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"SEEING WITH THE EYES": THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE DISPUTE ABOUT THE CARMEL AT AUSCHWITZ*

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> "Words, they say, are a comparatively recent invention, for the fuller expression of something that was already in existence".[1]
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> "How we treat silence depends upon the theory we hold about how words are related to objects".[2]

INTRODUCTION

If there is any value in the study of mysticism and its use of imaginative language, it is to facilitate the merging of worlds and not their collision. The international controversy surrounding the Carmelite monastery at Auschwitz reverberated at political and interfaith

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All the translations from the French and Dutch have been done by the author.

[1] SAMUEL BUTLER, "Thought and Language", in *The Importance of Language*, ed. Max Black, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1962, p. 15.

[2] FREDERICK SONTAG, "Words of Silence: The Context for God", in *God in Language*, ed. Robert Scharlemann and Gilbert E. M. Ogutu, Paragon House Publishers, New York 1987, p. 144.

levels and could be analyzed from several points of view - theological, historical, anthropological, symbolic, and nationalistic.

While these angles will be included, when relevant, this work will use language as the primary prism with wich to understand this bitter debate. Further, I will speculate about the language of a potential dialogue between the Carmelite tradition and the Hasidic Jews. Both groups are representative of a mystical stream within their faiths and both honor a place that goes beyond words and rational, logical discourse.

I BACKGROUND

Even the correct name for the concentration campi in Poland commonly referred to by its German name of Auschwitz carries linguistic significance and emotional freight. For many Poles the location is properly called Oswiecim, an ordinary village in southern Poland near the Czechoslovakian border. For most of the rest of the world and certainly for the Jewish community, the site is Auschwitz, the machine for and symbol of the Nazis' industrialized effort to exterminate Jews from the face of the earth. The discrepancy in place name is only the tip of the iceberg in mutual misunderstanding, ignorance, and diatribe that occurred among the various parties to the dispute over the Carmelite convent on the grounds of the Auschwitz death camp.

Ironically, pre-war Oswiecim or Auschwitz was primarily a Jewish village and some of the Jewish inhabitants were conscripted as slave labor to build the actual camp. Further, once designated by the Germans as official concentration camp construction workers, some were sent on to build other camps and even survived extermination! Through having been assigned to this particular linguistic category of human beings (camp builders), as opposed to being seen primarily as Jews, their lives were spared in an ironic twist of German logic and language. Eichmann is reported to have said at his trial in Jerusalem: "The only language I recognize is an administrative one", illustrating the point that the Nazis' obsessive hatred of Jews could be trumped by their even stronger obsession for administrative logic and consistency in labeling human beings.[3] Once a builder of concentrations camps, always a builder of concentration camps, even if Jewish!

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[3] THEO KLEIN, *L'affaire du Carmel d'Auschwitz*, Editions Jacques Bertoin, n.p. 1991, p. 17.

Even the term "Auschwitz" evoked entirely different collective memories and massive distrust among the disputants, in part due to simple ignorance of the history and inner workings of the Auschwitz operation. Indeed, the original inspiration for the camp was an outgrowth of an agreement between Hitler and Stalin in 1939 to eradicate politically threatening members of Polish society, including the well educated, the elite, and eventually anyone in the Polish Resistance.[4] Polish political prisoners began arriving ad Auschwitz in June 1940 and for most of the next two years, almost all prisoners were Poles in what was the concentration camp, as opposed to the subsequent death camp at Auschwitz II (see below). Two hundred and seventy thousand Poles died at Auschwitz and a total of 3 million Polish citizens died in other camps from actual murder, starvation and illness.[5] Thus to Polish national memory, Auschwitz was hallowed, sacrificial ground where many of the best and brightest members of society were killed. A quote from Jonathan Webber illustrates the symbolic meaning of the camp to Poles:

> As part of the wider Nazi treatment of the Polish population as a source of slave labor, Auschwitz was a specific element in the attempt at the systematic destruction of Polish culture and Polish national identity, in order eventually to provide Germany with more room to expand.[6]

(This important nuance of Polish history appears to have been often overlooked by some of the more strident Jewish voices during the angry debate). For this reason, many Poles reject Auschwitz as an exclusive Jewish sacrifice and there have even been some relatively recent skirmishes over who "owns" the symbolic horror of this place.[7]

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[4] Wladyslaw T. Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, George Braziller, New York 1991, p. 9. Thus in the collective memory of Poles, Auschwitz has special historical significance as the site of the early efforts to destroy Polish intelligentzia.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 10. See also Marc H. Ellis, *Ending Auschwitz*, Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, KY 1994, p. 60, where the author cites the figure of 75,000 deaths of non-Jewish Poles at Auschwitz.

[6] Jonathan Webber, as cited in Marc H. Ellis, *Ending Auschwitz*, p. 60.

[7] Peter Finn, "Dispute Over Auschwitz Crosses Roils Polish-Jewish Relations", in "The Washington Post", 6 september 1998. The article discusses the relatively recent dispute over the erection of multiples crosses, ranging from tiny ones to some 15 feet tall, and discusses Polish nationalists'insistence that Auschwitz is Polish and Catholic, not Jewish. The violent physical confrontation between N.Y.C. police and firefighters at the World Trade Center clean up after September 11th and feuding among survivor's groups about who is more deserving of financial help is sadly reminiscent of the ongoing polemic over who owns" Auschwitz

What many Polish and other Christian partisans in the argument either overlooked or denied was the near exclusive use of the sub camp (which contained the main gas chambers) called Auschwitz-Birkenau or Auschwitz II, to kill more than one million Jews. Starting in May 1942 most Jews who arrived at Auschwitz were sent directly to the gas chambers in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Indeed 90% of victims of the gas chambers at the sub camp were Jewish, thus marking Auschwitz as the grisly symbol of the Holocaust.[8] While more Jews died in the four other Polish camps of Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka combined than at Auschwitz, Wladyslaw T. Bartoszewski suggests that Auschwitz became the overarching Holocaust symbol for several reasons.[9] First, it was the center of destruction of European Jews, not just Polish Jews, so it had more of an international meaning; secondly, it had a large contingent of Jewish slave laborers with a relatively high survival rate, which meant they could be post camp witnesses; and thirdly unlike some other death camps, the physical plant of Auschwitz remained intact after the war as a concrete reminder of what took place there, thus making denial and obfuscation more difficult. Of the scholars I consulted, only one, Marc Ellis, referred to what he called an "incredible site" on the grounds of the Birkenau death camp – a Catholic church that he visited in 1992 as part of a group of Jewish intellectuals and advisers to the museum there.[10]

To Ellis, the presence of this church which commemorates the death of Edith Stein, is "much more provocative than the convent at Auschwitz" because it is a former Nazi building and because it stands alongside the road traveled by Jews on their way to the death camp.[11] I can only speculate why this church was not also a source of protest and confrontation but, to the best of my knowledge, there has been none. Undoubtedly the somewhat triumphal language of the original fundraising appeal to honor the Pope, which will be discussed below, and the fact that no mention was made of Auschwitz in the fundraising brochure as also a place of special symbolic meaning to the Jews were important factors in bringing this issue into the public square.

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[8] Some Jews reject the term "Holocaust", believing that it suggests a religious or sacrificial connotation to the genocide. "Shoah", to this group, denotes exactly the meaningless destruction of a people, a destruction without redemption. I use Holocaust simply because it was the most common usage in my research.

[9] BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 13.

[10] ELLIS, p. 60.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Abraham Joshua Heschel has suggested "all things carry a surplus of meaning over being – they mean more than what they are in themselves".[12] While Heschel was referring to the ineffable, spiritual underpinnings of reality, the above quote also highlights the truth that symbols are far more evocative than mere facts. The name Auschwitz signifies so much more than the bald numerical total of people killed there and has come to stand for the modern, scientific application of technology to kill human beings judged to be unworthy of life, in this case Jews. So whatever the exact "count" of murdered human beings, Auschwitz's surplus of meaning far exceeds the facts.

There is a basic conceptual challenge in the argument over the presence of a Christian convent on grounds of a concentration camp whose principal focus became the extermination of Jews. One struggles to acknowledge the huge losses for the Poles as well as other groups at Auschwitz without trivializing the unique suffering of the Jews, but one also must wonder whether language at all is suited for the purpose of discussing the Holocaust? As Susan Shapiro asks, "Have not the very coherence of language and the continuity of tradition been broken, shattered by this event?"[13] Shapiro argues that there has been a double rupture of language as our theological assumptions about the Divine and anthropological assumptions about human beings and relationships have been so negated that the capacity of language to bear this discourse has been radically called into question. She states: "The negating character of the event cannot be understood, therefore, as either external or occasional to thought. Rather, it must be recognized as a negation already present in our language, the very instrument of our thought".[14] Shapiro notes the inherent contradiction in using language to describe a "radically negating event that shatters the very conventions of speech and discourse without employing those conventions and, thereby, domesticating that radical negativity".[15]

Certainly one of the first places to use Shapiro's cautionary comments about the dangers of linguistically "domesticating" the Holocaust is in the initial Belgian fund raising appeal for the Carmelite

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[12] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 1951, p. 40.

[13] Susan Shapiro, "Hearing the Testimony of Radical Negation", in *The Holocaust as Interruption in Concilium*, T. and T. Clark Ltd, Edimburgh 1984, p. 3.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

convent at Auschwitz. If there was even a case example of how *not* to approach an exquisitely sensitive topic, this was it! In 1985 a Belgian charity, *Aide a l'Eglise en detresse*, decided to commemorate Pope John Paul II's upcoming visit by raising funds to support the Carmelite nuns already established in a ramshackle building adjacent to barracks at Auschwitz. The most striking thing about the fund raising language was the total absence of any reference to Jewish deaths at Auschwitz and the somewhat exclusive, triumphal Christian focus. While much was made of the fact by the later protesters that the appeal referred to the Carmelite nuns praying for "lost (or strayed) brethren of our countries", and that the convent would be a spiritual fortress", there was actually nothing in the text to support subsequent inflammatory accusations that the nuns would be praying for the conversion of the Jews who died at Auschwitz.[16] In fact, the fund raising appeal also mentioned the Carmel's prayers and penance "for those of us who are still living", which could have been interpreted as a humble acknowledgment of the responsibility that the living had to atone for the deaths at Auschwitz, rather than an attempt to domesticate the Holocaust.[17] While the financial appeal was aimed at the Catholic community, had it also evidenced any sensitivity to the symbolic power of Auschwitz for the Jewish people, some of the subsequent hostility might have been diminished. The fact that the nuns' convent had formerly been a storage area where the Nazis had stored the deadly Zykon B gas for use in the death camp made the physical location and symbolism even more neuralgic.

The Belgian appeal to celebrate the Pope's visit through financial donations came against a background of Jewish ambivalence about the Pope's true attitude vis a vis the Holocaust and the Church's supposed efforts to "christianize" the deaths of six million Jews. In protesting the convent, Sergio Minerbi, researcher at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, referred to remarks made by the future John Paul II in 1971 when he was Archbishop of Cracow about the Polish Church's wish to have "a place of sacrifice, an altar, and a sanctuary, precisely at Auschwitz".[18] Minerbi accused the Pope of wanting to con-

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[16] Theo Klein, *L'Affaire Carmel*, p. 208. Even if this had been the intent of the fundaisers, it is bad Catholic theology, as one doesn't pray for conversion of the dead.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Sergio Minerbi, "L'attittude du Pape Jean-Paul II vis a vis des Juifs et de la Shoah", in *Pourquoi le Carmel d'Auschwitz?*, in «Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles», Brussels, Belgium (1990-3-4), p. 77. Here we have one of the many clash of symbol sys-

struct a "basilica" at Auschwitz, based on these remarks and speculated that the Carmelite convent might really be a ruse for the Pope's alleged plan for a basilica. This is a typical example in this polemical debate of one side exaggerating and projecting malicious intent on to the other. In this case, Minerbi built a basilica out of the Pope's words from nearly two decades earlier. Minerbi also objected to the canonization of Edith Stein as an example of Christian "appropriation" of Jewish symbols, people, and places, in this case Auschwitz.[19] Many Jews, Minerbi among them, (and not a few Christians) had also been troubled by the Church's canonization of the Polish Franciscan, Father Maximilian Kolbe, in 1982.[20] Minerbi, whose language was among the most hyperbolic and cynical on the Jewish side of this controversy, suggested that the Church was positioning itself as "the major victim of Nazism" and implying that Auschwitz was the "symbol of the cosmic punishment of the Jews because they didn't recognize Christ".[21]

Another example of emotional and inflammatory language, this time attacking the Carmelite sisters themselves, is an article by Micheline and Nathan Weinstock.[22] While they strike many blows at the Church and the John Paul II (whose style is that of a "Hollywood show"), they reserve the most scorn and outrage for the fact that the sisters maintain a vegetable garden at Auschwitz:[23]

> It is precisely this patch of green, maintained with love by the nuns, as numerous photographic reports have shown us, that is singularly trou-

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tems - for the Christian, evil can be redeemed through liturgical sacrifice at the altar, whereas for Jews, there is no possibility of redeeming sacrifice at Auschwitz, only blasphemy.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 8. Edith Stein, a brilliant Jewish philosopher, converted to Catholicism became a Carmelite nun, and was killed in Auschwitz. Her eventual canonization by John Paul II in 1998 caused much outrage in the Jewish community who felt the Church was using her to publicize Catholic suffering when Jews believe she had been killed solely because she was Jewish. Stein and her sister, Rosa, were two of two hundred and thirteen Jewish converts to Catholicism who were deported from Holland in retaliation for an anti-Nazi letter from the bishops that was read in all Dutch Catholic churches on July 26, 1942.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 78. Minerbi acknowledged Kolbe's generosity in volunteering to take the place of a married man with family who had been sentenced to death, but asserted that his previous role as editor of an anti-Jewish journal made him an unsuitable candidate for sainthood, particularly if the Church was attempting to mend fences with the Jewish community.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 82.

[22] Micheline and Nathan Weinstock, "Le sens pervers du Carmel d'Auschwitz", in *Pourquoi le Carmel d'Auschwitz?*, pp. 21-40.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

> bling. Would it ever occur to you to grow vegetables in a field of human ashes? What flavor can a Carmelite possibly find in products from such a garden? And is it really blood that runs in their veins for them to enjoy eating such vegetables?[24]

The vegetable garden, of course, was not literally in a field of human ashes and such extreme symbolic language can be found on both sides of the polemic, as we shall see below.

Against this already heightened background of Jewish sensitivity about Auschwitz as well as the many centuries of deicide accusations against the Jews, the Belgian appeal asking for donations for the convent without any mention of Ausschwitz as *the* symbol of Nazi efforts to exterminate the Jews raised many hackles. Further, the fund raising appeal argued that donations would be "proof of our desire to erase the outrages so often done to the Vicar of Christ".[25] While there is reason to think that the aforementioned "offenses" actually referred to the neighboring liberal Dutch Church's open challenge of papal conservatism, many Jews heard the "offenses" as referring to criticism of Pope Pius XII's alleged indifference about the destruction of the Jews during World War II. According to this theory, a sub text of the Carmelite convent was the rehabilitation of the memory of Pope Pius XII by re-focusing on Polish victimization and Christian martyrdom and drawing attention away from Pius XII's perceived failure to defend the Jews.[26]

While there are very plausible, innocent interpretations of the fund raising message in a strictly Christian milieu, it did have a triumphal tone. One example is its reference to "the victorious power of the Cross of Christ" at Auschwitz, which among other claims in the appeal caused Theo Klein, a lawyer and president of «The Council Representing Jewish Institutions in France" to characterize it as evidence of "the old tradition of imperial and intolerant Catholicism"».[27] So while the fund raising tract stands as a most infelicitous example of dealing with such an emotionally charged topic as Auschwitz, it also illustrates the profound linguistic challenge in finding any language

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[25] KLEIN, p. 208.

[26] The role of Pius XII is a neuralgic one between Jews and Catholics. Until the 1963 appearance of the play, *The Deputy*, by ROLF HOCHHUTH, Pius XII was seen as a protector of the Roman Jews. The play challenged his public silence. Final evaluation of Pius XII's role must await the full opening of all the relevant archival material.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

that properly encompasses the horror symbolized by Auschwitz. Shapiro's above cautions about language not being able to contain the radical negativity represented by this symbol is to the point. The relatively innocent, naive inispiration to raise money for the convent, without taking Jewish sensibilities into account, and the exclusively Christian language of the appeal both illustrate her charge of the impossibility od domesticating the radical evil, particularly against the background of Jewish suspicion, some of which was well founded, as described above.

II Jewish fears and protests

Within months of the above appeal, the President of the «World Jewish Congress» lobbied government officials in Poland to move the convent. Momentum was building in the protest movement and in February, 1986, four Belgian Jewish leaders met with the Archbishop of Cracow, Cardinal Macharski, whose diocese included Auschwitz. This group expressed fear that the presence of the Carmelite convent would "accelerate the banalization" of the Holocaust at the very place regarded as the worldwide symbol of German efforts to eradicate European Jews.[28] Referring to the mutual respect and dialogue that had characterized Jewish-Christian relations since Vatican II, the Belgian Jews complained that this unilateral action of placing nuns at Auschwitz violated the trust that had been built up. Cardinal Macharski acknowledged that Jews had been the main victims at the death camp, a site that represented evil incarnate to him. However, he defended the location of the convent as a "concrete manifestation of a desire to pray and repent".[29]

According to Bartoszewski, the dispute which raged between Jews and Catholics boiled down to the two different theological interpretations of Auschwitz as symbol – with most Jews arguing that a Catholic convent would trivialize the memory of the Jewish victims and some Catholics defending the nuns' right, even obligation, to make reparations at the site of this great evil. To Catholics the mystery of redemptive suffering is central to the faith in a crucified Christ who, through his death and ultimate resurrection, reunited God and humankind and demostrated the power of Love over death, even death

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[28] Bartoszewski, p. 8.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

in Auschwitz. But for the Jewish theological tradition, any attempt to redeem the site was offensive. To illustrate this, I cite Yaffa Eliach's account of her experience when she joined other members of President Carter's Commission on the Holocaust for evening services at an ancient Cracow synagogue. Unexpectedly one member of the group, the sole Holocaust survivor of a large family, approached the bimah, banged on a table, and announced he was calling God to Din Torah, a court hearing on God's conduct:

> God! How could you stay here when next door are Auschwitz and Plaszow? Where were you when all over Europe your sons and daughters were burning on altars? What did you do when my sainted father and mother marched to their deaths? When my sisters and brothers were put to the sword?[30]

In the face of such anguish, Auschwitz is a place of God's absence, not presence. Christopher Longley offers more theological elaboration as follows:

> The Jewish instinct in a place like that is to leave it as desolate as possible, physically, morally, and philosophically. Auschwitz is not sacred to the Jews; it is the very opposite of sacred. To extract solace or meaning from such things, let alone find holiness there, is to try to mitigate the evil, to pretend it was somehow not as bad as it really was, and thus to belittle the millions who died there.[31]

In addition to different theologies, there is the issue of the relative silence of Christians during the Holocaust. The «European Jewish Congress», as just one example, protested in 1986:

> When our brothers and sisters met their death in Auschwitz, they were surrounded by a total silence on the part of the world and a very significant silence on the part of the Church. We cannot tolerate that prayers should take place, even in the best of intentions, in this place, from those who could have, at the right time, raised their voice for our brothers and sisters and who did no do so.[32]

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[30] YAFFA ELIACH, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, Avon Books, New York 1982, p. 250.

[31] CHRISTOPHER LONGLEY, in «Times», May 20, 1989, as quoted in BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 156.

[32] A. MONTAGUE, "The Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz: A Documentary Survey", in *IJA Report*, as cited in BARTOSZEWSKI, pp. 35-36.

A third perspective is offered by a modern Jewish theologian, Richard L. Rubenstein, who posits a certain Christian cultural ignorance and insensitivity to the Jewish notion of memory, stating that "May his name and memory be blotted out!" is the most abominable curse a Jew can utter.[33] In Rubenstein's opinion, the anger at the perceived threat to obliterate the memory of the Jewish victims at Auschwitz was an important, overlooked factor in Jewish resistance to the convent.

In July, 1986, an important meeting in Geneva took place between the Catholic delegation, headed by the French Cardinal Decourtray and leaders of several European Jewish communities, led by Theo Klein, the aforementioned Frenchman.[34] As we shall see in future developments, it was significant that no Carmelites were involved in the gathering or apparently even consulted. The fruit of this encounter was Cardinal Macharski's spontaneous (and surprising, according to Klein) commitment to stop any additional repairs or construction to the convent, pending a permanent resolution of the issue. The language of the document issued by this group, *Zakhor* in Hebrew or *Souvien-Toi* in French is a short masterpiece in reconciliation, in acknowledging Auschwitz as the "unique symbol" of the Shoah, in memorializing the dead, and in remembering that Poles, gypsies, and Russian prisoners of war were also murdered there.[35] Just as it was

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[33] RICHARD L. RUBENSTEIN, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1972, p. 70.

[34] For a thoughtful, personal account of the Carmelite convent dispute, associated mettings, and correspondence, seen by a French Jewish leader, see THEO KLEIN's above cited work, *L'affaire du Carmel*. Of particular interest are his impressions of the French Cardinals, Albert Decourtray and Jean-Marie Lustiger, the latter of Jewish origin like Klein. Klein, who describes himself as a "non-practicing Jew", was struck by Decourtray's humility, which he attributes to the Cardinal's mysticism and deep faith (pp. 60-61). There are also many delicious details of the dynamics of the meetings.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 211. I found no indication that this document was ever issued in Polish and indeed, some of the Jewish community outside Poland seemed better informed about the matter than the Polish people. French was apparently chosen as the common language due to its long diplomatic use and due to the plurality of French speakers: French Cardinals Decourtray and Lustiger, the Jewish chair, Theo Klein, the Chief Rabbi of France, René-Samuel Sirat, Belgian Cardinal Danneels, and the president of the Belgian Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations. Klein mentions that two Belgian representatives were included because the dispute originally arose in Belgium and to recognize Belgian Jewish "vigilance" about the matter (p. 58). Presumably the other participants either spoke Frenc or used interpreters. This point is not clarified. The Polish representatives were all Catholic (Cardinal Macharski, his assistant, the Jesuit Fr. Musial, and a lay intellectual). The absence of Carmelites certainly suggests that this was an issue with important political and interfaith overtones, rather than primarily a theological dispute.

significant that no Carmelites were involved in either Geneva meeting, the fact that the document did not appear in Polish speaks volumes about this controversy being an international and interfaith political issue, rather than a Polish question. Apparently neither the Poles nor the Carmelites were seen as significant to the process. In his account Klein was pleased with the commitment to a "mutual search" in order to "move beyond the affront" (of the convent).[36] Over time, however, some participants accused Cardinal Macharski of not following through scrupulously enough on his earlier promise to prevent any expansion or rehabilitation of the convent. Polish nationalistic protests against evicting the nuns were growing (see below), and there was a demand from the Jewish side for another meeting to hold the Church accountable to its commitment.[37] Charges of Polish anti-Semitism increased along with Catholic insistence that Polish deaths had to be honored too. Failure to include the Poles in a meaningful dialogue certainly increased the tension.

III Polish complexity: nationalism, anti-semitism, and communism

As chair of the Jewish delegation, Theo Klein's views on the evolution of this controversy are worth noting. He begins his effort at analyzing Polish anti-Semitism by comparing it to the history of a family with ups and downs and divergent views of the same experiences.[38] He stresses that to analyze this phenomenon is not to defend or justify it, but to attempt to explain it. Like many family histories, the story of Jewish-Polish relations is rife with ambiguities, contradictions, hatreds, and some mutual respect. From the 10th century the history of Jews in Poland consists of occasional waves of immigration from Western Europe when Jewish persecution there increased and chronic Polish ambivalence about the role Jews played in the economy. For the elite and working class, the Jews were a valuable minority in terms of their economic contributions as professionals in towns

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 87. Klein acknowledges rare voices of Jewish support for the nuns remaining at Auschwitz, such as a statement from the Canadian Jewish Congress, due to what he calls "incoherences" caused by "untimely initiatives" from his side. For contemporary Jewish dissent from the original demand that the convent be moved, see Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*, pp. 62 and 72.

[38] Klein, p. 33.

and as middlemen in agriculture, as peddlers, tanners, shoemakers, and so on. in the villages and countryside. Since the Polish nobility wasn't allowed to engage in trade directly, with grain and timber as the only exceptions, they found it convenient to rely heavily on Jews to do their trading and in some cases to manage their estates. For the poor peasants living miserable livel, the Jews became ideal figures for projections of the peasants' resentments and jealousies, particularly between the 16th and 18th centuries. Given the relative level of Jewish autonomy and the lack of opportunities for the impoverished peasants, this 200-year period has been described as "heaven for the Jews, paradise for the nobles, hell for the serfs".[39] However, this is also the same historical period that included a ban on Jews living in certain towns and periodic violence such as the murder of 20% of the Jewish population during the Cossack revolt against the nobles in 1648, when the Jews were accused of supporting the interests of the nobility.[40]

According to Klein, another factor leading to Polish anti-Semitism was the use of Yiddish by the Jews who lived in the countryside and villages. Given that Yiddish was a Germanic based language and that some elements of Polish society were anti-German, this linguistic relationship and the Jews' near monopoly on business with Austria and Germany were additional factors in maintaining anti-Jewish sentiments. Ironically, the Polish speaking Jews, who lived in cities, were professionals and better integrated into Polish society, but were often hated because of their supposed social and economic advantages. As per Klein, "in brief, if they were poor and badly integrated, they zere scorned; if they were rich and well integrated, they were objects of envy".[41]

The 18th c. partition of Poland by Austria, Prussia and Russia further complicated the ambiguous picture. Even though Jews participated in two uprising against the Tsars, they were often seen as collaborating with the foreign occupiers. On the other hand, although the Poles themselves had no love for the Tsarist occupiers, the Tsars' anti-Jewish policies fanned the flames of native anti-Semitism.[42] According to Klein, "this old scheme of hatred" existed all over Europe, par-

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[39] BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 2.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
[41] KLEIN, p. 32.
[42] Klein asserts that both the Polish and Russian gentry often used the Jews as their unpopular tax collectors, and thus had in common their ambivalence about the Jews.

ticularly in his native France, but reached its zenith in Poland, which happened to have the largest Jewish community in Europe.[43] Simultaneously with Poland's assent to the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which affirmed its independence, Poland was forced to sign the Minorities Treaty that supposedly guaranteed Jewish rights. This became a major threat to Polish honor and independence, a threat, which intensified when American Jews protested that the Polish Jews were still being mistreated.[44]

Klein stresses that 20th c. Polish attitudes about Jews were multi-determined and can't be simply subsumed under "classic anti-Semitism". In addition to the role of poverty, Polish nationalism had always been edgy about minorities and the allegiance between nationalism and Catholicism had a profound effect on the Jews being seen as the hated "other". By the time of Polish independence in 1918, the country faced a critical question about how to relate to the Jews who were 10% of the population. Would they be incorporated, along with other minorities, into a heterogeneous, pluralistic society or would Poland become a "homogeneous religioethnic community?"[45] This question was openly debated among political prties and in the market square with the main focus on the Jewish minority. It is Rubenstein's belief that while "most Poles" agreed that Jews should be removed from the country, they lacked the methods to do so, other than "soft" persecution and encouragement of emigration.[46] The Nazis, according to Rubenstein, supplied the strategy for achieving this national desire and their policy of exterminating Jews dovetailed nicely with Polish sentiments.[47]

Attacked by both German and Russian armies, the Poles lost their independence in 1939 and suffered terribly during the war. When Germany turned on Russia in 1941, Polish Communists began working underground against the Germans and became open pro-Soviet partisans when the Russian army invaded to expel the Germans. The 1945 Yalta Conference with Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin paid lip service to a future multi-party Polish state, but the Communists who then occupied the country never allowed free elections to be held, and thus Poland fell under Soviet influence.

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[44] RUBENSTEIN, pp. 65-66.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 64. This question is an ironic foreshadowing of the problems in the Middle East and the struggles in Israel over pluralism

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Under Communism, a new stereotypical, negative category emerged, that of "Judeo-Communism", which linked Jews to the hated Russian occupier.[48] Klein explains this, in part, by noting that for many Polish Jews the Russian occupiers did represent a more hopeful, less anti-Semitic force than the just vanquished Nazis and he wondered who could blame them? The post World War II Russian occupation forces appointed some Jewish sympathizers to various low level, administrative posts, thus adding fuel to the popular notion of Jews as Communists and therefore, by definition, as supposedly opposed to Polish freedom, the principal icon of which was the Catholic Church.[49] Eventually, in another example of the rigid linguistic categories of Nazi thought, some of these supposedly pro-Communist Jews, were eventually deported to Siberia for the crime of being religious believers or middle class, not particularly because they were Jewish.[50] In another more recent example of the role of language in scapegoating and oppression, Cardinal Glemp is reported to have charged that "Trotskyites", allegedly a thinly disguised reference to Jews, penetrated the Solidarity movement.[51]

IV The Church

In the Cathedral of St. John in Warsaw there is a plaque that speaks volumes about the close association between the Polish nation and the Catholic Church: "Catholicism isn't an addition to Polishness. It resides in its verye essence. Trying to separate Catholicism and Poles is to ruin the very basis of the nation".[52] The identification between the Church and the nation became particularly intense, of course, during times of struggle and threat.

Although Rubenstein credits the Church with having set boundaries on acting out one's hatred of Jews, all scholars I consulted referred to the Church's important role in maintaining anti-Semitism.[53]

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[48] Bartoszewski, p. 3.
[49] Klein, p. 34.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[51] Rubenstein, p. 69. Leon Trotsky, a Jew, was a leader of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and has been identified with a particular ideological strain of Marxism.
[52] Gwendoline Jarczyk, "L'Antisemitism en Pologne, hier et aujourd'hui", in «Etudes», as quoted by Klein, p. 102.
[53] Rubenstein, p. 68.

Bartoszewski, Klein and Rubenstein all quote from a 1936 pastoral letter from Cardinal Hlond, primate of Poland, to show that anti-Semitism existed at the highest Church levels. Hlond wrote:

> There exists a Jewish problem which will continue as long as the Jews continue being Jews... It is a fact that the Jews oppose the docrtines of the Catholic Church, that they are liberal thinkers, in the avant garde of atheism and of Bolshevik subversion. It is undeniable that they have a pernicious influence on public morality... But let us not be unjust. These descriptions don't apply to all Jews. A large number of Jews are upright and virtuous believers, working in honest professions. A number of Jews have an edifying and holy family life; among them are persons of an exceptional morality, truly noble and honorable.[54]

This type of anti-Jewish pronouncement is, according to Klein, a particular Polish specialty where the basic affirmation against Jews is nuanced with exceptions that confirm the original theory: most Jews are despicable, but there are some exceptions that we must note.[55] Another famous anti-Jewish proclamation from the Church hierarchy, which illustrates the above "the above exception proves the rule" approach, was a sermon Cardinal Glemp, the Polish primate, gave in 1989 after the Carmelite controversy was already aflame. In a homily at the famous Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa, Glemp attempted to explain the complexity of Jewish-Polish relations, but his condescending language and prejudicial examples of typical Jews, ended up antagonizing Jewish groups and receiving criticism from Catholics as well. While he began by saying that:

> Life, however, does not favour neat classifications, and relations between people fall into categories other than just friend or foe. In our country, this is especially true of the Jewish nation, which was never just a neighbor, but a member of the household and which through its distinctness both enriched us and caused us difficulties... Alongside the Jewish innkeeper who induced the peasant to drink, alongside the Jews who propagated Communism, there were among the Israelites people who gave Poland their talent and their lives...[56]

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[54] KLEIN, p. 102. Detestable as Hlond's statement is, it appears based more on his dislike of Jews because they aren't Catholics rather than prejudice based on ethnicity per se.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[56] BARTOSZEWSKI, pp. 109-111.

Glemp went on to acknowledge Polish silence about the suffering of the Jews as well as Poles who died to save Jews and to insist on the need for:

> A dialogue to explain difficult matters systematically and not to present demands. We have our faults with regard to the Jews, but today one should like to say: my dear Jews, do not speak to us from the position of a nation raised above all other and do not present us with conditions that are impossible to fulfill.[57]

As if this patronizing tone was not offensive enough, Glemp went on to accuse Jews of controlling the mass media in many countries and implied they were conducting an anti-Polish campaign in their efforts to oust the Carmelite sisters from Auschwitz. He concluded: "Without anti-Polonism there will be no anti-Semitism here either".[58] In the ensuing firestorm of criticism, Glemp justified his comments by questioning the competence of his brother Cardinal who had negotiated the original Geneva agreement and demanding the renegotiation of the accord. The three foreign Cardinals whose competence Glemp challenged protested tersely, as did Cardinal John O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York! In his denunciation of the competency of the Cardinals who negotiated the agreement, Glemp was also explicitly challenging Cardinal Macharski, Archbishop of Cracow, one of the original signers.[59] This in-fighting between elements of the Polish Church just illustrates the complexity of the raction in Poland and apparently caught the Jewish delegation by surprise.

A recent article in «Commonweal» is illustrative in dealing with this ambiguity and offers some personal background on Polish attitudes towards the Jews, while exploring the author's struggles to come to terms with his Polish grandfather's heroic underground resistance to the Nazis, his rescue of Jews, and, at the same time, the grandfather's profound anti-Semitism.[60] Referring to the widespread Polish perception that what they suffered under the Nazis has been overlooked in favor of an exclusive emphasis on Jewish suffering and Poles

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

[59] Glemp's challenge to Macharski marked a dramatic break with the lockstep unity maintained by the Church hierarchy under the Nazis and the Communists. The Church was able to be a relatively independent and unifying voice due to the Poles' identification with the Primate, who functioned almost as a monarch.

[60] Alexander Charns, "My Polish Grandfather: a dark history with flashes of light", in «Commonweal», 11 January 2002, pp. 16-18.

as alleged anti-Semites, the author argued that one must acknowledge that "distinctly Polish and Roman Catholic anti-Jewish stereotypes and prejudices were a reason why more Poles did not risk their lives to save their Jewish brothers and sisters..."[61] At the same time he reported there are more Poles recognized at Yad Vashem in Israel as "righteous gentiles" than any other country. He concluded that his grandfather was both "a hero and a bigot" and that these apparently contradictory categories are close to the ambiguity in most human hearts.[62]

As stated above, prejudice against the Jews wasn't the only factor operaging in this complex, dynamic scene. Patrick Michel, a researcher at the center Nationale Republicaine Scientifique in Paris, contends that the primate, Cardinal Glemp had political "circumstantial and tactical reasons" to attempt the abrogation of the first Geneva agreement.[63] Michel sees the Church as having been threatened by the increasing pluralism of Polish society and the erosion of its former privileged plase as "the besieged castle", representing a bulwark of strength and morality against the Communist totalitarian regime.[64] Having to acknowledge the possible legitimacy of alternative Jewish claims about the meaning of Auschwitz would have forced the Church (and Glemp) to come to termis with the Church becoming *one* of several competing purveyors of meaning, rather than *the* only one. Even Klein, a fierce partisan for removal of the convent, speculated that some of Glemp's intransigence was for Polish domestic consumption, rther than being against Jewish interests per se.[65] While both Klein and Bartoszewski acknowledge a strain of official anti-Jewish pronouncements in the language from Church leaders, they both suggest that these attitudes poisoned, not so much the dialogue process on the Carmelite convent, but the willingness or ability of local Polish Church officials to implement it. Klein also proposed the possibility that the Polish Communist government allowed the original establishment of

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[62] The apparent contradiction in terms is reminiscent of a famous anti-Nazi graffiti in German occupied Amsterdam during World War II: "Keep your hands off our filthy Jews", showing the presence of both protective instincts and negative stereotyping of Jews.

[63] PATRICK MICHEL, "Poland, the Church, and Democracy - A Delicate transition", in «Cross Currents», Spring 1990, p. 89.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[65] THEO KLEIN, in «Jewish Chronicle», September 8, 1989, as cited by BARTOSZEWSKI.

the Auschwitz convent as a method of embarrassing the Catholic Church, its most outspoken foe.[66] Michel also contedns that there were certain tensions between the Polish Church and the Vatican, that affected the struggle over Carmel and that it showed the political fissures in what had been a previously monolithic, uniovocal institution.

Suffice it to say that Polish response to the Carmelite question was dynamic, multi-layered and cannot be facilely subsumed as exclusively driven by anti-Semitism or by opposing theologies, while these certainly were major influences. Also in play were nationalistic forces, political questions, power struggles within the Church itself, and the possible role of the Communist party in wishing to embarrass its Catholic opponents. Another important and fascinating angle, wchich is beyond the scope of this paper, is the behing the scenes role played by the Polish Pope, John Paul II. It is also significant up to his point in the struggle the Carmelites themselves played no public role and a letter from their Superior General to Klein laments that the Carmelites themselves weren't involved in the process (see below).

V Demands for Geneva II

Given Cardinal Glemp's efforts to undo the first Geneva agreement and the perception of the Jewish leaders that no apparent efort was being made to move the sisters off the Auschwitz site, the protests escalated and took on an increasingly international scope. By late 1986 Yad Vashem weighed in by circulating a letter to its supporters asking for their involvement in evicting the nuns and the Belgian Jewish weekly publication, «Regards», began publicizing the cause. One article stated "there will be neither peace nor tranquillity as long as a shadow in the shape of the cross falls on the immense field of our unappeasable sorrow".[67] This starkly sums up the irreconciliability of the Jewish and Christian symbols – what was a sign of redemption for one was a deep offense to the other.

In Polish circles the issue went public with an article by a Jewish intellectual, Dr. Stanislaw Krajewski, defending the nuns'right to be there and strongly asserting that the sisters'vocation was contemplative prayer, not the conversion of Jews or anyone else.[68] Krajew-

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[66] Klein, p. 72.

[67] «Regards», No. 171, 1986, as quoted in Bartoszewski, p. 44.

[68] Stanislaw Krajewski, "Ausschwitz, Klasztor I Zydzi", in «Tygodnik Powszechny», June 22, 1986, as quoted in Bartoszewski, p. 39.

ski's only objection was to the original plan to name the convent after Edith Stein, which could have been interpreted as a proselytizing effort. Once the nuns withdrew this proposal, he was satisfied and stated that perhaps a Christian contemplative presence on the site would facilitate Christians taking more responsibility for the Holocaust. Also in a more conciliatory vein was an article by Rabbi Norman Solomon, which focused on educating his Jewish readers about what he saw as two basic facts: 1. That Jews were not the only victims of Auschwitz. 2. That the wall separating the convent from the camp existed at the time of Auschwitz activity and had not been added after World War II, as some Jewish groups apparently were claiming.[69]

Klein demanded and got a date for a second Geneva meeting with the principal participants of the earlier meeting the previous year. In addition to the same four Cardinals and many of the same Jewish leaders, there were added delegates from B'nai B'rith and the co-chair of the World Jewish Congress. At this follow up meeting in Geneva in Frebruary, 1987, a Jewish spokesperson, Professor Ady Steg, of the Universal Israelite Alliance, acknowledged that more non-Jews were killed at Auschwitz (as opposed to Birkenau) than Jews, but observed that:

> And if Auschwitz has become the symbol of the Holocaust it is no *we* who have decided this: a symbol does not decree itself. It is the universal conscience which has seen in Auschwitz and not in Birkenau, Treblinka, or Sobibor, the place of the Jewish catastrophe.[70]

Steg asserted there were more than enough churches where Poles could mourn their dead and that Auschwitz must be left to the Jews. All authors I consulted agree that it was at this second Geneva meeting that the Church made all the concessions. While the language of the accord did not *specifically* state that the Carmelite sisters would be moved, it did specify that there would be no "permanent Catholic place of worship on the site of Auschwitz and Birkenau camps" and that the Carmelites' prayer would take place within an educational center which would be built within two years.[71] This future center,

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[69] NORMAN SOLOMON, in «Christian Jewish Relations», No. 3, September 1986, pp. 42.46, as quoted in BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 44.

[70] BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 45. Note the power of his statement that "a symbol does not declare itself" as a way of undestanding why logic and reasoned, muscular discourse can never be sufficient to address an evocative symbol, particularly when the two communities were in confrontation over the meaning of the symbol, Auschwitz

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

maintained by European churches, would raise consciousness about the Holocaust, the "martyrdom of the Polish people and other peoples in Europe during the totalitarian horror throughout the war of 1939-1945", and would work against efforts to deny the Holocaust, and would promote Jewish-Christian exchanges.[72] Klein's memoirs speculate that the language of this agreement gave Cardinal Macharski and the Catholic Church adequate language to "cover" themselves with those of their constituents committed to the convent remaining at Auschwitz. Indeed, Klein acknowledges having naively assumed that this document would be iron clad and confesses that he was not sufficiently aware of the many divisions and multiplicity of opinions within the Catholic Church that would come into play in delaying the agreement.

Once the agreement was firmly in place, all protagonists found themselves in the difficult position of having to negotiate with the Polish (Communist) government about the exact location of the proposed ecumenical center. If language and politics had complicated the earlier debates, things now got considerably more complex with the government using a two-track system on Jewish issues. On one hand, to cultivate international standing, the Communists worked to maintain credibility with Israel and to cooperate with various international Jewish interests. On the other hand, the government avoided any public, domestic discussion of Jewish matters, partly in an attempt to increase its popularity by playing to anti-Semitic feelings and partly to avoid any discussion of its own past campaigns against Jews.[73]

Confusion, accusations, denials, rumors, and publicity proliferated from this point on. What follows is only a summary of the most interesting or controversial developments. The Jesuit, Fr. Stanislaw Musial, who had participated in the Geneva meetings, became the initial point person in attempting to explain the pending withdrawal of the nuns to the Polish public. In what was acknowledged to be a ground breaking public position for a clergyman, he wrote that, while both Jews and Poles saw Auschwitz as "a particularly sinister symbol of death..., it can never be sufficiently emphasized that the fate of the Jews during the last war was incomparably worse than that of any other nation. Never before in the world's history had there been a crime of such evil".[74] However, Cardinal Glemp's public questioning

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[72] *Ibid.*
[73] BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 48.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

of the Geneva II agreement provided a strong challenge to Musial's conciliatory language.[75] From the Jewish point of view there was no visible sign of moving the nuns and they began to question whether their perceived ally, Cardinal Macharski, had sufficient will or power to implement the agreement that the sisters would move to the ecumenical center off the grounds of the concentration camp, within two years, as agreed in Geneva.[76] In placing this apparent delay in implementation in context, Bartoszewski argues that Macharski was a typical product of the Polish Church, which had learned to operate behind closed doors during the Nazi and Soviet occupations, and that his retiring personality made him an unlikely person to lead the charge.[77] It was also argued that given the state of the Polish economy, it was unreasonable to think that anything could be constructed within a two-year period. Thus the public and the Jewish signers had little idea what was going on in the Polish Episcopacy, but they saw no movement to meet the deadline of moving the nuns to the ecumenical center by February 1989. The Prioress of the Carmel, whose name is not given, was quoted as accusing the Jews of negotiating in "bad faith" and of having been "manipulated".[78] Leaders of the World Jewish Congress threatened to boycott all ecumenical events unless the agreement was respected and solid progress seen. Klein, while vigorously denouncing the non-compliance, also attacked what he saw as a Jewish victim mentality among his co-religionists where Jews were always fated to be exploited by the powerful Catholic Church.[79]

Ady Steg, previously mentioned, accused the Carmelites nuns of "vomiting love for the dead Jews but overflowing with scorn for living Jews".[80] There are multiple examples on both sides of this inflammatory, hyperbolic language.

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[75] RUBENSTEIN, p. 63. Rubenstein asserts the notion of "cognitive monopoly" to explain Cardinal Glemp and the Church's alleged intransigence and inability to accept pluralism in Polish society. Neither Glemp nor the Church, he believes, had come to terms with modern communication and mass media, where issues occurring on Polish soil were instantly debated internationally and where the Church was no longer the only voice.

[76] KLEIN, p. 93. Klein states that Macharski lacked the personal qualities of a "boss".

[77] BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 63.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 65. We do not know precisely what she meant, but Bartoszewski speculates that the Prioress felt this was an anti-Polish issue in which the better financed Jewish groups were having more say.

[79] KLEIN, p. 101.

[80] KLEIN, p. 112.

VI THREE LENSES ON THE JEWISH PROTESTERS ENTRY INTO CARMEL

One of the most spectacular happenings in the troubled history of this dispute occurred in July 1989, when a group of seven American Jews, dressed in knock offs of concentration camp uniforms, scaled the convent wall and knocked on the convent's door and windows.[81] Reportedly Polish constructions workers nearby came to "defend" the nuns and a physical altercation ensued which was reported round the world. This boisterous, American style demonstration was in marked contrast to the silent, reverential atmosphere all parties reportedly desired for Auschwitz and significantly escalated the tensions and grievances on both sides. Since my particular interest in this question revolves around the language used, I will show below the different use of language by the commentators I consulted and how language gives clues to the author's lens.

1. Wladislaw T. Bartoszewski's account, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, is the most comprehensive and historically based account of the overall dispute. Bartoszewski is a social anthropologist, educated in Warsaw and Cambridge and a professor of modern European history at Warwick University.[82] While he certainly is international in focus, he taps into the Polish media reports in a way neither of the other authors does. The chapter dealing with the confrontation between the American Jews and the nuns and contruction workers is entitled «Invasion», thus giving us a linguistic clue about his stance (sub heading is «Rabbi Weiss Invades the Convent»).[83]

Bartoszewski has sufficient objectivity to report that the press accounts, both in Poland and internationally, varied widely. He quotes some comments attributed to the chief "invader", Rabbi Avraham Weiss (from a Solidarity paper) about his group being manhandled by the workers, water thrown on them and verbally abused.[84] According

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[81] It is not clear whether they first knocked on the convent door and only climbed over the wall later when there was no answer at the door. Bartoszewski actually details both sequences on p. 86.

[82] In the introduction he mentions his gratitude to his father, who has the same name, for his help on the book. I have unable to establish whether his father is the same Wladyslaw Bartoszewski who was in the Polish underground, survived Auschwitz, and later became Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs. This particular Bartoszewski is mentioned in the Rubenstein book as having been active in the rescue of Jews and is an interesting possible link to the author of the book on Carmel.

[83] BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 86.

[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

to Bartoszewski, the group climbed the convent walls when there was no response to their knocking and began blowing horns and praying with their prayer shawls on their shoulders. After "a few hours" the workers threw out Weiss and group in a "brutal fashion", and Weiss complained that the police who were watching did nothing. Reportedly nuns and a priest were also present and took no action. Two days later the Weiss group nailed the following protest to the door of Carinal Macharski's Curia:

> Dear Cardinal Macharski, we come in peace, but at the same time we are afraid. We come to appeal for justice for our dead who cannot speak for themselves... As proud Jews we announce - stop praying for the Jews who were killed in the Shoah, let them rest in peace as Jews.[85]

This letter was labeled "very restrained" by Bartoszewski. He also includes a report from Reuters that Weiss' group gave a letter to Macharsi's representatives, demanding his resignation, if the convent was not relocated and if the Carmelite nuns, who allegedly watched as the workers intervened, were not sanctioned "for watching in silence as workers beat Jews".[86] The same day the Weiss group returned to the convent, scaled the walls again, and demonstrated for six hours with signs and song. The nuns, who did not appear, called the police who didn't intervene, and the protesters eventually left. Needless to say, these events attracted a large group of spectators. This account by Bartoszewski quotes multiple press reports, most of which seemed critical of actions by Weiss' group and rifers to the nuns being disturbed on July 16th, an important Carmelite feast day (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel). It is worthwhile to note the inclusion of a Jewish critique of Weiss' group in the «Jewish Chronicle» that referred to the American Jews and the Polish nuns and construction workers as "two small, self-selected xenophobic groups (who) felt threatened by each other".[87] In his conclusion, Bartoszewski considers Polish ignorance about Judaism and Jewish values as "the main reason" for the bitter controversy.[88] While not exonerating the Jewish side at all in termis of its perceived misunderstanding of Catholic motives and the meaning of Auschwitz to Poles, Bartoszewski concludes that this was "a fight between two dif-

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[85] *Ibid.*, p. 87.
[86] *Ibid.*
[87] SHENKIN, in «Jewish Chronicle», August 11, 1989, as quoted in BARTOSZEWSKI, 97.
[88] BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 159.

ferent symbols – of Jewish and Polish martyrdom".[89] Given his academic training and intimate knowledge of Poland, his study reflects a nuanced, critical approach to the complexities of the Auschwitz dispute, though his bias against the "invasion" of the convent is clear.

2. The author of *L'affaire du Carmel d'Auschwitz*, Leo Klein, presents himself clearly as a partisan, as a "small entrepreneur" seeking to get a job done and refusing to succumb to what he describes as a Jewish tendency to feel victimized and defeated by the powerful Catholic Church.[90] An attorney by profession, he mentions several times his lack of religious belief: "I consider myself a Jew and an agnostic without any contradiction, a Frenchman nourished in a republican culture and a Jew passionately attached to the existence of Israel without partition".[91] Born into an observant Alsatian Jewish family, he eventually became president of the Representative Council of French Jews and Chair of the Jewish delegation on the Carmelite convent question. He describes the French Jewish community as diverse both in religious practice and original ethnic origin, with vibrant discussions and differences. In passing, he recalls the French Church's silence about the anti-Jewish policies of the Vichy regime and observes that there is always a danger of overt anti-Semitism retunrning.[92] Somewhat surprisingly to me, he expresses a greater affinity for Arab Moslems than with Christians and says (in 1991) that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a family quarrel.[93] Whereas with Moslem Arabs Klein feels "a kinship, a kind of existential complicity", dialogue with Catholics, he maintains, is "more cold, a dialogue of reason... passion isn't present in the exchange but rather, the interests of both parties".[94] Thus Klein approaches the Carmel question as a lawyer and "small entrepreneur" who shares little common passion with the Catholics, but who respects the good consciences of some of his adversaries. The one paragraph

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[89] *Ibid.*, p. 159.
[90] KLEIN, pp. 44, 154.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 186. The infamous Dreyfus case in which a French, Jewish army officer was unjustly accused of spying for Germany in 1984, found guilty in two trials, imprisoned, and only pardoned in 1906, would have been very much in Klein's consciousness as a bvlatant example of French anti-Semitism. Interestingly enough, Dreyfus, like Klein, came from Alsace.
[93] *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193. In light of present day blood letting on both sides, his characterization of a family feud seems to be a euphemism.
[94] *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

devoted to the American Jews who climb the convent walls is worth quoting in its entirety:

> On the 14th of July a small group of American protesters, lead by Rabbi Weiss, comes to pray in the Carmelite garden.[95] They are assaulted by the laborers who are working in the yard. The police, who are present on the site, do not intervene during the scuffle. There we are again: at Auschwitz, in the shadow of the cross, where the Jews are being hit by the Poles, and more precisely, by the laborers who are engaged in the work (on the convent) that cardinal Macharski had said wouldn't take place... As far as I'm concerned, even if I understand the demonstrations, I don't approve of them. And certainly not that of Rabbi Weiss, who believed in the efficacy of a media 'coup' but whose method recalls the terrible behavior of the "integristes".[96] Is Weiss one of them? I don't have the answer but to use their methods, is in the end to be identified with them.[97]

The first point of interest is Klein's disapproval of the demonstration, even though he presents the demonstrators' intent as peaceful and spiritual. These peaceful protesters are "assaulted" by the workers and the watching police do nothin. Immediately he identifies with Jews being attacked at Auschwitz under the shadow of the dreaded cross. He is the only author who claims that the laborers were engaged in work on the convent that Macharski had promised would not occur. (In fact, I was unable to locate any reference to exactly *what* the workers were doing, whether it was routine maintenance or new expansion.[98]) So while he is critical of the demonstration, he is sympathetic to the demonstrators' cause and places the blame for aggression on the workers. Klein ignores the invasive quality of the event, as described above by Bartoszewski, about the Jews climbing the wall of a cloistered convent. Obviously this event didn't make much of an impression on Klein as he devotes minimal space to it. It would appear

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[95] After Klein's vociferous protest against the Carmelite prayers, it is ironic that he implicitly accepts Jewish prayer on the site.

[96] The term "integristes", according to Peter Bernardi, S.J., in a private communication, refers to "those Catholics who were intransigently opposed to any accomodation to modernity" in France. Bernardi continues that the "integristes" tended to be "restorationists" and "authoritarians... opposed to any democratic tendencies". Given that Klein was French, he would have been familiar with this Catholic label, but it is significant that he applies it to his co-religionis., Rabbi Weiss. Although he questions if the term applies to Weiss, his usage suggests he may have found Weiss doctrinaire and rigid.

[97] KLEIN, p. 131.

[98] See «The Wall Street Journal» article cited below, which refers to repairs.

that as an attorney his attention was more focused on the chronology of the respectives moves and countermoves made by both sides, and less on psychological nuances.

3. For my taste, the most interesting and nuanced version of the American Jews' protest at the convent is that given in *After Auschwitz* by Richard Rubenstein.[99] Somewhat of an iconoclast in the Jewish community, Rubenstein has announced in various publictions, speeches, and classes his contention that the Jewish traditional belief in "the God of history" can no longer be maintained after Auschwitz.[100] However, according to Marc Ellis, his former student, and apparent admirer (since he dedicates *Ending Auschwitz* to him), Rubenstein does accept a Jewish mystical understanding of God and was saved from "despair" through psychoanalysis.[101] I am also interested in Rubenstein due to his apparent disaffection from Abraham Joshua Heschel, whom I have quoted earlier and whose work will figure prominently in the discussion below of Hasidism. Ellis reports that Rubenstein, who had been Heschel's student at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, was troubled by Heschel's purported romanticizing of the world of Eastern European Jews, a world that had been totally savaged by the Nazis.[102] Insisting that "No Jewish theology will possess even a remote degree of relevance to contemporary Jewish life if it ignores the question of God and the death camps", Rubenstein focuses exclusively on what he sees as the mutual abandonment of the Jewish people and God.[103] Given this particular lens, his perspective of the July 14, 1989, incident at the convent should be of interest.

Of the three authors I used for this part of the study, Rubenstein is the only one against the original Jewish demand that the convent be moved, although he eventually agreed that relocation was necessary because the whole issue had become so inflammatory.[104] Of the two

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[99] RICHARD L. RUBENSTEIN, pp. 62-79.

[100] ELLIS, *Ending Auschwitz*, p. 6.

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 6. Perhaps I am particularly sympathetic to Rubenstein's approach as it is more psychological and I am a therapist.

[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[104] Rubenstein felt that the demands of a pluralistic society, which the Jews wanted, also implied that the Jews would have to tolerate Gentile religious expressions and could not have a "cognitive monopoly" on Auschwitz. He used this same term to apply to the Polish Church's efforts to identify national values with Catholicism.

Jewish authors, he alone refers to the powerful symbolic invasion of the nuns' sacred space by the Jewish protesters. As cloistered sisters of the Discalced Carmelite order, the nuns lived in "an enclosure", an ecclesiastical and juridical term meaning that the walled off space had been specially consecrated by the bishop and that the area was completely forbidden to outsiders, even non-Carmelite women.[105] While Rubenstein does not highlight the spiritual significance of the breach of enclusure, he grasps the "primal associations" of the groups' actions.[106] He concedes that the Jewish prayer shawls worn by the protesters, their books and religious songs not only would have had no meaning to the nuns or the Polish onlookers, bat that they could have triggered fear and anxiety in "the psyches of theologically unsophisticated Polish Catholics".[107] (Note the patronizing assunption that the nuns and the observers were theologically unschooled!) He goes further in linking the assumed virginity of the nuns with the "male invasion" of their sacred space to suggest "most unfortunate sexual associations".[108] I feel that hem more than the other commentators, gets at the unspoken but very powerful symbolic meaning of the "invasion" of the convent.

His criticism of Rabbi Weiss and group notwithstanding, Rubenstein asserts the Jewish protesters were "violently assaulted by Polish construction workers" and adds two new details in his discussion of the incident.[109] In his version, the leader of the workers yelled "Heil Hitler" and a priest stood by, encouraging the workers'assault on the peaceful Jews.[110] Obviously, his version suggests more malice and vicious anti-Semitism on the part of the workers and the unnamed priest than Bartoszewski or Klein. Even though he has previously acknowledged that the demonstration caused "primal associations" for the nuns and onlookers, his portrayal of the workers' role imputes only hostility to them.[111] Rubenstein writes that the July 14th event brought tempers on both sides to a boil.

«The New York Times» of July 15, 1989 carried a photograph of a man leaning out the convent window, pouring water on a group of

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[105] Without diminishing the symbolic importance of this closed space, allowances are made for necessary outsiders to enter, as workmen, doctors, etc.

[106] RUBENSTEIN, p. 73.

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[108] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[109] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

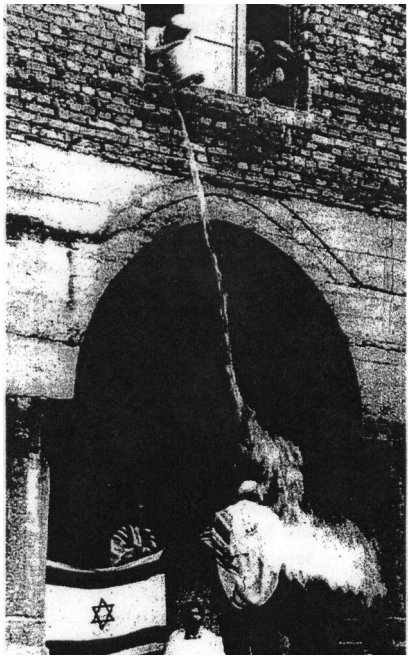
[110] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[111] Although I found no specific mentionof it, I wonder if the often-mentioned workers had any sense of needing to protect the nuns from the demonstrators.

men in yarmalkas and prayer shawls (sees below). The small blurb underneath the photo says Rabbi Weiss was "punched and kicked", thus highlighting the male-to-male struggle, rather than the perspective of the nuns, about which we know nothing.[112] A later edition on July 27th has a lengthier article on the whole controversy but only a small paragraph referring to this incident, which reads:

> This month several Jews from the United States clambered over a fence surrounging the cloister. Polish workers poured buckets of water on them and dragged them from the site while the Polish Police and the nuns looked on without interfering.[113]

This account softens the Jews' penetration of the convent with the word "clambered" and uses the plural for "workers" pouring water and "dragging" the Jews away.



Demonstrators Clash With Workers at Auschwitz.

«The Wall Street Journal» of November 1989 adds some detail and includes some words from the Carmelite Prioress.[114] This article reports that the demonstrators left pamphlets at the convent door and "then were beaten by the workers on the site".[115] The reporter actually visited the convent site and reports on works in progress (as alleged by Klein) without describing more than "repair work" to the convent.[116] She quotes the Prioress, speaking from behind the grille, as saying: "It's important for us to be here for all the Polish dead but we also pray for salvation for everyone

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[112] «New York Times», 15 July 1989, p. 3.

[113] «New York Times», 27 July 1989, sec. A, p. 3. Since no specific actions are attributed to the nuns, one wonders if they were passive observers in an effort to avoid involvement with men in the cloister or were they silently supportive of the workers?

[114] Brigit Grauman, "Standoff at Auschwitz: Nuns, Pole, Jewish Memories", in "The Wall street Journal", 28 November 1989, p. 1.

[115] *Ibid.*

[116] *Ibid.*

everywhere". Referring to the mail they've received from Poles imploring them no to move the convent, she is quoted as saying further: "They write to us that they lost a father, a brother, in Auschwitz, and they beg us to stay".[117] In Bartoszewski's version, the Prioress regretted water having been poured over Weiss by a worker who was mentally retarded and who was only playing a practical joke.[118] According to Bartoszewski, the Prioress herself had helped take food to Jews during World War II at the request of her mother.[119]

VII Protests on all sides

The day after the Jews entry into Carmel the Cracow Curia issued a statement condemning the behavior of the protesters, who, it claimed, had:

> hurled abuse at the sisters, Poles, and the Church. Workers and passers-by drew attention to their improper behavior and demanded that they leave immediately. Various forms of *persuasion* and discussione continued until 5 p.m., when the intruders *were moved* outside the gate [emphasis mine][120]

(Note the euphemistic use of "persuasion" and "were moved", if one accepts the U.S. media accounts of the Jews having been drenched with water, at the least, and possibily also physically attacked!) Within a few days the Cracow Curia and the Episcopacy both weighed in with protests about the Weiss group's action.

At the end of July, Poland's Chief Rabbi and other Jewish organizations in Poland issued a statement of concern about the Weiss demonstration, which they said violated Jewish values.[121] There was much vociferous debate in the Polish press with some Poles apologizing for the allegedly intolerant attitude of the workers and the police who just watched. On July 20th delegates from the World Jewish Congress visited the Vatican to ask for the Pope's intervention in the escalating controversy. Bartoszewski asserts that the delegation was told that this was a matter for the local Church and that the Pope would

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[117] *Ibid.* This quote is only the second time we hear a Carmelite quoted.
[118] Bartoszewski, p. 95.
[119] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[120] *Ibid.*, p. 88.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 88-89.

no interfere.[122] There were several ongoing demonstrations by Jewish groups in front of the convent, including one eight days after the original incident, where one hundred members of the Belgian Students Union and the World Jewish Congress protested with banners in French and Polish that read "Do Not Christianize Auschwitz and Shoah".[123] There were also protests by local residents of Auschwitz, many of which had ugly, anti-Semitic themes. Bartoszewski described the local crowd outside the convent as "poor, ugly, and wretched".[124] Their protests ranged from anger that the local population had never been consulted and that they were being protrayed as igorant, anti-Semites to complaints that the Jews had not cared for their own remaining cemeteries and synagogues in Poland but saw fit to interfere in Church business.[125]

In the first official Carmelite pronouncement of which I am aware, Fr. Dominik Wider, Provincial of the Discalced Carmelites in Poland, took public issue with the Geneva accords and accused the Weiss group of having held the nuns as virtual hostages.[126] Wider denied that any water was poured on the Jews (apparently he hadn't seen the photograph in «The New York Times»!) or that a priest had been present.[127] With a sweeping anti-Semitic generalization, he said that discussion with Jews was impossible, as they don't dialogue: "No arguments reach them".[128] He objected to any plans to move the nuns. Obviously this kind of rhetoric was not helpful and was very different from the language used by the Carmelites' Superior General, Camilo Maccise, as will be discussed below.

«The New York Times» refers to "prominent Catholics in Cracow" who were supposedly privy to the mind of Cardinal Macharski (who had signed the Geneva agreements). These sources volunteered that Macharski could not take firmer action to implement the agreement due to the resistance of the sisters and the local populace. Macharski was quoted as saying: "If you think that Macharski can go down there and tell those nuns to move, and they will get up and go, you are

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[122] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 91. It is noteworthy for our study of language that the signs included Polish, although the speeches, as per Bartoszewski, were in English and French.

[124] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[125] *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

[126] *Ibid.*, p. 93. Bartoszewski uses the term "Father General" with wich I am not familiars, so I assume he meant "Provincial", the head of a province.

[127] *Ibid.*

[128] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94

mistaken".[129] Klein also muses about what he sees as the nuns' surprisingly fierce independence:

> I finally understood that the Carmelites, although contemplatives and female, depend (neither juridically or spiritually) on the bishop of their diocese, nor on the provincial and not even the Prior General of the Carmelites. They seem to obey, according to the circumstances, first these and then those, or they disobey everybody, enjoying in the face of pastoral authority, an autonomy that they trace to their grille.[130]

We don't know whether Weiss' entry into the convent grounds was a trigger or not, but Macharski finally took a stand on August 8, 1989, when he abrogated the Geneva agreements (as discussed above in ch. IV, The Church), citing in part Jewish disrespect for the nuns. He charged that "some Western Jewish centers" had mounted a "violent campaign of accusations and slander, outrageous aggression".[131] Blaming the Jewish demonstrators for disrespecting the nuns and "the Christian faith, as well as symbols and piety", Macharski announced that he would not proceed with plans to relocate the nuns to the interfaith center. Weiss' response was swift: "the Cardinal has, in almost classical anti-Semitic terms, chosen to portray the Jewish victims as aggressors. It was not we who beat Polish catolichs. It was Catholic Polish workers of the convent who assaulted us..."[132]

Following Macharski's renunciation of the agreement, Cardinal Glemp's anti-Semitic sermon at Czestochowa (already discussed above under the ch. IV, The Church) two weeks later escalated the situation further. The protests on both sides and entreaties to various Vatican and Polish officials are too numerous to mention and included both ugly anti-Semitic demonstrations outside the convent and appeals by the Jewish representatives to the highest Vatican and Polish authorities.

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[129] «New York Times», 27 July 1989, A3. This quote would fit with Klein's opinion discussed above that Macharski's shy personality didn't lend itself to resolving such a contentious issue.

[130] KLEIN, p. 175. As we shall see, Klein far overestimates the nuns' independence and ignores their vows of obedience.

[131] RUBENSTEIN, p. 73.

[132] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

VIII Reluctant resolution

As already discussed, little was known publicly about the feelings of the Carmelites themselves, either the cloistered nuns of Auschwitz or the larger Carmelite order. According to a «Washington Post» article, getting the nuns' cooperation was difficult and involved archival research and invocation of St. Teresa of Avila, the reformer and founder of the O.C.D. Order.[133] Supposedly a vote was held at the Auschwitz convent and of the fourteen nuns, only one voted to relocate. Given St. Teresa's well-known guideline that at least six women were needed to found a new convent, the move was blocked temporarily since there were not six nuns willing to transfer to the new convent at the ecumenical center.

Klein is the only commentator to mention correspondence with the Prior General of the order in January and February 1989, (well before the controversial Weiss incident). He includes copies of a letter to himself and to the French Cardinal Decourtray from the Prior General, Philippe Sainz de Baranda.[134] For the purposes of analyzing language what stands out in the Sainz de Baranda's January letter to Decourtray is his unequivocal statement: "... the duty of carrying out all the points (of the Geneva agreements) is mandatory and, consequently, the Discalced Carmelites of Auschwitz must accept the transfer as provided for by the Accord".[135] This language is crear, direct, and allows no "wiggle room". Further and very diplomatically, Sainz de Baranda chides Decourtray for not having involved the Order in the Geneva meetings and for not informing the Carmelites when the agreements were reached. Look at this language for an example of a protest couched in high diplomatic swirls and curlicues:

> ... renewing to you my most sincere wish to collaborate, I take the liberty, Eminence, of speaking with you frankly, also in the name of the General Definitory, to say that it is incomprehensible and painful to me

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[133] John Pomfret, "Pope Orders Nuns at Auschwitz to Move", in «Washington Post», 16 April 1993, sec. A, pp. 17, 20. Pomfret quotes Fr. Musial, S.J., who has been mentioned above as a participant in the Geneva meetings, to the effect that 13th c. text affirmed the contemplative nuns right to decide themselves on the location of each convent. If the 13th c. document is the Rule, which is the foundation of Carmelite life and allows the men to choose the location of their monastery, it doesn't apply to women who only entered the order in the 15th c. It is not clear if this is the "archival research" mentioned.

[134] Klein, pp. 230-238.

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 230.

> that the Carmelites weren't consulted at the time of the Geneva meeting nor were they informed later when the agreement was concluded and signed. I believe that the Carmelites had the right to know the contents of the agreement, given that a very important and painful decision was being made there (in Geneva), a decision which would affect the Carmelites who are under the jurisdiction of the Order. It would have facilitated things, if there had been more respect and more collaboration, and one might have avoided the current situation in which, the Order is finally being asked to intervene.[136]

After this very deferential protest, Sainz de Baranda now strongly asserts:

> I would like to add just a word, I think it is my duty as Prior General of the Order, about the future of the Discalced Carmelite community in Auschwitz. It is clear that the monastery is not being *suppressed* and that the community is not being *dispersed* [emphasis mine]. It is a question of a transfer or concretely, of building a new monastery... It seems obvious to me that the Discalced Carmelite community also has rights which should be respected an, if necessary, defended to the Jewish representatives by the Catholic delegation in Geneva.[137]

Obviously the Prior General needs to mark a position that the nuns will remain as a community, even if in a different location and that his Catholic brothers on the delegation should do a better job of protecting their interests! Under this very polite and diplomatic language, there is a strong position being taken. Sainz de Baranda also writes several days later to Klein, confirming the acceptance of the decision that the nuns will move to a yet to be constructed interfaith center which he opes will be constructed as soon as possible "so that the sisters may experience the atmosphere of peace and silence which are indispensable to the contemplative life and that the brotherly ties between Jews and Christians will not suffer any new tensions because of Auschwitz".[138] While Sainz de Baranda is diplomacy itself, a carefully worded reproach to the Jewish delegation is implied.

After the tumultuous Weiss incident at the Carmel, protests gathered steam on both sides with the abrogation of the accord by Macharski, the anti-semitic homily by Glem and his charges that the agreement had been negotiated by incompetent Cardinals. Klein observed that he finally understood that this affair was not at all about

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[136] *Ibid.*, p. 231.
[137] *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.
[138] *Ibid.*, p. 234.

a Catholic-Jewish conflict but about Polish conflicts at the eart of the Church.[139] He asked how could a Polish Pope disavow the attitude of Glemp, who as Primate was the "incarnation of the continuity and unity of the nation"?[140] Still, Klein relates John Paul II was obliged to apply "the pontifical unction" in September 1989, two months after the crisis of the Weiss protest, because the situation was out of hand.[141] All the authors I used agreed that the decisive move in favor of the transfer of the nuns to the interfaith center came from the Vatican and effectively settled the matter.[142] In a wonderfully obscure, indirect fashion the Pope's wishes were made known through the "moderate voice" of Cardinal Willebrands of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, who announced that the Vatican is "prepared to make its own financial contribution" to the interfaith center where the Carmelites would be housed.[143] Although Glemp quickly changed his message to support the nuns' transfer, the oblique Vatican language reportedly still left some Jews in the dark about the Pope's intentions.[144] After so much drama, bitter controversy, and accusations, it is little wonder that outsiders not acquainted with the intricacies of Vatican communications might not realize that Vatican financial support for the interfaith center was equivalent to Papa "blessing" of the nuns' transfer. While it would be too simplistic to say that everyone lived happily ever after, Rome's intervention decisively settled the matter and the acute sense of crisis passed. However, mutual recriminations continued with the Prioress of the convent quoted in a Polish-American paper to the effect that the nuns refused to budge "a single inch", that the Israelis were the true anti-Semites because of their treatment of the Arabs, and that Jews were responsible for atheism in Poland.[145] Representative of the ongoing furor was a press report in December 1989 (after Vatican intervention) that Rabbi Weiss planned to sue Cardinal Glemp for slander.[146] Protests against moving the nunz continued outside the convent until they moved in the interfaith center in July 1993.

A critical shift in language from the Catholic side is evident in the correspondence from the new Discalced Carmelite Superior Ge-

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[139] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[140] *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.
[141] *Ibid.*, p. 145.
[142] KLEIN, p. 144; BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 126; RUBENSTEIN, p. 77.
[143] KLEIN, p. 144, and RUBENSTEIN, p. 77.
[144] BARTOSZEWSKI, p. 126.
[145] *Ibid.*, p. 133. Doubts were raised later about the authenticity of this interview.
[146] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

neral, Camilo Maccise, with Theo Klein. Unlike the Polish Carmelite Provincial, who made an insulting, anti-Semitic generalization, Maccise's entry is noteworthy for its healing language. In a letter dated July 14 1991, exactly two years after the Weiss protest, Maccise expressed his intent to honor the agreement in moving the convent as soon as possible. What is significant in his frank apology to Klein:

> This "day of violence and distress" which is the Shoah ought never to be forgotten in contemporary memory. At the beginning of my term as Prior General of the Discalced Carmelites, *I express to you my regret for the lack of understanding and respect to Jewish memory, which may have been shown by members of the Carmelite family*. United to my Polish brothers and sisters, I reverence, as a Christian, the memory of the Polish martyrs under National Socialism. Neither this faithfulness and nor the Catholic faith demand that the sisters pray on the (actual) site of the martyrs' death [emphasis mine].[147]

Klein appeared very moved by this personal apology and delicate diplomacy, even though Maccise doesn't specify to which martyrs he refers. Klein replied a week later:

> Reading your letter has convinced me that you have appropriated, with a profundity that I must honor, *the meaning and the scope of the Geneva accords which go beyond the words and the pledges*... It is important to end this painful conflict, first to maintain in silence and serenity the places of suffering, but also, as a commitment *to a reciprocal concern as regards our convergences and divergences* [emphasis mine].[148]

Note that these communiqués go well beyond the diplomatic language of courtesy and the confronting or logical language of argument and use empathy, symbolic language ("meaning and scope", "convergences and divergences", etc.), and mutual respect. The last letter in Klein's book is Maccise's reply a week later in July 1991, in which the thesis of this paper begins to take shape. Maccise used the positive communication technique of "mirroring" in agreeing with several of Klein's points and then goes further to invoke a story about The Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism:

> Speaking for the Friars and Nuns of Carmel, I am conscious of the need to pursue mutual listening and education of the hearts *"as regards our convergences and divergences"... I dare to hope that what you have suffered*

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147 KLEIN, p. 268.
148 *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

> *may also open a path of meeting and better comprehension. I write this thinking of a well-known commentary of the Baal Shev Tov on dialogue: 'Two brothers are walking together. Piotr says: Ivan, I love you'. Ivan answers: 'If you love me, tell me what makes me suffer!' Piotr answered: 'How would I know what makes you suffer?' Ivan says to him: 'How can you say you love me if you don't know what makes me suffer?'* [emphasis mine].[149]

One has the sense that Maccise and Klein have experienced some of the empathy of which The Baal Shem Tov spoke and in so doing, have reached across the abyss of their respective tradition's misunderstandings and rancor. The importance of this exchange cannot be overestimated. It appears from Klein's response, that finally someone from the Catholic side has begun to understand what causes his (and other Jews) suffering. In his introduction to *L'affaire du Carmel d'Auschwitz*, Klein asserts that a dialogue is about "obliging the other to reveal themselves" and not committing "the terrible error" of always assuming the "irremediable hostility of the others, the goyim".[150] With Maccise's apology, empathetic response, and particularly his use of a Hasidic reference, Klein may have seen him "revealing" himself, beyond the level of logic and reason that Klein experienced in negotiations with other Catholics. This reaching out for common meaning, instead of fighting over symbols, is most striking and healing. This exchange also harkens back to Shapiro's cautions about language being an inappropriate vehicle with which to deal with the Holocaust. By offering the Hasidic story, Maccise certainly uses words, but not to score a debating point – rather to go *beyond* the words to a spiritual point of reverence for the other.

As discussed above and as evidenced by Sainz de Baranda's diplomatic protest to Cardinal Decourtray, the Carmelite nuns at Auschwitz and the Discalced Carmelite Order itself were not consulted at either Geneva meeting and seem to have been bystanders to the whole controversy. The apparent relegation of the Carmelites to the sidelines highlights my contention that this dispute was primarily about the politicization of the symbol of Auschwitz by both Poles and Jews, and particularly by the leaders of both groups. At heir worst, zealots within both communities saw the "other" as continuing to victimize them. There are definitely discrepant theologies between the two communi-

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[149] *Ibid.*, 272.
[150] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

ties as regards expiation, prayer, sacrifice, and redemption, etc., which complicated the issue. In correspondence and decrees issued there is some use of Hebrew Scripture citations by both groups, but spiritual language clearly takes a back seat to the language of reasoned, muscular, polemical debate (not to deny that both sides often used emotionally charged language). Most participants sought to mamipulate to their advantage and used the mass media to help them, rather than genuinely seeking mutual understanding.

The last Maccise letter in which he uses the Hasidic story, and with which Klein closes the book, offers us a departure point for exploring what might have been, had there been an extended dialogue between the Carmelite and the Hasidic traditions. Both groups represent a mystical stream within their faiths and both honor a place that goes beyond language. A caveat: I explore this potential conversation, not to facilely deny difference or tension nor to suggest that the convent should non have been moved, as I certainly believe it should have been, but to look at unexplored depths, to consider how such an exchange might have reduced the rancor and hatred, and how the process might have been different. After a brief exploration of both the Carmelite and Hasidic traditions, there will be a summary discussion of mystical language and then an analysis of how these traditions might have used their commonalities to surmount the polemics and inflammatory language of both sides.

IX The Carmelite tradition

The Carmelites belong to an ancient tradition that had its birth and inspiration in a group of men who lived as hermits in Palestine on Mount Carmel and sought their inspiration in the Prophet Elijah and the Blessed Virgin. While the exact date of this informal group's birth is unknown, by the early 1200's there are references to them. From the Carmelite Rule, given to this group of hermits between 1206 and 1214, we know that they lived a life of poverty in separate cells, and joined together for daily mass. John Welch has speculated that their eremitical existence "focused their scattered lives, and settled their confused minds. It freed hearts that had been anxious about many things".[151] Disturbed by the changing political scene in Pales-

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[151] John Welch, O.Carm., *The Carmelite Way*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, N.J. 1996, p. 9.

tine, these first Carmelites began to migrate to Europe in 13th century, where they evolved from an eremitical life to a life of pastoral service as mendicant friars, without ever renouncing their contemplative heritage.

In attempting to capture the Carmelite Charism, Welch highlights the mythic role the early rugged mounhtains and valleys played in the developing Carmelite imagination. Symbolic language was always key to their understanding of themselves and the world around them. For the early friars there was a relationship between the stark wilderness from which the Order had come and the intentional, interior emptiness of the heart, facilitated through asceticism, prayer, and solitude in the cell. The Dutch Carmelite, Kees Waaijman, draws attention to the history of "mystical space" associated with the original Mount Carmel. In recounting the spiritual and psychological challenge faced by the original men who were uprooted from the actual Mount Carmel, he poses the question of how they managed to remain Carmelite away from Mount Carmel? Thei answer, as per Waaijman: "In whatever place you livel, draw away from the finite and enter into the infinite space which is God. Turn every place into a Carmel".[152]

An important document in carrying the Carmelite spirit through the centuries was the abovementioned Carmelite Rule, given to the original hermits by Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem in the early 13th century.[153] Waaijman calls the Carmelite Rule "a spiritual structure in which the parts of the whole are so related to each other that together they form a way which leads to God, or rather, which gives God a chance to find us".[154] The Rule embodies the specific steps that can be taken to "turn every place into a Carmel". Highlights of the Rule include the followers' dedication to Christ, an elected prior to whom the community promises obedience, a separate cell where the Carmelite remains in contemplative prayer, unless "occupied with other lawful activities", and property held in common.[155] The Carmelite Rule is noteworthy in its common sense and flexible demands as witness the following qualifying phrases: "necessity over-

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[152] KEES WAAIJMAN, *The Mystical Space of Carmel*, trans. John Vriend, Peeters, Leuven, Belgium 1999, p. 3.

[153] In the history of different orders in the Catholic Church, a Rule of Life, often written by the founder, has pride of place in systematically organizing the members'life in a way designed to emphasize and maximize the particular charism or spiritual goal of the order. Any Rule aims to draw athe adherent closer to God and to minimize distractions, both internal and external.

[154] WAAIJMAN, pp. 13-14.

[155] WELCH, pp. 175-181.

rides every law and "See that the bond of commons sense is the guide of the virtues".[156] By "placing the center (of one's focus) outside of human activity" and on the Holy One, the faithful Carmelite attains a pure heart, and Waaijman argues that it is precisely this perspective of the pure heart that opens "the mystical perspective".[157]

Moving from the wilderness of Mount Carmel to all parts of the globel, the Carmelites struggled to maintain their heritage and founding vision. The 14th c. document, *The Book of the First Monks*, was a seminal document in shaping the Carmelite tradition and in enriching Carmelite symbolis. Initially once taken as literal history, *The Book of the First Monks* is now understood mythically, as being even more powerful and "true" than a history book. The truth that it contains is symbolic and thus more compelling than facts. Assembled by Felip Ribot, Provincial of the Catalan province, it consists of ancient documents as well as major additions by Ribot that purport to tell the history of the Carmelites from the Order's supposed foundation by Elijah to medieval times. Even though its historicity is no longer accepted, Paul Chandler argues it is "perhaps the most significant single work for our knowledge of early Carmelite spirituality".[158] Given its importance in explaining the foundational link to the prophet, Elijah, and both Jewish and Christian Scriptures, it behooves us to explore it, at least briefly.

Like the Rule, the *Book of the First Monks* gave the Carmelites a self-definition, a connection to Elijah and Mary and a powerful symbolic myth and language that transcended time and space. But the *Book of the First Monks* goes beyond a purely metaphoric understanding of the tradition. It attempts to establish a direct, genealogical link between Elijah, Mary, the early hermits, and generations of Carmelites. Perhaps in an effort to compensate for the lack of a specific, charismatic founding figure and to establis the order's legitimacy in Europe, Ribot wished to lay out the family tree, specifically linking the founding figures with their descendants. In addition to the alleged historical, genealogical tie, Carmelites are those who model them-

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[156] *Ibid.*, pp. 178, 181.

[157] Waaijman, p. 53.

[158] Paul Chandler, O.Carm., *The Book of the First Monks: A Workbook*, Carmelite Spirituality for Formators of the Carmelite Family, Centro Internazionale S. Alberto, Rome, Italy 1992, p. 3. [The critical edition of *The Book of the First Monks* by P. Chandler, not yet published, has been used by E. Coccia for his Italian translation of the work: *Istituzione e gesta dei primi monaci*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2002, *note of the editor*].

selves after the multifaceted prophet, Elijah, and the hidden, silent waiting of the Virgin Mary, both of whom offer mythic inspiration to the order. Following this imaginative theme, Elijah is the first monk and "founder" of Carmel and Mary is honored in the order's full name, "The Brothers of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel". Elijah and Mary are also said to be the first man and woman to take vows of virginity as an expression of their purity of heart.

Patrick McMahon noting that the medieval Carmelites, like other orders, rode the popular image of Eliah to their own benefit, reminds us not to project current historical requirements onto a pre-historic era.[159] In claiming Elijah as founder, the *Book of the First Monks* tapped into a long tradition of Elijah meaning different things at different times, based on the particular needs of the community. Ribot in the 14th c. wrote in suc a "pre-historic" culture, "more interested in meaning than in historical fact".[160] The malleable figure of Elijah was a perfect symbol for the Carmelites to use in establishing the meaning of their lives in an ascetic, monastic tradition which valued chastity, silence, and prayer, particularly in a historical contex of competition with other orders for legitimacy. A large portion of Ribot's work was the key Elian text of *1 Kings 17:2-4*. His exegesis asserted that the purity of heart, attained by the Carmelite in silence and solitude, would lead to the actual experience of God's love in this life. This Elian scriptural quote, according to Chandler, illustrates "Carmelite spirituality as an asceticism and a mysticis of love".[161] Like Elijah, who retreated from the world to his cave where he experienced God in the gentle breeze, the Carmelite will find that less is more and that a pure heart yields rich rewards.

With this very brief foundational background about the Carmelites, we must touch on several key historical events in the life of the order. First is the sixteenth century reform of St. Teresa of Avila, who wished to return to the original, unmitigated Carmelite Rule to eliminate the influence of wealth and power that existed in the convent of the Incarnation in Avila where she had lived nearly three decades.[162] Teresa focused on establishing small groups who would

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[159] PATRICK MCMAHON, O.CARM., "Pater et Dux: Elijah in Medieval Mythology", in *Master of the Sacred Page*, ed. KEITH J. EGAN and CRAIG E. MORRISON, O.CARM., The Carmelite Institute, Washington, D.C. 1997, pp. 283-299.

[160] *Ibid.*, p. 285.

[161] CHANDLER, p. 5.

[162] Teresa herself came from a family of "conversos" or Jews who had converted to Catholicism usually under the threat of the Inquisition. Her movement to return to

live in absolute poverty in total dependence on God (rather than wealthy benefactors) and in intimacy with each other and with God. The desired atmosphere is illustrated by her famous quote: "... all must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear, all must be helped".[163] The sisters become a true community, dedicated to each other's spiritual perfection and overall well being, as opposed to being concerned with pleasing wealthy patrons. It was Teresa's goal for her sisters to become holy through the sanctification of everyday life. While she outlined a whole theory of the spiritual life, her teachings on prayer were simplicity itself: "... prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends".[164] Her doctrine on prayer points to a more recollected, authentic life where God's will moves from the periphery to the center of one's life. Divine Mercy is a major theme in her works and she once referred to her autobiography as the *Book of God's Mercies* as it is organized around evidence of God's compassion and mercy.[165] (Likewise, the Franch Carmelite, Therese of Lisieuxm began her autobiography with the stated intention to sing "the Mercies of the Lord".[166]) Although Teresa's language and imagery are her own, her trajectory is the same described in the *Book of the First Monks*, namely, a life dedicated to the pure heart so that one may taste the "torrent" of God's love in contemplative prayer.

Needless to say, Teresa's determined efforts to reform or re-found the Carmelites engendered resistance both within and without the Order, but by her death, in 1582, she had succeeded in implanting her vision of the reform in seventeen convents in Spain.[167] In 1580 the Spanish Carmelites split into two different groups, with Teresa's reformed group becoming the Discalced Carmelites (O.C.D.) and the original group being known as the Ancient Observance (O.Carm.). The

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the idealized, original eremitical life of Mount Carmel is paradoxicaò: she is attempting to recapture the original vision by herself being creative and groundbreaking. This paradox has inspired many an intra-Camrelite debate about whether she is a "reformer" or a "founder".

[163] Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, chapter 4, section 7, cited in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. 1980.

[164] Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, chapter 8, section 5, vol. 1.

[165] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[166] *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, trans. John Clarke, O.C.D., ICS Publications, Washington. D.C. 1996, p. 13.

[167] While Teresa insisted in her autobiography that she was at peace with all the politics and feuding about the reform leaving it all in God's hands, she proved to be remarkably astute in making the system work for her and in negotiating behind the scenes.

final international separation of the two groups occurred in 1593. From that time on there have been two distinct orders or two branches of the same vine with common symbols and heritage, but with different nuances and charisms. The actual reform and separation process was bitter, complicated, and the tension between the two groups lasted centuries. Happily today there is more fraternal cooperation and respect between the two branches.[168]

Discussion of the Carmelite reform must include the collaboration between Teresa and St. John of the Cross, the passionate Carmelite friar whose work and insights were critical to the success of the reform and whose poetry and spiritual commentaries have become classics. John was ordained in 1567, the same year Teresa founded her second reformed monastery, and was persuaded by Teresa to join her work in the reform. In 1568 the first reformed monastery for contemplative friars was founded in Duruelo. Teresa and John shared the same vision for the friars and nuns: radical opposition to all the false gods of their contemporary society in order to undergo radical transformation in God's love. John's poems and accompanying commentaries are classicis and hallmarks of Carmelite non-linear, mystical language. They elaborate on two paradoxes that are hallmarks of John's and which have particular relevance for the thesis of this paper. First, the spiritual path must be marked by renunciation of all attachments to worldly things and relationships, even those that are worthy and good. Often this detachment is not voluntary, but occurs when the proximate things of the world, which we have made into gods, fail us. Without any choice, we are forced to face our poverty, limitations, and the disordered relationships we have worshipped, in the place of God. In this necessary purification, all must give way before love of God until one reaches the famous "Nada" or nothingness where the soul is stripped of all attachments. Surprisingly, in this letting go into nothingness, one finds God who could non be contained by any of the gods to which one was attached previously. Secondly, in the "dark night" the soul feels abandoned, bereft, and far from God, but in a sophisticated psychological and spiritual insight, John explains that the necessary purifications and darkness are a prelude to an even deeper union with God. What seems to be darkness is actually the presence of God, so everwhelming and profound that our

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[168] Interestingly enough, the Baltimore Carmel is the successor community to the first American Carmel, founded by Catholic women from Maryland who had been trained in the Lowlands in convents with direct ties to Teresa.

limited senses perceive it as "the night". Like Teresa, John used shockingly bold and creative images to illustrate the same classic Carmelite orientation to a radical turning towards God. While certainly not identical, there is a parallel paradox in the Hasidic spirituality explored below.

Although the modern understanding is that any activity or ministry can be contemplative, the Carmelite charism still maintains the original dymanic tension between the active life and the more explicitly mystical focus of contemplative prayer. Even the original Carmelite Rule contains this tension with the elected prior living in the first cell that pilgrims would encounter so he could welcome them in being of service and the eremitical ideal of the men enjoying the solitude or the cell for prayer. In cloistered orders of nuns, such as the Discalced Carmelites in Auschwitz, the accent is on the side of contemplation, but always in service of those who request their prayers and for the needs of the Church. Within the Carmelite family today there are groups of friars who staff parishes, teach in schools, give retreats, ec. and "active" congregations of religious sisters who care for the aged and infirm, teach, give spiritual direction, etc.

X HASIDIC TRADITION

To enter the Hasidic world is to become one with a Chagall painting: fantastic, ephemeral spirits float by, colors are vibrant, and there is joy, dance, and song. This is not the Enlightenment world of rational thought and science, nor is it irrational. Rather it is a particular orientation to life, namely, the amazing discovery, according to Heschel, of "the ineffable delight of being a Jew".[169] This movement, he believed, was caused by depletion of the Jewish imagination in the intricacies of Jewish law and the social and economic suffering of the people in the eighteenth century. "Hasidim" is related etymologically to the biblical notion of *hesed* as the Creator's loving kindness to creation as well as human devotion to God and to each other and this was welcome news to oppressed Jews.[170] Eliach relates receptivity to the optimistic Hasidic message to the earlier pogroms by the Cossacks,

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[169] ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL, *A Passion for Truth*, Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont 1973, p. 52.

[170] MARTIN BUBER, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem*, trans. Maurice Friedman, Schocken Books, New York 1969, p. 214.

the failure of the predicted seventeenth century Messiah to appear, and the general decline of Jewish institutions in Eastern Europe.[171]

Eve as the Carmelite stories about their founder Elijah transcend the historical facts, so too the founder of Hasidism escapes the narrow boungs of history. There is no historical documentation for the existence of the Hasidic founder, the Baal Shem Tov, but what is missing in factual evidence is compensated for in the beauty and power of the legends associated with him.[172] As Elie Wiesel puts it, the legends about the Baal Shem Tov describe "events that may o may not have happened, and if they did, may or may not have happened in quite the way they are told. Viewed from the outside, all of these tales are incomprehensible; one must enter them for their truth may be measured only from the inside".[173] Subjectivity is the very nature of the Hasidic tale. Wiesel remembers his grandfather warning him: "There will, of course, always be someone to tell you that a certain tale cannot, could not, be objectively true. That is of no importance; an objective Hasid is not a Hasid".[174] There is some vriance among the scholars I consulted about whether the Baal Shem Tov even existed, but tradition places him in the Ukraine from approximately 1700 to 1760.[175] Born to a pious, observant couple who had been childless, he was named Israel ben Eliezer. His birth was said to have been a reward for the parents' hospitality towards Elijah who appeared mysteriously to share their Sabbath meal disguised as a beggar. The father is reported to have counseled his son at his death:

> I leave before I can make you into a man who fears God and loves those who fear Him. Remember one thing: "God is at your side and He alone is to be feared". Later, the Baal Shem Tov was to add: "God sees, God watches. He is in every life, in everything. The world hinges on His will. It is He who decides how many times the leaf will turn in the dust before the wind blows it away".[176]

Tradition has it that he lived a marginalized life, plying several trades and not succeeding at any, until the age of thirty six, when he

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[171] ELIACH, p. xv.

[172] The Baal Shem Tov is also known as The Master of the Good Name or the acronym of his initials, The Besht.

[173] ELIE WIESEL, *Souls on Fire - Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters*, trans. Marion Wiesel, Fireside, New York 1972, p. 5.

[174] WIESEL, *Souls on Fire*, p. 7.

[175] Note that Martin Buber's biographer, Maurice Friedman, asserts that Hasidism began in Poland.

[176] WIESEL, *Souls on Fire*, p. 11.

recognized the time had come for him to stop playing the fool and accept the mystical leadership role for which God had destined him. His powers were publicly displayed to a visitor who saw the Baal Shem Tov radiant with light near his hearth, which was blazing with flames.[177] The visitor reportedly fainted and upon awakening was cautioned by the Baal Shem Tov: "One does not look where one should not". The visitor ran back to the village, announced to pious Jews who were studying the Torah that there was a new source of illumination nearby. The devout men built a throne and upon taking his seat, the Baal Shem Tov said: "I shall open a new way".[178]

This story contains many typical Hasidic elements, including the presence of Elijah, things not being as they seem the miraculous, impossibile happening, the reverence accorded the Baal Shem Tov, the spirit of joy and celebration, and the fact that the legend are best seen from within, as Wiesel suggested. In Hasidism, Martin Buber said that "mysticism and saga flowed together into a single stream" and that "the proclamation of rebirth" is always present.[179] Like all myths, in Hasidism he claimed, "there is no division of essential being. It knows multiplicity but not duality".[180] The Baal Shem Tov's transformation illustrates this point about non-duality – at age thirty-six he didn't become a new or different person, rather he began to show the powers he had always had. And his powers, although enhanced and revered, are not qualitatively different from the powers of this followers who can also see the miraculous, if they know how to look. Heschel, the scion of a long line of important Hasidic rabbis, described the ease with which the divine permeated the ordinary: "Miracles no longer startled anyone, and it was no surprise to discover among one's contemporaries men who had attained the holy spirit, men whose ear perceived the voice of heaven".[181]

This new movement inverted the traditional hierarchy of Jewish values, whereby scholarship was no longer the principal path to God: "It placed prayer, ecstasy, storytelling, and santification of daily life on

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[177] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[178] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[179] BUBER, p. 12. One can see the notion of rebirth in the Baal Shem Tov's "new way".

[180] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[181] ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL, *The Earth is the Lord's*, 1950, as quoted in EDWARD K. KAPLAN - SANUEL DRESNER, *Abraham Joshua Heschel*, Yale University Press, New Haven - London 1998, p. ix.

a par with Talmudic studies".[182] Likewise leadership roles were initially based on charismatic appeal, though Hasidism eventually became an almost exclusively dynastic phenomenon with rabbis known by their lineage: i.e. Abraham Joshua Heschel whose ancestors hae been rabbis for seven generations, traced his paternal Hasidic roots back to the Rebbe (Rabbi) of Apt, who had become the Hasidic spokesperson upon the death of the Baal Shem Tov and on his mother's side he was descended from Rabbi Yitzhac of Berditchev.[183] The latter ancestor's name shows another Hasidic tradition of naming the town from which the Rebbe came. The Rebbe was assumed to be a holy man or a *zaddik* who often had miraculous powers of telling the future, healing, causing supernatural occurrences, etc. The followers venerated the Rebbe whose words and advice were treasured, somewhat like the Desert Monks of the fourth century who were asked for "a word".

By the beginning of the nineteenth century Hasidis had overcome scholarly and class prejudices to become a major popular movement in Eastern Europe with particular importance in the Jewish communities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[184] Friedman reports that almost half of the Jews in Eastern Europe considered themselves Hasidic.[185] While acknowledging that Hasidism "lives in personalities" and that "without the charismatic person there is not teaching of Hasidism", Heschel called it "first an intellectual revolution".[186] The Jewish emphasis had fallen too heavily on the side of abstract Talmudic arguments where the simplest question became a dialectical pyramid with all previous generations of scholars. As Heschel wrote: "There was a tremendous fascination in those days for what we call *pilpul*, with what may be called sharpness, intellectual wit in the study of the Torah and the Talmud".[187] The Baal Shem Tov offered another version of Judaism one that exalted prayer and didn't see study as the answer to all of life's quandaries. Heschel quotes the following to illustrate the emphasis on the human heart's response to God:

> There is a famous story of how a man came to a rebbe for the first time in his life. He was already advanced in years; he was almost thirty years

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[182] ELIACH, p. xv.
[183] KAPLAN - DRESNER, pp. 5, 10.
[184] ELIACH, p. xvi.
[185] SAMUEL FRIEDMAN, *Martin Buber's Life and Works - The Early Years 1878-1923*, E. P. Dutton, New York 1981, p. 94.
[186] ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York 1996, p. 35.
[187] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

> old. "It's the first time I come to a rebbe", the man said. The rebbe asked him "What did you do all your life?" He answered, "I have gone through the Talmud four Times". "How much of the Talmud has gone through you?" asked the rebbe.[188]

As can be seen from the two Hasidic anecdotes above, much of the richness of the tradition lies in its storytelling and literature. Just as a Chagall painting, the Hasidic tale was often a story within a story, a paradoxical account of unexpected, fantastic things happening, often told with biting wit in popular speech. As per Eliach, the common themes are "love of humanity, optimism, and a boundless belief in God and the goodness of mankind".[189] Dreamlike in quality, the Hasidic tale uses what therapists call "primary process" associations in which the world of reality is filtered through fantasy, myth, and the unconscious. The tales are inspiring to a people in need, subversive in overturning the established order, and affirming the power of memory and tradition. Wiesel celebrates the power of the Hasidic tale (and all stories):

> True writers want to tell the story simply because they believe they can do something with it - their lives are not fruitless and are not spent in vain. True listeners want to listen to stories to enrich their own lives and to understand them. What is happening to me happens to you. Both the listener and the reader are participants inthe same story and both *make* it the story that it is. I speak only of true writers and true readers and true listeners. As for the other, they are entertainers and their work doesn't really matter.[190]

There is a powerful dynamic between the listener, yearning for a word of counsel or insighit into his or her situation, and the paradoxical, metaphoric tale that works on the imagination and the heart. Both teller and listener are transformed by the process. Another example with clever humor, cited by Wiesel follows:

> When the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov saw misfortune threatening the Jews it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. Then he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted. Later, when his disciple, the celebrated Magid of Metzritch, had occasion, for the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the for-

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[188] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[189] ELIACH, p. xvi.
[190] ELIE WIESEL, *Harry James Cargas in Conversation with Elie Wiesel*, Paulist Press, New York 1976, pp. 86-87.

> est and say "Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer". And again the miracle would be accomplished. Still later, Rabbi Moshe-leib of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say: "I do not know how to light the fire, I do not know the prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient". It was sufficient and the miracle was accomplished.
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> Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: "I am unable to light the fire and I do not know the prayer; I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is to tell the story, and this must be sufficient". Ant it was sufficient.
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> God made man because he loves stories.[191]

Compassion and joy are major themes in Hasidic stories. A Father complained to the Baal Shem, "My son is estranged from God - what shall I do?" he replied, "Love him more".[192] The command "to love more" is "one of the primary Hasidic words", according to Buber, as Love "exists in reality *between* the creatures, that is, it exists in God".[193] There is a tremendous sense in Hasidic stories of our inter-relationship and mutual responsibility for each other. If one loves too little, the next person must love more. The story is told of a jealous rabbi who competed with the Baal Shem Tov and bitterly resented his teachings and his popularity. In a dream this rabbi saw his garden wither and die, the tenacious roots remained dead under the earth and the tortured rabbi pondered how to uproot them. The Baal Shem Tov appeared, he threw himself at his feet and cried out: "Master, teach me what I must do to tear out the roots!". The Baal Shem Tov explained that the garden represented his owns bitter self-preoccupations and masochism which had taken material shape in the garden. However, magically the roots had been torn out through the Baal Shem Tov having shared this story with others: "And because I, a joyful man, have told your story to joyful men, joy has entered the depths and has torn out the roots".[194] While the listener could well imgine that the Baal Shem Tov could have torn out the roots single-handedly, the message is that shared joy and compassion become even more powerful.

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[191] ELIE WIESEL, *Gates of the Forest*, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York 1966, prologue.

[192] BUBER, p. 47.

[193] *Ibid.*

[194] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

The prophet Elijah figures largely in the Hasidic tradition. Once, when the Baal Shem Tov was preparing to do cosmic battle with the forces of evil, he called back to his side all the "sparks" of goodness that he had sent into the world. However, the sparks protested being removed from the human sphere where they were so needed and where they had already inspired such hope. The Baal Shem Tov relented and allowed the sparks to return to the human world, but found himself without the strength to fight the battle alone. He ascended into the realm of the prophets, complaining, "Much of the fervour from my heart's core has been sacrificed and I no longer have enough for the deed".[195] He consulted Elijah, who directed him towards earth to a devout shepherd boy who longed to give God glory and whose pact with the Baal Shem Tov defeated the forces of evil. Another story about Elijah illustrates the nature of subjectivity in the stories of the Hasidim. Having been promised by the Baal Shem Tov that he would show them Elijah, the disciples tried to follow his injunction to open their eyes wide. First they saw a beggar go into their House of Study and emerge with a precious book. Next the same beggar left a ceremony, clutching a piece of silver. Finally, a mounted soldier appeared who asked the disciples to light his pipe. The Baal Shem Tov said: "It was he. The secret is in the eyes".[196] We may say that one of the functions of the Hasidic story is to help the listeners keep their eyes wide open!

A marvelous contemporary example is *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, in which Yaffa Eliach transcribes actual Holocaust events told by survivors. The stories are told in a Hasidic format with calamitous events recounted with absolute faith in God or in the *zaddik* who represents Him. The purpose of the Hasidic story, writes Eliach, is "to restore order and to mend the broken lines of communication between man and his fellow man, and between heaven and earth, at a time and place when faith and prayer failed".[197] This type of bold narrative offers the freedom and context to explore "dangerous, problematic, and otherwise forbidden topics", such as the Holocaust.[198] Eliach makes the crucial point that the Hasidic story provides the survivor with a method to link his/her life before and after the Holocaust. One such story is "God's messenger, the Grandson of the Pnei Yehoshua".[199] Over his

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[195] *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.
[196] WIESEL, *Souls on Fire*, p. 27.
[197] ELIACH, p. xix.
[198] *Ibid.*, p. xx.
[199] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-69. The notes explain that the Pnei Yehoshua was a religious book whose author was called by the name of his work. The author, a well-known scholar, was the mentor of the successor to the Baal Shem Tov.

mother's protests, a young Hasid went out after the Sabbath dinner and came upon an elderly Jew, being beaten up by Polish teenagers who fled. The aged man identified himself as the grandson of the Pnei Yehoshua and thanked the young man for saving his life, saying that his bravery had earned him "this world and the world to come".[200] Only when they reach the prayer house with its illumination does the young Hasid notice the translucent quality of the old man's eyes. A year later with the persecution of the Jews in high gear, the Hasid goes out again for a walk, against the wishes of his fearful mother. A German soldier attacks him brutally, threatening to kill him, and screaming anti-Semitic epithets. Out of nowhere the image of the grandson of the Pnei Yehosua appears to the Hasid and simultaneously, a Christian woman from across the street threw herself at the German's feet to plead for mercy for the Jew. Although cursing the woman and the Hasid, the German retreats and the young man is saved. In recounting this story in 1974, the Hasid observed of the earlier miracle: "God has mysterious ways and mysterious messengers...".[201] This story is classic in the unexpected outcome, the emphasis on the brilliance of the Pnei Yehoshua's eyes, and the linking of two disparate events that on the surface would seem unrelated, unless one had Hasidic eyes to see.

XI Ordinary language and mystical language

Language, in order to qualify as such, must convey an idea between two people, the "sayer" and the "sayee", said Samuel Butler.[202] And since this language is both the method for conveyin the idea as well as the environment in which the idea is conveyed, words only become language, argues Robert Scharlemann, when they are put into a medium where the hearer can receive them.[203] Thus, for example, speaking Portuguese words to a Finnish speaking person isn't language by Butler's definition, as the words can't be received by the sayee. Applied to the polemics of the Carmelite dispute, one can see multiple examples of ineffective language as well as words that never became language. Certainly ideological rhetoric is one case where words didn't become language, according to this definition. We can look in several places to illustrate this linguistic misfiring.

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[200] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[201] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[202] Butler, p. 18.
[203] Robert E. Scharlemann, *God in Language*, ed. Robert E. Scharlemann and Gilbert E. M. Ogutu, Paragon House Publishers, New York 1987, pp. cii-viii.

On the level of the everyday people involved, we can assume that what was meant by the Poles who demanded that Auschwitz honor their sacred dead was very different from what some Jews meant when they spoke of Auschwitz as *the* symbol, par excellence, of the Holocaust. Their language actually meant different things: the Poles wanted to use Auschwitz affirmatively to stake out their claim to the meaning of their national sacrifice, whereas the Jews used language negatively, to state what Auschwitz should *not* become. When the authors of the piece about nuns growing vegetables on top of Jewish ashes protested in hyperbolic language, their message may have incited more Jewish anger, but it certainly didn't melt any Polish hearts. The Poles may have "heard" the message, but, it couldn't have been considered "received". Likewise, Cardinal Glemp's patronizing homily, which generalized about Jewish media power, may safely be said not to have eased any Jewish distrust. The offensive ideas were conveyed by the sayer, but with limited reception by the sayee, due to anger, distrust, and prejudice. The best, or worst, example of the failure of ordinary language to "do the job" was the protest by Rabbi Weiss'group and the resultant confrontation with the workers. What actually happened is in dispute, as witness media accounts that all focus on different angles of one event in a Roshamon fashion, but neither the words of Weiss and group nor the alleged words of the workers ever became language in the above sense of the word. It is worth noting that even Klein, the chair of the Jewish delegation, voiced disapproval of the medium in which Weiss expressed himself. All the above examples illustrate rhetorical language in the service of ideology, not genuine communication.

The language at the interfaith level of negotiations between the Catholics and Jews, which can be closely followed by Klein's chronology of the correspondence, highlights rational, logical, and diplomatic language as befits the high ecclesiastical and professional circles in which the two delegations to the Geneva meetings functioned. This precise, legal language was the language of the courtroom or of a diplomatic treaty, thus the strongly worded, reasoned Jewish protests when the Carmelites were not moved by the agreed upon date. In a similar vein, the Catholic explanations for the failure to meet the deadline were couched in the same type of language with reasoned explanations about why the economic problems in Poland and internal Church politics had caused the delay. Interestingly enough, Klein himself characterizes his exchanges with the Catholics as too rational and lacking in passion, as we have seen above. We also saw how a participant at this level of discourse was expected to continue to use rational,

logical arguments. When Cardinal Macharski abrogated the terms of the Geneva agreement and Glemp suggested that the Cardinals who had signed the accord were incompetent, he was roundly condemned by his prothers cardinals. Not only had he disrespected the Cardinals on the committee, but also he had resorted to accusatory and non-diplomatic language.

Initially silent on the controversy, when the Vatican finally took a position, its language was so obscure and indirect that the Jews couldn't decipher it and had to turn to Catholics to learn that Rome had decided the nuns had to move. It seemed the higher one ascended on the herarchy of power and social status and the further removed one was from the issues on the ground, the more obfuscating the language became.

Sicnce silence necessarily bookends speech, one must highlight the virtual public silence of the Carmelite nuns themselves. While their vocation would not have lent itself to public demonstrations, any inquiry into this controversy runs up against the apparent lack of voice for the nuns themselves. How did they understand the issues involved and what language would they have used to describe their position?[204]

Similarly one notes the relative lack of linguistic attention given to the Polish people themselves by the Church authorities and the high-ranking decision makers. The initial Geneva documents were published only inh Hebrew and French, not in Polish, and Cardinal Macharski appears to have done little of a positive nature to prepare his countrymen for the eventual transfer of the nuns. Certainly, once the the demonstrations began and Macharski repudiated the agreement, there was massive public protest and much discussion, but, at this stage, it had reached a level of impasse where the language was often inflammatory and highly emotional. Had the Poles been given the opportunity to participate in a dialogue and to discuss the issues involved early on, where they could have expressed themselves thoughtfully without necessarily being labeled anti-Semitic, they would have had more sense of inclusion and there probably would have been less Polish anger.

The Carmelite convent at Auschwitz was not about truth or facts, not even the partial truths conveyed by all the above groups of sayers and sayees, it was about *meaning*. It is here, with the focus on meaning, that we began to see a shift in tone in the correspondence that Klein's book exposes. This shift occurs with the first letter from the

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[204] We do have only the fragmentary quotes attributed to the Prioress.

new Superior General of the Carmelites, Camilo Maccise, where we see the power of empathy and apology, as discussed above, and shift reaches its apogee in Maccise's final letter with the Baal Shem Tov quote. An excerpt from Butler is appropriate here:

> ... for the most part it is in what we read between the lines that the profounder meaning of any letter is conveyed. There are words unwritten and untranslatable into any nouns that are nevertheless felt as above, about, and, underneath the gross material symbols that lie scrawled on the page; and the deeper the feeling with which anything is written the more pregnant will it be of meaning which can be conveyed securely enough, but which loses rather than gains if it is squeezed into a sentence, and limited by the parts of speech. The language is not in the words, but in the *heart-to-heartedness* of the ghing, which is helped by words but is nearer and father than they [emphasis mine].[205]

With Maccise's genius stroke of citing the Baal Shem Tov story, he entered into the "heart-to-heartedness" of Klein's world and created what Butler refers to as "a covenant" between them.[206] Using an Hasidic symbol, the story, he entered into the sayee's world and created a new bond of meaning which was previously unavailable through logical, reasoned discourse.[207] Precise, literal language can nail down, but never expand, can specify facts (like the agreed upon date for the Carmelites to move), but can rarely clarify meaning. Maccise must have sensed intuitively that the convent debacle had reached such a point that he needed to move beyond the rational and linear, *not* to the irrational, but to the non-linear. By opening up the dialogue to new possibilities, Maccise moved beyond ordinary speech and opened the door to mystical language with the Hasidic story.

Since language is both "a tool and a medium", as we use it to do things and it is also the environment in which we work, let us look at mystical language in this context.[208] Evelyn Underhill's classic study of mysticism delineated the faculties of "the mental life" of human beings.[209] First there is the distinction between what she calls "the

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[205] BUTLER, p. 20.
[206] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[207] I am not arguing against such language, but rther arguing that such language did not advance the resolution of this issue of the convent at Auschwitz.
[208] SCHARLEMANN, p. vii.
[209] EVELYN UNDERHILL, *Mysticism - The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, England 1993, p. 67.

threshold" of the concscious, "surface" life and and the "threshold" of the "unconscious deeps".[210] The former is sub-divided into three parts, the "Trinity in Unity of feeling, thought, and will".[211] The latter encompasses a "hidden self" which can emerge, under certain circumstances, to experience a relationship with "the Absolute".[212] The mystical life, as per Underhill, involves "the emergence from deep levels of man's transcendental self; its capture of the field of consciousness; and the 'conversion' or rearrangement of his feeling thought, and will – his character – about this new center of life".[213] Stressing that "the business and method of Mysticism is Love", Underhill gives various examples of the stammering and stuttering of mystics who have attempted to explain the inexplainable.[214] This is precisely the language that seeks to transgress beyond former linguistic boundaries, that stumbles and lurches with new experiences, and startling insights.[215] Like John of the Cross' poetry or the Hasidic story, mystical language "is forever groping along the borders of the unspeakable, wresting new land from the vast void of the unexpressed".[216] Still, even mystical language has the function both as the above mentioned tool and medium. Thus Sontag suggests that the principle function of language is to help the mind see beyond itself.[217] "Words", he says, "properly used are props to hold the mind up".[218] However, words only go so far, particularly ina context like Auschwitz where God appears to be absent, and then silence is the only response possible. But to remain silent does not mean one is not "doing" anything or that "nothing is happening". Since words are only props, as stated above, mystical language is where one goes when the props fail or are no longer necessary and silence is often an accessory to this special kind of language. As Sontag suggests, "... we need to locate a silence underneath thought in order to help the mind move freely".[219] Given Saint Martin's claim that "all mystics speak the

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[210] *Ibid.*
[211] *Ibid.*
[212] *Ibid.*
[213] *Ibid.*, p. 68.
[214] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[215] FRIEDRICH WAISMANN, "The Resources of Language", in *The Importance of Language*, ed. Max Black, Prentice-Hall, Ebnglewood Cliffs, N.J. 1963, p. 114.
[216] *Ibid.*, p. 116. On the next page Waismann observes that there may be some truth in the notion that "ordinary speech is only good for saying things that are no longer worth saying".
[217] SONTAG, "Words of Silence", p. 136.
[218] *Ibid.*
[219] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

same language and come from the same country", I shall now explore how the mystical language of both the Carmelite and Hasidic traditions might have better bridged the gap than any of the language forms used.[220]

XII Analysis

Keeping in mind Shapiro's earlier caution about attempting to domesticate the radical negativity of the Holocaust requires us to move outside conventional language (which failed to find the heart-to-heartedness between the disputants, as described above). With many critical differences between them, Carmelite and Hasidic spiritualities both transgress the conventional bounds within their respective traditions and go beyond the place where words hold the mind up. In their history both the Teresian reform of the Carmelites and the Eastern European birth of Hasidism have contradiction and paradox built into their very foundation. Teresa, a woman in 16th c. conservative Spain, without any wordly power or affluence, adroitly challenges much of the entrenched powerful interests and goes on to found (or reform) a major religious group. The rise of Hasidism seems to have been equally unlikely and surprising - poor, oppressed Jews begin to sing and dance, to follow preposterous "superstitious notions", to engage in "unruly behaviour" and this form of piety captured almost half of European Jews prior to the Holocaust.[221] By their very nature, both groups challenge the mainstream and have paradox at their heart. With their mystical perspectives they suggest a radical toppling of conventional social or religious values and suggest that things are not really as they seem. Their shocking, paradoxical language challenges the believer to the core and undermines verities that have been taken for granted. Take, for instance, the teachings of John of the Cross, which are expressed in poetry and prose commentary. As discussed above, for John the pinnacle of the spiritual life is reached in the nothingness of "Nada" where radical detachment from all one previously knew opens up the possibility of moving beyond limited human concepts of God, necessarily described in words, to an authentic, mystical experience of the Divine. Indeed John's instruction in *The Ascent*

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[220] Underhill, p. xiii.

[221] As attributed to a "prominent Jewish historian", cited in Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Insecurity of Human Freedom*, Schocken Books, New York 1959, p. 240.

of Mount Carmel sets up his theory of spiritual detachment in classic paradoxical language:

> To reach satisfaction in all
> desire satisfaction in nothing.
> To come to the knowledge of all
> desire the knowledge of nothing.
> To come to possess all
> desire the possession of nothing.
> To arrive at being all
> desire to be nothing.
>
> To come to enjoy what you have not
> you must go by a way in which you enjoy not.
> To come to the knowledge you have not
> you must go by a way in which you knot not.
> To come to the possession you have not
> you must go by a way in wich you possess not.
> To come to be what you are not
> you must go by a way in which you are not.[222]

Much like a Zen koan, the literal, objective meaning appears to be nonsense and incomprehensible to someone outside the mystical circle. How can one attain the All by letting go of everything? This might be more puzzling to a mainstream Christian than to a Hasid who knows that the truth of a Hasidic story is seen subjectively, from within, not from outside, as it overturns commonly accepted patterns of reality. However, once the listener's imagination is seized by these contradictory images, he/she may feel a kinship with the already mentioned pious Jew who was confronted by the rebbe about whether any of his four readings of the Talmud had "gone through" him. Has the Talmud gone beyond words that prop up the mind, one might ask?

Another famous theaching of John's is the *Dark Night* in which one feels abandoned by God, unable to pray as before, and unsure of God's will. It is precisely in this perceived abandonment that the Divine is most present, John argues. There are multiple such stories in Hasidic *Tales of the Holocaust* and while I am not arguing that the theology is identical, I do assert that this concept would not be foreign to a Hasid. Such awareness is evident in "A Hill in Bergen Belsen", where Anna, ill with the typhus epidemic that had already killed thou-

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[222] *The Collected Works of John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. 1991, p. 111.

sands in the camp, struggles to remain alive after four years as a prisoner.[223] She knew instinctively that her only hope was to keep moving and not succumb to the temptation to give up and die. Deliriously shuffling through the camp, she spied a mist-covered hill in the distance that seemed to be a life giving sign. In her own mind, reaching the top of the hill would guarantee her survival. Unable to walk straight up the hill, she laboriously crayled to the top and collapsed. Suddenly she experienced the loving hands of her father, who was also a prisoner at Bergen Belsen, caressing her and assuring her that she would live to see the liberation of the camp. Four days later the camp was liberated and Anna was hospitalized. Upon her release she returned to Bergen Belsen and learned that the hill up which she had crawled had been, in fact, a mass grave for thousands of victims, including her father. In her perceived hour of abandonment, her father (and God) had been present. It is precisely in this juxtaposition of apparent desolation with God's presence that a common threat can be found between Carmelite and Hasidic mysticism.

In a more lyrical approach to the paradoxical union of love and suffering, Teresa wrote of "the heart that greatly loves receives no counsel or consolation excepts from the very one who wounded it, because from that one it hopes its pain will be cured. When You desire, lord, You quickly heal the wound You have caused..."[224] In what would be nonsensical language, if taken literally, Teresa's wounds can only be cured by the very source of the pain. In a similar ven is the story of a *zaddik* on his deathbed who said: "Sweet suffering, I receive you in love".[225] Both traditions understand the paradoxical "madness" of mystical language and ecstasy where longing for God is described in terms of pain.

In both traditions we are challenged to delve beyond the surface reality and look for a more transcendent undestanding of reality where human experience trumps academic learning. The successor to the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezeritch, was said to have "mastered the art of winning the absolute loyalty of men by upsetting their equilibrium. His method relied on surprise and shock".[226] While he was esteemed as a learned scholar and a maker of many miracles, it was the experience of his presence that attracted follower. Said an admirer, "I came to the Maggid not to listen to discourses, nor to learn from

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[223] Eliach, pp. 208-209.
[224] Teresa of Avila, vol. one, p. 460.
[225] Buber, p. 19.
[226] Wiesel, *Souls on Fire*, p. 58.

his wisdom; I came to watch him time his shoelaces".[227] The experience of the holy person in the everyday moments of life provide a window for the seeker into what it means to lead a holy life now, in this moment, in these circumstances. Esoteric teachings take a back seat to the experience of the sanctification of every life. Similarly, Blessed Titus Brandsma, O.Carm., a Dutch Carmelite who was killed at Dachau, described Carmelites as not being called to dramatic, ostentatious things in public, but "it is certaingly our duty to do ordinary things in extraordinary ways, in other words with pure intention and the focus of our whole personality".[228] Carmelites and Hasids would understand each other on this score.

Both traditions share themes about the importance of the believers' friendship with God and with each other. Teresa's famous quote, cited earlier about friendship is relevant: "... all must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear, all must be helped".[229] No one is excluded from the embrace of the community, which makes God's love present to its members and models heaven on hearth. Likewise among the Hasids, there is reverence for the preciousness of each human being and reverence for him or her. Buber writes about the uniqueness of each individual soul and the honor it merits: "In each man, there is a priceless treasure that is in no other. Therefore, one shall honour each man for the hidden value that only he and none of his comrades has".[230] Although his language is exclusively male, the theme is the same as Teresa's idea: ieach person is a fragment of the Divine and shall be honored and respected as such.

Another theme common to both the Carmelite and Hasidic traditions is the pure heart. We have seen this theme developed in the *Book of the First Monks*, where the Carmelite tradition of asceticism fosters purity of heart and awareness of Divine Nearness. This includes not only a charitable orientation towards all but an uncompromising focus on the Diviene Presence. Paradoxically, it was during John of the Cross' imprisonment by fellow Carmelites and attendant suffering that he wrote the great classic *The Spiritual Canticle* about the soul's search for and ultimate union with God. The Hasidic tradition acknowledges the paradoxical possibility of attaining purity of heart in the most unlikely situations. A man, disillusioned and grieving his

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[227] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[228] Titus Brandsma, *Mystiek Leven/Een Bloemlezing*, ed. Bruno Borchert and Uitgeverij B. Gottmer, Nijmegen The Netherlands 1985, p. 38.

[229] Teresa of Avila, *Way of Perfection*, see fotnote 162.

[230] Buber, p. 45.

dearest friend's death, had a visitation from the deceased which inspired him to visit the Baal Shem Tov in a reversal of his previous cynicism.[231] Prostrating himself at the Master's feet, he pronounced himself ready to die as the world held nothing more for him. The Baal Shem Tov counseled him, instead, to speach with the trees on a summer night "in your joy".[232] And he added that he was blessing him, "not for death" but rather for the man's continuing in the world, moving "from goal to goal, from strength to strength..."[233] Through the unlikely experience of speaking with trees on a summer evening, the man's heart would be purified so that he could continue in the world, moving "from goal to goal" to seek God, rather than dying in disbelief and frustration.

Mystical space is another common theme of Carmelite and Hasidic spirituality that is relevant to the Auschwitz dispute. I my previous assertion is correct that Carmelites make important use of symbolic space, it is important to understand the Auschwitz Carmel question through this prism and to look for any correspondence on the Hasidic side. The whole history of Carmel is replete with the notion of mystical space. Earlier references have established the critical, imaginative role played by the early images of Mt. Carmel in the Order's understanding of itself.[234] By turning everyplace into a Carmel, the believer taps into a wide range of imaginative symbols, which enrich the understanding and go beyond literal thought. Carmel becomes an orientation, a direction in which one's glance is cast, as much as a geographic site. Similarly, I argue, the Hasidic tradition uses the notion of sacred space to sanctify all of life as witness the following example:

> The rabbi of Kobryn taught: God says to man, as he said to Moses: "Put off thy shoes from thy feet" - put off the habitual which enclose your foot, and you will know that the place on which you are now standing is holy ground. For there is no rung of human life on which we cannot find the holiness of God everywhere and at all times.[235]

Mystical space exists wherever the human seeks the Divine and experiences God's yearning also. This becomes another key point in which the Carmelite and Hasidic tradition understand each other.

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[231] *Ibid.*, p. 178.
[232] *Ibid.*
[233] *Ibid.*
[234] See WELCH and WAAIJMAN in footnotes 151 and 152.
[235] WAAIJMAN, p. 4.

Elijah is another powerful, mythic symbol, which pervades both movements. He is honored on the Carmel side with the foundational importance given to him in the *Book of the First Monks*, where the author provides the genealogical link between the medieval Carmelites and the pre-historic figure of Elijah, as discussed above. Considered the first monk by the *Book of the First Monks*, he becomes the model for the eremitical and prophetic life and is such a rich and colorful image that he invites all sorts of projections in both traditions. Witness how he functions as a critical figure in the Hasidic tradition with the following example in the story "The Shepherd".[236] The Baal Shem Tov is preparing for a final, cataclysmic battle with Evil and to this end, summons home all the "sparks" of good from the universe. Some of the sparks protest, however, at being called to abandon the creation in which they have been active: "Would you spoil all that you have redeemed?", ask the sparks.[237] Reluctantly, the Baal Shem Tov allows the sparks to return to creation and then appeals to Elijah for special intervention in the battle against Evil. Elijah directs the Baal Shem Tov to a shepherd with whom he dialogues about good and evil and who moves to rescue his flock of sheep in a final battle of good and evil. In a typical Hasid emphasis on the here and now, the shepherd saves the sheep at the same time he is discoursing uupon existential themes. Elijah, in this Hasidic story, commutes between the divine realms and earth as a mythic, powerful figure, binding together the two reals. In another Elijah story, the Baal Shem Tov promised to show Elijah to his followers whom he admonished: "Open your eyes wide".[238] A while later the group observed a beggar going into a House of Study and exiting with a book. Next the beggar was observed taking a silver spoon from a religious gathering and, thirdly, the beggar approached the group as a soldier on a horse who wanted his pipe lit. The Baal Shem Tov whispered: "It was he. The secret is in the eyes".[239] With true Hasidic spirit, he suggested that one can "see" only with the eyes of spiritual belief and hope. All the above examples illustrate the powerful and varied projections associated with Elijah.

As discussed above, *The Book of the First Monks* describes Carmelite spirituality "as an asceticism and a mysticism of love".[240] The Theme of Love runs across the board in the great Carmelite writ-

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[236] BUBER, pp. 202-208.
[237] *Ibid.*, p. 204.
[238] WIESEL, *Souls on Fire*, p. 27.
[239] *Ibid.*
[240] CHANDLER, p. 5.

ers and saints. One of the most famous sayngs of John of the Cross is the following: "... where there is no love, put love, and you will draw out love...".[241] And Titus Brandsma, known for his good humor and concern for his fellow prisoners at Dachau, said: "Joy is not a virtue but an effect of love".[242] The strong Carmelite theme of love also finds a counterpart in Hasidism. Recall the story cited earlier about a father worried about his religiously unobservant son who was advised by the Baal Shem Tov: "Love him more".[243]

In another story from a now obscure *zaddik* we hear:

> If a man sees that his companion hates him, he shall love him the more. For the community of the living is the carriage of God's majesty, and where there is a rent in the carriage, one must fill it, and where there is so little love that the joining comes apart, one must love more on one's own side to overcome the lack.[244]

This is the heart-to-heartedness of which Maccise spoke to Klein and which seemed to ease the separation between the two men from different traditions.

Both traditions emphasize God's mercy in dealing with the human. St. Therese of Lisieux began her autobiography by saying that her whole focus would be singing "The Mercies of the Lord".[245] Stressing that any spiritual blessings she had experienced were through God's generous mercy and not her own merit, she pondered how God's mercy was allocated and concluded that God calls not those who are "worthy but those whom He pleases".[246] The merciful bounty is not something achieved by human, but given freely by God. Likewise there is a strong Hasidic tradition of God's compassion and mercy. The following two stories about Levi-Yitzhad of Berditchev, a contemporary of the Maggid of Mezeritch, combine both the Yiddish humor and holding God accountable with the notion of God's mercy. Levi-Yitzhad bargained with God:

> We shall give You our sins and, in return, You will grant us Your pardon. By the way, You come out ahead. Without our sins, what would Youd do with your pardon?[247]

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[241] *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, The Letters, p. 760.
[242] BRANDSMA, p. 159.
[243] BUBER, p. 47.
[244] *Ibid.*
[245] *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, p. 13.
[246] *Ibid.*
[247] WIESEL, *Souls on Fire*, p. 108.

On another occasion, he warned God:

> Know that if Your reign does not bring grace and mercy, ... Your throne will not be a throne of truth.[248]

Intimacy with God is so taken for granted that Levi-Yitzhad can threaten Him about his mercy! God needs human beings to exercise mercy, otherwise, the stories imply God would lose some of the Divine qualities.

All the above examples evidence the extent to which the Carmelite and Hasidic traditions both share a way of "seeing" that stands accepted reality on its head, language that opens up to the Transcendent, and which might have enabled the two groups to reach a more spiritually based decision to move the convent. The Polish Catholic "cognitive monopoly" to which Rubenstein referred would have been more easily changelled, had the approach been through the mystical dimensions both Carmelites and Hasids share, rather than through inflammatory language and rhetoric.

XIII Conclusion

> Where shall the word be found, where will the word Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence. T. S. Eliot[249]

The meetings, protests, correspondence, and media reports about the Auschwits Carmel dispute were far more extensive than could be covered in this paper. Suffice it to say that the words expended on this issue appear to have been almost infinite and, with few exceptions, to have done little to resolve the crisis with any modicum of mutual respect or the heart-to-heartedness of he Hasidic story told by Maccise above. All sides (often there were more than two parties disputing) used the brute force of rationality and logic as well as emotional appeals to control the facts and the outcome. The presence of the Sacred was rarely mentioned by any of the participants, even though many of the leading figures were religious.

Since words can only point to that for which they stand, they are necessarily finite. Once one has dissected the facts about the Carmel

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[248] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

[249] T. S. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday", in *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950*, Harcourt, Brace, and Company, New York 1980, p. 65.

at Auschwitz, what does one do with them? It is only with symbolic and imaginative language that one can access the Transcendent or bow before the Wisdom of another faith tradition. Access to this type of language, which includes mystical language, is particularly critical in discussing any Auschwitz topic. As Shapiro has argued earlier, one must eternally guard against a facile linguistic domestication of the Holocaust. This caution is, perhaps, part of what the Rabbi of Bluzhov (Rabbi Israel Spira) meant when he said:

> There are events of such overbearing magnitude that one ought not to remember them all the time, but one must not forget them either. Such an event is the Holocaust.[250]

If one could adequately describe the Holocaust or Auschwitz with words, there would be no need of silence. However, the inadequacy of language is a much broader problem, Sontag asserts: "If the reality of the world and of ourselves could be exhausted by description in words or formulae, silence is not important".[251] But if there is an inexhaustible meaning in certain events, then silence becomes an absolute necessity, as the above T. S. Eliot quote suggests. Inherent in both traditions is an understanding that the ghings of "overbearing magnitude" cannot be contained by words, can only be suggested by mystical language, and honored by silence.

In explaining to his disciples how Elijah could have appeared in the form of a beggar in the Hasidic tale quoted above, the Baal Shem Tov stresses "the secret is in the eyes". In other words, *how* we look will affect what we see. Looking with eyes of Love enable us to see the most irreconcilable things made whole, reconstituted, and transformed. Bl. Titus Brandsma asserted that seeing is a mutually reciprocal process with the Divine, who is able to "fix our glance".[252]

Had the mystical glance been the lens through which this bitter dispute over meaning was considered and had the parties inclined towards silence as opposed to more words, I submit the convent would have been re-located sooner and with more harmony and trust among the parties. Had this occurred, it would have been a positive example of interfaith dialogue based on "seeing" the difference of the other and yet reaching beyond that gap to the underlying Reality that both traditions acnowledge.

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[250] ELIACH, unnumbered page before the dedication.
[251] SONTAG, p. 144.
[252] BRANDSMA, p. 155.

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