially absurd because of its original eschatological expectations. Similarly, Rosenzweig

viewed the Jewish people as eternal because of the fact that they anticipate the eschaton by their already established status as a redeemed nation. Consequently, the Jews cannot grow as a people in the context of history because that would imply that their perfection has not yet been attained in time.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, just as Barth rejected Protestant attempts to equate Christianity with cultural progress, Rosenzweig rejected Zionism as a secular movement that mistakenly equated the Jews' eternal longing to return to their holy land with a political movement like all others. Because Jews can realize the eternal peace of redemption in every moment through their immediacy to God, they do not have to strive for it politically like all the other nations in history. Consequently for Rosenzweig and later Bonhoeffer, the "holy remnant" of the chosen people Israel must maintain an apolitical, exilic existence to ensure its eternal status outside history.<sup>14</sup> While Bonhoeffer accepted the Pauline portrayal of Jewish carnality as a sign of sinfulness and alienation from God, Rosenzweig inverted its meaning to refer to Jewish "eternal life" based on physical procreation in contrast to Christian self-preservation on the "eternal way"

<sup>12</sup> Mendes-Flohr discusses Rosenzweig's critique of Cohen in *German Jews*, 77-86. See Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 2d ed., trans. William W. Hallo (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1985), 328. Cf. Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 29-30, 145-46, n. 26; Nahum Glatzer, Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 334-335; Karl Barth, "Unsettled Questions for Theology Today," in *Theology and Church*, trans. Louise Pettitbone Smith (London: SCM Press, 1962), 55-73. See also Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 297; Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 227-31.

<sup>14</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star*, 331-332, 342. See Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 241; Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 292; Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 28-30.

toward redemption through proselytization.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Rosenzweig turned Augustine's narrative in the *City of God* on its head by arguing that it is not Christians who occupy an eternal realm, possessing an "inner unity between faith and life," but rather the Jews who possess this unity by virtue of their blood that enables them to guarantee their eternity merely through "the natural propagation of the body."<sup>16</sup>

Disappointed with Prussian imperialism in WWI, Rosenzweig condemned what he considered to be the Christian-led *Zwischenreich* or interim kingdom of history in which nations of the world mistakenly claim to achieve eternity through the historical destiny of their states, failing to realize that it is already present beyond history in the very existence of the Jewish people.<sup>17</sup> While Rosenzweig seemed to portray Christianity as subordinate to Judaism in terms of its historical, this-worldly status, he nonetheless portrayed it as a necessary partner in the task of redemption based on its work of eternalizing the world through proselytization.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 241; Rosenzweig, *The Star*, 341-43. Cf. Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 36, 149, n. 83; Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 300.

<sup>16</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star*, 329-330, 331-332, 299. Cf. Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 299, n. 58; Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> See Rosenzweig's 1918 letter to Hans Ehrenberg in *Der Mensch und Sein Werk: Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, *Brief und Tagebücher*, pt. 1, 543-544; translated by Ronald Miller in *Dialogue and Disagreement: Franz Rosenzweig's Relevance to Contemporary Jewish-Christian Understanding* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1989), 107. Cf. Rosenzweig, *The Star*, 298-300, 328-335, 338-343, 378-379, esp. 334-335; Mendes-Flohr, "Rosenzweig and the Crisis of Historicism," in *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988), 154, 157; Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 291-292; Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star*, 341-342, 415-416. Cf. Richard A. Cohen, *Elevations: The Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 18-21; Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton

University Press, 1992), 105-106; David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 108; Mendes-Flohr, "Rosenzweig," 156.

Although claiming to preserve the absolute nature of Jewish identity, Rosenzweig's theology demonstrated a level of interdependence with Christianity grounded on a shared, albeit dialectically constructed discourse, and a common vision of redemption at a pivotal time of transition in German history.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Schoeps's Theological-Political Approach to German Jewish-Christian Coexistence

In his 1932 book, *Jüdischer Glaube in dieser Zeit*, Schoeps decried what he perceived to be the Jewish liberal attempt to make God into either a projection of natural cosmic forces or ethical-political ideals by historicizing revelation.<sup>20</sup> Drawing from a German Christian, cultural discourse shared by Bonhoeffer, Schoeps crafted a theological response to this religious dilemma shaped to some extent by Barth's dialectical portrayal of faith and Martin Luther's writings on divine justification and this worldliness as interpreted by the Lutheran scholar Karl Holl.<sup>21</sup> While Rosenzweig had utilized this joint discourse with Christianity to demonstrate its incommensurability with

University Press, 1992), 105-106; David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 108; Mendes-Flohr, "Rosenzweig," 156.

<sup>19</sup> See my discussion of this dialectical interdependence between Judaism and Christianity in *Intersecting Pathways*, 8, 26, 40-41. See Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 269.

<sup>20</sup> Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Jüdischer Glaube in dieser Zeit: Prolegomena zur Grundlegung einer systematischen Theologie des Judentums*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Julius H. Schoeps (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1990), 63-64. Cf. Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> I discuss the influence of Barth and Holl's Luther on Schoeps's theology in *Intersecting Pathways*, 43, 54-63. See Martin Rumscheidt's portrayal of the Lutheran and Barthian influences on Bonhoeffer's theology in "The formation of Bonhoeffer's theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55-65.

Judaism, Schoeps embraced this shared language and used it to speak to both Jews and Christians about what he perceived as a general “western history of fallenness” characterized by “the practical and theoretical elimination of God-consciousness.” Using early Barthian lenses, Schoeps viewed both Jews and Christians as having fallen away from God in sin through secularization and historicism of religion.<sup>22</sup> Like Bonhoeffer, Schoeps was inspired by Barth to set faith free from the bonds of the liberal *Religionswissenschaft* as well as the spiritless legalism of orthodoxy.<sup>23</sup> Schoeps argued that Jews and Christians had forgotten that faith in God cannot be proven rationally, but rather is “dialectically determinable as having and at the same time not-having, as knowledge and equally non-knowledge.” Together, they must realize their creaturely status and decide to respond to the divine command through faith in an irrational, unmediated revelation.<sup>24</sup>

Despite Jewish claims that he was a full fledged Barthian, Schoeps disagreed with Barth’s objective, Christocentric theology of justification in which Christ must be understood as the creaturely medium of divine self-revelation that externally acts upon and transforms the individual from

<sup>22</sup> Schoeps, *Jüdischer Glaube*, 4, 63-64, 84

<sup>23</sup> See Schoeps’s promotion of the Barthian idea regarding the “self-limitation of theological understanding and speech” that can’t be at the disposal of any individual human being whether they are a liberal theologian or an Orthodox rabbi, in *Jüdischer Glaube*, 3, 5-6. See Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 54, 55, 59. Rumscheidt discusses Barth’s radical critique of religion and its influence upon Bonhoeffer’s theology in “The formation of Bonhoeffer’s Theology,” 61-65. See Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage*, trans. Eric Mosbacher, Peter and Betty Ross, Frank Clarke and William Glen-Doepel (New York and Evanston, IL: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), 52-55.

<sup>24</sup> Schoeps, *Jüdischer Glaube*, 75, 78. Cf. Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 43. See also Gary Lease, ed. “Der Briefwechsel zwischen Karl Barth und Hans Joachim Schoeps,” in *Menora* (Munich: Piper, 1991), 111.

sinner to saint. Schoeps rejected Barth’s perception of Christ as the second person of the Trinity and consistently argued that Israel received an unmediated revelation of God’s Word in its “absolute concreteness” at Sinai.<sup>25</sup> In constructing his theology of an unmediated divine revelation, Schoeps had a Jewish model in the nineteenth century theologian Salomon Ludwig Steinheim’s promotion of irrational biblical revelation.<sup>26</sup> However, I have argued in *Intersecting Pathways* that based on his childhood exposure to Protestantism and his later immersion into Karl Holl’s Luther studies, Schoeps found a Christian model for a more theocentric process of justification in the writings of Martin Luther. Like Barth, Schoeps appeared to portray an objective experience of justification in which a person is externally confronted by God in judgment, but there is no mediation by a separate entity like Christ. Instead, the process of justification shifts to an inner subjective experience in which the Holy Spirit works within one’s psyche demonstrating divine grace and producing the realization that one “has the ability to decide to hear God’s Word” and complete the process of justification through repentance, charity and prayer.<sup>27</sup> This largely theocentric experience of justification replicated to some extent the

<sup>25</sup> See Alexander Altmann’s critique of Schoeps’s alleged Barthianism in “Zur Auseinandersetzung mit der dialektischen Theologie,” in *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 79, 345-61; Altmann, “Theology in Twentieth-Century Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook I* (1956): 209-10. See also my refutation of Altmann’s argument with my discussion of Schoeps’s approach to justification and revelation in *Intersecting Pathways*, 60-61.

<sup>26</sup> See Steinheim’s portrayal of an irrational biblical revelation in *Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge*, vol. 1 *Ein Schiboleth* (Frankfurt am Main: Schmerber, 1835), 11, 358; Schoeps, *Jüdischer Glaube*, 70-73. Cf. Gary Lease, “Odd Fellows” in *the Politics of Religion: Modernism, National Socialism, and German Judaism* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), 195, 198, 270, n. 340.

<sup>27</sup> Schoeps, *Jüdischer Glaube*, 82. Cf. Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 60-61.

divine-human encounter described by Holl's Luther. While at first facing temptation from Satan and intervention by Christ, the individual is later confronted directly by God in judgment, ultimately arriving at an inner realization of divine love concealed by divine anger which Luther attributed with the working of the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> Like Bonhoeffer, Schoeps was deeply affected by Luther's doctrine regarding the necessity of "grace alone" in the form of an inner realization of divine love to confront the naive optimism of German Idealism in human progress leading to the abandonment of a sense of creaturality. Yet not surprisingly, while Bonhoeffer disputed Holl's portrayal of Luther's internal "religion of conscience," Schoeps was attracted to a Luther without a Christocentric approach to justification.<sup>29</sup>

Schoeps was perhaps also inspired by the this-worldly Luther who Holl argued, believed in the existence of divine likeness after the Fall in the form of love for one's neighbor, despite the fact that every Christian has a dual self-awareness as sinner and saint. In fact, ethical behavior was one's God-given duty to be performed in and for this world; not as a means to a greater end of reaching "the absolute world of the gospel of eternal salvation." According to Holl, Luther believed that ethical behavior should be mediated by the political and social order, and that the state is God's instrument for preserving the gospel through its attempts to

ensure peace and order in the world. One could argue that in this instance, Schoeps found a paradigm for his theological-political approach to Prussian nationalism.<sup>30</sup> While Schoeps placed Jews in an ahistorical *Heilsgeschichte*, he also promoted their entrance into history as participants in the formation of a Prussian state. Because the Prussian leaders are representatives of God in history, Jews must serve them in their efforts to bring divine order to the world.<sup>31</sup>

Like Rosenzweig, Schoeps portrayed the Jews as having an eternal, otherworldly status through the sanctification of their blood as a result of "the grace of election." Consequently, just as Rosenzweig and later Bonhoeffer, Schoeps rejected Zionism as a secular, political movement that mistakenly associated the remnant of God's inheritance, Israel, with a "worldly-historical" rather than a "spiritual-salvation historical destiny."<sup>32</sup> Whereas this led Rosenzweig to portray an ontological opposition between Jewish eternity and Christian historicity, Schoeps actually envisioned an unprecedented intersection of Jewish spiritual and Christian historical destinies in the reestablishment of a Prussian monarchy wherein Jews and Christians could realize their common creatureliness through their service to the divinely appointed state. In his effort to establish a viable Prussian-Jewish nationalism in the face of Nazi racism and

<sup>28</sup> On Luther's portrayal of divine justification, see Karl Holl, *What did Luther Understand by Religion?* ed. James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense, trans. Fred W. Meuser and Walter R. Wietzke (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 74-78.

<sup>29</sup> Schoeps, *Ja-Nein-Und Trotzdem: Erinnerungen, Begegnungen, Erfahrungen* (Mainz: Hase & Koehler Verlag, 1974), 136; idem, *Die Letzten dreissig Jahre, Rückblicke* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1956), 73. Cf. Holl, *What did Luther Understand by Religion?*, 42-43, 53, n. 28, 86-91, 96-101; Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 54-55, 62-63; Rumscheidt, "The formation of Bonhoeffer's theology," 56-57; Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Holl, *What did Luther Understand by Religion?*, 95, 100-101, n. 71, 102-8, esp. 104. Cf. Walter Bodenstein, *Die Theologie Karl Holls im Spiegel des Antiken und Reformatorischen Christentums* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968); 206-7. Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 55, 61-63, 156, n. 106.

<sup>31</sup> Schoeps and Hans Blüher, *Streit um Israel: Ein jüdisch-christliche Gespräch* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1933), 104, 110; Schoeps, 76. Cf. Lease, "Odd Fellows," 217; Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 46, 51-53.

<sup>32</sup> Schoeps, *Jüdischer Glaube*, 75-76, n. 224. See Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 47-48.

anti-Semitism, Schoeps at times conflated his self-perceived, biologically rooted divine essence of the Jew with a dogmatic position of faith. By periodically portraying Judaism as more of a religion than an ethnicity, Schoeps wanted to show that Jews were members of the Prussian nation based on a religious decision to work with the German people in the universal process of redemption. Drawing upon a theological term used by Barth, Schoeps affirmed that in “redemptive history” German and Jewish identities converge, and blood should not be taken into consideration. Redemptive history is constituted by the efforts of all people to perpetuate the order of creation “through human history.” Schoeps argued that because the principles of statehood originate with a universal God, Jews as well as Christians must embrace Prussia in order to take responsibility for its past development and future destiny. To this end, he organized the *Deutscher Vortrupp* in 1933, led by Jews whose historical mission was as he understood it, to provide a spiritual foundation for Prussian identity by achieving a political rapprochement with the Nazi regime.<sup>33</sup> Yet despite seeking a public, pragmatic alliance with the Nazis, Schoeps argued privately that unlike the old conservative leaders of Prussia, the Nazis failed to recognize the divine origin of the Prussian state and consequently rejected any belief in a transcendent order to the world. Even though he would eventually be forced into exile in 1938 where he condemned Hitler’s self-established “political religion,” Schoeps’s theologically based Prussian-Jewish nationalism and his

<sup>33</sup> Schoeps, *Jüdischer Glaube*, 76; Schoeps and Blüher, *Streit um Israel*, 45-47, 104, 110. Cf. Lease, “*Odd Fellows*” in *the Politics of Religion: Modernism, National Socialism, and German Judaism* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), 215-17, 227-31; Krell, *Intersecting Pathways*, 46-47, 52.

own reputation became captive to the destruction of German Jewry in the Holocaust.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4. Buber’s Attempt to Create an “Interhuman” Community

In constructing his philosophy of dialogue and community following WWI, Buber drew upon University of Berlin philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel’s *wissenschaftliche* notion of the “suprapersonal realm” to describe what Buber considered to be *das Zwischenmenschliche*, an objective synthesis of the “interhuman,” in which truth is determined relationally through human interaction, ultimately creating the foundation for *Gemeinschaft* or true community that is the locus for divine realization. While at the same time, Buber criticized the *wissenschaftliche* efforts of the Jewish Reform movement to reduce divine revelation to an historically evolving rational principle of ethical monotheism that led to intellectual parasitism and alienation from God.<sup>35</sup> Yet in contrast to Jewish dialectical theologians like Rosenzweig and to some extent Schoeps, Buber refused to remove God and the people Israel from western Christian history by positing an ontological distinction between a sacred Jewish dimension and a profane Christian, political realm.

Like Rosenzweig, Buber was also deeply affected by the historical instrumentalism and the abuse of power leading to World War I, and he was also inspired to reconstruct theology in relation to his Christian milieu. Yet whereas

<sup>34</sup> Schoeps, “Der Nationalsozialismus als verkappte Religion,” *Etheto* 93 (March 1939): 93. Cf. Lease, “*Odd Fellows*,” 181-82; Krell *Intersecting Pathways*, 46-47, 52-53.

<sup>35</sup> Laurence J. Silberstein’s discusses Buber’s critique of the rational approach embraced by the early Reform movement in *Martin Buber’s Social and Religious Thought: Alienation and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 76-77, 81-82.

Rosenzweig positioned himself as a Jew in a sacred, metahistorical realm ontologically distinct from a Christian realm of secular history, Buber envisioned an integration of the spiritual and the historical in a transhistorical realm of the interhuman or what he would later call the “ontology of the Between.”<sup>36</sup> This integration of the spiritual and the historical reflects Buber’s integration of *Religio*, the divine-human encounter with *Socialitas*, the interhuman encounter to form “religious socialism.”<sup>37</sup> Just as Rosenzweig had opposed the idealization of the state and the mistaken belief that eternity arises through historical conquest, Buber criticized the belief that the spirit is only effective “...under the sway of powerful groups, under the dictates of what rules in history, that is, of power...”<sup>38</sup>

However unlike Rosenzweig, Buber argued in his 1938 article “The Demand of the Spirit and Historical Reality” that it is misleading to conclude that history “massively opposes and resists the spirit.”<sup>39</sup> For Buber, the real problem is not history itself, but rather the misunderstanding and subsequent abuse of spirit as an excuse for power *within* history. To illustrate his point, he contrasted the mindset of the philosopher Plato and philosophers throughout history like Hegel with that of the biblical prophet Isaiah who did not share the belief that spirit or even power is a human possession but rather something that is bestowed upon the

individual by God. In fact, Isaiah demonstrated that spiritually influenced figures like prophets do not have perfect souls like Plato. Instead, they are in fact powerless and flawed human beings whose mission is to call the powerful to task for dominating the powerless through the perpetuation of social inequality and enslavement. In Isaiah Chapter 6, God sends Isaiah to proclaim that King Uzziah’s leprosy symbolized the uncleanness of the entire people including Isaiah himself, yet tells him that aside from a small remnant, the entire community will misunderstand his message and persist in their disobedience to God. Hence, the prophet Isaiah does not represent God’s people over against the heathens, but rather condemns everyone in the community and is not expected to succeed in redeeming the people in the short term. Unlike the Platonic spiritual figure, the prophetic spirit does not possess a timeless, ideal truth in the midst of a profane world and cannot stand outside of history waiting for the rest of the world to be redeemed.<sup>40</sup> Instead, Buber argues that the prophet is directed to address a particular people in a particular place in a specific historical situation, and even though his message will largely not be acknowledged at the time, “...it instills the vision in the people for all time to come. It lives within the people from then on as a longing to realize the truth.”<sup>41</sup>

Juxtaposing the prophetic with the philosophical narrative, Buber cleverly positioned himself theologically between the liberal historicists of religion aligned with the nationalists idealizing the state, and the neo-Orthodox theologians rejecting the historical realm altogether in favor of a Platonic dualistic historiosophy that was inherently apologetic. Instead, he envisioned the emergence of a liminal zone between theology and culture in which the ideal only momentarily envelops the real, but leaves a lasting spiritual

<sup>36</sup> Maurice Friedman, “The Interhuman and What is Common to All: Martin Buber and Sociology,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 29, no. 4 (1999): 411. Cf. Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber’s Transformation of German Social Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 44-47.

<sup>37</sup> Buber, “Three Theses of Religious Socialism,” in *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*, trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 112.

<sup>38</sup> Buber, “The Demand of the Spirit and Historical Reality,” in *Pointing the Way*, 182.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-82

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-90.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

legacy that has universal appeal. Based on his portrayal of the prophet Isaiah, Buber seemed to agree with Rosenzweig that the Jew has been a powerless, spiritual figure in history that is often at the mercy of powerful rulers. Yet in contrast to Rosenzweig, Buber didn't portray the Jew as a purely divine entity that must abandon history in favor of an ideal metahistorical realm. Moreover, Buber tried to show that God does not necessarily reside in the fixed form of the religious institution or in the small holy remnant of Israel in the midst of a Christian dominated historical realm that is godless. Instead he portrayed divine revelation in more universal terms as a random event in which the divine spirit fuses with different individuals in the world in different locations at different times throughout history.<sup>42</sup>

Together with Protestant socialists like Leonhard Ragaz and Paul Tillich, Buber occupied this liminal zone between religion and culture that transcended the sacramental boundaries of Judaism and Christianity and demonstrated the potential for sanctification in the concreteness of the everyday world. This was most clearly represented in the public, political sphere where it was needed most to confront the growing objectification, instrumentalism and political domination of German bourgeois culture following WWI. While initially supporting the war for idealistic, asocial reasons, Buber and Tillich were transformed by the event and propelled toward a philosophy of religious socialism based on the concept of *Gemeinschaft*, a true community governed by a prophetic ethos.<sup>43</sup> They both had been

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 188-89.

<sup>43</sup> On their common goal of *Gemeinschaft*, see Mendes-Flohr, "Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology: Martin Buber and German Social Thought," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 60, no.1 (July-September 1985): 71; Ephraim Fischhoff, introduction to *Paths in Utopia*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), xvi-xx; Paul Tillich, "Basic Principles of Religious Socialism," trans. James L. Adams and Victor Nuovo, in *Political Expectation* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers,

staunch German nationalists who justified the war theologically as a symbol of hidden, metaphysical import that transcended its social brutality and political imperialism. Yet in response to the destruction following the war and the German socialist revolution of 1918, Buber and Tillich began to seek out a larger community beyond their particular religious confines with a more universal goal of restructuring the social order as a whole based on equality and justice. They and their fellow Jewish and Christian socialists came together to confront the common enemy of bourgeois culture and the political, religious and social institutions associated with it.<sup>44</sup>

The foremost influence upon Buber's ideology of religious socialism was his dearest friend, the German Jewish anarchist and social philosopher Gustav Landauer, who totally opposed the authority of the state, instead opting for a doctrine of "federalist anarchism" that consisted of a completely decentralized socialist community that emerges spontaneously out of smaller communal cells. Buber would closely align himself with Landauer's federalism by advocating a social, decentralist framework as opposed to the political, centralized socialism emerging in Russia following the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>45</sup> Both he and Paul Tillich

1971), 83-85; Stumme, introduction to *The Socialist Decision*, trans. Franklin Sherman (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), x-xi.

<sup>44</sup> On their shared confrontation with bourgeois capitalism, see Mendes-Flohr, "Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology: Martin Buber and German Social Thought," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 60, no.1 (July-September 1985): 70-71; John Stumme, introduction to *The Socialist Decision*, by Paul Tillich, trans. Franklin Sherman (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), xi-xiii; Stephen Haynes, "Between The Times": German Theology and the Weimar Zeitgeist," *Soundings* 74, no. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 1991): 24-25; Richard A. Falk, "Martin Buber & Paul Tillich: Radical Politics & Religion," in *Faculty Papers* (New York: The National Council, 1961), 6-8," 13-15, 18-27.

<sup>45</sup> Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, 49-53, 106-07, 117-18. Cf. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work*, 237-38, 240-42

stood on the boundary or as Buber described it, the “narrow ridge” between the autonomy of a decentralized, anarchistic community and the heteronomy of a centralized socialist or even democratic state.<sup>46</sup> In order to create an ethical balance between the autonomous and heteronomous forms of socialism, Buber and Tillich articulated the joint discourse of religious socialism that erected a sacred, central zone to which individual citizens and government leaders could gravitate, preventing them from yielding to the extremes of absolute autonomy or heteronomy, and integrating them together in a meaningful and interdependent public sphere. In doing so, they were dismantling the traditional barrier between the holy and secular spheres in their attempt to show that religion and culture are indeed interdependent and that holiness pervades all existence.<sup>47</sup>

In 1928, Buber organized and hosted a conference on religious socialism focusing on the universal theme that socialism is not just a fundamental change in the economic framework of society, but also a philosophy of human renewal embracing one’s spiritual, ethical and psychic existence.<sup>48</sup> In the protocol for the conference, Buber echoed this universal theme by asserting that socialism must be understood as a movement promoting the “concrete common life” of humanity and the genuineness of

interhuman relationships, finally urging the attending religious socialists to “construct a true human community (*Gemeinschaft*) in an utterly unromantic fashion, totally alert to the present...”<sup>49</sup> Here Buber spoke with prophetic passion about reconstructing the social order, admitting that it would be too precipitous to promote a utopian, otherworldly endeavor at such a precarious moment in Germany. When rejecting political romanticism, he seemed to be alluding to the immanent rise of Nazism. He was indeed prophetic as the neutral zone of religious socialism was steadily shrinking and by 1932, the window for genuine dialogue between Jewish and Christian socialists in Weimar Germany was also closing. This changing dynamic was reflected in Buber’s inability to assemble a group of Jewish socialists to join together with Christian socialists who had become increasingly Christocentric in their approach.<sup>50</sup>

Consequently on the eve of the Holocaust, Buber began to apply his religious socialist approach more earnestly to his evolving Zionist ideology. Promoting the interconnection of religion and culture, he argued in religious socialist terms that only by returning to their ancestral homeland can Jews rediscover divine holiness in the concreteness of their national existence rather than simply as the object of their religious devotion. He claimed that the roots of Jewish nationalism lay in the Hebrew Bible which promoted a type of biblical or what he considered to be “Hebrew humanism,” reflecting the need for a “concrete transformation” of Jewish life: both the inner religious life of the individual and the outer

<sup>46</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 43-45. For a description of Buber’s attempt to take the middle ground between centralization and decentralization, see Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work*, 241.

<sup>47</sup> See Mendes-Flohr, “Nationalism as a Spiritual Sensibility: The Philosophical Suppositions of Buber’s Hebrew Humanism,” *The Journal of Religion* 69, no. 2 (April 1989): 162-63; Mendes-Flohr, “Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology,” 70-71; Haynes, “Between the Times,” 24.

<sup>48</sup> Stumme, *Socialism in Theological Perspective: A Study of Paul Tillich, 1918-1933*, American Academy of Religion Dissertation Series, ed. Mark C. Taylor, no. 21 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1978), 40; Mendes-Flohr, “Nationalism as a Spiritual Sensibility,” 163; Mendes-Flohr, “Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology,” 71.

<sup>49</sup> Buber, “Einladung zu einer sozialistischen Aussprache in der Pfingstwoche 1928 in Heppenheim a.d. Bergstr.,” in *Sozialismus aus dem Glabuen. Verhandlungen der sozialistischen Tagung in Heppenheim, a.B.* (Zurich: Rotaffel, 1929), 243. Cf. Mendes-Flohr, “Nationalism as a Spiritual Sensibility,” 163; idem, “Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology,” 71.

<sup>50</sup> Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work: The Middle Years 1923-1945* (New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1983), 100-101.

political life of the community.<sup>51</sup> Buber based his ideology of Hebrew humanism on what he perceived as the purpose of the biblical covenant; hallowing every day life without any division between sacred and profane realms, a theology that he argued was magnified later in the eighteenth century by the Eastern European Jewish pietistic movement of Hasidism.<sup>52</sup>

Interestingly enough, Buber seemed to agree with the dialectical theologians Rosenzweig and Schoeps by refusing to see the Jewish people as a “normal nation in the modern sense of the word,” instead arguing that they are fundamentally a “community of faith” who by becoming secularized, had forgotten their true identity.<sup>53</sup> However, while Rosenzweig and Schoeps to some extent, argued for the separation of the historical Jewish people from its metahistorical existence as a community of faith, Buber believed that the ideal Jewish spirit could be fused with its real body politic in a religious socialist framework. To this end, he contrasted his ideology of Hebrew humanism with the conventional Zionist approach which in his eyes “regards Israel as a nation like unto other nations and recognizes no task for Israel save that of preserving and asserting itself.”<sup>54</sup> Instead, he argued that Zionism must be based on the

humanistic principle of *Gemeinschaft*, an ideal community characterized by mutual trust, concern and solidarity.<sup>55</sup>

In his 1923 book *I and Thou*, Buber argued that an ideal community arises situationally when a group of individuals share a common relation with each other and a divine center in a social framework which cannot be willingly constructed in advance. Yet while these communities are ideal, they are not otherworldly, demonstrating a quasi-utopianism. In his 1949 book *Paths in Utopia*, Buber would actually assert that the more earthly and creaturely the divine center is, the truer it will be.<sup>56</sup> There he pointed to the cooperative settlement or kibbutz movement in Palestine as an example of “an experiment in Utopia that did not fail” because of the fact that it emerged out of the historical situation of the Zionist pioneers and their primary need to work the land which superseded any singular theological or ideological doctrine. In fact, Buber asserted that the ideal community does not emerge by circumscribing a group of people within a periphery or an external border separating it from other communities, but rather grows spontaneously out of individuals who appear as radii in a common relation to a divine center.<sup>57</sup> This explains why Buber attempted to advance this religious-socialist philosophy of community in Germany during the Weimar era when Jewish and Protestant socialists had the unprecedented opportunity to construct a “true human community” situated between the peripheries of liberal and neo-Orthodox circles in each of their communities. Yet this also explains why by 1932, Buber realized that the historical situation for Jews had changed dramatically. As a result, they could no longer achieve the spiritual and cultural renewal that he had once

<sup>51</sup> Mendes-Flohr discusses Buber’s application of his religious socialist ideology to Zionism in “Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology,” 73. Cf. Buber, *On the Bible*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1982), 213; Silberstein, *Martin Buber’s Social and Religious Thought*, 249-50.

<sup>52</sup> Silberstein, *Martin Buber’s Social and Religious Thought*, 250.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 248. Cf. Buber, *Israel and the World* (New York: Schocken, 1963), 223.

<sup>54</sup> Buber, *Israel and the World*, 248. Cf. Silberstein, *Martin Buber’s Social and Religious Thought*, 249.

<sup>55</sup> Mendes-Flohr, “Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology,” 73-74.

<sup>56</sup> Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, 135.

<sup>57</sup> Buber, *I and Thou*, 163; Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, 135.

thought was possible in the public sphere of the German polity, and could only rediscover that in the land of Israel, their ancestral home. Subsequently for Buber, the Zionist regeneration of Jewish *Gemeinschaft* was essentially “the moment’s answer to the moment’s question” of how the Jews would position themselves in relation to the modern German nation state.<sup>58</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Despite their divergence from one another, the theological approaches of Rosenzweig, Schoeps and Buber represent a common attempt to map out the course of twentieth-century Jewish identity construction based on a shared, but at times unacknowledged engagement with Christian thought and culture. Their writings constitute a mutual opposition to the perceived failure of their forbearers in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to balance Jewish particularity and universalism, while at the same time reflecting a desire for varying degrees of mutual coexistence with their Christian contemporaries. Although scholars are in disagreement about the extent of Jewish-German dialogue in the Wilhelmine era and its implications for the Holocaust, it could be argued that the liberal Jewish reformers during this period perpetuated a longstanding, complex dialectic in which the ideas of the dominant culture were neither passively internalized by the subculture nor entirely distinct from them; rather, they were actively negotiated at the boundaries between the two cultures and shaped to fit the circumstances of the subculture. Whether they admitted it or not, Rosenzweig, Schoeps and Buber each inherited the ongoing dialectic between fascination for and aversion toward Christian culture exhibited by their predecessors in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Rosenzweig was attracted to the dialectical

discourse of his Protestant contemporary Barth and used it to portray an incompatible yet interdependent relationship between Jewish and Christian cultures in a redemptive framework, while Schoeps argued for an existential intersection between ontologically distinct Jewish and Christian cultures in a Prussian political matrix, using a taxonomy constituted by Barthian and Lutheran elements. Finally, Buber constructed a joint religious socialist response to Weimar capitalism in dialogue with Protestant thinkers like Paul Tillich, while at the same time utilizing this more universal discourse to cultivate a uniquely Jewish nationalism.

To conclude, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s 1933 theological-political forecast of Jewish destiny vis à vis Christian culture was eerily correct yet simplistic in laying out the possible permutations of Jewish fate in the Holocaust and beyond. When examining the writings of the Jewish thinkers Rosenzweig, Schoeps and Buber in response to their Wilhelmine forbears in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, it appears that Bonhoeffer was intuitively correct regarding the different possible directions that Jewish life could take, ranging from assimilation to Zionism to extermination. Yet by simply discounting each of these possible Jewish interfaces with Christian culture, Bonhoeffer failed to take into account the complex negotiations between Jewish thinkers and their German milieu in the run-up to the Holocaust. One could argue that based on a combination of unfamiliarity with contemporary Jewish theology and the fact that he viewed Jews through the prism of a supersessionist Christian *Heilsgeschichte*, Bonhoeffer was unable to envision the intricate types of engagement with Christian culture undertaken by his Jewish contemporaries in Germany. Yet at the same time, one could argue that this same ideal, theological vision clouded his assessment of the realistic historical fate awaiting the Jews in Nazi Germany, in the sense that the perceived theological centrality of the Jews in

<sup>58</sup> Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, 134. Cf. Mendes-Flohr, “Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology,” 77.

the West was more of a rationale for, as opposed to a guarantee against their extermination in the eyes of Hitler. Ultimately the work of Rosenzweig, Schoeps and Buber confirmed Bonhoeffer's portrayal of the continuing validity of Jewish existence in relation to God during the Holocaust, while at the same time providing models for a later, dialogical mapping of Jewish identities vis à vis Christianity in an increasingly multicultural, post-Holocaust world.