

**HOLOCAUST APOLOGETICS:
TOWARD A CASE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD
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INTRODUCTION

From time to time those of us in Jewish missions have had the same bitter reaction from our Jewish family members or friends. In our sincere attempt at presenting the biblical case for the messiahship of Yeshua, we are abruptly interrupted with the angry response: “There is no way that I want to investigate whether Jesus is the Messiah. I don’t even believe in God! Since the Holocaust, it is impossible for a Jew to believe in God!” And so it goes. In the light of the trauma of the Holocaust, God’s very existence is vehemently denied or painfully doubted by many, dare we say most, of our Jewish people. Jewish atheism has become a viable option in the post-Holocaust era.

Of course, the most well known of the so-called Jewish atheistic theologians is Richard Rubenstein. His words bear painful testimony to his struggle over the very existence of the God of Israel, traditionally ascribed to the Jewish Scriptures:

No man can really say that God is dead. How can we know that? Nevertheless, I am compelled to say that we live in the time of the “death of God. “. . . When I say we live in the time of the death of God, I mean that the thread uniting God and man, heaven and earth, has been broken. We stand in a cold, silent, unfeeling cosmos, unaided by any purposeful power beyond our own resources. After Auschwitz, what else can a Jew say about God?¹

In another place Rubenstein is even more forceful, “Of one thing I am convinced: more than the bodies of my people went up in smoke at Auschwitz. The God of the covenant died there.”² He further concludes, “in the final analysis, omnipotent Nothingness is Lord of all creation.”³

Radical Jewish theologians like Rubenstein are not alone in their struggle with the covenant-keeping God described in the Hebrew Bible. Even an Orthodox rabbi like Irving Greenberg is constrained to wrestle with the so-called loving and caring God of traditional Judaism, “To talk of love and of a God who cares in the presence of the burning children is obscene and incredible; to

¹ Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), pp.151-53

² Richard L. Rubenstein, “Auschwitz and Covenant Theology,” *The Christian Century* 86 (21 May 1969): 718.

³ Richard L. Rubenstein, in a symposium, *Commentary* 42 (August 1966): 134ff; quoted in Arthur J. Lelyveld, *Atheism Is Dead: A Jewish Response to Radical Theology* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1968), p. 110.

leap in and pull a child out of a pit, to clean its face and heal its body, is to make the most powerful statement--the only statement that counts.”⁴

Although most Christian theologians and missionaries have chosen virtually to ignore this most obvious Jewish agony, we who love Israel and our Jewish people cannot avoid it. Jewish theologian Seymour Cain goes right to the heart of the matter:

Auschwitz, or “the Holocaust,” looms as the stumbling block of contemporary Jewish theology. Whatever may be the case with Christian theologians, for whom it seems to play no significant generative or transformative role, the Jewish religious thinker is forced to confront fullface that horror, the uttermost of evil in Jewish history.⁵

Like the late messianic believer and theologian, Jakob Jocz, we must be prepared to deal with this issue:

Auschwitz casts a black pall upon the civilized world. Not only is man’s humanity put under a question mark, but God himself stands accused. Jews are asking insistently: Where was God when our brothers and sisters were dragged to the gas ovens?

. . . Faith in the God of Israel, in the God of the Covenant, in the God of history, is always a test and a challenge, but after Auschwitz it is an agonizing venture for every thinking Jew.⁶

Some may feel it sufficient merely to fall back on the famous chasidic cliché coming out of the Holocaust, “For the faithful, there are no questions; for the nonbeliever, there are no answers.”⁷ But for those of us who have been called and therefore are committed to the saving message of the Gospel to the Jew first, falling back on clichés or merely ignoring this challenge to the very existence of God will be neither sufficient nor excusable. But like Peter, the Apostle to the Jews, we must

sanctify the Messiah as Lord in [our] hearts, always being ready to make a defense [Gr., *apologia*] to everyone who asks [us] to give an account for the hope that is in [us], yet with gentleness and reverence; and [we must] keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which [we] are slandered, those who revile [our] good behavior in the Messiah will be put to shame (1 Peter 3.15-16, NASB).

Peter’s admonition to us is worth noting. Our “defense” or apologetic must be done with “gentleness and reverence.” For religious atheism which has been induced through the convulsion of the Shoah is of two kinds. The first kind of Holocaust induced atheism is *an emotional atheism*

⁴ Irving Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust,” in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust*, ed. Eva Fleischner New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1977), pp.4142.

⁵ Seymour Cain, “The Question and the Answers After Auschwitz,” *Judaism* 20 (Summer 1971):263.

⁶ Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ After Auschwitz: A Study in the Controversy Between Church and Synagogue* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), pp.23, 34.

⁷ Azriel Eisenberg, ed., *Witness to the Holocaust* New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981), p.628.

which arises out of the painful depths of the human heart. It does not, indeed it cannot, respond to rational and logical reasoning, especially if it is too close in time to the traumatizing event itself.⁸ This kind of atheism needs pastoral love, care, and patience, as well as a listening ear and a sensitive heart, plus loads of prayer.

The second kind of Holocaust-induced atheism is *a belligerent atheism* that arises out of an arrogant and foolish heart. “The fool [Heb., *nabal*] has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Pss. 14:1; 53:1, NASB; cf Ps 10:1-4ff.). In its senseless and rebellious posture [i.e., *nabal*], this kind of atheism refuses to submit to the truth (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). What it really needs is a loving, logical, and firm encounter with the truth of the Word of God and the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (see John 16:7-11; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 3:16-17; 4:1-5; Jude 17-23; etc.).

In developing a Holocaust apologetic and initiating a case for the existence of God in light of the Holocaust, we must begin with a *rhetorical strategy*. For example, if I were an attorney attempting to win a case for my client, I would do everything I could to get someone from the opposing side to testify on behalf of my client. In other words, I want to begin where my audience is and with that which they accept, and then build a bridge back to where I [better, where God] wants them to be. This was the rhetorical strategy of the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost, when, with a Spirit-empowered love and a holy boldness, he addressed a hostile audience, the same kind of audience that earlier had rallied together in approving the murder of the Messiah Himself (see Acts 2).

Therefore, for our rhetorical purposes, in order to begin a case for the existence of God in light of the Holocaust, we will start with a case study of Elie Wiesel, the grand storyteller and historian of the Holocaust, himself a Jewish survivor and, perhaps, the most well known and respected voice of the Shoah. With the help of God, this may, at least in an initial way, earn us the right to be heard on further matters (viz., the messiahship of Yeshua, justification by faith, etc.). In a sense then, this apologetic approach could be termed “pre-evangelism,” that is, a door-opener for the Good News of the Messiah.

THE CASE STUDY: ELIE WIESEL

Wiesel During the Holocaust

Elie Wiesel was born in 1928 in the small village of Sighet, Transylvania, an area ruled at that time by Romania but Hungarian-speaking. From a religious family, he received a traditional talmudic education, studying with chasidic rabbis in the village. In 1944 all of Sighet’s Jewish inhabitants were deported to concentration camps. Along with other relatives, Wiesel’s mother, father, and younger sister were murdered. Two other sisters survived. Following the liberation, Wiesel was sent to France to be a ward of a French Jewish children’s agency.

⁸ See Robert M. Hicks, *Trauma: The Pain That Stays* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell), 1993. Some have called this type of emotional paralysis a form of “cognitive dissonance,” a kind of static or pain in the human psyche that renders the individual incapable of any true repentance or change, at least in an initial way; on this, see two Orthodox Jewish apologists, Gershon Robinson and Mordechai Steinman, *The Obvious Proof: A Presentation of the Classic Proof of Universal Design* (New York: CIS Publishers), 1993.

Wiesel's earliest and most profound work was, of course, his autobiographical account of the Holocaust, entitled: *Night*. In his most well known paragraphs, Wiesel, in graphic and painful details, describes his arrival at his first camp and his first viewing of a hanging:

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.

I witnessed other hangings. I never saw a single one of the victims weep. For a long time those dried-up bodies had forgotten the bitter taste of tears.

Except once. The Oberkapo of the fifty-second cable unit was a Dutchman, a giant, well over six feet. Seven hundred prisoners worked under his orders, and they all loved him like a brother. No one had ever received a blow at his hands, nor an insult from his lips.

He had a young boy under him, a *pipel*, as they were called -- a child with a refined and beautiful face, unheard of in this camp

One day when we came back from work, we saw three gallows rearing up in the assembly place, three black crows. Roll call. SS all round us, machine guns trained: the traditional ceremony. Three victims in chains--and one of them, the little servant, the sad-eyed angel.

The SS seemed more preoccupied, more disturbed than usual. To hang a young boy in front of thousands of spectators was no light matter. The head of the camp read the verdict. All eyes were on the child. He was lividly pale, almost calm, biting his lips. The gallows threw its shadow over him

The three victims mounted together onto the chairs.

The three necks were placed at the same moment within the nooses.

"Long live liberty!" cried the two adults.

But the child was silent.

"Where is God? Where is He?" someone behind me asked.

At a sign from the head of the camp, the three chairs tipped over. Total silence throughout the camp. On the horizon, the sun was setting.

“Bare your heads!” yelled the head of the camp. His voice was raucous. We were weeping.

“Cover your heads!” Then the march past began. The two adults were no longer alive. Their tongues hung swollen, blue-tinged. But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive

For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him. His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet glazed. Behind me, I heard the same man asking: “Where is God now?” And I heard a voice within me answer him: “Where is He? Here He is -- He is hanging here on this gallows”⁹

Many believe these lines to be some of the most poignant descriptions of the Holocaust ever to appear in the vast array of Holocaust literature. It is easy to see and feel the immediate impact of these events on the young sixteen year old Wiesel. His God died. Emotional atheism was born within him during these years of the Holocaust Kingdom.

But is this the whole or final story for Elie Wiesel? Did his bitter experiences during those horrific war years deprive him from belief in God once-and-for-all? Does God cease to exist for him? Is he bound to a religious atheism forever? If not, why not?

For the answers to these questions, we must turn to the ensuing years of Wiesel after the Holocaust.

Wiesel After the Holocaust

It would appear that with the passing of time since the Holocaust and with further reflection, Elie Wiesel was forced to make some adjustments in his own perspectives on the Holocaust. His words in this matter do not appear in his more popular works, but rather in his lesser known and more reflective pieces. We shall look at four examples from these writings. There certainly are several others that bear a similar testimony on his thinking in the post-Holocaust years. The reasons for his changing views and struggles remain for us to investigate later.

In an article published in an ecumenical journal, Wiesel appears to be dangling tenuously between atheism and theism, “[The Holocaust] could not have been without God, nor could it have been with God. It cannot be conceived on any level.”¹⁰

A short time later in a television interview, Wiesel propounded the following affirmations, especially amazing in light of his painful words in *Night*: “For a Jew to believe in God is good. For a Jew to protest against God is still good. But simply to ignore God, that is not good. Anger,

⁹ Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: A Discus Book/Published by Avon Books, 1960), pp. 44, 74-76.

¹⁰ Elie Wiesel, “Freedom of Conscience-A Jewish Commentary,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 14 Fall 1977):643

yes. Protest, yes. Affirmation, yes. But indifference to God, no. You can be a Jew with God; you can be a Jew against God; but not without God.”¹¹

In an earlier symposium, Wiesel also affirmed that any genuine protest against God--like those of Abraham (Gen. 18), Moses (Exod. 5, 32), Moses and Aaron together (Num. 16), Job (Job 13; etc.), David (Pss. 10; 13; etc.), the sons of Korah (Pss. 42; 44; etc.), Ethan the Ezrahite (Pss. 89; etc.), Jeremiah (Jer. 12; Lam. 3; etc.), Habakkuk (Hab. 1); etc.--must come from within the covenant context, not from without: “I believe that God is part of our experience. The Jew, in my view, may rise against God, provided he remains within God.”¹²

And finally, Wiesel testifies to his own ongoing struggle with the God in whom he believes, when he declares, “To be a Jew is to have all the reasons in the world not to have faith in language, in singing, in prayers, and in God, but to go on telling the tale, to go on carrying on the dialogue, and to have my own silent prayers and quarrels with God.”¹³

In summary then, we can see Elie Wiesel in the midst of the most painful of existential struggles. On the one hand, the emotional Wiesel refuses to embrace the reality of the God of his tradition--the pain is too great. On the other hand, like Jacob of old, the rational Wiesel grapples with God as a living Being, seeking to find the place of blessing for himself and his people. But why all of this tension and pain? Why does not Wiesel, like Rubenstein and others, simply throw off the so-called God of the covenant? What drives him to maintain his religious theism when religious atheism seems to be the more viable option?

In order to answer these questions, we will look at only two reasons, out of several possible, for Wiesel’s case, and therefore our own case, for the existence of God, especially in light of the Holocaust.

THE CASE FOR GOD

We now move to the next stage of our rhetorical strategy. In order to begin our case for God’s existence during and since the Holocaust, we must lovingly nudge our Jewish friends toward the logical conclusions and consequences of their Holocaust induced religious atheism. In other words, let us assume for a moment that there is no God or that God really did die in the Holocaust. What would be some of the logical and inevitable consequences of such a faith-commitment? In this light, we may gain a better insight into Wiesel’s ultimate refusal to reject God altogether (i.e., two of several major consequences or reasons for clinging to his theism). Plus, we may gain a valuable and biblical pre-evangelistic tool for our ministry of love toward Israel, especially in bridging into the Gospel itself with our Jewish loved ones and friends.

¹¹ Elie Wiesel quoted in Alice L. Eckardt, “Rebel Against God,” *Face to Face* 6 (Spring 1979):18.

¹² Elie Wiesel quoted in Emil Fackenheim, Richard H. Popkin, George Steiner, and Elie Wiesel, “Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust Future: A Symposium,” *Judaism* 16 (Summer 1967):298-99.

¹³ Elie Wiesel, “Talking and Writing and Keeping Silent,” in *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust*, eds. Franklin A. Littell and Hubert G. Locke (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1974), p.277.

Consequence #1: Concerning the Nature of Law Itself

Laws do not come from nowhere. They come from law-makers or law-givers. If there is no God, these laws, by the very nature of the case, must come from men; that is, they must be man-made laws, derived from the best or even the worst of what men can propose. To embrace a religious atheism [or for that matter, any form of atheism] is to embrace a world without any transcendent Law-Giver, a world, therefore, that is devoid of any true meaning, purpose, or value.

Further, without moral transcendent Laws, from a moral transcendent Law-Giver, those who govern [control] will be the power elite at the top, either the consented majority or the empowered minority or individual (e.g., Hitler, the Nazis, etc.). If there is no transcendent rule of Law, then all hell can break loose. Feodore Dostoyevsky [1821-81], the Russian novelist and interpreter of Eastern Orthodox spirituality, certainly captured this in a most graphic way in his novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. For it must be, after all, as Ivan Karamazov was forced to confess, “If there is no God, all things are permissible!”

In this kind of non-absolute kingdom, who is to say that six million Jews were any better or any worse than six million ants crawling on the ground? Answer? Those passing the Nuremberg Laws of course! Without any higher transcendent Laws from such a transcendent Law-Giver, the Nazis had every right to pass any kind of laws they so chose against so-called non-Aryans, whether dictated by Adolph Hitler or approved by the majority of Germans, including the German State Church. Without God, it would have been their perfect right, privilege, and responsibility to determine for themselves who and what had true meaning, purpose, and value.

In that kind of Holocaust Kingdom, it makes perfectly good sense to destroy the vermin (e.g., the Jews, the gypsies, the political dissidents, the homosexuals, etc.) before they destroy the pure (i.e., the Aryan). Auschwitz was the logical outcome of such a humanistic, non-absolute world view. Without the moral restraint of a transcendent set of Laws from a moral transcendent Law-Giver, anarchy will inevitably result (see Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; etc.). So it was even in the dark days of the Judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25, NASB). Evidence of this in our own day is clearly manifest. It is the public opinion poll that reigns supreme. Gallup and his polls have replaced Moses and his Laws!

Ironically, it was the “higher” laws of the Hague and Geneva Conventions, used in the Nuremberg and other International Military War Tribunals, that served to convict and punish the Nazis for crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.¹⁴ These two modern war conventions, the Hague and the Geneva, were born out of and grounded in the

¹⁴ For the use of the Geneva and Hague conventions in the post-world two war tribunals, as well as “The Crystallization of the Principles of International Criminal Law,” see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1972 ed., s.v. “War Crimes Trials,” by Emmanuel Brand, 16:288-302; see also, Gideon Hausner, *Justice in Jerusalem* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1966, 1968), pp.114-15, 313-14, 400, etc.; Adalbert Ruckerl, *The Investigation of Nazi Crimes, 1945-1978: A Documentation*, trans. by Derek Rutter (Hamden, CT: Archon Books), 1980; and Bradley F. Smith, *Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg* (New York: A Meridian Book/New American Library, 1977), pp.13-14, 156, 218-19, 227, 244, 258, 263, etc.

Middle Ages and eighteenth century world views that were committed to a transcendent moral or natural law, to which all men were accountable.¹⁵

Contemporary historian Robert G. Clouse not only verifies these historical underpinnings of the Hague and Geneva Conventions, but also maintains that many of the framers of these conventions were themselves committed to a strong Christian world view:

There was a strong Christian influence that led to international gatherings such as the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907. From these meetings came decisions that limited the nature of war, protected the rights of prisoners of war, affirmed the need to care for the sick and the wounded, promised protection of private property and guaranteed the rights of neutrals.¹⁶

Of course, this transcendent moral law is nothing less than the Law of God “written on human hearts” (Rom. 2:14-16; cf Acts 17:22-31), a Law which is universal and which holds all men accountable for their actions.¹⁷ While it must be admitted that western society has thrown over such a biblical worldview, nevertheless, it still finds it both inherently as well as conveniently pertinent to apply the resulting Laws of such a worldview to matters like the modern war tribunals. Even if we attempt to deny the divine Law-Giver Himself, it is virtually impossible to deny that His Laws are written on our hearts. We try to live by them every day; at least we expect others to live by them every day. This is a strange state of affairs.

¹⁵ For the background and historical development of the modern Hague and Geneva Conventions, especially their grounding in a biblical and Christian world view, see Percy Bordwell, *The Law of War Between Belligerents: A History and Commentary* (Chicago: Callaghan & Co.), 1908.

¹⁶ Robert G. Clouse, ed., *War: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1981), p.23; for more on the Christian background of these conventions, see also, Bordwell, pp.2849. For example, Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), “the father of international law,” laid the foundation, through his writings, for all modern war conventions. Besides being a great statesman and jurist, he was a committed Protestant commentator on the Bible, the historian of his country, and a dramatist and Latin poet. In his own writings, Grotius recorded his reasons for writing on the law of war:

I, for the reasons which I have stated, holding it to be most certain that there is among nations a common law of Rights which is of force with regard to war, and in war, saw many and grave causes why I should write a book on that subject. For I saw prevailing throughout the Christian world a license in making war of which even barbarous nations would have been ashamed; recourse being had to arms for slight reasons or no reasons; and when arms were once taken up all reverence for divine and human law was thrown away, just as if men were thenceforth authorized to commit all crimes without restraint [Grotius, *Prolegomena*, par. 28; quoted in Bordwell, pp.30-31].

In concluding his treatise on the law of war, Grotius penned this solemn prayer:

May God write these lessons, -- He alone can, -- on the hearts of all those who have the affairs of Christendom in their hands; and may He give to those persons a mind fitted to understand and to respect Rights, divine and human; and lead them to recollect always that the ministration committed to them is no less than this: that they are the governors of Man, a creature most dear to God [Grotius, III, 25, 8; quoted in Bordwell, p.34].

¹⁷ For a popular, apologetic treatment on this universal moral Law [“moral motions”/ “categorical imperative”/etc.], see C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1943, 1945, 1952, 1957), pp.17-39; also published under the title, *The Case for Christianity* (New York: Collier Books/Macmillan Publishing Co.), 1989; also see, C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York; Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc.), 1947, 1965.

With all of this in mind, perhaps such a Holocaust-induced atheism is not so viable an option after all? Therefore, Elie Wiesel is right in struggling to maintain his spiritual and moral commitment to a theistic Law-Giver and Judge. Even our forefather Abraham understood this, when he proclaimed, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” (Gen. 18:25, NASB).

But there is a second possible reason why Wiesel refuses to yield to a hard-core religious atheism. This may also give us another reason for our case for the existence of God, especially in light of the Holocaust. For the Holocaust without God raises another serious consequence.

Consequence #2: Concerning the Nature of Morality Itself

Morals and ethics do not come from nowhere. They come from moral and ethical determiners. This consequence is closely related to the first consequence concerning the nature of Law itself. So it seems patently true that any morality that is not transcendentally-based, that is, from outside the human system, must be determined, by the very nature of the case, from within the human system. Ultimately, therefore, this means that any moral or ethical system, derived from this kind of divinely-absented world, must be relative to the core. Therefore, we cannot talk about “morals” (i.e., a prescriptive norm: what people *ought to do*), but only about mores (i.e., a descriptive norm: what people *actually do*).

Philosopher and apologist Norman Geisler states this dilemma in the following words:

How would you know that the Holocaust is ultimately wrong [or evil] unless you knew what was ultimately right? If you don't have an absolute standard for right, you can't say that [the Holocaust] is absolutely wrong. That's just your opinion, and somebody else's opinion could be, the Holocaust was the best thing in the history of mankind [which some claim today].¹⁸

To those who say that everything is relative, and that there are no moral absolutes, Geisler concludes, “You can't make everything relative unless you're standing on the pinnacle of your own absolute.”¹⁹

Without God all morals and ethics are relative in nature. If God is removed from any system in which all values derive from Him, then His removal must ultimately result in only one thing: total anarchy (cf Rom. 1:18-32). Even Jewish death-of-God theologian Richard Rubenstein is forced to grant this point: “Murdering God... is an assertion of the will to total moral and religious license.”²⁰

Historian Paul Johnson states this issue in the most succinct and frontal way possible:

By cutting the umbilical cord with God, our source of ethical vitality would be gone. Morally, we would become nothing better than a species of fantastically clever monkeys.

¹⁸ Carey Kinsolving, “For Christian Apologist, God Speaks in the Voice of Reason,” *The Washington Post*, 3 July 1993, Metro Section, p. B7.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, p.20.

Our ultimate fate would be too horrible to contemplate. For the truth is that we humans are all Jekyll and Hyde creatures, and the monster within each of us is always striving to take over.²¹

In other words, it is Macbeth's "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing!"

In this relative state of moral matters, it does not matter who is the moral ethicist or what is his particular view.²² All of these systems leave one in the moral abyss determined by those in power at the time, like the Nazis. Whether it is Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and his relative utilitarianism (i.e., one should act so as to produce the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run) or Joseph Fletcher in our day, with his relative situationism (i.e., everything is relative to the situation and the only thing required in any moral moment is love), or any other approach leaving the divine perspective out of the formula, we are left in the hands of those who have enough power and persuasion to determine for us what is the moral and ethical truth at any given moment. I am sure that Hitler and the Nazis, as well as most of the rest of Germany's population, were convinced that their solution to "the Jewish question" was for the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run [i.e., Bentham] and that they were carrying out the most loving acts in that ethnic cleansing situation [i.e., Fletcher].

In summary then, we must recognize along with Elie Wiesel that the consequences of leaving God out of the Holocaust are worse than keeping Him in. In fact, without God in the Holocaust in some fashion or another, the Nazis could have never been held accountable for their evil deeds, for there would have only been deeds, not evil deeds. Without God, there is no Lawful nor Moral accountability for one's actions. Public opinions, private views, mores, pollsters, etc. -- yes. But moral and legal accountability -- no!

It is our divinely commissioned task to help our Jewish brothers and sisters to recognize this reality. And just maybe, along with this recognition, some of them might be open to discussing the messiahship of Yeshua.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, apologetics is doxological. Its final aim, like everything else, is to glorify God.²³ For as the Westminster Catechism so rightly affirms: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Therefore, God is well-pleased and is fully committed to our task at hand. When we prayerfully and in full dependence upon Him seek to bridge this agonizing gap produced by the Holocaust, God will work in us and through us with our Jewish family and

²¹ Paul Johnson, *Reader's Digest*, June 1985.

²² For a popular overview of the various approaches to ethics and morals, especially those based on a system of relativism, see Norman L. Geisler, *Options in Contemporary Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 1981.

²³ On this point, see John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.), 1994.

friends--all to His glory. For after all is said and done, including allowing a place for divine mystery (cf. Deut. 29:29), it is true as Isaiah confessed, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. 63:9).