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## Re-Remembering the Holocaust

### A Look into “Judeo-Christian” Holocaust Denial

This paper explores the hermeneutical and theoretical problems associated with the term “Judeo-Christian” in an American political context. In particular, it focuses on how certain conservative Protestant groups surreptitiously espouse a political-theological agenda to replace their historical role of oppressor with that of victim. It examines a process I term “re-remembering” to demonstrate how this political-theological agenda necessitates a form of Holocaust denial.

Have we not tolerated one another already  
As brothers for a millennium and longer;  
You, you tolerate that I breathe,  
That you have become acerbated, I tolerate.

THIS POEM, entitled “To Edom,” penned by a young Heinrich Heine in 1824, expresses the dismay the author felt having read Jacques Basnage’s spurious *History of the Jewish Religion from Jesus Christ to the Present* (1707).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Heinrich Heine, *Gedichte*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Jost Perfahl, 4 vols. (München: Winkler-Verlag, 1969), 1,731, my translation.

Basnage is credited for writing the first comprehensive history of Jews and of Judaism. Yet, missing from this fifteen-volume behemoth is any archival research or notion of critical history.<sup>2</sup> The work was, as Heine suspected, a renewed form of Christian supersessionism. While Heine found it to be troubling, to be sure, he also admired imagination in the writing of history. “History,” as he wrote a few years after the publication of this poem, “is not falsified by poets. They faithfully convey its meaning even when they invent figures and incidents.”<sup>3</sup> A poet draws inspiration from the peoples’ memories and their lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*). Basnage drew his inspiration from the wellspring of Christendom. The story he told was that of his people. However, to be a true historian one must allow the poetic side of research to inspire, but one must also maintain philosophical sobriety in telling the story. Historical methodology requires a symbiosis.<sup>4</sup> Basnage drew too much on his inspiration.

Heine’s second problem with Basnage was theological. Esau, brother of Jacob (Israel), is the father of the kingdom of Edom (the title of the poem), which for Jews symbolizes Christendom. The question lurking behind this poem, then, is how can a reviled minority living within Christendom survive? Edom and Jacob are indeed brothers, but they are not Siamese twins. Their narratives are dialectically related, but not the same. Power has always played a role in this relationship.

Heine’s concern, for my purposes here, is hermeneutical. Underlying my paper is a suspicion of the term Judeo-Christian in some of the discourse occurring in our political arena today. Not that long ago, Jean-François Lyotard questioned whether the hyphen connecting these two terms even denotes a relationship at all.<sup>5</sup> A poignant example is found in how the audience of each reads their scriptures: Jews read it in Hebrew, Christians in English (or other languages written, usually, using the Roman script). Robert Alter powerfully sets up this distinction in his translation of the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai’s “Temporary Poem” [*shir hazemani*]. The poem is four lines:

<sup>2</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 81.

<sup>3</sup> Heinrich Heine, *Schriften zu Literatur und Politik I*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Jost Perfaß, 4 vols. (München: Winkler-Verlag, 1972), 3,330.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, “On the Hyphen,” in *The Hyphen: Between Judaism and Christianity*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Prometheus Books, 1999), 13–27.

Hebrew and Arabic script go from east to west  
 Latin script from west to east  
 Languages are like cats.  
 One must not go against the direction of the fur.<sup>6</sup>

Historically speaking, Jews, like the Hebrew language, moved from east to west, from the land of Israel to Europe and beyond. Like Jews, Christians followed the trajectory of their sacred languages. Latin script, like the Christians who read it, moves from west to east, “following the twin paths of exploration and colonial conquest.”<sup>7</sup> The history of Christianity is one of conquest. The history of Judaism is one of being conquered.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, somehow American politicians continue to use the terms “Judeo-Christian,” “Holocaust,” and “Nazi” for their own political purposes. Commentators have already traveled down that cynical road and I do not intend to echo their arguments. My suspicion of the term Judeo-Christian should not be understood as an outright rejection of it.<sup>9</sup> I am aware of its virtues.<sup>10</sup> However, I would like us not to lose sight of the potential political consequences, intended or not, of using the term. My fear is rooted in how the term affords particular conservative Protestant Christian groups in the United States the opportunity to imagine their own religious history as one

<sup>6</sup> Robert Alter, *Necessary Angels: Tradition and Modernity in Kafka, Benjamin, and Scholem* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall Grossman (“The Violence of the Hyphen in Judeo-Christian,” *Social Text* 22 (Spring 1989): 121) argues that the Christian side of the hyphen embodies the conquering of the post-colonial Other:

The hyphen at once couples the now Old Covenant and the ever New Covenant and disjoins the imaginary Other of the recalcitrant and now archaic people of the Law from the newly consolidated body of the saved. The sublated Jews, retained on the far side of the hyphen and subsumed into the Christian inheritors on the other, are the trace of a past that has been abrogated by the very historical passion which is the putative, yet, belated origin of “Judeo-Christian” discourse. Retained in the text and discarded in the world “Judeo-” signifies the supplement that, in a single gesture, establishes and effaces the initiatory difference which constitutes the Christian subject and its vision of the end of difference, when, through an apocalyptic reduction of heterogeneity, God shall subsume all differences.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 115.

<sup>10</sup> See Benjamin E. Sax and Matthew Gabriele, “Introduction: State of the Question,” *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 2, no. 2 (2012): 245–51.

of the oppressed, not as one of the oppressors.<sup>11</sup> Although hardly the first to recognize this problem, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote about such a paradox in Christian theology. In his *Der Antichrist*, he wrote that Christians embody “a cruelty [Grausamkeit] to all those who do not share their views—the will to persecute,” while at the same time imagine themselves as the persecuted “first- and second-century Christians.”<sup>12</sup> By claiming we live in a Judeo-Christian society, it is all too easy for our poet-historians to do the same thing: that is, to use contemporary language to reinvent themselves historically.

Why hermeneutics? Hermeneutics can be the means by which communities balance the freedom of the interpreter and the authority of her or his tradition. Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method* argued: “language has its true being only in dialogue, in *coming to an understanding*.”<sup>13</sup> Gadamer wanted to establish a method that would allow for a focus on ontology in hermeneutics—*language as the way we experience the world*.<sup>14</sup> To rephrase Gadamer’s position in relation to Heine’s concern above, it could be said that this focus on ontology in hermeneutics is a way to remember, or more precisely, *re-remember* collectively. We re-remember by reversing the roles of historical actors, in this case Christians and Jews. In the first part of my paper, we will look at how employing the term “Judeo-Christian” helps conservative Protestant Christians in the United States re-remember their collective memory. In the second part, I will explain how this shift in collective memory actually changes the way we recreate and even forget the past. Jacques Derrida famously blurred the distinction between memory and forgetting.<sup>15</sup> For him, to remember is in fact to forget. For my purposes here, I will spare you my reading of Derrida in the second part and shift my focus to the German-Jewish critic Walter Benjamin’s understanding of this process of memory and forgetting, in order to explain the potential complications of the term Judeo-Christian and how its usage might contribute to a form of Holocaust denial. Deborah Lipstadt’s research into Holocaust denial is helpful here. In her

<sup>11</sup> The term has a long and varied history in American religious and political discourse. See Mark Silk, “Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America,” *American Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1984): 65–85; Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–14.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist. Fluch auf das Christenthum*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Verlag de Gruyter, 1999), 190.

<sup>13</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1997), 446.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>15</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

book, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, she skillfully traces the potential for denial even before the Holocaust occurred.<sup>16</sup> Denial takes many forms. Recently she coined the phrase “soft-core denial” to describe myriad activities that link the Holocaust to the State of Israel, or to critics who decry a lack of moral equivalency in relating the Holocaust to contemporary forms of discrimination.<sup>17</sup> There has even been concern that anti-Israel rhetoric can be understood as a Trojan horse for anti-Semitism, and thus a form of “soft-core Holocaust denial.” However, is it possible that a philo-Semitic/pro-Israel position couched in the rhetoric of “Judeo-Christian” could similarly be a Trojan horse for another form of soft-core Holocaust denial? Indeed to many, Judeo-Christian means pro-Israel. So, how could this be? In the third part of my paper, I will explain how. When Senator John McCain, during the 2008 presidential election, reminded us that Iran does not share our Judeo-Christian values, the following day he reminded us that the Nazis, too, did not embody these values. Even by using simple Aristotelian logic—*modus ponens*—we can see that the Nazis and Iranians share the same values, i.e., they are at war with us. This, as we will learn, is a form of Holocaust denial.

### Reversing Roles: Blaming the Victims

Philo-Semitism characterizes much of American political life. America, as President Barack Obama recently remarked, has an unbreakable bond with Israel.<sup>18</sup> The most openly critical President against Israel’s policies, Jimmy Carter, who once compared first-century Jews to the Taliban, commissioned the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Despite the recurrence of old forms of European anti-Semitism in the new Europe, Jews worldwide, though most impressively in the United States, for the most part are safe and flourishing. Many Christian organizations have apologized for the incendiary anti-Judaism used in pre-modern Christian writings. Many have also apologized for historical anti-Semitism. Some have even apologized for the Holocaust itself. It is hard for many to imagine today that Jews were actually oppressed and systematically tortured and executed.

<sup>16</sup> Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 49–64.

<sup>17</sup> Deborah Lipstadt, “Denial,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Peter Hayes and John K. Roth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 560–74.

<sup>18</sup> Obama made these remarks in a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on March 5, 2012.

Yet, for many, there is still no question that the Holocaust remains a “grave human concern.”<sup>19</sup> In fact, evangelical ethicist David Gushee, in the preface to the second edition of his *Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust: Genocide and Moral Responsibility*, wrote: “the Holocaust remains ... a specifically Christian moral failure of staggering proportions.”<sup>20</sup> As is well known, churches in Europe notoriously did little to help the Jews during the Holocaust. Those who did, in fact, at times, provided staggeringly supersessionist reasons for doing so. For example, in a conversation with the philosopher Richard Rubenstein, Dean Grüber, a Protestant pastor in Berlin, explained that Jews were merely being punished for their rejection of Christ. Sweetening the position, he added that the Germans were divine agents. Pastor John Hagee, the controversial founder of the American Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, argued something similar—though in relation to the State of Israel. European Jews simply were being punished for not being Zionists. “How did [the Holocaust] happen?” asked Hagee, “because God allowed it to happen. Why did it happen? Because God said my top priority for the Jewish people is to get them to come back to the land of Israel.”<sup>21</sup> Even though the Nazis acted on behalf of God in both cases, this fact seems to bounce off mainstream Americans because Hagee is a stalwart defender of Israel.<sup>22</sup> More importantly, though, God is not punishing Jews for rejecting Christ. Rather like a stereotypical Jewish mother, God is punishing Jews for not being Jewish enough. Regardless, the Holocaust in this context remains a Jewish problem, not a Christian one.

### The Road to Denial: The Oppressors as Victims

The study of the Holocaust, as Michael Marrus argued, is disproportionately political.<sup>23</sup> How can we imagine a future without somehow betraying the past? Yet, there is another problem. What if betraying the past is precisely the goal? This fear haunted the German-Jewish literary critic Walter Ben-

<sup>19</sup> David Gushee, *Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust: Genocide and Moral Obligation*, 2nd ed. (St Paul: Paragon House, 2003), xi.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Chris Rodda, “Then God Sent a Hunter,” *The Huffington Post*, October 7, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> For myriad other examples of this position see Yaakov Ariel, “The New Face of the Missionary Movement,” in *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880–2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 270–86.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover: University of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1987), 11.

jamin. In his now oft-cited “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” he crafted two distinct notions of the future based on conflicting, if not entirely contradictory, relationships to the past.<sup>24</sup> In the first, Benjamin linked a notion of homogeneous time to the idea of progress. Herein we learn history as a course of domination in which the past is absorbed by the present and tradition is characterized by conformism. This is a history where those who have already perished are still not safe from their enemy. In the second, the future is portrayed as the myriad possibilities for revolution. Here, history contains the struggle to liberate the oppressed past, which requires eviscerating specific eras or epochs out of this above-stated homogeneous course of history. For Benjamin, then, redemption of the past is inexorably bound to the possibility of a better future. Strangely enough, as we will see shortly, Pastor Hagee might agree with this, because he would interpret a re-remembering, or even a neglect of history, as a way of redeeming it.

Language plays a crucial role in this process as well. Because Benjamin was so insistent in placing thinking and writing beyond the text, he had structurally prevented the potential goals of any philosophy from reaching a totality (*Allheit*). This need to move beyond homogenous time must incorporate all other particularistic contemporary philosophies, ideologies, and theologies in order to establish its modus operandi: one that is destined by virtue of this method to sublimate, yet also resist sublimation, in its actualization in the “now-time” (*Jetztzeit*) of language. It is unavoidable. For example, when we use the term Judeo-Christian to denote Western Civilization (as we will learn in the third part of this paper), democracy, liberty, gun ownership, deregulated free market capitalism, it enters into history and into lived experience (*Erlebnis*) by continually *being* in the process of *being read, being interpreted, being reinterpreted, and being revised*. This process, for Benjamin, should not be confused with an aesthetic one—in the realm of empirical experience (*Erfahrung*). That is to say, language is never actually *known* empirically, but rather, as stated above, is in the process of being read, being interpreted, being reinterpreted, and being revised, and the *Jetztzeit* remains pointed to a future rather than committed to a present. His fear was rooted in the possibility of misinterpreting this process as Hegelian, in that writers, politicians, artists, inter alia, have the capacity to broaden what is politically, morally, or spiritually possible in the present world (the *Jetztzeit*)—the Nazis

<sup>24</sup> Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Harry Zohn, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003), 389–400.



being an extreme example—to redeem the future. Yet, the Hegelian path operates in homogeneous time. That is all to say that the term Judeo-Christian, when used in a similar context, must forget past relationships in order to sublimate and re-remember them.

In April 1998, an editorial appeared in the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* entitled “Did Christianity Cause the Holocaust? No, despite what a biased film at the tax-supported Holocaust Museum implies.”<sup>25</sup> The editorial focuses on a fourteen-minute video in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Viewers of this film learn, the author writes, “disconnected facts and quotations that leave the viewer believing that anti-Jewish bias is the result of Christian influence on the Roman Empire, that it has been Christian society alone that has marginalized and oppressed Jews, and that Nazi racial prejudice against the Jews was in clear continuity with early religious prejudice.” The other major concern of this editorial is “the inclusion of [an] anti-Christian message in a tax-funded national museum.” If Hagee succeeded in blaming the victim, this author succeeded in transforming the victim into the persecutor—i.e., Jews have the temerity to blame Christians for the Holocaust, and have the government support to do so. In fact, taxpayers implicitly support this insidious indictment.<sup>26</sup> The editorial continues: “For all the horrible history of Christian European anti-Judaism, it was almost always a cultural and theological prejudice, not a racial one, and therefore it was at least possible for Jews to escape the pressures through assimilation and conversion.” So theological prejudice was preferable to anti-Semitism, which for this author emerged from an exclusively Nazi racial prejudice, not, let’s say, from the letters of Paul? The author’s position, though subtle, is no less pernicious. The simple theological solution for Jews in Christian culture and society to assimilate or convert as a way of overcoming their historical predicament is indeed anti-Judaic and not anti-Semitic. Yet *Jews could not remain Jews for there to be a genuine equal relationship between Christians and Jews*. The semantics here cannot hide the historical violence against Jews inspired by anti-Judaism. Ironically, the author’s position is the springboard

<sup>25</sup> “Editorial: Did Christianity Cause the Holocaust? No, despite what a biased film at the tax-supported Holocaust Museum implies,” *Christianity Today* (April 27, 1998), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1998/april27/8t5012.html>.

<sup>26</sup> This, in fact, follows a classical anti-Semitic indictment against Jews and their presumed control and influence over the state’s finances. See Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor About the Jews: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 140–47.

for an intentionalist interpretation of the Holocaust. To soften Christianity's role in the Holocaust by focusing on how Jews could escape persecution by converting simply means Jews had no right to live among Christians as Jews.<sup>27</sup> An intentionalist would argue that this is merely the first stage in genocide. When nationalism replaced theological prejudice in nineteenth-century Europe, we move to the next stage: Jews had no right to live among Christians.<sup>28</sup> In its quest for racial purity, Nazism follows this to its logical conclusion: Jews had no right to live. Notice that as part of this three-part process, whether in the nascent anti-Judaic phase or the racist and genocidal phase, the phrase—Jews had no right to live—persists.

However, the road to the Holocaust was a twisted one and nothing in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum suggests this intentional-

<sup>27</sup> Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1995), 183-225.

<sup>28</sup> Take, for example, the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte's (1762-1814) solution to the so-called Jewish problem in Europe:

Let the poisonous air of intolerance stay as far from these pages as it is from my heart. The Jew who overcomes the difficult, one may say insurmountable, barriers which lie before him, and attains a love of justice, mankind, and truth—that Jew is a hero and a saint. I do not know whether such Jews ever existed or exist today. I shall believe it as soon as I meet such Jews. But dare you not sell me beautiful appearances for the real thing. Let the Jews never believe in Jesus Christ. Let them never believe in God. If only they did not believe in a misanthropic God and in a double ethical standard [one applicable to Jews alone, another for their dealings with Gentiles]. They must have human rights, even if they will not grant them to us. For, they are human, [although] their malevolence does not justify our becoming like them. Do not force these rights on the Jew against his will—do not allow that to happen when you are present and able to prevent it. If you have eaten yesterday, but are hungry and only have enough bread for today, then give it to the Jew. The Jew hungers for it, since he did not eat yesterday. You will be doing a good deed. Still, I see absolutely no way of giving them civic rights; except perhaps, if one night we chop off all their heads and replace them with new ones, in which there would not be one single Jewish idea. And then, I see no other way to protect ourselves from the Jews, except if we conquer their promised land for them and send all of them there.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urteile des Publicums über die Französische Revolution," in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Johann H. Fichte, vol. 6 (1793; Berlin: Verlag von Veit, 1845), 149-50, trans. Mark Gelber in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 284.

ist version of history.<sup>29</sup> The film simply points to Hitler's overtly Christian language in *Mein Kampf* to appeal to a larger, more religious audience. Cited in almost every book written on the relationship between Christian anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism is Hitler's sentence that the Jews' "whole existence is an embodied protest against the aesthetics of the Lord's image," and Hitler believed "that [he] is acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty creator: by defending [himself] against the Jew. [He is] fighting for the word of the Lord."<sup>30</sup> We could, of course, quibble over the theological legitimacy or even the authenticity of such claims. We probably should. However, it would take a great deal of imagination, to bring us back to Heine for a moment, to "disconnect" historically a relationship between the claims of anti-Judaism and of anti-Semitism.<sup>31</sup> This is only part of the problem.

Obviously, no mainstream conservative Protestant authors are denying that the Holocaust occurred. They are simply replacing the actors and their roles—they are *re-remembering*. It would seem that to use the term Judeo-Christian in this context is a way to continue Benjamin's first trajectory of history, while at the same time claiming the second. Even though the Nazis were not at war with Judeo-Christians, groups can now imagine that they were. By inserting the term into the discourse, it allows for certain groups of people in this country to imagine a dramatically different tale, one that has now made its way even into scholarship on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.

### The Judeo-Christian Holocaust: A New Obituary

In the Introduction to his (very long) work on anti-Semitism, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*, the historian Robert S. Wistrich writes:

In the totalitarian nightmare of the past seventy-five years, a special role has undoubtedly been played by the political religions of Nazism, Stalinism, and Islamism. It is certainly no

<sup>29</sup> See K. Hannah Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews: History and Identity in the Museum* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1–16.

<sup>30</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1998), 178.

<sup>31</sup> See Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 26–68.

coincidence that in all three cases, a remarkably similar anti-American and anti-Jewish demonology has been manipulated in the cause of destroying Judeo-Christian values, individual freedom, and liberal democracy. All three anti-Western ideologies have shared the same penchant for conspiracy theories of history, society, and civilization; they are equally characterized by a similarly closed system of belief, addiction to historical inevitability, and an unquenchable will to power.<sup>32</sup>

Embracing Bernard Lewis's notion of the clash of civilizations, nearly every page of this thousand-page work trumpets the Manichean worldview of the noble Judeo-Christian West where liberty, freedom of conscience, and democracy are at odds with the less magnanimous east (Islam, Nazism, Stalinism, etc.). Particularly striking in this worldview is the idea that Nazism is anti-Judeo-Christian. Even more striking is not only the idea that 'anti-American' and 'anti-Jewish' are coterminous, but also that a Judeo-Christian culture is at odds with anti-Jewish demonology, not to mention the odd argument that Nazism, Stalinism, and Islamism are anti-Western ideologies. The first two emerged in the so-called West and the third simply appropriated these modern prejudices against Jews into their nationalisms and fundamentalisms as a result of European colonialism. So scholars of anti-Semitism now too are re-remembering in the name of a Judeo-Christian culture.

To re-remember is a Faustian wager. Even liberal Protestants and liberal Catholics, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, made this wager to challenge Nazism. The French Protestant-turned-Catholic theologian Jacques Maritain (who was married to a Jewish poet and mystic), for example, argued that "anti-Semitism was essentially the modern world's attack on Christ, and therefore Jews were unwittingly suffering on Jesus' behalf and consequently drawing closer to their true messiah."<sup>33</sup> Maritain, unlike in the example above, took great pains to avoid blaming the victims. He was tormented by the reality of anti-Semitism, so much so that he found inspiration in, and cites, a Jewish interpretation of a possible Judeo-Christian worldview unlike that of "Nazi-Fascism [which] says that man exists in and by virtue of *the*

<sup>32</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Frances Crane, "Jacques Maritain, the Mystery of Israel, and the Holocaust," *The Catholic Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (2009): 41–42.

machine; Judaeo-Christianity says that a machine must exist for a man, or must not exist all.”<sup>34</sup> For Maritain and others, to be present one cannot be a bystander.<sup>35</sup> To be a Judeo-Christian is to fight persecution in its manifold incarnations. Sadly, Maritain and other liberal Christians—Protestant and Catholic—remained in the minority worldwide.<sup>36</sup>

However, the wager today requires Jews and Christians to embark on what Peter Wust, a nineteenth-century Catholic, termed a “second naïveté.” Crisis emerges from a shift in religious epistemology to a less mythical place. The same happens in the fight over history. To re-remember the past allows Jews and Christians, in an Augustinian sense, to redeem it and sublimate Jewish suffering into a Jewish-Christian narrative. By now using the term Judeo-Christian we have the language to construct a reality in which Nazis were at war against us, not simply against Jews, gays, the Roma, etc., forgetting, of course, what most Christians were actually doing during this dark period in history.<sup>37</sup> This allows for a less burdensome present and the possibility of a redeemed future. In fact, in his discussion of the hyphen between Judeo and Christian, Lyotard critiques it by paraphrasing Paul when he writes: “the truth of the Jew is Christian . . . what is Jewish is what must be forgotten.”<sup>38</sup> The term Judeo-Christian is, in this context, a realization of Paul’s truth. Traditionally Jews have interpreted their plight with the famous quote from Isa 53—God’s suffering servant—as part of their own theodicy. Christians, of course, see this passage as a preamble to Jesus’ crucifixion. However, the replacement of actors in the process of re-remembering actually allows Christian theology to portray Christians and Jesus simultaneously as God’s suffering servant(s). By whitewashing the historical suffering of Jews at the hands of Christians and by replacing the role of perpetrator as victim, Christians are simply fulfilling their own theological obligation to forget “what is Jewish,” which of course is the “truth of the Jew.” Regrettably, this requires a form of Holocaust denial.

<sup>34</sup> Maurice Samuel, *The Great Hatred* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1940), 109, cited in Crane, “Jacques Maritain,” 43.

<sup>35</sup> Victoria J. Barnett, *Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity during the Holocaust* (Westport: Praeger, 1999), 135–54.

<sup>36</sup> Robert P. Ericksen, “Protestants,” in Hayes and Roth, *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, 253–56.

<sup>37</sup> Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, “Introduction,” in *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, ed. Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 1–22.

<sup>38</sup> Lyotard, “On the Hyphen,” 15.

With this in mind, I conclude by returning to the final two stanzas of Heine's poem.

Some time only in dark times  
 You become whimsical, audacious  
 And in pious-loving paws,  
 you colored my blood.

Now our friendship is firmer,  
 And yet in everyday it takes,  
 For I even began to dash,  
 And that I am almost like you.

Clearly Wistrich and others are able to identify with this relationship—"their friendship is firmer," but at what cost? For Heine, it is the cost of becoming more like them, while they remain unchanged. It seems that re-remembering a Judeo-Christian Holocaust fulfills a Christian eschatological hope, but at the expense of Jewish theological self-determination. In fact, I would interpret the final line of Heine's poem in the context of my argument above as the paradox implicit in the term Judeo-Christian: "almost" can only be understood as *prolepsis*, i.e., the differences will never be reconciled. As a result, we should refuse to re-remember.