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The Holocaust and American Theology

Genocide was the heart and soul of World War II, and many people do not like to see the true horror that caused one of the worst times in world history. Whenever we hear the term Holocaust people think Hitler, Nazis, concentration camps, and the death of Jews. The genocide that occurred during World War II will never be forgotten. Richard Rubenstein takes a look at the Holocaust in Germany and genocide that ran throughout Europe. Rubenstein predicts that America is the next country for genocide to take out a group of targeted people and I disagree with him. The Nazis took control over Germany and Rubenstein explains how this was allowed to happen. I will summarize Rubenstein's arguments regarding genocide in Germany and the Nazi ethic that millions of Germans followed. There are many components to Rubenstein's theories that I will touch, some of which I agree with and some of which I disagree with. Concluding in chapter one, I will start to form my thesis of my paper. Many of the wars fought in current society do not deal with genocide like World War II. The war in particular that I am researching is World War II and more specifically the Holocaust (genocide of the people of Jewish decent in Europe, as well as other groups of people who perished in Nazi camps). Is it fair for anyone to argue that a certain group of people other than the Nazis was at fault for the Holocaust? Richard Rubenstein believes that the Nationalist Socialist Party is not the only group of people to blame for millions of innocent people put to death. In 1975, he wrote a book entitled *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future*. Rubenstein makes claims that are, to put at best, debatable. I think that almost everyone knows about the Holocaust, about Hitler and his Nazi régime, about the Jews that died at death camps, and lastly I feel that everyone is sympathetic for the people that died or

were put through a concentration camp. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere....Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”¹

The Holocaust affected and continues to affect us as human beings; I will summarize Rubenstein’s arguments taking specific time dealing with his prediction of America being the next sight for future catastrophic genocide. I am not arguing against Rubenstein here. I am just trying to get the point across that the majority of the world has some idea of what the Holocaust is. Even though we (as a human race) were not all affected directly, knowing what happens affects each and every one of us indirectly. Maybe we know of people that are survivors, or maybe we are affected because in our hearts it is impossible to believe that another person could do this to anyone. It does not matter who you are, I believe that every single person that learns of the Holocaust feels their heart drop if just for a second.

I will also compare American theologies that have changed because of the Holocaust. I will be mainly analyzing Christian and Jewish theologies. These two religions do not agree on many things, but they are attempting to understand one another better. The Holocaust did not separate these religions; it just gave a name to the problem. Before the Holocaust issues between Christianity and Judaism were still present but the Holocaust magnified the problems between the religions. Can things ever be restored between Jews and Christians? That is what I will attempt to pick apart in the second section of my paper. In chapter two I look at the relationship between people of the Jewish faith and people of Christian faith. Jews and Christians share some of the same basic ideas. The only problem is that Jews and Christians do not share enough of the

¹ *Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail*, <<http://almaz.com/nobel/peace/MLK-jail.html>> (13 November 2006).

same ideas to truly get along with one another. The Holocaust further damaged the relationship between religions. Chapter two examines many different view points of Jewish-Christian relations. The chapter ranges from pre-Holocaust relations, relations during the genocide of Jews, to current relations regarding Jews and Christians. Are Jews and Christians now better off because of current attempts to try to restore a positive outlook of one another's religious views?

Chapter three deals with just that question and I try to give you my best to answer the question dealing with Rubenstein's prediction. That prediction being that America is the next place for a large genocide to occur. In chapter three I take a look at some groups that could be possible targets in America for genocide. If America were the place genocide were to strike next, who would be targeted, could it really happen, and who would be the one attempting to oppress the targeted group? I also take a look at the idea of Jews and Christians again being the groups in America under fire. I examine if their attempts to resurrect a positive view of one another is working. This chapter is intended to form my conclusions from chapter one and two. I will either agree with Rubenstein or disagree with Rubenstein. Could genocide take over America? I guess we will just have to read and find out. In the last aspect of my paper I will again be looking at Rubenstein's bold prediction that America is the home for the next large genocide to occur. I will argue either that yes, Rubenstein proves his arguments or no, Rubenstein is way off base because there is lack of proof in his research. There are many questions of concern to predict the future, which is why I will examine Rubenstein's work and attempt to help answer a scary question. Is America next?

Chapter One: Richard Rubenstein and Genocide

Rubenstein is a very complicated person and has many ideas that are brilliant yet very hard to grasp. His book, *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American*

Future, must be summarized in order for you the reader to understand where I the writer am coming from.

First we need to understand what Rubenstein believes about mass death and contemporary civilization. We live in a bureaucratic society. Rubenstein does not argue that we believe in a bureaucratic society, but I do. Rubenstein argues defines bureaucracy as a government by many bureaus, administrators, and petty officials. America is a bureaucratic society because we have many people in charge. We have a president, congress, senate, police departments, and many other aspects of a bureaucratic society. Just imagine the devastation if some of the “wrong” people were to gain control of political leadership. We have many people in charge and thus we have many people making decisions regarding other people. Rubenstein writes,

The Nazi period serves as a warning of what we can all too easily become were we faced with a political or an economic crisis of overwhelming proportions. The public may be fascinated by the Nazis; hopefully, it is also warned by them.²

What Rubenstein is getting at is that we should be fascinated by what the Nazi party did, it was new, it was daring, and it was ultimately wrong. I believe that we should also be concerned. If the Nazis took control of the German government, then could it happen elsewhere as well? That is why we should also be worried about what the Nazi party did. I do not think that anyone can fathom having genocide of that magnitude possibly where we live. No country that I know of should want to kill off so many of their people. Yes, there is Rwanda that can be noted for killing its own people. I am trying to say that it is unnatural for a person or group to want to kill people in order to better them. Thus, the

² Richard Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future* (New York: Harper & Row Publishing, 1975), 2.

Holocaust should be scary to us. We should view the Holocaust as something that is so disturbing that no one should want to recreate the gruesome situations that Jews and others faced in World War II.

The reason that Germany came to systematically kill so many Jews, Gypsies, people of Polish heritage, as well as others, is because they came up with a way in which it was systematically easy to do so. The Nazis dehumanized their targeted people and therefore were able to kill human beings without feeling any emotion because the Nazis did not view the targeted group as equal. The Nazi party had three ways in which they tried to rid their land of targeted people (mainly Jews). These ways included conversion, expulsion, and annihilation. Rubenstein writes,

Each of the three policies directed against Jews represented an intensification of hostile action beyond the previous step. Conversion was an attempt to subvert Jewish religious and communal institutions by securing defections to the rival faith. Expulsion was an attempt to rid a community of Jews as unwanted outsiders. Annihilation was the most radical form of expulsion...In conversion and expulsion, the death threat was often used as a means to an end; in extermination, killing became the end in itself.³

Conversion was more of a Christian effort to convert Jews to Christianity, while expulsion and extermination was more of a Nazi technique to rid Germany of Jews. This is really the first time that a group thought about a process of eliminating people. Yes, conversion had been used before. Convert or something bad will happen. However, we must note that conversion is not necessarily a Nazi way to rid themselves of Jews.

Conversion is commonly viewed as a Christian form to turn Jews away from the Jewish religion and to convert to a Christian religion. The reason I tie the idea of conversion to the Nazis is because the Nazis were of Christian background. Yes, expulsion had been

³ Ibid, 5.

used before. Jews or other targeted people would be shipped off to places outside Germany, and they would have no place to go and not many if any material things. The problem for the Nazis here was the fact that Jews were still living. The Jews were not in Germany anymore, but the idea of a Jew still was upsetting. That is why annihilation was the new form in which Nazis chose to use with the Jews. Annihilation was new. The threat of killing people had not really been used before but at first was it only a scare tactic? I would have to say no. I do not believe that the Nazis would just try to scare Jews. I think the Nazis planned on killing the Jews no matter what and the idea of just trying to scare people straight was never to be used. Now with the adoption of annihilation, killing was the final plan. Germany decided that any person they deemed unworthy, they (National Socialist Party/Nazis) had the right to execute. Did Hitler and company really decide that if people would not do what they wanted them to do, it would be alright to kill them? In a sense, Hitler was playing God. Citizens' lives belonged to him and he could do with them as he pleased.

This pertains to the piece of Rubenstein's explanation of mass murder. Rubenstein writes,

In modern warfare, there is no knightly comradeship. The objective is often to deprive the enemy of his basic instrument of violence, his army...This was a giant step towards the death camps of World War II. For the first time in memory a European nation had attempted to alter the biological rather than the military and political balance of power with an adversary.⁴

War was changing. The giant step was that war used to depend on who has the better position, or who has the better strategy to gain the victory in battle. Now war is all about numbers. Who kills more? Who will let more men die? Many believe wars are fought

⁴ Ibid, 8.

with the notion that if one side can kill more people, then they win right? Not necessarily. Often times, in the heat of battle, people would surrender. But Rubenstein argues that the Nazi tactic was not so nice. Many times the Nazis would strengthen their attacks after their enemy had surrendered. Rubenstein goes on to state, “Never before have human beings been so expandable.”⁵ This is true. The Nazis did not view anyone but Aryan (to the Nazis, a non-Jewish white person) people as worthy. They would do as they wished with the non-Aryan. Hitler saw the Jews and other targeted people as surplus people. Hitler and many other Germans saw Jews as a source of pollution and weakness as well. Thus, Hitler thought the best way to get rid of surplus was to kill them. This would stop the surplus and rid Germany, the country he so loved, of non-Aryans.

Rubenstein has another good question that is difficult to answer. America did not attempt to stop the terrible things from happening at Auschwitz. But, did any country? This is a good question to ponder. Did every country fighting Germany accept the Nazi treatment of Jews in Auschwitz? I do not believe any country agreed with Germany. Rubenstein says, “...but they were unwilling even to attempt to drop a few bombs to stop the murderous traffic to Auschwitz.”⁶ Rubenstein has a very valid argument. Maybe if some country had attempted to bomb Auschwitz lives could have been saved. But no country tried to destroy Auschwitz. It was almost as if they turned their heads away, to pretend like they did not know what was really going on. I think that America for example did not bomb Auschwitz because; simply if we would have bombed Auschwitz we would have killed every single person there. The thought about bombing the train

⁵ Ibid, 12.

⁶ Ibid, 20.

lines was not talked about but I think that would be the best idea. I think of a group were to ruin the train lines when trains carrying thousands of Jews was not running then the process for killing would have been more difficult. It would not have mattered if a person were a Nazi or a prisoner in camp. By bombing Auschwitz, America would have been helping Germany exterminate every Jew that was held in that death camp. Some might argue that by bombing Auschwitz people could have been saved from future death, but that means every person that survived Auschwitz when peace was finally agreed upon could have died. Lastly regarding war Rubenstein declares, “We are more likely to understand the Holocaust if we regard it as the expression of some of the most profound tendencies of Western civilization in the twentieth century.”⁷ Times were changing. We do not necessarily understand the Holocaust fully, but we should be able to see what Western civilization was doing in accordance with the Holocaust. Western civilization allowed the Holocaust to happen. A person dying was not the big issue anymore. People seem to almost care less because they are not involved with the situation or choose not to be involved therefore are not a part of the situation.

The next piece of Rubenstein that I would like to address is maybe the most interesting and compelling idea that he has. His idea of a bureaucratic overthrow, which is just like the Nazis did to take over Germany and gain power to do what they wished throughout Europe. First we must define bureaucracy in Rubenstein’s words. For Rubenstein there are three main pieces of a bureaucracy: secularization, disenchantment of the world, and rationalization. Rubenstein writes,

Bureaucracy can be understood as a structural and organizational expression of the related processes of secularization, disenchantment of the world, and rationalization. The secularization process involves the

⁷ Ibid, 21.

liberation of ever wider areas of human activity from religious domination. Disenchantment of the world occurs when “there are no mysterious forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all the things by calculation.” Rationalization involves “the methodical attainment of a definitely given and practical end by means of an increasingly precise calculation of adequate means.”⁸

Hitler did just that. Hitler used secularization against the Jews. And by saying that Hitler used secularization against the Jews I should really say that Hitler used secularization to persuade Christians to do what he wanted. Hitler took their (The Jews) religion away.

The Nazi ethic was an idea born to Hitler and the National Socialist Party (Nazi party). The idea of the Nazi ethic was the thought that only the Aryan people should live. To Nazi's, an Aryan was a non-Jewish Caucasian. As a result all Jews were targeted by the Nazi party for extermination. Peter Haas states,

The first step was to remove Jews from the German government. This was imperative since the Nazi party in effect “annexed” the government as one of its extensions...it was impossible to tolerate Jews-or other non-Aryans- as part of the leadership cadre.⁹

The idea of the Nazi ethic was that any person that was thought to be non-Aryan was to be exterminated. Non-Aryans were seen as a group of subhuman individuals. The Nazi ethic was to take over countries and systematically take out targeted groups, and this ethic happened all over Europe. The ethic was aimed to be simple enough to take over countries and then implement the ethic into gained territories of the Nazi party.

The Nazi party had a way to implement the ethic that was very thought out and if done correctly, the Nazi party would have total control of the government and residents of each country. The Nazi party, mainly Hitler, had the idea that if he and the Nazis could go into a targeted country and take out the leaders of the government, then Hitler

⁸ Ibid, 27-28

⁹ Peter J. Haas, *Morality After Auschwitz* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988), 61.

and the Nazi party could take over the land. If the leaders of the government were killed then Hitler would take control of the country and implement his Nazi ethic into the overtaken country. Hitler did this throughout Europe. The Nazi party would kill political leaders, implement the Nazi ethic, and start the extermination of Jews in a new land.

What is very important to understand is that in order for the ethic to develop in Germany Hitler needed to oust the Jewish authority in the German government. Hitler was able to do so and then the idea was to rid society of subhuman people. Hitler did this in every country he conquered. He would first eliminate Jews from government power and then would simply teach the new ethic to the country in which the Nazi party had taken control over. Haas writes,

Hitler's influence lay partly in his ability to articulate a myth of racial struggle and superiority that drew on traditional patterns of thought in Europe....He promised what all Germans wanted: stability, economic growth, and respect. He identified as enemies people that the Germans had always mistrusted: the Jews, the Gypsies, and the social misfits.¹⁰

With that said the ethic could be implemented wherever Hitler and the Nazi party took control and the targeted groups days where a mere number. The hard part was taking over the land, once that was done all Hitler needed to do was take control of the people's minds that lived in his designated areas.

Hitler was able to secularize Christians to believe what he was doing to the Jews was right. If Hitler and the Nazi party had the backing of German Christians in general then he felt as though he could go forth in annihilating the Jews. Hitler did not just attack the Jews. Hitler also used Christianity to gain power over people. Maybe Hitler did not make Christians agree with him, but maybe Christians agreed to a process of secularization. I am not saying that Christians jumped on the bandwagon of Jew hatred,

¹⁰ Ibid, 127.

but am I saying that maybe the Christians process of secularization helped the Nazis form the idea of anti-Jewish thought. Hitler gave Jews nothing. Hitler then allowed for disenchantment with the world. Nothing could be put in place of what Hitler wanted. Nothing from the outside was going to come in and stop what he wanted done. Lastly, the rationalization was the end of the line for Hitler. After he got what he wanted from his prisoners in concentration camps, they were killed. Death was Hitler's rationalization. Death for Hitler was the only way to rid himself and Nazi Germany of the Jews. Hitler believed that death was rationalized because he wanted them gone and found that death was the easiest way to "clean out" Germany. I would not argue that all German Christians wanted this, but I will argue that all Nazi Christians wanted the rationalization that Hitler wanted. I do not trust that every German Christian wanted Jews to be dead. Maybe Christians and Jews cannot get along but should it really end up in the systematically killing of a group of people? I do not think so.

The main way in which Hitler and the Nazi party reached their goal of a true bureaucracy run by a corrupt group was to fully dehumanize the Jews. If Hitler could dehumanize the Jews then he was able to strip of them what they could always say they had. What the Jews had was their identity of Judaism, their religion. That is the simplest form of Nazi theology. If the Jews were dehumanized then why should they be treated like humans? They should be treated lesser according to Nazi theology. Dehumanizing allows people to feel no human emotions toward certain people or things. To the Nazis Jews were not people; they were something that contained alien blood. We are all humans, but Hitler trained his troops to believe that Jews (as well as other groups of people) were not fully human. We also must understand that many Germans that were

not part of the Nazi party agreed with Hitler. To the Nazis they had alien blood and were to be disposed of by any means necessary. It was hard to be a true bureaucrat, meaning that, you would feel no emotion if you were a Nazi taking the life away from an innocent person. By killing them, hurting them, putting them on a train to a concentration camp, or simply being the one to take away their identity. Rubenstein believes that there was one perfect bureaucrat, Heinrich Himmler of the SS. Rubenstein says,

Himmler was the perfect bureaucrat. He did what he believed was his duty, without bias or scorn. He recognized that the task assigned to his men, mass extermination, was humanly speaking exceedingly distasteful. He praised the SS for exercising an obedience so total that they overcame the feelings men would normally have when engaged in mass murder.¹¹

In order for anyone to be able to do such a violent and nasty thing to another human being makes it seem like they were dehumanized as well. Rubenstein said it himself; Himmler and the SS could kill at will and not have one poor feeling about it. Does that not seem sick? They were brainwashed in a sense by saying that something of this nature is fair to do to another person.

As stated earlier, the Jews were viewed as subhuman. To the Nazi party they were pests that needed to be killed. They had no chance of survival. However, unlike Himmler, some Nazis had more trouble bottling emotions. Thus the Nazi party had to resort to something that would kill the Jews and be less personal to the officers. Executing still happened but a new invention was created to depersonalize the mass murder and make it easier for the Nazis. Rubenstein states, “Bureaucratic mass murder reached its fullest development when gas chambers with a capacity for killing two

¹¹ Rubenstein, 24.

thousand people at a time were installed in Auschwitz.”¹² Gas chambers were not the only way to make the death not as daunting on the Nazis. Rubenstein reads, “In a bureaucratically controlled society where every individual’s ration can be strictly determined, starvation is the ideal instrument of “clean” violence.”¹³ If the Germans did not believe what they were doing was right then why did they feel as though they could not kill the Jews personally. Maybe this is because the Nazis felt direct responsibility by gunning down many Jews in an execution style. I guess I am questioning the logic of Rubenstein in regards to the idea that all Nazis viewed Jews as a dehumanized group. I believe the answer to be; one human should never take another humans life into their own hands because they are different then what is thought to be the “right” way to live a life. Maybe some of the Nazis had to not personally kill Jews in a less personal style because they did not fully buy into viewing Jews as dehumanized.

For the Germans, there were only a couple of things that absolutely needed to happen to form their bureaucratic society and systematically exterminate the Jews.

Rubenstein writes,

Among the preconditions for such a society are, a bureaucratic administration capable of governing with utter indifference to the human needs of the inmates, a supply of inmates capable of continuous replenishment, and the imposition of the death sentence on every inmate as soon as here or she enters...Furthermore, there must be no hope that any inmate might eventually return to normal life.¹⁴

Why is it important for Rubenstein to use the term bureaucracy? I think the reason that Rubenstein uses that term is because the Germans lived in a bureaucratic society during World War II and the society that America lives in today is a bureaucratic nation. There

¹² Ibid, 25.

¹³ Ibid, 25.

¹⁴ Ibid, 34.

are so many people with power. People can gain control and use their power as a resource to create havoc in a nation. The Germans from the Nazi party were elected to office, including Hitler. The Nazis gained control and did not care what happened to any inmate held in a prison or camp. The Jews were endless and could be seized from anywhere. Lastly the Germans wanted every inmate to die. That was their intention from the beginning of this ordeal. Rubenstein says it best, “The Germans were able to create a society of total domination because of the competence of their police and civil service bureaucracies and because they possessed millions of totally superfluous men whose lives and sufferings were of absolutely no consequence to any power secular or sacred and who were as good as dead the moment they entered the camps.”¹⁵ This is the theological key component to Rubenstein’s argument. The Nazis knew that every Jew going to a concentration camp was in essence a “dead man” walking. The Jews had nothing to do with the Christian secularization and the Jews were not worthy to be saved according to Christian beliefs because Christians believe that God does not save non-Christians. Therefore, Jews were not important in the Christian secular world or the Christian sacred world. I do not think the bureaucracy in Germany can be stated any simpler or better than that. No one cared about the Jews; they knew the fate of each prisoner before they were even captured. No one did anything they allowed it to happen. The Nazis were a killing machine and the Jews were the group that did not have a chance to escape.

Rubenstein is not done yet; the next claim will shock and disgust many Americans who read this. Rubenstein links North America for what happened in Europe. Yes, the Holocaust. He argues that America started the worst form of dehumanizing

¹⁵ Ibid, 35.

another person when America participated in the slave trade. Rubenstein is attempting to say that what we did was just a step below what the Nazis did because the only difference was that Jews died, and African-Americans were, to him, just slaves. Rubenstein says, “While no slave system was like that of North America, the American system can be seen as a link in the process of the progressive rationalization of a system of total domination that reached its full development in the Nazi camps.”¹⁶ That is very difficult to digest for a country that abolished slavery, but will never forget how terrible it was because slavery in America was only abolished during the civil war and after 200 years of using African-Americans as slaves. Rubenstein retreats a little bit by saying, “It is, however, as little my intention to suggest that Protestantism was responsible for the forms that the exploitation of free and slave labor took in the nineteenth-century England and America as it was my intention to suggest that Protestantism was to blame for the Nazi camps.”¹⁷ Maybe Protestantism should be partially blamed for what happened to the Jews. Yes, Protestants allowed slavery in North America and what Hitler did was really take the rationalization to the next step by killing the Jews. But I do not think it is fair to say that Protestantism is to blame. What the Nazis did was somewhat similar, but Protestants did not have a plan of action that ended with millions of people being murdered after they enslaved.

Richard Rubenstein argues that it is very possible America could be the next country in the history of the world to be defined by a similar “ethic” in which a group of people in America are targeted. Rubenstein argues that if America does not want to be

¹⁶ Ibid, 41.

¹⁷ Ibid, 42.

the next country to have genocide, we as a country need to fight to stop that from happening. Rubenstein says,

The Holocaust was an expression of some of the most significant political, moral, religious and demographic tendencies of Western civilization in the twentieth century.... It was the first attempt by modern, legally constituted government to pursue a policy of bureaucratically organized genocide both within and beyond its own frontiers.¹⁸

With that statement, Rubenstein takes grasp of the idea that America could be the next government to target people in which should be exterminated. If one group can gain enough backing then why couldn't America adapt a new ethic? The question then is who will be the person or group of people to try to take control and put into effect a new ethic, Hitler was able to turn Germany into an anti-Jewish machine, by simply telling his side of the story to any person that would listen. He turned his idea into genocide and will always be remember as the man that killed millions of people because he and the Nazi party deemed them to be subhuman or not an Aryan. The issue here is that millions upon millions of people agreed with the view regarding an Aryan race.

Rubenstein also argues that this could happen in America. One reason is because Americans are always at odds with one another about who has the power. A democracy is supposed to be power of the people, but could on group gain the power to turn a country against one another? Rubenstein writes,

They were able to turn human beings into instruments wholly responsive to their will even when told to lie down in their own graves and be shot. That is perhaps the supreme "achievement" of their society of total domination. Unfortunately, if it is true that every system of domination has an inherent tendency towards the expansion of power, then the society of total domination may prove to be permanent temptation to future rulers, especially in stressful times. Every ruler seeks affirmative response to command.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid, 6-7.

¹⁹ Ibid, 45.

Rubenstein is contending that people want power. If a person or group can gain the power and have ideas that people want to go along with then there is a possibility that the person or group holding that power may want to rid themselves of an unwanted group of people living in America. And if they have the power to do so, when will they stop ridding themselves of people that are unwanted. When one group is gone, they will just go to the next group of people who they see as negative for America. People with power want more power.

We as America must stop a genocide from happening. I support the idea that America is almost built to have genocide occur. We must band together to stop such a thing from happening. There are so many different races, religious beliefs, and morals throughout America that people see the differences and dislike a group for being different. We must see beyond the differences, not necessarily agree with everyone, but see beyond the differences in order to keep peace. Do so in order to stop genocide from happening. We must do what we can to stop such a thing from happening in America because, we are the land of the free and the land of free should not kill one another based on differences.

So there are a few reasons in which Rubenstein thinks America could be the next place for genocide. I suppose the reason genocide happened in Germany was because of the slave trade in North America was finally taken to the next step by Germany and executed its prisoners. There are many stereotyped groups that are targeted daily for a possible genocide. Who is to say that our government could not be overturned by black-hearted bureaucrats like the Nazis did to the German government. Lastly, warfare nowadays is so impersonal and the weapons America has could kill our own country

twenty times over. Who is to say that we could not get into a civil war again because of religious, ethnic, or racial issues and turn on each other killing millions?

Then we must think about the idea of could genocide occur in America versus will genocide happen in America. The question is simple; could the next large genocide happen in America? Yes. The follow-up question is not as simple to answer. Will the next large genocide happen in America? I do not believe so. Rubenstein argues that America will be the next place for genocide. I partially agree with him. I one hundred percent agree that genocide could very well break out in America. I do not think that genocide will happen though. Rubenstein's arguments could very well fit any country in the world so I do agree with the idea that America could be the home to the next massacre, but I find lack of evidence to say that it **will** happen. Rubenstein has very interesting arguments and I find them very compelling. I partially agree and I partially disagree with his arguments.

I then think it is important to think about the current state of Jewish-Christian relations. The Holocaust caused strife between these two religious groups. Is anything happening to strengthen the relationship between Jews and Christians? Or could the next genocide deal again with Jews at the heart of the problem and Christians being the subject of the debate as what they could have done, again?

CHAPTER TWO: Jewish and Christian Relations

We must understand that people with Jewish backgrounds and people with Christian backgrounds do not see eye to eye. Was this because of what happened during

World War II? No, Jews and Christians have nearly been in a religious conflict for long before you and I were born. It is not necessarily a war, because generally one side will win the war. This is more of a never ending battle. There will always be something that Jews and Christians can not agree upon. Rubenstein writes,

One mistake often made by those who appeal to the humanistic ideals of the Judeo-Christian traditions is the failure to distinguish between the *manifest values* a tradition asserts to be binding and the *ethos* generated by that same tradition. The Judeo-Christian tradition is said to proclaim an ethic in which every man is possessed of an irreducible element of human dignity as a child of God. Nevertheless, beyond all conscious intent, it has produced a secularization of consciousness involving an abstract, dehumanized, calculating rationality that can eradicate every vestige of that same human dignity in all areas of human interchange.²⁰

Rubenstein is saying that Jews and Christians do share some of the same values, but not entirely. Thus, secularization is caused. Jews and Christians need to work on their problems and build on the similarities they find within each religion. The problems between Jews and Christians have always been there, the Holocaust simply put a name to the problem.

There are many people that question the relationship between Jews and Christians. Regarding the Holocaust, Jews question Christians about their resistance or lack of resistance to the Nazi ethic. Christians feel as though they (the religion in general) are being blamed for the Holocaust, which is a bold statement. What Hitler did was despicable. I do not think that any religious group could have helped the Jews. This is a very bold statement that I am making but I feel it is needed because of all the blame that is put on other people to try to take some of the hurt away. The Jews look at the Christians as if something more could have been done. Yes, I would argue that more could have been done. But we also need to look at the aspect of the lack of help from

²⁰ Ibid, 31.

other religious groups. I know it is unfair to say other religious groups should have done something, but I think it is the only way to make you the reader to think from the perspective that I am coming from. No religious group really put up an effort to stop the genocide. Maybe religious groups said what they were doing was wrong but I do not feel as though one religious group could have single handedly stopped what Hitler and the Nazis were doing to the Jews.

Hitler used writings from Martin Luther to justify what he did to the Jews. Luther did write that Jews are bad people. He wanted Jews to become Christian. Luther wrote against the Jewish religion. In 1543 Luther wrote, *The Jews and Their Lies*, in which he stated that,

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. If we do, we become sharers in their lies, cursing and blasphemy. Thus we cannot extinguish the unquenchable fire of divine wrath, of which the prophets speak, nor can we convert the Jews. With prayer and the fear of God we must practice a sharp mercy to see whether we might save at least a few from the glowing flames. We dare not avenge ourselves. Vengeance a thousand times worse than we could wish them already has them by the throat. I shall give you my sincere advice

- First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom.
- Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues.
- Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.
- Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb.
- Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews.

- Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping.²¹

He believed that the Jewish religion was not the “true” religion. Hitler took Luther’s writings and used them to say that Jews should die. They are not pure, that was what Hitler inferred from Luther’s works regarding people of Jewish religion. People can view writings how ever they want to; Luther’s writings fit in perfectly with what Hitler wanted for the Jews. Hitler used Luther’s writings because he could. The writings were a reason that Hitler tried to justify his actions with. Luther simply did not believe in what Jewish people thought religiously. Hitler wanted the Jews terminated. Due to the differences between Jews and Christians, and on top of that the problem of World War II made the relations even worse than before. Hitler used one of the most influential Christians of all time to validate the genocide of all the Jews. That is a huge predicament for both Jews and Christians. Should the Christians have done more? Probably, but can the Jews really blame Christians for not doing enough to stop the hate that Hitler caused? I do not think that can ever truly be answered. There might be legitimate values that would cause Christians to think they should have done something to save the Jews, but they did not. I think that we can never know if anything would have changed had the Christians tried to save the Jews. All I know is that what can happen is Jews and Christians should work on their relationship. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) attempted to rectify Luther’s writings about the Jews. Then we must take a look at what social statements the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has come out with regarding theological changes since the Holocaust. In 1994, the ELCA came out with the

²¹ Martin Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies*, < <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/luther-jews.html> > (13 November 2006).

Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community.

In this declaration, the ELCA states,

We express our urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people. We recognize in anti-Semitism a contradiction and an affront to the Gospel, a violation of our hope and calling, and we pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry, both within our own circles and in the society around us. Finally, we pray for the continued blessing of the Blessed One upon the increasing cooperation and understanding between Lutheran Christians and the Jewish community.²²

The ELCA is trying to say that what Martin Luther wrote was not okay. Martin Luther is the founder of the Lutheran denomination. He wrote that Jews are not good people, and Hitler used that to say what he was doing to the Jews was nothing of the wrong doing because Luther had written that Jews are bad. That is why in 1994 the ELCA came out with the Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community. This declaration is saying that Lutheran Christians and Jews should be able to get along and share a love for God together. Lutherans should not see Jews as a lesser people. The declaration states,

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America feel a special burden in this regard because of certain elements in the legacy of the reformer Martin Luther and the catastrophes, including the Holocaust of the twentieth century, suffered by Jews in places where the Lutheran churches were strongly represented.²³

That quotation straight from the declaration says that the Lutheran religion takes some responsibility for what happened to the Jews during the Holocaust. We can not fight it, but the ELCA can come out with their declaration stating that they do not agree with what Luther wrote in his anti-Jewish and anti-Semitism writings. The problems do not

²² Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community: Jewish-Christian Relations, < <http://www.jcrelations.net/en/?item=1003>> (4 November 2006).

²³ Ibid, elca.org.

end there. Jews and Christians have many more issues than just the writings of Luther. Both Jews and Christians view their problems differently, but can Jews and Christians eventually come closer to a balanced view of one another's religion. After all, Jews and Christians have many things in common, but why would they want to admit it.

Another theologian, Clark Williamson believes that Christians have some work to do in order to gain the trust of Jews again. Williamson writes,

Individual believers and congregations must take it upon themselves to make genuine post-Holocaust theological revision a priority. Attention to the fallacies of authenticity, superficial engagement, and theological retrieval will cause post-Holocaust Christians to proceed carefully.... And no longer will they suppose that a new basis for Jewish-Christian relations can be forged from the church's unalloyed biblical and theological traditions.... Christians will speak of the Holocaust and Jewish-Christian relations only in fear and humility. But with this attitude comes a lifting of the shame that we bear for the Holocaust and the long history of Western antisemitism that it represents.²⁴

Williamson is writing that Christians are the ones that need to do the work here.

Williamson views Jewish-Christian relations as poor right now. When Williamson says that Christians must speak of the Holocaust with fear and humility he is right. Christians must realize how scary the Holocaust was, and speak with humility for not acting at all. Lastly, Williamson argues that Christians need to take it upon themselves to fight anti-Semitism. If Christians can do this then maybe the relations between Jews and Christians can be fixed, but until Christians can take responsibility I guess the two sides will be on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Irving Greenberg is Jewish and he has many ideas about Jewish and Christian relations. How are the relations between Jews and Christians? Is one group more to

²⁴ Clark Williamson, *"Good News" After Auschwitz?* (Mercer University Press, 2001), 20.

blame for the Holocaust than the other, or should both Jews and Christians take responsibility? Greenberg says,

Judaism and Christianity do not merely tell of God's love for man, but stand or fall on their fundamental claim that the human being is, therefore, the ultimate and absolute value. It is the contradiction of this intrinsic value and the reality of human suffering that validates the absolute centrality and necessity of redemption, of the Messianic hope.²⁵

What Greenberg is saying is that both Jews and Christians believe that God loves all men (humans). Therefore, why would Hitler and the Germans want to kill off all the Jews? Jews and Christians both know that God loves all his children. Although, Jews and Christians, had different beliefs they both believe in God's love.

More importantly, Greenberg argues that Christians are often blamed for not helping enough during the Holocaust. Greenberg argues that many Christians simply turned a blind eye to the problem. They allowed the Germans to murder millions of people and did not try to resist the efforts because they were afraid for their own lives. Greenberg states,

Even some Christians who resisted Hitler failed on the Jewish question. Even the great Christians who recognized the danger of idolatry, and resisted the Nazi government's takeover of the German Evangelical Church at great personal sacrifice and risk did not speak out on the Jewish question. All this suggests that something in Christian teaching supported or created a positive context for anti-Semitism, and even murder. Is not the faith of a gospel of love, then, fatally tainted with collaboration with genocide conscious or unconscious? To put it another way: if the Holocaust challenges the fundamental religious claims of Christianity (and Judaism), then the penumbra of Christian complicity may challenge the credibility of Christianity to make these claims.²⁶

²⁵ Irving Greenberg, *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1977), 9.

²⁶ Ibid, 13.

Greenberg argues that Christian's non-action to speak up for the Jews shows that Christians indeed helped with the murder of the Jews. Many Christians would be appalled by this statement. But, really we must think about this. Many Christians did nothing to stop what was going on in Germany. Greenberg is arguing that the action chosen by Christians was that of no action at all. And that did kill Jews. Christians choosing not to help a human in need is not a Christian at all. That is why Christians are such an immense part of the Holocaust. You may disagree with Greenberg, but the worst action the Christians could have chosen was no action or total collaboration with the Nazis. And, that is exactly what most Christians did.

Greenberg does not just magnify what Christians could have done. Jewish theology did not necessarily blame the Christians for everything. Some Jewish theologians took it upon their own religion as well. Greenberg says,

There are Jews who have sought to assimilate the Holocaust to certain unreconstructed traditional categories, to explain destruction as a visitation for evil. To account for the Holocaust as God's punishment of Israel for its sins is to betray and mock the agony of the victims. Now that they have been cruelly tortured and killed, boiled into soap, their hair made into pillows and their bones into fertilizer, their unknown graves and the very fact of their death denied to them, the theologian would inflict on them the only indignity left: that is, insistence that it was done because of their sins.
²⁷

The sad part about what some Jewish theologians argue is that Jews were punished for the sins of Israel. People were killed because of the sins of their religious ancestors. I find it hard to believe that Jews were punished by God in the form of the Holocaust. Greenberg states that any theologian agreeing with the footnote above is betraying or

²⁷ Ibid, 25.

mocking the Jews that died in death camps because they had no option. They were told what to do, and they were killed for what they believed in.

I believe that the biggest component of Greenberg's argument is the fact that Christians did nothing and in some cases Christians helped do the killing. They did not try to stop what was going on. They allowed it to happen. Many religious people could have taken a stand because they would know through religious practice that what was happening in Germany was not okay. Greenberg illustrates,

We must remember the many "religious" people who carried out the Holocaust. There were killers and murderers who continued to practice organized religion, including Christianity. There were many "good Christians," millions of respectable people, who turned in, rounded up, and transported millions of Jews. Some sympathized with or were apathetic to the murder process, while perceiving themselves as religiously observant and faithful including those who did an extra measure of Jew-hunting or betrayal because they perceived it as an appropriate expression of Christian theology. Vast numbers of people practiced religion in this period, but saw no need to stand up to or resist the destruction process.²⁸

I am Christian, and I do not know what I would do if I were in Germany during World War II. I think it is very hard for a person to take a stand, so the easiest thing to do was to do nothing at all and allow the Nazi party to do what they pleased. Yes, Christians helped the Nazi's with finding Jews and thousands helped in the extermination process. Greenberg finishes by saying, "I dare to use another biblical image. The cloud of smoke of the bodies by day and the pillar of fire of the crematoria by night may yet guide humanity to a goal and a day when human beings are attached to each other; and have so much shared each other's pain, and have so purified and criticized themselves, that *never again will a Holocaust be possible*."²⁹ Or maybe Greenberg would simply ask, if another

²⁸ Ibid, 45.

²⁹ Ibid, 55.

Holocaust would occur; do not say you are not responsible because you had nothing to do with it. Remember that no action is action. Take action to stop such hate because we are all God's children.

Christian theologian Jurgen Moltmann takes a look at how Jewish Theologians responded to the Holocaust. There are a few things that Moltmann believes to be very important. Moltmann says,

The horror doesn't wear off with time. The remembrance doesn't fade. Every attempt after more than fifty years to historicize the mass murder of the Jews by us Germans founders when it is confronted with the abyss of horror and brought face to face with God. For before God there is no statute of limitations, either in the detachment of the past or through the alleged 'grace of a late birth'. Before the Eternal One everything is simultaneous and present. That is why the horror that lays hold of us in the face of that crime is unplumbed, fathomless. We cannot repress it, for we cannot grasp it. It is there, and goes with us from generation to another.³⁰

Moltmann is trying to say that no matter what happens society can not forget the Holocaust. It is such an important part of our world history. It is such a devastating event, but also is an event that we (as a society) can never allow to happen again. Every generation should know about the Holocaust, it is not just an event that we let die because years pass. Yes, maybe the first hand accounts of the Holocaust will be lost because all the survivors are getting older but that does not mean we should stop teaching the importance of the Holocaust. We must teach that the Holocaust was a low point in human history but we can grow and learn from this. People of a Jewish background will always know what happened in Germany, and Christians should learn that what happened to them is not alright because mainly Christians were responsible. Moltmann writes,

³⁰ Jurgen Moltmann, *God For a Secular Society; The Public Relevance of Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 170.

I am a Christian theologian, and I have to address and wrestle with the question about God after Auschwitz. That is not just a question for believing men and women among the Jews and the Germans. The question about God was the question of antisemites and the murderers of the Jews as well....But behind this apocalyptic messianism of 'the Reich' there was at the deepest depths something else as well: the hatred of God, and the will to exterminate not only the Jews but with them the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his eternal righteousness and justice, so as to establish the atheistic despot. The murder of the Jews was an attempt to murder God.³¹

This is a very powerful statement from Moltmann. The attempt to kill the Jews was the main concern for the Nazis. That would lead to completely forgetting the Jewish God as well. If Hitler did not fulfill his goal of murdering every Jew, he at least felt that he could make them question their God, why could this happen? Therefore, he felt either way the Jewish religion was going to cease. Moltmann also asks the question regarding the lord of history. Moltmann ponders, "On the one hand his concern is the theological question whether the God of Israel is also the Lord of history, so that it was God who tried to exterminate his own people in the gas chambers."³² Moltmann is questioning Rubenstein and his God-is-dead theory, that God was killing his chosen people during the Holocaust. Again, this is asking if God is punishing Jews for the sins they committed that eventually led to the Exodus of the Promised Land told in the Bible. Moltmann writes,

But then all that remains is the cry of total despair: 'there is no judgment and no judge.' Hitler would have then not only murdered a third of Jewish people, but the Jewish faith too – would have slain not just Israel but Israel's God. Anyone who after Auschwitz declares that God is dead, and renounces his Jewish faith, is giving Hitler the posthumous victory over the Jews and the God of Israel which he was unable to achieve during his lifetime.³³

³¹ Ibid, 171.

³² Ibid, 174.

³³ Ibid, 176.

In the view of Rubenstein, the Jews cannot let Hitler win. They must bounce back and keep their religion going. They did not deserve what happened. Moltmann goes on to say, “Auschwitz was not the physical end of Judaism – but was it perhaps the spiritual end of Christendom, and end which we have not yet noticed?”³⁴ This is where Moltmann and Greenberg kind of agree. Did the Christians hurt themselves by not doing anything at all? I guess that is up to every individual to say. I will however say that I do not fully agree that Moltmann’s quote is true. I partially agree that it is the end of Christendom. Christianity dying a spiritual death is not totally true. Christians still practice today and therefore, Christianity did not die at Auschwitz. Where I disagree is that Christianity is still spreading and gaining converts. Therefore the idea of Christendom did not die, but it is losing steam and has been losing steam since the Holocaust. I will however say that I do believe it makes Christians look at where their common beliefs stand. Yet again, Moltmann agrees with Greenberg by stating,

In the knowledge of guilt already atoned for in the boundless suffering of God, it becomes possible, without denying ourselves and without destroying ourselves, to face up to the appalling happening of the past and to keep alive the remembrance of the victims, and of the perpetrators. Today reconciliation in the presence of the atoning God means holding this past in our remembrance. It must not be forgotten.³⁵

That fact that almost everything theologian I have read regarding the Holocaust, Jewish or Christian, says that we must not forget what happened during World War II. These are not the only two aspects that Jews and Christians agree upon.

The book *Irreconcilable Differences? A Learning Resource for Jews and Christians* is the best tool to understand what the Jewish and Christian religions have in

³⁴ Ibid, 181.

³⁵ Ibid, 188.

common. This book takes a look to see what Jews and Christians have in common and possible stepping stones that can be reached in the future. I think this book shows is what many people do not know. That being the general beliefs that Jews and Christians have in common. I think many people, Jew or Christian and immediately think they have nothing in common so they do not want to even try to attempt to respect and understand each others religious beliefs. There are many things that Jews and Christians have in common.

I think that most important similarity between Jews and Christians is the fact that both Jews and Christians worship the same God. The book states,

Before the rise of Christianity, Jews were the only worshipers of the God of Israel. But Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; creator of heaven and earth. Although Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that through Christianity hundreds of millions of people have entered into a relationship with the God of Israel.³⁶

I think that is very important for Jews and Christians to know. I trust that not many non-theologians would know that both Jews and Christians worship the same God. Jews and Christians have different beliefs but the idea of worshipping the same Holy One is awesome. I think that is the best word to describe how great it truly is. The God of Israel created heaven and earth and both Jews and Christians worship that God, it is simply awesome.

The next important aspect of Jewish and Christian relations deals with seeking authority in writing. The Bible is this source, the Jews call it the Tanakh and the Christians call it the Old Testament. Rosann Catalona, Christopher Leighton, and David Sandmel write,

³⁶ Rosann M Catalano, Christopher M Leighton, and David F Sandmel. *Irreconcilable Differences* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 12.

We take away similar lessons: God created and sustains the universe; God established a covenant with the people of Israel, God's revealed word guides Israel to a life of righteousness; and God will ultimately redeem Israel and the whole world. Yet, Jews and Christians interpret the Bible differently on many points. Such differences must always be respected.³⁷

This is a statement from a group of Jewish theologians and not every Jewish person necessarily agrees. This is important to know because then we understand that similar lessons are being taught religiously. There may be some differences in interpreting the Bible but the same basic ideas are being taught to Jews and Christians.

Next the book focuses on the idea that Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. This is a very pressing issue for the paper at hand. The book writes,

Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians. We recognize with gratitude those Christians who risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews during the Nazi regime. With that in mind, we encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people.³⁸

This is important because we have Jewish theologians saying that Nazism is not solely a Christian phenomenon. Certain Christians tried to stop the Nazis and Jews respect them for what they did. And Jews still believe that Christians must treat Jews with respect and accept Jews and their religion.

To summarize the thoughts of Jewish and Christian relations should simply be stated by a simple phrase; Jews and Christians must never stop trying to strengthen their relationship. The relationship between Jews and Christians is still growing. The Holocaust made it hard for Jews and Christians to see eye to eye. But I feel as though if Jews and Christians continue to talk about issues and try to understand each other better

³⁷ Ibid, 12.

³⁸ Ibid, 13.

then we will be better off. I do not think that Jews and Christians will ever fully agree on everything because there are differences between religions. But, I do think that if the relations allow Jews and Christians to gain knowledge and respect for one another then we will be living in a better world. Jews and Christians need to know that they do have some things in common and why not try to build from that. Jews and Christians will never be the same, but I feel that the relationship can always grow stronger.

I think it is important to know that the ELCA also came out with a writing entitled "Talking Points" in which is stated,

Our two communities share historical and scriptural origins. We have also influenced one another in various ways over the centuries. Yet as Christianity has developed within diverse cultures and as Judaism has lived through its own rich history, both have grown beyond the terms of their original relationship. Christianity has often been called a "daughter religion" of Judaism; alternatively, the two have been viewed as siblings, both sprung from the ancient faith of Abraham and Sarah. In fact, however, both communities have matured to be separate and fellow "adults" within the diverse world of human faiths.³⁹

I think this agrees with the authors from the book *Irreconcilable Differences*. This statement is saying that Judaism and Christianity although often thought of as completely different, can also be viewed as similar. I think Jews and Christians need to understand that both religions have similar teachings and although thought of as totally different there is more in common that many believers would know.

Chapter Three: Possibility of American Genocide

³⁹ Talking Points: *Christians and Jews in the Context of World Religions*, <<http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/interreligious/jewish/talkingpoints/tp8.html>> (26 November 2006).

This chapter deals the possibility of American genocide. We must look again at what Rubenstein predicts that the next large genocide will happen in America. Chapter one summarizes how Germany took over Europe and systematically killed off the Jews. The idea that is tough to grasp is the idea that America could be the site for the next genocide. We must see both sides, the side Rubenstein argues and the way in which I dispute many of Rubenstein's arguments based on logic.

The last chapter of the essay will detail the thought of Richard Rubenstein that genocide could happen in America. The importance of this thought is first based on the idea of who is running the country. When we look at most of the political and religious leadership, who do we find? We find white men. When we look even harder it seems to be White Anglo-Saxon Protestants are running the country. Is not that what Hitler wanted when he was taking over Europe? He wanted what America already has. Meaning the majority of power is not held by blacks or Hispanics or even women for that matter. Yes, there are a select few that do have power but in general power is not held by people of minority groups. Another way to say it is that many of the people claimed to be oppressed in this country are not people who hold power in America. That is a dangerous thought. Although many people would argue that the people in power would never allow such things like the Holocaust to happen in America, who are we to decide what could or could not happen. I would argue that people in Europe never imagined the Holocaust and genocide of so many innocent people to happen there either, but it did. Hitler was one man with one goal, to eliminate the people he believed to be undesirable to society. I am saying that Hitler dreamt up this idea, he did not pull it off alone, he was aided by people who thought what he was doing was right.

Also in America, the country is always fighting over something. In my lifetime I can not think of a time in which America has not been involved in some sort of difference of opinion with a group of people. Something is always going to be on the fritz, America must always find a group of people to target because that is what gets peoples attention. Peace does not get the attention of people, it is the little battles being fought throughout the country that get the headlines and that are publicized daily. I am not arguing that America does this on purpose but the reality of it is that groups of people will always be oppressed. Therefore, America needs to avoid oppressing people in its own country in order to avoid the possibility of that oppression from turning into the on start of a future genocide. That however is unfair to blame solely on America. America is not the only country at odds. Everywhere in the World people are being oppressed.

Is it fair of Rubenstein to say that America is the next place for genocide? I do not believe it is fair, and to be honest I think it is a rather risky prediction. Yes, America has problems within society. But, America is not the only society in which people of different sexes, races, and religions are oppressed. Is there anything that Rubenstein argues that is concrete evidence allowing anyone to believe him that America will allow such a devastating event to happen? Could the next large genocide happen in America? Yes. How do you and I know that? We do not know that. Rubenstein argues that America would be a good home for the next genocide to happen because it is built similar to Europe was when the Holocaust happened, but that does not mean America is the front runner for genocide around the world. Why can't we argue that Canada, Mexico, Africa, Russia, China, or any other place around the world is an ideal home of future genocide.

Not only would the fact that it is very hard to predict the future of genocide, what groups would be targeted if there was genocide in America.

We must look at groups that could be future targets for genocide in America. The group that is targeted daily is the African-Americans. Look at what America did to African-Americans during slavery. They oppressed a whole group of people, sometimes killing them or lynching them. Could that not have become genocide if slavery were not abolished (even though many argue that was genocide of African-Americans)? Even after slavery was abolished, African-Americans still deal with racism everyday. The group that I could see in America attempting to persuade others to join is the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Not unlike the Nazi party, the KKK has a total hatred for African-Americans. Could the KKK attempt to implement an American ethic in an already racist country in which Americans challenge to exterminate African-Americans? That is a very good possibility. If a leader from the KKK could gain any amount of power and then try to gain support from other racist groups throughout the nation the ball would start rolling and all anyone would need to do is first gain a role in politics and then implement the anti-African-American ethic and then proceed to watch the extermination of blacks all over the United States.

Another group that is targeted in America is the homosexuals. So many people are anti-homosexual and many people are within the church. The big issue is that of same sex marriage. With so many people speaking out about gays within the church, the ELCA came out with a statement saying that homosexuals should not be treated any differently than anyone else in the church. The statement was written in 1994 but was never officially adopted by the ELCA. We need to not allow one group of people to be

discriminated against because of their differences. Just because the ELCA did not adopt the social statement does not mean that the ELCA is against homosexuals. It means that not enough people thought it to be important to formally view the document as a social statement. I think it means a lot to the homosexual community to know that the ELCA did write a statement trying to be adapted saying that gay members are accepted just like straight members of the congregation.

There are still yet other groups that are targets for a possible future genocide as well. To shortly list off a couple more potential future targets. Anyone with Arabic decent is a future target solely based on the events that occurred on September 11, 2001. That event will single handedly be the biggest American historical event of my generation. With that said people of Arabic decent will carry a burden on their shoulders because they will be linked to the planes crashing through the World Trade Centers. So they are another group of people that could be a future target for genocide in America, Arabic-Americans. My point here is that America basically has issues with many people and the fact that not one group really stands out. We, as Americans, can turn on a television set and see the same type of news everyday. This oppressed group had this done to them today. People will always be targeted in America because that is the nature of America. I feel that if you want to be safe in America you must be or act like the oppressor and not let the oppressed forget they are in a submissive role in society.

The last group in which could be a future target eliminated are illegal immigrants. The debate whether to put a fence up around United States borders has been a somewhat recent debate. Many people think that illegal immigrants are breaking laws and taking jobs away from U.S. born unemployed citizens. This is an ongoing issue that will not be

dropped. What to do with illegal immigrants is the question. I do not say that America would kill the illegal immigrants. What would happen to the illegal immigrants is unknown, but I do not think that death would be the immediate outcome.

There are many groups that could be targeted in the United States, but how can we say that anyone could gain the power to form a genocide spotlighting one of the groups mentioned above. There is racism in America, there is bigotry, and many Americans dread the thought of another illegal immigrant coming to America. But, how can Rubenstein argue that America will choose one of these groups or any other group for that matter and attempt to exterminate them. America is the land of the free. This is important because I feel that if America is the land of the free, then why should any group of people be the target for future genocide? People have the right to do and say what they want. They have the right to act the way they want. Is it fair for one group of people to target another group of people based on religion, race, sex, sexuality, or any other reason and try to systematically exterminate them because they do not agree with someone's morals/ethics. People have every right to think what they want to think, and say what they want to say.

I do not think one group could gain the power needed to create genocide in America. This again is where I disagree with Rubenstein. The idea of a possible genocide in America I agree with. On the other hand, I disagree with Rubenstein because I do not think that genocide will happen in America. It is too hard to fathom. Which group would be killed? Who would do the killing? With that said that is another reason to dispute the idea of genocide in America. I do not believe that any group could gain enough power to take over the country. We as a country need to stop genocide before it

starts, even though I believe that it will not start in America. I am not trying to say that people will stop being oppressed by groups. There will always be groups oppressing, blacks, homosexuals, illegal immigrants, women, and people of different religious backgrounds than Christians (mainly Jews and Arabs).

Then we need to simply look at stopping the possible genocide of Jews and Christians from happening again. That is how theology has truly changed in America. Genocide could happen in America, and any group can be targeted for that genocide to occur. I have outlined three groups that I believe to be targets because of how America has treated them in the recent past. I do believe that no genocide will have to do with Jews and Christians. I know there have been talks to better the relations between Jews and Christians because as stated earlier some Jews blame Christians and many Christians feel as though Jews are chastising them. Jews and Christians are forming committees to start religious dialogue to begin to understand one another. Jews and Christians are starting to come out with statements regarding their current relationship. The Jewish and Christian relationship has never been perfect. But the Holocaust made Jews and Christians unite because both religions were faced with a problem. A social statement from the ELCA is attempting to draw the relations between Jews and Christians closer by disregarding Martin Luther's writings in the social statement, *Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community*. Part of the statement says,

In the long history of Christianity there exists no more tragic development than the treatment accorded the Jewish people on the part of Christian believers. Very few Christian communities of faith were able to escape the contagion of anti-Judaism and its modern successor, anti-Semitism. Lutherans belonging to the Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America feel a special burden in this

regard because of certain elements in the legacy of the reformer Martin Luther and the catastrophes, including the Holocaust of the twentieth century, suffered by Jews in places where the Lutheran churches were strongly represented... Grieving the complicity of our own tradition within this history of hatred, moreover, we express our urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people. We recognize in anti-Semitism a contradiction and an affront to the Gospel, a violation of our hope and calling, and we pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry, both within our own circles and in the society around us. Finally, we pray for the continued blessing of the Blessed One upon the increasing cooperation and understanding between Lutheran Christians and the Jewish community.⁴⁰

That is just the tip of the iceberg. Christians and Jews are now starting to realize that in order for there to be religious harmony people need to be in conversation with one another. That is the basic issue for all groups of people. People can and will get along. Jews and Christians will never fully agree on every religious principle because then their separate religions would have to change. But if Jews and Christians can somehow see and respect one another's differing opinions, then there will be no genocide between Jews and Christians. I believe that Jews and Christians are beginning what seems to be a relationship that does not fully agree on every topic but has the ability to understand differences.

The ELCA states in their writing, "Talking Points," "The growing reconciliation between Christians and Jews in our time may thus become an example of the way in which we might live together with people of other commitments and experiences"⁴¹ We must live together and be able to communicate with one another and then we will begin to grow to understand the differences between each other and be able to see past them.

⁴⁰ Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community: Jewish-Christian Relations.

⁴¹ Talking Points, <<http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/interreligious/jewish/talkingpoints/tp8.html>>

We are all children of God, and I believe that that is the first step to take in order to grow together under God.

Like I stated earlier, Jews and Christians should not worry about a genocide involving each other again because they are in talks with one another to try to understand.

The book, *Irreconcilable Differences*, states,

The differences dividing Jews and Christians are “humanly irreconcilable” not because we are incapable of careful listening, respectable dialogue, and discerning theological judgments. Rather, our communities cannot be “reconciled” in the sense that we enjoy distinct and different ongoing relationships with the One who is above every other name. What we can do, in dialogue, is to open windows into each other’s worlds, illuminating the rich, complex, and multifaceted character of religious traditions as distinctive ways of life that cannot be reduced solely to truth claims to be judged objectively “right” or “wrong.”⁴²

What I am trying to get at here is that even though Jews and Christians will never fully agree because of the contrast of religions, both groups are trying to understand the other group better. I think this can work with other people as well. If people will try to open their eyes to unneeded prejudices and poor judgments then I think America can avoid a future genocide.

If Jews and Christians can avoid genocide in America I think the idea of genocide in America to fail. I think it is nearly impossible to pinpoint the country in which the next large genocide will happen. Every country has oppression. Every country will have internal battles but it is so hard to deem which one will allow power to turn into an ethic like the Nazi ethic. The question should not be who will be the prisoners of the next genocide? The question should not be who will be committing the genocide? The question should not be where will the next large genocide take place? The question

⁴² *Irreconcilable Differences*, 181-182.

should be why does there have to be another genocide? I think that if the world can consciously try to form groups to talk about opposing issues then we can keep all relations in touch with our differences. Then we do not have to worry about genocide, we only have to worry about people predicting such a negative aspect on a culture that has an ability to have genocide but is willing to do something to stop it. Rubenstein predicts that genocide will hit America, but I boldly say that Rubenstein is wrong. America will do everything in its power to not allow that to happen.

The Holocaust made America change their theology. Americans now question how they will remember the Holocaust from generation to generation. The Holocaust will forever be remembered, but the ways in which Americans remember the Holocaust may change, but we must know that what happened in Europe, the genocide, is possibly the worst thing to happen in world history. Carol Rittner and John Roth authored the book, *From the Unthinkable to the Unavoidable*, it says,

Whatever the traditional ideas and acquired values that have existed, whatever the philosophical systems and social theories that human minds have devised, whatever religions have been believed or gods have been worshiped, they were either inadequate to prevent Auschwitz or, worse, they helped pave the way to that place.⁴³

That is a quote to defend the second part of my conclusion. America faces the possibility of genocide. We face genocide by our politics, our religion, or prejudices, and our own ethics and morals. In order to stop genocide from happening in America we need to actively fight to stop oppressing our own country. If we, as Americans, can band together to stop fighting ourselves, we can band together to stop genocide from occurring as well. Just as the nineteenth century was the century of the movement to abolish slavery, let us

⁴³ Carol Rittner, and John Roth, eds., *From the Unthinkable to the Unavoidable* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 199.

make the twenty-first the century when we abolish genocide. Genocide, like slavery, is caused by human will. Human will, including our will, can end it. To put it simply, it is in your hands America. What will happen in the future is decided by you.

Conclusion:

So to conclude the whole paper, I disagree with Rubenstein that America will be the next place for genocide to occur. However, I think we need to break down what Rubenstein is attempting to predict. Rubenstein argues that the next large genocide will happen in America. What I got from researching my paper, I break his argument down into two parts. Could America be home to genocide? The other is, will America be the home of the next genocide? By tackling one question at a time I can restate my thesis.

Could America be home to genocide? I fully agree with Rubenstein that America could be the place for genocide of the future. I think that his argument is very logical and I think it would be difficult for anyone to prove that the mere possibility of genocide could not happen. Genocide could happen anywhere. It is impossible to pinpoint the spot of the next genocide because we as humans are not smart enough to know the future. So, Rubenstein is fair to say that he thinks genocide could happen in America. America has issues that could spurn into genocide but that happens to be when I tend to disagree with Rubenstein, because I feel as though America is not in the right circumstances to have genocide sweep the nation

Will America be the home of the next genocide? The short and sweet answer is no. The reason I think that America will not be the home of the next genocide is because I do not think that any group could gain enough power and backing to start genocide.

America is a very strong and powerful country, but I do not think that America would allow a Hitler type figure to gain control of this bureaucratic nation. That is not the only issue. Which group would be targeted? Is there a clear cut group in America that would for sure be the targeted group for genocide? There are way too many oppressed people in America. I think it would be very hard to target a group that America would jump on the bandwagon to exterminate. America would not let genocide run rampant through the self-proclaimed super power country that it is. Not only that, I believe that America prides itself on helping other countries fight oppression when they are in trouble. There is yet another issue as well. What kind of a state must a country be in so that genocide could happen?

This is where a new idea regarding the idea of the possibility of genocide comes into play. I am only giving my theory on what I think is important for a country to surrender genocide of mass killing. I think the backbone of the idea in a country must be the idea of chaos. There must be civil upheaval. A country needs to be in udder chaos so that some group can take power. Then the question turns to how do you take the power or when? First the idea of chaos must run rampant throughout a country, and then I believe that there needs to be a call for change of power in the government. If there is a call for change in the government of a giving country in a state of chaos, anything the newly elected leader and his political party do are going to be viewed as different. And, many times people will allow time to see how effective the new government is. With chaos and a new government that wants to systematically remove certain citizens is a much better fit than a country like America. America is not in a state of chaos. America holds elections every four years and that system I do not see changing in the near future.

Therefore I have to cross America off the list of next potential countries for genocide. I also think that a country in war times is more likely to face the possibility of genocide. I feel that a country that is heat of battle is more likely to turn on its own countrymen and start killing them if it were the idea of the government in charge. I think Rwanda is my best example for the scenarios above. Rwanda did have a genocide in which people from their own country killed thousands upon thousands of people in their own country. Then take a look at Bosnia, there is another country in which a recent genocide occurred. And coincidentally, a couple of the things I was suggesting that can lead to genocide was going on in Bosnia.

I also think that we must look at the idea of how does religion tie into the idea of genocide. I do not think that religion is very important when genocide is going on, I believe the aftermath of genocide makes people question their religion. I think people often ask themselves if I believed in God then why or how could this happen to me. Also I think that if a group of people feels as though they are targeted for religious reasons then they question the morals and ethics of their oppressors.

So the important thing to remember is that I do agree with Rubenstein that America could be the next place for genocide. I disagree with Rubenstein in saying that America will be the next place for genocide. Lastly, I argue that America will not be the next place for genocide but I do not predict where the next large genocide will happen because I feel that is a totally different paper.

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