

From Confrontation to Cooperation: The Philosophical Foundations of the Joseph B. Soloveitchik-Irving Greenberg Schism on Jewish-Christian Dialogue*

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■ Abstract

The place of interfaith dialogue in Orthodox Judaism has been the subject of extensive discussion. This article offers a reading of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's and Rabbi Irving Greenberg's stances on interfaith dialogue that situates them in a Jewish philosophical context. Some scholars have argued that Soloveitchik's refusal to engage in Jewish-Christian theological dialogue must be understood historically; others have argued that his opposition to such dialogue must be understood halakhically. This article, building upon the view articulated by Daniel Rynhold in his 2003 article that Soloveitchik's stance on interfaith dialogue must be understood philosophically, posits that in order for Soloveitchik's stance on interfaith dialogue to be fully understood, it should be studied bearing in mind the influence of Hermann Cohen upon Soloveitchik's religious philosophy. This

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article, which demonstrates the direct influence of Franz Rosenzweig upon aspects of Greenberg's thought, further argues that in order for Greenberg's stance on interfaith dialogue—as well as his interfaith theology—to be completely grasped, his positions upon these theological matters must be studied with the awareness of Franz Rosenzweig's influence upon his thought. The reading offered in this article of Cohen and Soloveitchik and of Rosenzweig and Greenberg does not purport to minimize the irreconcilable differences between these thinkers; nonetheless, it believes that the substantial resemblances—and, in the case of Rosenzweig and Greenberg, the direct influence—between the views of Christianity held by these pairs of figures are significant and suggest a reconsideration of the role of philosophy in the story of American Jewish theology.

■ Keywords

Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Irving Greenberg, Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, interfaith theology, interfaith dialogue, Jewish-Christian dialogue

■ Introduction

The topic of interfaith dialogue has been one of the most contentious issues in Orthodox Jewish theology and public policy since the 1960s, when the National Council of Young Israel denounced Abraham Joshua Heschel's colloquy with Pope Paul VI.¹ The Orthodox-identifying Young Israel movement argued that Heschel's dialogue with the pope was something that “flagrantly violate[d] the decisions reached by unanimity of all organizations” and that it was “degrading” to Jews to have to witness the specter of its “spiritual leaders [who] lower themselves to beg” before the faith leader of another tradition.²

In the same year, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik delivered a seminal address (later published in the influential Modern Orthodox journal *Tradition* as “Confrontation”) at the Rabbinical Council of America's mid-winter conference in which he argued that Jews may engage in interfaith dialogue—something many Catholics and Jews were being encouraged to do following Vatican II³—as long as the dialogue

¹ See Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940–1972* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), for more on this encounter. Heschel, however, did not enter into this meeting for the purpose of theological dialogue but to save Jewish lives; the “teaching of contempt,” he believed, had fueled centuries of anti-Semitism, and he wanted to use this meeting as an opportunity to change this state of affairs. (I am grateful to Alan Mittleman for this important observation.) On Heschel's interfaith theology, see Edward K. Kaplan, *Holiness in Words: Abraham Joshua Heschel's Poetics of Piety* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) 153–55.

² “The Self-Appointed Spokesman,” National Council of Young Israel (1964), in Zev Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2016) 219.

³ The council ended in December 1965. Twenty years later, the University of Notre Dame sponsored a Catholic-Jewish conference to commemorate the original publication of *Nostra Aetate*. The papers delivered at this conference, which showcase the considerable progress made in Jewish-Christian relations since the Second Vatican Council, have been published in *Unanswered Questions: Theological Views of Jewish-Catholic Relations* (ed. Roger Brooks; Notre Dame: University of

remained upon the plane of public policy and did not delve into the realm of theology. When engaging in such dialogue, Soloveitchik warned that “it is futile to try to find common denominators” between Judaism and Christianity, because each faith community expresses its faith in a unique way (in a “singular normative gesture”); because Judaism and Christianity have unbridgeable, incommensurate differences when it comes to their “standardization of practices, equalization of dogmatic certitudes”; and because each community is “unyielding in its eschatological expectations.” Each of these faith communities, writes Soloveitchik, “is as unique and enigmatic as the individual himself.”⁴ Judaism and Christianity, Soloveitchik mandated, may only “face each other in the full knowledge of their distinctness and individuality.”⁵ Soloveitchik went on to stipulate that, though the two faiths share historical and cultural affinities, when it comes to the realm of faith, “the whole idea of a tradition of faiths and the continuum of revealed doctrines which are by their very nature incommensurate and related to different frames of reference is utterly absurd.”⁶

Soloveitchik’s stature as the leading exponent of Modern Orthodoxy of his day guaranteed that the stance he took in “Confrontation”—that “confrontation” (interfaith dialogue) “should occur not at a theological, but at a mundane level”⁷—became the normative position in Modern Orthodoxy. In 1967, the rabbi of the Young Israel synagogue of Brookline, Massachusetts, declined to participate in a panel on Jewish-Catholic relations on the grounds that “the major Orthodox groups are following the policy of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik.”⁸ Following suit, the Rabbinical Council of America, the foremost professional rabbinical association for Modern Orthodox rabbis in the United States, resolved that

any suggestion that the historical and meta-historical worth of a faith community be viewed against the backdrop of another faith, and the mere hint that a revision of basic historic attitudes is anticipated, are incongruous with the fundamentals of religious liberty and freedom of conscience and can only breed discord and suspicion. Such an approach is unacceptable to any self-respecting faith community. . . .⁹

Three years after his address, Rabbi Soloveitchik wrote an addendum to it¹⁰ in which he recapitulated his position that “in the areas of universal concern,

Notre Dame Press, 1988).

⁴ Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” in *Confrontation and Other Essays* (New Milford, CT: Maggid, 2015) 102.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁸ Minutes of the Jewish Community Council Meeting, 6 April 1967, I-123, box 7, folder 1, American Jewish Historical Society, New England Archives, Boston; cited in Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 227.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 472 n. 23.

¹⁰ Published in *A Treasury of “Tradition”* (ed. Norman Lamm and Walter S. Wurzburger; New

we welcome an exchange of ideas and impressions,” but “in the areas of faith, religious law, doctrine, and ritual,” Jews should be wary of an exchange of ideas and impressions: “*Discussion will in no way enhance or hallow these emotions.*”¹¹ What was implicit in his original address—which contained more philosophy than proscriptive policy—was made explicit in his addendum: “We are, therefore, opposed to any public debate, dialogue or symposium concerning the doctrinal, dogmatic or ritual aspects of our faith vis-à-vis ‘similar aspects of another faith community.’”¹² Theology, according to Orthodox policy, would be off-limits; dialogue concerning “the public world of humanitarian and cultural endeavors,” however, would be permissible, “desirable and even essential. . . . We are ready to discuss universal religious problems. We will resist any attempt to debate our private individual commitment.”¹³

■ From Confrontation to Cooperation

Soloveitchik’s stance, however, was not without its dissenters. Three years after Soloveitchik’s address, his student Rabbi Dr. Irving (“Yitz”) Greenberg published several of his lectures on Jewish-Christian relations. According to Greenberg, interfaith dialogue—even dialogue which delved into theology—was not only permissible but highly beneficial. Greenberg believed that interfaith dialogue that explored theology contained within it the potential—by increasing understanding and appreciation between the two faiths—to ameliorate hatred, increase cooperation, and lessen the possibility of future religious violence. If Christians, after the Holocaust, were doing *teshuvah* (repentance) by seeking to repair their relationships with Jews—and by seeking to better understand and appreciate Judaism—then shouldn’t Judaism acknowledge this monumental step in religious history and meet Christianity at least halfway? Greenberg reaffirmed his commitment to interfaith dialogue in a 2015 statement, “To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians,” signed with nearly thirty other Orthodox rabbis.¹⁴ According to some of the other more prominent Modern Orthodox rabbinic signatories, such as Shlomo Riskin and Eugene Korn, Soloveitchik’s (as well as Rabbi Moshe Feinstein’s) ban on interfaith dialogue is no longer applicable. “Jews have real enemies today,” said Korn, “but Christians are no longer among them.” Korn, moreover, stressed that interfaith dialogue did not violate Orthodox Jewish law.¹⁵ Greenberg believed that “Confrontation” did not make its antitheological-

York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1967) 78–80, and republished in Soloveitchik, *Confrontation and Other Essays*.

¹¹ Ibid., 118, emphasis in original.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 119.

¹⁴ Steve Lipman, “Modern Orthodox Leaders Bless Interfaith Dialogue,” *New York Jewish Week*, 8 Dec. 2015, <http://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/modern-orthodox-leaders-bless-interfaith-dialogue/>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

interfaith dialogue argument from the place of halakhah,¹⁶ and Randi Rashkover has also noted that Soloveitchik's address did not refer to Jewish law, "for as David Novak says, 'there are no specific halakhic impediments to serious talk with non-Jews.'" ¹⁷ According to Greenberg, Soloveitchik—in a private conversation—conceded to Greenberg's points and did not object to Greenberg's wish to engage in theological dialogue with Christians. "Personally," writes Greenberg:

I had an overwhelming urge to say to him: But if you only had said openly what was really on your mind, then Jews could prepare properly for the dialogue. Now the Orthodox will interpret your view as stating that dialogue is not permitted, and the Jewish community will be even less capable of maintaining a high-quality conversation. However, I did not have the heart or courage to challenge him any more than I had.¹⁸

Rabbi Greenberg, in a written message to me, elaborated upon his disagreement with Soloveitchik on the matter of Jewish-Christian dialogue and interfaith relations:

[Rabbi Soloveitchik and I] never discussed the relationship of Judaism and Christianity when I learned with him. I was struck by his connection with neo-Orthodox Protestant thinkers, as testified by his footnotes in *Halakhic Man* but we never talked about the issue; nor did he lecture/teach on this. By the time he came out with *Confrontation*, I was too deep into the dialogue to go back. Although I maintain that he was not that opposed to theological conversation with Christianity as the RCA and David Berger have interpreted him. This is described in *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*. So I can't say that he had much impact on me in this area. Although Soloveitchik did not have much influence—pro or con—on my attitude toward Christianity, the Rav's emphasis that Judaism was a world religion (implying a feeling of peer and facing common issues with Christianity) did influence me a lot.¹⁹

The place of interfaith dialogue in Orthodox Judaism, and the matter of Orthodox stances to interfaith theology more generally, have been the subject of extensive discussion.²⁰ What this article offers, by contrast, is a reading of Soloveitchik's

¹⁶ Irving Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2004) 13.

¹⁷ Randi Rashkover, "Jewish Responses to Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Look Ahead to the Twenty-First Century," *CrossCurrents* 50 (2000) 211–20, at 214, citing David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 23.

¹⁸ Greenberg: *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 13–14.

¹⁹ Irving Greenberg, personal communication to author, 13 Dec. 2018.

²⁰ See, e.g., Rashkover, "Jewish Responses to Jewish-Christian Dialogue"; Reuven Kimelman, "Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel on Jewish-Christian Relations," *Modern Judaism* 24 (2004) 251–71; Yigal Sklarin, "'Rushing in Where Angels Fear to Tread': Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rabbinical Council of America, Modern Orthodox Jewry and the Second Vatican Council," *Modern Judaism* 29 (2009) 351–85; Yoel Finkelman, "Religion and Public Life in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 13.3–4 (2001) 41–71; John T. Pawlikowski, "The Evolution of Christian-Jewish Dialogue," *Shofar* 2.2 (1985) 44–51; and Eugene Korn, "The Man of Faith and Religious Dialogue: Revisiting 'Confrontation,'" *Modern Judaism* 25 (2005) 290–315.

and Greenberg's stances on interfaith dialogue that situates them in a Jewish philosophical context and which can perhaps explain why they took the divergent stances they did. Certain scholars have argued that Soloveitchik's refusal to engage in Jewish-Christian theological dialogue must be understood historically;²¹ others have argued that his "no" to such dialogue must be understood halakhically;²² and still others have argued that *Confrontation* should be understood politically²³ and even psychologically.²⁴ This article builds upon the view that Soloveitchik's stance on interfaith dialogue must be understood philosophically,²⁵ and posits that in order for Soloveitchik's stance on interfaith dialogue to be fully understood, it should be studied bearing in mind the influence of Hermann Cohen upon Soloveitchik's religious philosophy. This article, which unveils new, yet-to-be-published materials demonstrating the direct influence of Franz Rosenzweig upon aspects of Greenberg's thought, further argues that Greenberg's epistemological pluralism and approach to interfaith dialogue bear striking similarities to the thought and theology of Rosenzweig,²⁶ and thus, in order for Greenberg's stance on interfaith dialogue—as

²¹ Angela West, "Soloveitchik's 'No' to Interfaith Dialogue," *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 47.2 (2014) 95–106, asserts that Soloveitchik rebuffed opportunities for dialogue with Christians as a result of what he (West conjectures) believed was Christianity's failure to repent adequately for their historic oppression of Jews. This assertion, in light of the fact that Soloveitchik was well aware of Greenberg's endeavors in Jewish-Christian dialogue—and thus aware of the many Catholic Church leaders and Protestant theologians who were reaching out to Jewish leaders such as Greenberg precisely in order to perform such *teshuvah*—appears untenable.

²² Joseph H. Ehrenkranz, "'Confrontation,' Religious Freedom, and Theological Dialogue" (paper presented at the Revisiting "Confrontation" After Forty Years conference, Boston, 23 Nov. 2003, https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/center/conferences/soloveitchik/soj_ehrenkranz.htm) implies that Soloveitchik considered Christianity to be *avodah zarah* (idolatry), a claim that is not only unprovable but that is belied by the fact that Soloveitchik favorably refers to the work of Protestant theologians in his writings—references which would be unimaginable if Soloveitchik believed that such theologians were idolatrous. Similarly unimaginable, if Soloveitchik indeed maintained such a view, would be how Soloveitchik would have been able to halakhically justify his presentation of *The Lonely Man of Faith* to a Christian audience at St. John's Catholic Seminary in Brighton, MA. Soloveitchik, moreover, was surely well aware of the medieval Jewish scholar ha-Meiri's position that Judaism's fellow monotheistic faiths are not idolatrous.

²³ David Hartman, *Love and Terror in the God Encounter: The Theological Legacy of Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (vol. 1; Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2001) ch. 5.

²⁴ David Singer and Moshe Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik: Lonely Man of Faith," *Modern Judaism* 2 (1982) 227–72, at 255, assert that Soloveitchik's psychological struggles with his Lithuanian conservatism caused him to become concerned "over what they would say in 'Brisk.'"

²⁵ Daniel Rynhold, "The Philosophical Foundations of Soloveitchik's Critique of Interfaith Dialogue," *HTR* 96 (2003) 101–20, argues compellingly that Soloveitchik's opposition to interfaith dialogue should be understood as an outgrowth of his neo-Kantianism, particularly as articulated in *The Halakhic Mind*.

²⁶ Mary C. Boys speculates that Soloveitchik's and Greenberg's attitudes toward Christianity may have been influenced by the amount of contact they each had with Christians. Soloveitchik had relatively little contact with Christians and thus may have been more swayed by the general rabbinic and medieval bias against Christianity, whereas Greenberg—like Rosenzweig before him—had close relationships with Christian thinkers, which may have led him to form his more favorable impressions of Christianity (Mary Boys, written communication to author, 4 May 2018).

well as his interfaith theology—to be completely grasped, his positions upon these theological matters must be studied with the awareness of Franz Rosenzweig’s influence upon Greenberg’s thought. The reading offered in this article of Cohen and Soloveitchik and of Rosenzweig and Greenberg does not purport to minimize the irreconcilable differences between these thinkers; nonetheless, it believes that the substantial resemblances—and, in the case of Rosenzweig and Greenberg, the direct influence—between the views of Christianity held by these pairs of figures are significant and suggest a reconsideration of the role of philosophy in the story of American Jewish theology.

Soloveitchik wrote his doctoral dissertation on Cohen’s *Logic of Pure Cognition* (*Das reine Denken und die Seinskonstituierung bei Hermann Cohen*, 1932, still untranslated²⁷), studying Cohen as a neo-Kantian (Cohen was the founder of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism, the beginnings of which date to 1871, when Cohen published his *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* [*Kant’s Theory of Experience*]) and offering a deep analysis of Cohen’s epistemology, accompanied by a strong critique. Soloveitchik found tremendous support in Cohen’s *Logic of Pure Cognition* for his own philosophy, and also found within its epistemic idealism a way of articulating the cognitive quality of halakhic life.²⁸ Soloveitchik’s thought, however, is not Cohenian in all or even many respects. Tragedy has little place within Cohen’s Judaism, which is a religion of hope. (Alan Mittleman has called Cohen the “predominant [Jewish] philosopher of hope.”²⁹) For Soloveitchik, however, Judaism—while being far removed from the ethos of fatalistic Greek tragedy—still contains important elements of tragedy; in “Confrontation,” he speaks of “the human tragic destiny” that unfolds when man becomes aware of “his inner incongruity and complete alienation from his environment.”³⁰ Soloveitchik was also much more at home with romantic³¹ and existential modes of thought than was Cohen.³² Existentialism pervades “Confrontation”; a statement such as “each human being believes both in an existential community, surrounded by friends,

²⁷ Reinier Munk has reportedly been working on a translation.

²⁸ See, e.g., Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (trans. Lawrence Kaplan; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983) 153 n. 80.

²⁹ Oral communication.

³⁰ Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” 90. Soloveitchik insists that, while striving for conquest and victory, man must come to terms with retreat and defeat—with “the simple tragic fact that he is finite and mortal”—an inescapable dimension of human existence (Joseph Soloveitchik, “Majesty and Humility,” *Tradition* 17:2 [1978] 29). On the sense of tragedy in *The Lonely Man of Faith*, see Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” 2 and 101–2. R. Jonathan Sacks has also commented upon the tragic sensibility resonant in Soloveitchik’s thought, particularly as is manifest in *The Lonely Man of Faith* (Sacks, *Traditional in an Untraditional Age: Essays on Modern Jewish Thought* [London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1990] 299).

³¹ See, e.g., Moshe Sokol, “Transcending Time: Elements of Romanticism in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” *Modern Judaism* 30 (2010) 233–46, at 241.

³² See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992) 95, 97.

and in a state of existential loneliness and tension”³³ would be anathema to Cohen. Still, the overriding thrust of Soloveitchik’s thought is Cohenian in its neo-Kantian idealism, in its desire to be less historical and more Platonic, in its sentiment that we can never truly be at home in the world,³⁴ and in its reverence for rationality.³⁵

Soloveitchik’s Cohenianism is evident early on in “Confrontation,” when he speaks of the “new I-awareness,” the “self-discovery” of man, which comes about as a result of his discovery of a “non-I,” of God.³⁶ This is a recapitulation of Cohen’s conception of the uniqueness of the human, which emerged, Cohen believes—and works in tandem with—human beings’ discovery of the one unique God. Soloveitchik, like Cohen, similarly valorizes the intellectual, rational aptitude of the human as the preeminent human faculty, believing that “the most miraculous of all human gestures [is] the cognitive.”³⁷

Most relevant for our purposes is Soloveitchik’s Cohenianism in regard to his attitude toward Christianity. Though Cohen admired Protestantism, he only expresses his esteem for the faith insofar as he saw the Reformation as a step closer toward Judaism, becoming more Jewish than Catholicism ever was or ever could be. Cohen viewed Catholicism as pantheistic, and he believed that its

³³ *Ibid.*, 98. On existentialist and Kierkegaardian elements of Soloveitchik’s thought, see Michael Oppenheim, “Kierkegaard and Soloveitchik,” *Judaism* 37:1 (1988) 29–40, and David D. Possen, “J.B. Soloveitchik: Between Neo-Kantianism and Kierkegaardian Existentialism,” in *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology; Tome III: Catholic and Jewish Theology* (ed. Jon Stewart; Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources 10; Farnham: Ashgate, 2012) 189–210.

³⁴ See, e.g., Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, 87: “Man . . . is commanded to move on before he manages to strike roots . . . and so the ontological loneliness of man persists. Verily, ‘A straying Aramean was my father.’”

³⁵ On the impact of Cohen’s philosophy upon Soloveitchik’s thought, see Lawrence Kaplan, “Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik’s Philosophy of Halakhah,” *The Jewish Law Annual* 7 (1988) 139–97; idem, “Hermann Cohen and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Repentance,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 13 (2004) 213–58; and idem, “Hermann Cohen in Disguise—Review: Dov Schwartz, *The Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*,” *Modern Judaism* 33 (2013) 75–97. Dov Schwartz reads *Halakhic Man* in a Cohenian manner in *Religion or Halakhah: The Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (trans. Batya Stein; vol. 1; Leiden: Brill, 2007) ch. 8. More recently, Daniel Rynhold and Michael J. Harris have read Soloveitchik not through the more frequently applied neo-Kantian and existentialist lenses but through a Nietzschean lens; Daniel Rynhold and Michael J. Harris, *Nietzsche, Soloveitchik, and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Though Rynhold and Harris argue that Soloveitchik may be aptly read and understood through the lens of Nietzschean perspectivism, they also note that even Nietzschean perspectivism itself “can be seen to have Kantian roots” (*ibid.*, 32 n. 14, citing R. Lanier Anderson, “Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism,” *Synthese* 115 [1998] 1–32, esp. 21–25). See also Rynhold and Harris, *Nietzsche, Soloveitchik, and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy*, 49 (discussing the obvious limitations of a Nietzsche-Soloveitchik comparison). Rynhold and Harris also note the Cohenian vectors in Soloveitchik’s thought, such as “the notion of the ideal as an ever-existent eschatological ‘ought’ but a never-actually-existent ‘is.’ For Soloveitchik, human beings ‘can never find complete self-realization and fulfillment’” (*ibid.*, quoting Joseph Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed: Essays on Family Relationships* [ed. David Shatz and Joel B. Wolowelsky; Jersey City: Ktav, 2000] 22).

³⁶ Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” 90.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

sacramentalism was a species of superstitious, magical thinking inimical to the über-rationalist religion that is Judaism; in his view, Protestantism was a kind of Judaized Christianity.³⁸ (This is the sentiment Cohen aims to convey by writing that “Maimonides exemplifies the spirit of Protestantism in medieval Judaism”³⁹—that Maimonides’s philosophy is akin to Protestantism—and vice versa—in its focus on ethics⁴⁰ and in its spurning of sacramentalism and magical thinking. Cohen also favored Protestantism over Catholicism in part due to the latter’s adherence to ritual and the former’s abandonment of it.) Cohen otherwise did not think very highly of Christianity, and in parts of “Confrontation,” Soloveitchik revealed that neither did he. In the beginning of the essay, Soloveitchik gestures cordially toward Christianity, acknowledging its influence in shaping Western civilization.⁴¹ But Soloveitchik later recapitulates the invidious rabbinic comparison of Christianity to the biblical personage Esau, writing that the Jewish representatives who take it upon themselves to meet with church officials “should be given instructions similar to those enunciated by our patriarch Jacob when he sent his agents to his brother Esau.”⁴² Choosing still to understand Christianity as “the world of Esau,”⁴³ instead of as an offshoot—and part of—Jacob/Israel (as Greenberg does), evidences a spiteful, tit-for-tat interfaith theology: if you believe in supercessionism, we’ll believe that you’re as morally corrupt as the spiritually spurned Esau. Although Soloveitchik occasionally cites Christian theologians in his essays, an anti-Christian sentiment is

³⁸ Cohen, as Alan Mittleman has observed, “postulated a profound affinity” between Judaism and (German) Protestantism. Cohen believed that both cultures “mirror one another in complex ways and can recognize each other in the other’s eyes” (Alan Mittleman, “‘The Jew in Christian Culture’ by Hermann Cohen: An Introduction and Translation,” *Modern Judaism* 23 [2003] 51–73, at 53). Cohen also believed German Protestantism to be in accord with Judaism on account of the former’s “propheticism” as well as its “inwardness of faith” and its esteem of individuality (*ibid.*, 56). Cohen believed that Judaism and “Germanism” (“*Deutschtum*”) were separate but complementary, similar to his view of the relationship between Platonism and Prophetism. On Cohen’s belief that Judaism and “Germanism” (“*Deutschtum*”) not only shared many affinities but carried with them the potential to act as the elixirs for humanity more generally, see Hermann Cohen, *Deutschtum und Judentum. Mit grundlegenden Betrachtungen über Staat und Internationalismus*, in *idem, Jüdische Schriften* (ed. Bruno Strauss, with an introduction by Franz Rosenzweig; 3 vols.; Berlin: Schwetschke, 1924) 2:237–301.

³⁹ Hermann Cohen, “German Humanism and Messianism,” in *Reason and Hope: Selections from the Jewish Writings of Hermann Cohen* (ed. and trans. Eva Jospé; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1993) 178.

⁴⁰ This is a particularly Cohenian reading of Maimonides that most scholars would likely reject. Cohen has indeed been accused of skewing Maimonides to fit his idealistic, ethics-based Jewish philosophical agenda (see, e.g., Eliezer Berkovits, *Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism* [New York: Ktav, 1974] 21–23, and Shlomo Pines, *Guide of the Perplexed* [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963] translator’s introduction, cxxii). But, as George Kohler has observed, Steven Schwarzschild has been able for the most part to defend Cohen from his critics on this front (George Y. Kohler, introduction to Steven S. Schwarzschild, *The Tragedy of Optimism: Writings on Hermann Cohen* [ed. George Y. Kohler; Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018] xxi–xxii).

⁴¹ Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” 106–7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 110–11.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 111.

unmistakable and pervasive in his writings, to such an extent that Lawrence Kaplan, the translator of the standard English edition of Soloveitchik's *Halakhic Man*, made sure in the very first page of his translator's preface to call attention to "the clearly anti-Christian thrust" of Soloveitchik's signature work⁴⁴—remarkably resonant of the clearly anti-Christian thrust of Hermann Cohen's religious philosophy.

A perusal of *Halakhic Man* bears out Kaplan's judgment.⁴⁵ How Soloveitchik's occasionally favorable-seeming citations of Christian theologians can be squared with his unfavorable view of Christianity has been a matter that has been noted and discussed in Soloveitchik scholarship.⁴⁶ Cohen too, in spite of his negative view of Christianity, also made use of Christian motifs in his works, as Michah Brumlik has observed.⁴⁷ Perhaps it can be suggested that Cohen and Soloveitchik, in spite of their unfavorable views of Christianity, resorted to Christian motifs and referred to Christian theologians in their writings simply because Christian motifs were so pervasive in European culture and Western collective consciousness and were thus ways through which Cohen realized he could make his brand of neo-Kantian Judaism understood—it was a way, as Brumlik puts it, for Cohen to show his fellow Germans "that the modern Kantian Israelites share the fundamental assumptions of modern Christianity."⁴⁸ (Why it would be a positive for Cohen to demonstrate that modern Jews share the same assumptions as Christianity—a religion he mostly despised—is another, highly perplexing, matter; Brumlik acknowledges that the cost of Cohen defending Judaism through such a Christian lens was "the surrender of the theoretical autonomy of Judaism" and the ceding to Christianity of the prerogative of "determining the validity of prophetic ethics."⁴⁹) In the case of Soloveitchik,

⁴⁴ Lawrence Kaplan, translator's preface to Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, vii.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, 142 (polemicizing against conceiving of religion through characteristically Christian terms—"Religion is not . . . a refuge of grace and mercy"); and *ibid.*, more explicitly: "The popular ideology [which Soloveitchik strongly opposes] contends that the religious experience is tranquil and neatly ordered, an enchanted stream for embittered souls . . . this ideology is embedded in the most ancient strata of Christianity. . . ." Soloveitchik reaffirmed his negative views of Christianity in a 1972 lecture that has only recently been published: "Christians . . . developed the theory of contempt for this world . . . Judaism did not . . ." (*Halakhic Morality: Essays on Ethics and Masorah* [ed. Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler; New Milford, CT: Toras HoRav Foundation/Maggid Books, 2017] 204). Indeed, much of *Halakhic Man*'s critique of the *homo religiosus* can be viewed as a veiled polemic against Christianity (or at least against what Soloveitchik perceived to be Christianity's otherworldliness).

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Hartman, *Love and Terror in the God Encounter*, ch. 5, esp. 134–36.

⁴⁷ Michah Brumlik, "1915: In *Deutschum und Judentum* Hermann Cohen Applies Neo-Kantian Philosophy to the German Jewish Question," in *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture 1096–1996* (ed. Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 336–42, at 337.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* The theoretical autonomy of Judaism was just as central for Soloveitchik (see, e.g., *Halakhic Man*, 79 [stressing the importance of creativity and human autonomy even within the seemingly heteronomous halakhic system]) as it was for Cohen, both of whom were loathe to surrender it. See also *Halakhic Man*, 135. On the importance for Soloveitchik of human autonomy within the divine halakhic system, see *idem*, "Mah Dodekh mi-Dod," in *Divrei Hagui ve-Ha'arakah*

the roster of Jewish thinkers who were writing seriously, systematically, and sophisticatedly about theology was considerably thin, and thus, in order to situate his own serious, sophisticated (if nonsystematic) theological writings within the context of serious theology of his time, all he had to work with were Christian theologians; serious, sophisticated Jewish theology, as it would develop after the Second World War, had yet to emerge fully when Soloveitchik was writing *Halakhic Man* and *Lonely Man of Faith*. Additionally, the Jewish thinkers who were beginning to delve seriously into theology during the early and middle part of the twentieth century—Mordecai Kaplan, Eugene Borowitz, Emil Fackenheim, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Richard Rubenstein—were all non-Orthodox theologians and thus “unsafe” for an Orthodox rabbi of the stature of Soloveitchik to cite. Why Orthodox thinkers to this day are more comfortable referring to Christian and other non-Jewish theologians than they are referring to non-Orthodox Jewish theologians is a complex topic touching upon matters of intradenominational politics and a tremendous reticence upon the part of Orthodox theologians to admit to shared affinities with non-Orthodox thinkers.⁵⁰ This topic, however, is one that requires greater analysis and is beyond the scope of this paper to address adequately.

Cohen believed that Judaism (at least prophetic Judaism) was at some level the manifestation of this neo-Kantian, universal religious ethic, which, if all persons were properly attuned to it, could be discovered and then practiced by all people.⁵¹

(Jerusalem, 1982) 57–98, at 70–85; and on the centrality of autonomy in the religious realm in general for Soloveitchik, see idem, *The Halakhic Mind* (New York: Seth Press, 1986). See also Jonathan Sacks, “Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik’s Early Epistemology: A Review of ‘The Halakhic Mind,’” *Tradition* 23:3 (1988) 75–87, at 78, and Alex S. Ozar, “Yeridah Le-Zorekh Aliyyah: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Autonomy and Submission,” *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 17 (2016) 150–73.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Daniel Ross Goodman, “The Orthodoxization of Non-Orthodox Thought” (paper presented at Georgetown University’s Life, Legacy, and Work of Mordecai Kaplan conference, Washington, DC, 3 March 2014, <http://kaplancenter.org/panel-kaplan-and-other-important-jewish-approaches-day-2-pt-4>), exploring the ways in which Orthodox theologians have made use of concepts and motifs found in the work of non-Orthodox thinkers without crediting the latter’s influence upon the former.

⁵¹ Cohen promulgated his theory of Jewish universalism, Michah Brumlik has observed, as a response to the influential German nationalist historian Heinrich von Treitschke’s anti-Semitism. Brumlik also notes that Cohen’s theory of Jewish universalism is not only rooted in neo-Kantianism but is a response to Hegel’s questions concerning historical progress; Cohen “reformulates Hegel’s questions as How is it possible for reason to become actualized in history? and How must we behave?” (Brumlik, “1915: In *Deutschtum und Judentum*,” 337; see also 340, noting that Cohen’s philosophy of history hardly differed from Hegel’s). Klaus Christian Köhnke, in attempting to shed light on certain aspects of neo-Kantianism that have been underplayed, has also remarked upon the ways in which the various schools of neo-Kantianism, despite arising during the *post-Hegel mortuum* era of the 19th-cent. German academy—the period during which most philosophies of history, especially Hegelian, were being rejected—nonetheless contain a nonnegligible amount of Hegel in them (Klaus Christian Köhnke, *The Rise of Neo-Kantianism: German Academic Philosophy between Idealism and Positivism* [trans. R. J. Hollingdale; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]). Indeed, Rosenzweig characterized his friend and mentor Cohen as a “new Hegel” and wrote of the “Hegelianism of this neo-Kantian” (Alexander Altmann, “Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy: An Introduction to Their ‘Letters on Judaism and Christianity,’” *JR* 24.4 (1944)

Protestant Christianity was admirable in his eyes only insofar as it was a step closer to prophetic Judaism; Cohen, though, otherwise did not hold Christianity (or any other religion, for that matter) in very high regard. The doctrine of the trinity was especially problematic for Cohen, who called it a “permissible pantheism,”⁵² insofar as it contravened the core Cohenian principles of oneness (*Einheit*) and distinctiveness (*Einzigkeit*). Cohen strongly believed that it is the Jewish “Idea of God”—the pure, unadulterated conception of the one unique Jewish God—that “distinguishes Christian from Jewish monotheism.”⁵³ Andrea Poma has emphasized the importance of the uniqueness of God in Cohen’s philosophy, stating that for Cohen this principle was one of Judaism’s “two defining features” (the other being messianism) and its “special contribution to German culture.”⁵⁴ As Cohen himself writes, “In Judaism, God and man maintain their respective distinctiveness. . . . In contradistinction, both Christianity and pantheism teach that God does not remain God, and man does not remain man.”⁵⁵ For Cohen, pantheism is “the antithesis of Judaism and the philosophical error par excellence.”⁵⁶

In light of the neo-Kantian, Cohenian spirit that animates much of Soloveitchik’s religious philosophy,⁵⁷ and in light of the conspicuous resemblances between their

258–70, at 265, quoting Rosenzweig’s *Kleine Schriften* [Berlin, 1937] 305).

⁵² Alan Mittleman, “‘The Jew in Christian Culture,’ 56.

⁵³ Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften*, 1:76.

⁵⁴ Andrea Poma, “Herman Cohen: Judaism and Critical Idealism” (trans. John Denton), in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy* (ed. Michael L. Morgan and Peter Eli Gordon; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 80–101, at 84. On the nonnegotiable importance of monotheism for Cohen, see also *ibid.*, 89. Rosenzweig recorded some of the most striking statements made by Cohen during his lectures on the matter of what Cohen believed to be the most consequential fundamental difference between Judaism and Christianity, that of the two respective faiths’ conception of monotheism: “God be what He be, but He must be One”; “On this point we cannot come to an understanding with Christianity; the unity of God, the most abstract idea, . . . ‘for whose sake we are killed all the day’” (Ps. 44:22) (Rosenzweig, *Kleine Schriften*, as quoted in Altmann, “Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy,” 266).

⁵⁵ Hermann Cohen, “The Holy Spirit,” in *Reason and Hope*, 150–51.

⁵⁶ Poma, “Hermann Cohen: Judaism and Critical Idealism,” 91, citing H. Cohen, *Innere Beziehungen der Kantischen Philosophie zum Judentum*, in *idem, Jüdische Schriften*, 1:284–305. On Cohen’s criticisms of Christianity, see Alan Mittleman, “‘The Significance of Judaism for the Religious Progress of Humanity’ by Hermann Cohen: An Introduction and Translation,” *Modern Judaism* 24 (2004) 36–58, at 57 n. 4. Interestingly, in this article Mittleman, citing Jacob Fleishmann, *The Problem of Christianity in Modern Jewish Thought* (Jerusalem, 1964) 131–46 (Hebrew), observes that “although Cohen’s criticisms of Christianity apply more fully to Catholicism than Protestantism, the latter, while less mythological, contains the same errors.”

⁵⁷ On the place of Kant in Soloveitchik’s thought, see Zachary Braiterman, “Joseph Soloveitchik and Immanuel Kant’s Mitzvah-Aesthetic,” *AJSR* 25 (2000) 1–24, finding Soloveitchik’s Kantianism inhering not only in Soloveitchik’s a priori conception of halakhah but fascinatingly in Soloveitchik’s understanding of the aesthetic dimension of *mitzvot* as well. See also Almut Sh. Bruckstein, “Halakhic Epistemology in Neo-Kantian Garb: J. B. Soloveitchik’s Philosophical Writings Revisited,” *JSQ* 5 (1998) 346–68 (analyzing Soloveitchik’s “halakhic method” within the context of neo-Kantian epistemology and discussing how Soloveitchik applied neo-Kantian terminology to halakhic thinking), and Aviezer Ravitzky, “Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik on Human Knowledge: Between Maimonidean and Neo-Kantian Philosophy,” *Modern Judaism* 6 (1986) 157–88.

respective attitudes toward Christianity, Soloveitchik's stance on interfaith dialogue, I would like to suggest, should be seen from within the context of the Cohenian currents that flowed around and within him, some of which—concerning Cohen's views of Christianity—may have seeped into his own thinking upon Christianity. This is not to suggest that Soloveitchik holds a theological stance for Cohenian reasons; Soloveitchik's views of Christianity likely stem from his orthodoxy, from his traditionalist, exclusionary, and unitary view of chosenness,⁵⁸ and from his agonistic mode of philosophizing (for Soloveitchik, there is always some kind of dialectical struggle that is occurring, or that should be occurring, in our minds). This is, though, to suggest, that the strong resemblance between Cohen's and Soloveitchik's views of Christianity, in combination with Cohen's impact upon Soloveitchik's general philosophy, the specific parallels between Cohen and Soloveitchik on theological matters (Soloveitchik, Moshe Sokol has observed, appears to take a page out of Cohen's *Religion of Reason* in his insistence that the proper response to evil lies not in metaphysical speculation but in ethical action⁵⁹), and Cohen's direct influence upon Soloveitchik in certain Jewish philosophical matters (Soloveitchik's views of immortality were "no doubt informed in part by those of Hermann Cohen," as Daniel Rynhold and Michael Harris have noted⁶⁰), prompt us to view Soloveitchik's stance on interfaith dialogue through the prism of Soloveitchik's Cohenianism. Studying Soloveitchik's stance on interfaith dialogue through a Cohenian lens can thus help us understand why Soloveitchik maintained that any interfaith dialogue that veers into theology should be shunned: such dialogue

⁵⁸ How Soloveitchik's traditionalist conception of revelation and his "singular and certain" approach to Jewish law (see William Kolbrener, *The Last Rabbi: Joseph Soloveitchik and Talmudic Tradition* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016] 12) gels with his otherwise perspectivist views of truth and with the epistemological pluralism which he espouses in *The Halakhic Mind* (see, e.g., Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, 13, 15–16, 22ff., 108, and passim) is a complex matter. The existence of God, for Soloveitchik, is clearly an absolute truth (Rynhold and Harris, *Nietzsche, Soloveitchik, and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy*, 49), as is the truth of Judaism and the falsity of the Trinitarian conception of God (*ibid.*, 58)—as it was for his dissertation subject Cohen. Soloveitchik hints that he is unsure whether his prayer experience has universal validity (see, e.g., Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Worship of the Heart* [ed. Shalom Carmy; Hoboken, NJ: Ktav/Toras HoRav Foundation, 2003] 2), and he indicates in a 1950 letter that he believes that Judaism itself does not have universal validity: "religious tolerance asserts itself in the knowledge of *the existence of a variety and plurality of God-experiences* and in the recognition that each individual is *entitled* to evaluate his great unique performance as the most redeeming and uplifting one" (Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant and Commitment: Selected Letters* [ed. Nathaniel Helfgot; Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 2005] 22, emphases added. I am grateful to Rynhold and Harris, *Nietzsche, Soloveitchik, and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy*, 66, for alerting me to this letter). If Soloveitchik indeed believes, like his disciple Greenberg, in some form of theological pluralism, how such beliefs can be reconciled with the overtly negative views of Christianity he espouses in *Halakhic Man* and elsewhere is confounding and requires much greater analysis than the scope of this article permits.

⁵⁹ Moshe Sokol, "Is There a 'Halakhic' Response to the Problem of Evil?," *HTR* 92 (1999) 311–23, at 317.

⁶⁰ Rynhold and Harris, *Nietzsche, Soloveitchik, and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy*, 250, referring to Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, ch. 15.

carries with it the risk of the other faith—and, in the case of Christianity, a religion whose theological concepts flout the Judaic (and universally true) principle of oneness espoused so forcefully by Cohen—being “made to look equal” to Judaism. Soloveitchik, thus, objected vociferously to the possibility of *Gleichschaltung*⁶¹ (rendering equivalent) between Judaism and Christianity that interfaith dialogue (as well as interfaith services), in his mind, threatened to effectuate⁶²—a concern that Cohen, in his confirmed loathing of Christianity,⁶³ would have wholeheartedly shared. (This is not to suggest that Soloveitchik was appropriating Cohen; he might very well have been doing so. Though it may be tempting to attempt to make this case, there is insufficient evidence to argue convincingly for a direct influence and/or appropriation of Cohen in Soloveitchik’s position on interfaith dialogue. There are, however, sufficiently striking parallels between Soloveitchik and Cohen to argue that Cohen’s views on Christianity must be taken into account when considering Soloveitchik’s position on interfaith dialogue.)

Much as Rosenzweig admired his mentor Cohen greatly—Rosenzweig celebrated the publication of Cohen’s *Religion der Vernunft*, acclaiming it as a groundbreaking work in post-Hegelian Jewish thought⁶⁴ and penned the introduction to Cohen’s *Jüdische Schriften* (1923)—but later parted ways with him on matters of interfaith theology and Jewish-Christian relations,⁶⁵ Greenberg broke with his beloved teacher Soloveitchik on matters concerning interfaith theology and Jewish-Christian relations as well. For Greenberg—as it is for Rosenzweig⁶⁶—interfaith dialogue that ventures into the realm of theology is permissible. Greenberg maintains a Rosenzweigian approach toward Judaism and Christianity. According to Franz Rosenzweig—less a neo-Kantian than an existentialist, *post Hegel mortuum* antiphilosophical philosopher—there is no one true universal form of religion; both Judaism and Christianity are equally valid faiths. Rosenzweig may have been revolutionary for his being a Jewish thinker who held Christianity in such

⁶¹ “Each community worships God in its singular way. *Gleichschaltung* distorts the very essence of the religious experience” (Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, 114).

⁶² Much has been written on the subject of Soloveitchik and interfaith dialogue; for a sampling of this literature, see, e.g., Sklarin, “‘Rushing in Where Angels Fear to Tread,’” and the papers and deliberations from a 2003 conference on “Confrontation” at Boston College, which can be found at https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/center/conferences/soloveitchik.

⁶³ It suffices to see the paragraphs on the logos in the introduction to *Religion of Reason* to get a glimpse of the genuine odium Cohen harbored for the dominant faith of 19th-cent. German; see, e.g., Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen de Judentums* (Wiesbaden: Dreieich, 1978).

⁶⁴ See Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Franz Rosenzweig Writes the Essay ‘Atheistic Theology,’ Which Creates the Theology of His Day,” in *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture*, 322–26, at 323.

⁶⁵ On the mentor-disciple relationship between Cohen and Rosenzweig, see, e.g., Altmann, “Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy,” 265. Though Rosenzweig highly admired Cohen for, among other things, striving to establish the first chair of Jewish philosophy at a German university, Rosenzweig was frustrated by Cohen’s uncompromising animus toward Christianity (*ibid.*, 266).

⁶⁶ See Leora Batnitzky, “Dialogue as Judgment, Not Mutual Affirmation: A New Look at Franz Rosenzweig’s Dialogical Philosophy,” *JR* 79 (1999) 523–44, at 524.

high regard—in fact, it is very likely that Rosenzweig was the first Jewish thinker of note to have, as Emil Fackenheim put it, given “recognition to the Christian covenant from a Jewish point of view”⁶⁷—but he did not greatly esteem other religions. Indeed, Rosenzweig held Christianity and Judaism to be at the top of a religious hierarchy, with other religions on a progressively downward-sliding scale. Greenberg, though—much more of a committed, genuine pluralist than Rosenzweig—maintains that all religions, not only Judaism and Christianity, can be legitimately valid paths to God.⁶⁸ And not only are they equally valid, but they are intimately involved with one another and must work together; Rosenzweig held that Christianity and Judaism need each other in order to bring redemption to the world. These two faiths must act as partners, Rosenzweig believed, because they each operate in two separate spheres: Judaism is an inward-looking religion that operates outside of history, in cyclical time—“aussherhalb einer kriegerischen Zeitlichkeit”⁶⁹—whereas Christianity is an outward-looking religion that operates within history, in linear time, within the messiness of geopolitics, statecraft, and world events. Rosenzweig, in asserting that Judaism and Christianity have different historical roles and different destinies, thus became the first Jewish thinker of note, as Emmanuel Levinas put it, to render “homage” to Judaism’s fellow Abrahamic religion.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) 279.

⁶⁸ See Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 211–12. Any religion which respects and nurtures the *tselem Elokim* (Godliness) of each and every human being is a legitimate religion in Rabbi Greenberg’s view. When a religion systematically denies the dignity of *tselem Elokim* (viz., compromises human dignity), it loses its legitimacy as a religion. Thus, a religion like scientology, which manipulates and exploits people and, instead of nurturing their human dignity, tries to convince them that they are flawed and must be reconditioned—a systematic abuse of *tselem Elokim* that deprives people of their inherent self-respect and self-value—would not be considered a legitimate religion (idem, Personal communication to author, 19 Dec. 2019).

⁶⁹ Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988) 332. In a 1913 letter, Rosenzweig reaffirms his view that the Jewish people “must deny itself active and full participation in the life of this world” (quoted in Gregory Kaplan, “In the End Christians Become Jews and Jews, Christians? On Franz Rosenzweig’s Apocalyptic Eschatology,” *CrossCurrents* 53 [2004] 511–29, at 518). For Rosenzweig, the cyclical, transhistorical nature of Judaism most strongly manifests itself in the Jewish liturgical cycle; see Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (trans. William H. Hallo; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985) 298–335, and his letters to Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. On the importance of the liturgical cycle and repetition in Rosenzweig’s conception of Judaism, see Zachary Braiterman, “Cyclical Motions and the Force of Repetition in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig,” in *Beginning/Again: Toward a Hermeneutics of Jewish Texts* (ed. Aryeh Cohen and Shaul Magid; New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002) 215–38; and Randi Rashkover, “Rosenzweig’s Return to Biblical Theology: An Encounter between the *Star of Redemption* and Jon Levenson’s *Sinai and Zion*,” in *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 11.1 (2002) 75–89.

⁷⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, “The Spinoza Case,” in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (trans. Seán Hand; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 109. On Levinas’s discussion of Rosenzweig’s views of Christianity, see also *ibid.*, 187 and 194. On the various conceptual parallels between Rosenzweig and Levinas, and for a comparative reading of the two thinkers, see Richard

While it was Cohen's student Franz Rosenzweig who became the first modern Jewish thinker to articulate a conception of Jewish-Christian partnership, it should be noted that Cohen, in spite of his qualms about Christianity, was not entirely inimical to every possibility of partnership between the two faiths. In his 1869 essay *Der Sabbat in seiner kulturgeschichtlichen Bedeutung* (*Shabbat in Its Cultural-Historical Meaning*), Cohen proposed that the Jewish and Christian Sabbaths both be observed on Sunday, which he believed would "facilitate greater Jewish integration in German society and . . . spread the ethical and social meaning of the Sabbath more effectively throughout the wider culture."⁷¹ Though later in life Cohen had second thoughts concerning this radical proposal, that he proposed it suggests a nonnegligible current of proto-partnership sentiments in his attitude toward Jewish-Christian relations. Indeed, Poma adduces an essay written by Cohen in 1917—five years subsequent to his statement concerning his volte-face on the Sabbath suggestion—in which Cohen indicates that he "did not deny the original intentions behind this proposal."⁷²

In the last part of *The Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig articulated his vision of the Jewish and Christian division of labor: Judaism needs Christianity, according to Rosenzweig, in order to implement and actualize the ethics of the Bible in the real world. Christianity needs Judaism in order to be able to look to a model of a pure, uncorrupted biblical religion, untainted by the hurly-burly of world events and standing outside of history—a faith, in Levinas's terms, that is a "non-coincidence with its time"⁷³—in order to be reminded of the kind of faith that needs to be actualized within the chaos and corruption of geopolitics and within the flow of history.⁷⁴

According to Rosenzweig's "Star of Redemption" philosophical system, Christianity is the "rays" emanating out of "the eternal flame" of Judaism; the flame must be kept burning—it must be preserved and protected from the harmful winds of history that threaten to extinguish it—but it is up to the rays to ensure that the light from the flame reaches and transforms the rest of the world. The rays of Christianity that reach into history are therefore "good for the Jews," writes Rosenzweig, because they allow the warmth of the eternal flame to be felt by all and allow the light of Judaism's star to illuminate the world.⁷⁵

A. Cohen, *Elevations: The Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁷¹ Poma, "Hermann Cohen: Judaism and Critical Idealism," 87.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 99 n. 27, citing Hermann Cohen, *Manhung des Alters an die Jugend*, in Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften*, 2:1758; reprinted in *idem*, *Werke*, vol. 17, cit., 5778.

⁷³ Levinas, "Judaism and the Present," in *Difficult Freedom*, 212.

⁷⁴ On the complementarity of Judaism and Christianity, see Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 404, 420. See also *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (ed. Nahum M. Glatzer; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998) 341–48.

⁷⁵ *Franz Rosenzweig*, (ed. Glatzer) 341–46.

Rosenzweig also articulated his vision of this Christian-Jewish partnership, and the terms it ideally should take, in a letter to Rudolph Ehrenberg:

The synagogue, which is immortal but stands with broken staff and bound eyes, must renounce all work in this world, and muster all her strength to preserve her life and keep herself untainted by life. And so she leaves the work in the world to the church and recognizes the church as the salvation for all heathens in all time.⁷⁶

An additional reason that a Jewish-Christian partnership is necessary, according to Rosenzweig, is because of—and due to—the two faiths' shared biblical heritage. Christianity needs the Hebrew Bible, writes Rosenzweig, not only for theological reasons but for the purposes of statecraft, for its world-building and world-redeeming mission. It is specifically the Old Testament—a more “solid ground for building the world, and for building in the world,” rather than “the New Testament, which sees the world only in crisis”⁷⁷—that enables Christianity to carry on its work of bringing redemption and salvation to the world. At the same time, Judaism “needs” the New Testament, not in the sense that it needs it to be part of its own scripture, but it needs Christianity to have the New Testament as part of its own scripture so that Christianity, a religion of history, will be able to institute the biblical ethics of Judaism and Christianity within the chaotic, crisis-ridden world. Any attempt to transform Judaism into something this-worldly (*Verdiessseitigung*) contravenes the metahistorical, meta-terrestrial essence of Judaism and co-opts a secular, mundane role that should better be left for Christianity, the religion of history.⁷⁸

Even a cursory sampling of Greenberg's writing on Christianity, Judaism, and interfaith theology reveals that Greenberg's approach to interfaith theology and Jewish-Christian relations is remarkably continuous with that of Franz Rosenzweig. Similar to Rosenzweig, Greenberg believes that Judaism and Christianity are preeminently “religions of redemption”⁷⁹ tasked with improving the world for each

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁷⁷ Rosenzweig, “On the Significance of the Bible,” in *ibid.*, 273.

⁷⁸ Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk: Gesammelte Schriften* (vol. 3; Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984) 697. On Rosenzweig's views of the Jewish people as above the considerations of place and time, see Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 304. Gershom Scholem, in his 1959 essay “Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism,” famously took Rosenzweig to task for what he perceived to be Rosenzweig's too quietistic, otherworldly, nonpolitical conception of Judaism (Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* [New York: Schocken Books, 1971] 33–35). On the dispute between these two contemporary thinkers concerning the historical or ahistorical nature of the Jewish people, see Rivka Horwitz, “Franz Rosenzweig and Gershom Scholem on Zionism and the Jewish People,” *Jewish History* 6.1/2 (1992) 99–111. Gregory Kaplan has recently argued that Scholem misunderstands Rosenzweig on this account, failing to appreciate the importance of the underlying apocalyptic sensibility in Rosenzweig's thought and its implications for Rosenzweig's view of Judaism (see Kaplan, “In the End,” 511–29).

⁷⁹ Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust,” in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* (ed. Eva Fleischner; New York: Ktav, 1977) 7–55, at 7.

generation so that it becomes progressively more suited for human flourishing, a place in which the infinite value of every single human life can be properly appreciated.

In response to my question to him of whether Rosenzweig influenced his stance on interfaith theology, Rabbi Greenberg wrote: “I had read Glatzer’s account about [Rosenzweig], his teshuvah which came close to joining Christianity, etc. I was impressed and felt that Rosenzweig, Buber etc. were models for what I wanted to do, e.g., understand/interpret Jewish religion in a richer way, using the more sophisticated and penetrating Western approaches to bring out the richness in Judaism. I did not read heavier Rosenzweig material (like *Star of Redemption*) until later.”⁸⁰ Greenberg, though, took pains to note that his positive attitude toward Christianity—while rooted philosophically in Rosenzweig’s thought—was shaped just as much, if not more so, by his own experience, through his interactions with Christians and his learning of their increasing awareness to abandon supercessionist theology in the wake of the Holocaust: “I came to [interfaith theology and Jewish-Christian dialogue] in response to the Holocaust, starting in 1961. I started and came to critique and get them to stop the hostility and supercessionism but got to know their *chozrei b’teshuvah* [penitents] vis-a-vis Judaism. They moved me and their religious life and vitality got me to rethink my attitude toward Christianity.”⁸¹

It should be noted, though, that just as Soloveitchik is not Cohenian in many important respects, neither is Greenberg Rosenzweigian in all respects. The most salient difference between Rosenzweig and Greenberg, at least so far as Jewish-Christian interfaith theology is concerned, is that while Rosenzweig believes that Judaism is a religion that stands outside of history, Greenberg (writing as an explicitly post-Holocaust thinker), while acknowledging his debt to Rosenzweig in the area of Jewish-Christian dialogue, strongly maintains that Judaism—just as much as Christianity—is a religion *of* history, that strongly stands *within* history: “Both religions come to this affirmation about human fate out of central events in history. . . . The central events of both religions occur and affect humans in history. . . . Yet both religions ultimately have stood by the claim that redemption will be realized in actual human history.”⁸² If anything, Greenberg sees Judaism as the more historically enmeshed religion:

⁸⁰ R. Greenberg, personal communication to author, 13 Dec. 2018.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* It is noteworthy for the purposes of this article that Greenberg’s mentor Soloveitchik, by contrast, as Daniel Rynhold and Michael Harris have observed, does not refer to Rosenzweig in his writings even once (Rynhold and Harris, *Nietzsche, Soloveitchik, and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy*, 60).

⁸² *Ibid.*, at 8. Rabbi Greenberg elaborated upon his divergence from Rosenzweig’s metahistorical conception of Judaism in written correspondence: “Coming at [interfaith theology and Jewish-Christian relations] through Holocaust and history—and being a *farbrente* Zionist—made Rosenzweig’s views (they pilgrims/we out-of-history) unattractive and mistaken in my eyes although I continued to respect and appreciate Rosenzweig. I agreed with his idea that both were communities in contact with God” (R. Greenberg, personal communication, 13 Dec. 2018).

It seemed all too obvious that Judaism was not outside the maelstrom of history. To my mind, Judaism was always charged with the task of journeying through history, showing the way for humanity toward *tikun olam* . . . the Jewish calling after the *Shoah* was to enter into history with both feet and strive to move the entire world toward redemption.⁸³

The Jewish religion, he writes, is “temporally and spatially rooted,” and is thus in need of the “universal, landless church” as a “corrective.”⁸⁴

Despite his disagreement with Rosenzweig concerning whether or not Judaism is a religion of history, Greenberg is in direct agreement with Rosenzweig on the matter of the need for these two “religions of redemption” to partner with each other in order to bring redemption to the world. Greenberg, like Rosenzweig, believes that both faiths have “respective roles” to play “in the strategy of redemption.”⁸⁵ There is a “divine strategy for redeeming the world” and a “divine will that Judaism and Christianity are together in the world,” acting as God’s “human agents” to bring the world closer to redemption.⁸⁶ In this scheme of partnership, Christianity’s role would be modeling for the world a “religious system that explores faith and ideology as central categories,” while Judaism specializes in “the dialectic of birth and choice, action and attitude,” and “places tremendous emphasis on human action and responsibility in the world.”⁸⁷ Islam and Buddhism, importantly, also have roles to play in this grand religious partnership.⁸⁸ (Greenberg does not mention Hinduism and several other world religions, but one presumes that he would also grant that these faiths also have important roles to play in the divine scheme to bring redemption to the world through human actors. One wonders as well whether he would grant, as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook did, that nonreligiousists and even atheists have roles to play in this global redemptive work.)

The “ultimate testimony” of both Judaism and Christianity is “to affirm life and its ultimate redemption,” writes Greenberg.⁸⁹ And to this end, Judaism would be well served to become more appreciative of Christianity (just as Christianity has made greater strides toward a greater appreciation of, and reconciliation with, Judaism):

Let us ask ourselves whether it is possible for Judaism to have a more affirmative model of Christianity, one that appreciates Christian spiritual life in all its manifest power. If for no other reason, let this be done because if we take the other’s spiritual life less seriously, we run the great risk of taking the biological life less seriously, too.⁹⁰

⁸³ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 39.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 211–12.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Toward this end, Greenberg states that Judaism should affirm that Jesus was not a “false” messiah, but a “failed” messiah:

The Rabbis confused a “failed” messiah (which is what Jesus was) and a false messiah. A false messiah is one who has the wrong values, i.e., one who would teach that death will triumph. . . . A failed messiah is one who has the right values and upholds the covenant, but does not attain the final goal. . . .

Calling Jesus a failed messiah is in itself a term of irony. In the Jewish tradition, failure is a most ambiguous term. Abraham was a “failure.” . . . Moses was a “failure.” . . . Jeremiah was a “failure.” All these “failures” are at the heart of divine and Jewish achievements.⁹¹

Greenberg, an advocate of “principled pluralism,”⁹² is clearly no neo-Kantian⁹³ and, like Rosenzweig—and unlike Soloveitchik (and apparently unlike Cohen as well)—staunchly affirms that Christianity and Judaism (as well as other faiths) are equally legitimate paths toward the divine: “Jews must develop the ability to recognize the full implications of the truth that the Lord has many messengers.”⁹⁴ For Rosenzweig, God needs Christianity to do God’s work in the world; for Greenberg, God needs both Christianity and Judaism—the religions of redemption, the religions of life—to bring divine redemption to the world.

For Rosenzweig, Judaism and Christianity must be, and are, partners. Greenberg, following Rosenzweig’s lead, felt comfortable to engage in dialogue with Christians—Judaism’s partners—much as Rosenzweig felt privileged to engage in his own variety of interfaith dialogue in the letters he exchanged with Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.⁹⁵ And Greenberg, with Rosenzweig as his theological

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 153. Cf. Rosenzweig’s remarks on the utility of a “false Messiah”—found in his comments on Judah Ha-Levi’s poem “Good Tidings,” trans. Barbara E. Galli, in *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi: Translating, Translations, and Translators* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995) 259—which intriguingly resonate with Greenberg’s appraisal of the value of a “failed” Messiah.

⁹² Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 201.

⁹³ Greenberg, unlike Soloveitchik, does not view halakhah (the primary area in which Soloveitchik’s neo-Kantianism manifests itself) as an ideal a priori realm of mathematical-like abstract purity (the realization of which, in this tumultuous terrestrial world, is an end in its own right and the apotheosis of Judaism; see, e.g., Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, esp. 19–24, 79), but rather as a means toward an end: a way of life comprised of covenantal remembrances and ethical behaviors that are designed to help us maximize the quality and quantity of each individual life, to help us better appreciate the fundamental anthro-theological truth-claim of Judaism that every human being is created in the image of God (viz., that every single individual is—like God—unique, equal [to all other images of God], and infinitely valuable), and to help us advance the covenantal mission of Judaism (perfecting the world a bit more with each passing generation). (Another important area in which Soloveitchik’s neo-Kantianism manifests itself is in the emphasis that he places on creativity; see, e.g., Lawrence Kaplan, “The Religious Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik,” *Tradition* 14.2 [1973] 43–64, at 44.) R. Greenberg begins to outline his pragmatic conception of halakhah in *The Jewish Way*, 94–96; a more detailed statement on the subject may be found in his forthcoming *The Triumph of Life*.

⁹⁴ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 174.

⁹⁵ On the letters exchanged between Rosenzweig and Rosenstock—which were “unparalleled in the long history of Jewish-Christian relations”—see Altmann, “Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen

guiding star, articulates a bold theology: “two covenants, one people”⁹⁶—a “dual covenant theology,” as Jon Levenson has termed it.⁹⁷ Though Greenberg’s dual covenant theology plays off of Rosenzweig’s, Greenberg’s dual covenant theology is more egalitarian, allowing for the possibility that both Jews and Christians are equally chosen—that both faith communities can be called the people of Israel. Rosenzweig’s dual covenant theology, however, is colored by a reverse-supercessionist view. While esteeming Christianity for “Judaizing the pagans,” Christianity for Rosenzweig is clearly the “daughter religion.”⁹⁸ And while believing that Christianity too offers a path to the divine, Rosenzweig nonetheless maintains that the Jewish covenant brings its adherents closer to God than the Christian covenant.⁹⁹

Greenberg, in developing a theology that demanded “a new conceptualization of the nature of absolute truth that would allow for the existence of two or more valid yet contradicting faiths,”¹⁰⁰ claimed that both Christians and Jews are “the

Rosenstock-Huessy,” 258–70, at 258.

⁹⁶ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 39. Though advocates of Jewish-Christian dialogue have appropriated Rosenzweig in attempts to propound a view that Christianity and Judaism are mutually affirming, a closer reading of Rosenzweig, as Leora Batnitzky has demonstrated, reveals that the Jewish-Christian relationship is, in fact—in Rosenzweig’s view—one that is full of tension, conflict, and even potential danger (see Batnitzky, “Dialogue as Judgment,” and eadem, *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009] esp. 223–24). Thus, if Greenberg does in fact read Rosenzweig in a manner that for Batnitzky would constitute a misreading of Rosenzweig, it is a misreading that has a long legacy in Rosenzweig appropriation (see Peter Eli Gordon, “Rosenzweig Redux: The Reception of German-Jewish Thought,” *Jewish Social Studies* 8.1 [2001] 1–57) and whose imprint can be felt in Paul Van Buren’s theology of Jewish-Christian relations (see, e.g., James H. Walls, *Post-Holocaust Christianity: Paul van Buren’s Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997]).

⁹⁷ Jon D. Levenson, “Dual-Covenant Theology vs. Dual Truth Theory: An Exchange on Catholic-Jewish Dialogue,” *Commonweal*, 10 Feb. 2014, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/dual-covenant-theology-vs-dual-truth-theory>. See also Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 201, 220. Cf. Emil Fackenheim’s discussion of Rosenzweig’s “double-covenant” theory, as he terms it, in Fackenheim, *To Mend the World*, 80; and for Fackenheim’s discussion of Rosenzweig’s conception of Jewish-Christian relations, see *ibid.*, 79ff. See also Maurice G. Bowler, “Rosenzweig on Judaism and Christianity—The Two Covenant Theory,” *Judaism* 22 (1973) 475–81; Steven Schwarzschild, *Franz Rosenzweig: Guide to Reversioners* (London, 1960) 31–36; and Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, 93–113.

⁹⁸ Franz Rosenzweig, *Judaism Despite Christianity: The 1945 Wartime Correspondence between Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig*, as quoted by Edith Wyschogrod, “Judaism Despite Christianity,” *CrossCurrents* 20 (1970) 105–11, at 107.

⁹⁹ See Kaplan, “In the End,” 511–29, at 512–13, citing *Judaism Despite Christianity: The “Letters on Christianity and Judaism” between Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig* (ed. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy; Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1969) 112. Kaplan, accordingly, offers a reading of Rosenzweig’s interfaith theology in which the view of Rosenzweig as offering a harmonious, conflict-free view of the Jewish-Christian partnership along the lines of Greenberg gives way to a view of Rosenzweig proffering a more agonistic, confrontational dual covenant theology grounded in Rosenzweig’s latent “apocalyptic sensibility” (see Kaplan, “In the End,” 515ff.).

¹⁰⁰ Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, 10.

people of God,”¹⁰¹ and that anyone who affirms God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—are “the people of Israel.”¹⁰² Greenberg analogized this theological move to the turn from the “Newtonian universe, in which there is only one absolute center point, to an Einsteinian universe, in which many absolute center points exist.”¹⁰³ It was, perhaps, a Copernican revolution in Orthodox theology, a revolution whose implications are still being felt to this very day.

Greenberg, as aforementioned, follows Rosenzweig’s lead in being the second consequential traditionally oriented thinker of the post-Enlightenment era (Rosenzweig was the first) to accord metaphysical significance to Christianity. However, as scholars such as Hilary Putnam have underscored—and as nearly any contemporary reader of Rosenzweig likely notices—one of Rosenzweig’s most significant failures was that for all his tolerance, even esteem, of Christianity, unlike Greenberg, Rosenzweig did not extend this same esteem to other non-Jewish faiths. As Putnam observes, “The most unfortunate aspects of *The Star of Redemption* are, in fact, its polemical remarks about religions other than [Judaism and Christianity]—its scorn for Islam, for Hinduism, and so on.”¹⁰⁴ It is possible to apply Mary C. Boys’s aforementioned observation about the differences between Soloveitchik’s and Greenberg’s views of Christians to Rosenzweig and attribute Rosenzweig’s theological myopia to the product of Rosenzweig’s only having lived among Jews and Christians but not among Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, or members of other faiths. In any event, extending Rosenzweig’s charitable view of Christians toward members of non-Christian faith communities, as well as toward secularists and atheists (in the vein of R. Abraham Isaac Kook)—all of whom, after all, according to Jewish and Christian scripture, are equally created in the image of God—is, needless to say, an ethical and theological desideratum.

■ Conclusion

The argument of this article has not been that Soloveitchik’s views on interfaith dialogue were directly influenced by Cohen’s views of Christianity; rather, this article has argued that the fact of Cohen’s overall influence upon Soloveitchik’s thought, in concert with the striking conceptual resemblance between these thinkers’ views of Christianity, must lead us to consider Soloveitchik’s stance on interfaith dialogue through a Cohenian lens. This article has further argued that, due to the significant conceptual parallels between the views of Rosenzweig and Greenberg regarding Christianity, interfaith dialogue, and interfaith theology—as well as the evidence of the direct influence of Rosenzweig upon Greenberg—Greenberg’s

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰² Ibid., 185.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰⁴ Hilary Putnam, *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life: Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) 35.

positions on interfaith dialogue and interfaith theology must be considered through a Rosenzweigan lens. Doing so—being fully cognizant of the significant conceptual resemblance between Cohen and Soloveitchik, of the significant conceptual parallels between Rosenzweig and Greenberg, and of Rosenzweig’s direct influence upon Greenberg—not only will lead to a more complete understanding of the schism regarding interfaith dialogue within Orthodox Jewish theology, but also leads to a shift in our taxonomies of thinkers in the modern Jewish thought canon. The typical reading of modern Jewish thinkers situates them halakhically and theologically (that is, based upon where they stand on matters of Jewish legal observance—whether they are Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, or Reconstructionist—and where they stand on the doctrine of Sinaitic revelation). Thus, Reform and Reconstructionist theologians such as Eugene Borowitz, Mordecai Kaplan, and Emil Fackenheim are commonly grouped together, while Conservative theologians such as Richard Rubenstein and Neil Gillman and Orthodox theologians such as Joseph Soloveitchik, Michael Wyschogrod, David Hartman, and Irving Greenberg are typically studied together by dint of their denominational affiliations.¹⁰⁵ The reading of Soloveitchik and Greenberg offered in this article regarding their positions on interfaith dialogue, as well as the revelations disclosed here concerning the direct influence of Rosenzweig upon Greenberg, recommend that we reorient our taxonomy of modern Jewish thinkers away from only grouping them together halakhically and theologically and toward a taxonomy in which they would be also grouped together philosophically: toward a taxonomy of theologians wherein not only their positions on Jewish law and belief are significant but also wherein their positions on Kant and Hegel, Cohen and Rosenzweig are of consequence. (To paraphrase Ze’ev Levy,¹⁰⁶ although it would be misleading to speak of Kantian, Hegelian, or Schellingian schools of Jewish theology, since one can trace the influence of these philosophers, and others, on the work of their Jewish acolytes, studying modern Jewish theologians such as Soloveitchik and Greenberg through not only halakhic and denominational prisms but through a philosophical prism as well promises to bear enlightening intellectual fruits.) Under such a philosophically oriented taxonomy—a taxonomy in which denominational affiliation is of less consequence than philosophical affiliation—Soloveitchik and Greenberg would no longer necessarily be grouped together but would instead be grouped with, and studied with, the thinker (Cohen for Soloveitchik; Rosenzweig for Greenberg) with whom

¹⁰⁵ Robert G. Goldy classifies American theologians precisely in this manner (Goldy, *The Emergence of Jewish Theology in America* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990] 115 n. 17) and tells the story of Jewish theology in America predominantly through a denominational lens (see 5, 18, 22, 26–28, 30–32, and 48–50). Though Michael Morgan, in his *Beyond Auschwitz: Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), classifies American theologians by denomination (46–47), he tells the story of Jewish theology in America primarily through a theodical lens—that is, grouping together theologians based on whether and how they addressed the Holocaust (4).

¹⁰⁶ Ze’ev Levy, “The Nature of Modern Jewish Philosophy,” in *History of Jewish Philosophy* (ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman; New York: Routledge, 1997) 516–24, at 517.

they most closely align philosophically. The full implications of such a reorientation in our taxonomy of modern Jewish theologians cannot at this moment be foreseen.

Despite the clear and pervasive presence of Cohenian themes in Soloveitchik's thought, there would be obstacles to be overcome in—and clear limitations to—a Cohen-Soloveitchik and Greenberg-Rosenzweig link. Greenberg, as noted, sharply departs from Rosenzweig on the question of whether Judaism is an historical or a metahistorical religion, with Greenberg resolutely taking the latter position. Additionally, a Cohen-Soloveitchik link would challenge the reading of Cohen as an assimilationist thinker who, as some have argued, “sacrifices the Jewish tradition on the altar of Kant.”¹⁰⁷ Cohen, who felt compelled to endorse interfaith marriages, wrote that “we Jews must acknowledge that the ideal of national assimilation must from generation to generation be more consciously striven for.”¹⁰⁸ Though passages such as these make it possible to construe Cohen as an assimilationist thinker (viz., one who believes that the optimal path for Judaism to take would be one wherein Judaism completely integrates itself within German Protestant culture, even at the cost of the possible disappearance of Judaism and the Jewish people), my belief—grounded in David Novak's reading of Cohen, as well as within Cohen's own writings on the subject—is that this is an errant reading of Cohen, and that he should be more aptly construed as an acculturationalist, and not an assimilationist, thinker (viz., a thinker who maintains that Jews should integrate themselves into their surrounding culture but should do so while never compromising their Jewish identity); Cohen, who argued strenuously for the uniqueness and universal significance of Judaism in his writings, never advocated for the melting of *Judentum* within the seething pot of *Deutschtum*. Though he did argue for the acceptance and full participation of Jews and Judaism within Christian culture, this acceptance and participation should be construed properly as acculturation, and never as assimilation. Cohen, as Novak has pointed out, always maintained that “Jewish singularity will never be *aufgehoben* into something more universal, not even ideally.”¹⁰⁹

This article does not attempt to argue, fully and conclusively, for a Cohen-Soloveitchik/Greenberg-Rosenzweig linkage upon each and every theological and philosophical matter; such an association would be not only untenuous but impossible to substantiate. The similarities between Cohen and Soloveitchik and between Rosenzweig and Greenberg should not be overstated; certain crucial theological (as well as Jewish legal jurisprudential) differences between Cohen and Soloveitchik (e.g., Cohen's construal of the essence of Judaism as its ethical monotheism versus Soloveitchik's pan-halakhism) and between Rosenzweig and Greenberg (e.g., their conflicting views on the doctrine of chosenness—Greenberg

¹⁰⁷ See Brumlik, “1915: In *Deutschtum und Judentum*,” 336–42, esp. 338.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften*, 1:88.

¹⁰⁹ David Novak, *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 77.

disagrees vigorously with Rosenzweig's conception of Jewish uniqueness as inhering in a biological *Blutgemeinschaft*) are conspicuous and irreconcilable. Nonetheless the conceptual (as well as certain biographical) parallels between these two pairs of teacher-student thinkers are striking; for example, much as Rosenzweig's bold new theological thinking constituted a marked departure from the post-Enlightenment religious thinking of his time, as well as a departure from the religious thinking of his master Cohen,¹¹⁰ Greenberg's similarly bold (and occasionally controversial) Voluntary Covenant and Moment Faiths theologies were momentous departures from his teacher Soloveitchik's traditionalist Orthodox theology.¹¹¹ And, similar to Rosenzweig's choice to devote his life to interdenominational adult Jewish education—as seen most prominently in his founding of the Lehrhaus in Frankfurt—Greenberg, after stints in the rabbinate and academia, chose to devote his life to interdenominational Jewish adult education as seen most prominently in his founding of Clal—the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. Other conceptual and biographical similarities between these pairs of thinkers—most significantly in the realm of interfaith theology and Jewish-Christian relations, as this article has discussed—abound. Accordingly, this article does aver that the conceptual parallels between the Cohen-Soloveitchik/Rosenzweig-Greenberg double dyad—in consonance with the revelation of Rosenzweig's direct influence upon Greenberg—are significant enough to warrant a new reading of the Soloveitchik-Greenberg interfaith dialogue disagreement and a reorientation of the typical taxonomy of modern Jewish thinkers, a reorientation which this conclusion hazards to sketch.

What this Cohenian and Rosenzweigian reading of Soloveitchik's and Greenberg's positions on interfaith dialogue—and the animating principle of this article—does strongly suggest is that when we tell the story of Orthodox theology in the United States in the twentieth century, we have to make sure that we not only tell a halakhic and theological story¹¹² but a philosophical story as well.

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., Mendes-Flohr, "Franz Rosenzweig Writes the Essay 'Atheistic Theology,'" 322–26.

¹¹¹ See, e.g., Ira Bedzow, "Rabbi Irving [Yitz] Greenberg and his Theology of Covenant," in *Symposium on Open Orthodoxy III*, Aug. 2015; http://www.academia.edu/15032033/Rabbi_Irving_Yitz_Greenberg_and_His_Theology_of_Covenant.

¹¹² After all, halakhah (Jewish law), as David Novak (in *Jewish-Christian Dialogue*) has noted correctly, does not determine whether or not Jewish-Christian dialogue is permitted. Furthermore, Soloveitchik, as aforementioned, conceded to Greenberg that his reasons for saying "no" to interfaith theological dialogue were non-halakhic; thus, other, non-halakhic—and, according to the argument of this article, philosophical—considerations were, and are, at play when it comes to Orthodox Jewish positions on interfaith dialogue.