

Conflict in Causality:
The Orthodox Jewish Historian and Academic Scholarship

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*Dedicated to my parents,
for their unwavering support and immense commitment to my education*

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Introduction

The scene of mourning occurs every year on *Tisha B'Av*¹ in Orthodox Jewish synagogues across the globe. The lights are dimmed, and the destruction of the Jewish Temple is retold vividly by reading the biblical book of *Lamentations*. The text speaks of wearing sackcloth, the wailing of pain, and sitting on the ground, and the community mimics these acts of suffering, grieving and repentance through fast-day rituals. Congregants sit on the floor—unshaven, unwashed and hungry—connecting themselves to their ancestors who experienced the travesty of the destruction of the Holy Temple thousands of years before.² As they mourn over this tragic historical event, they signify the cause: God orchestrated this destruction in retaliation for their sins. From *Lamentations* they cry out, “for the Lord hath afflicted her [Jerusalem] for the multitude of her transgressions” and “wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.”³ Deeply embedded in this day of mourning—perhaps the most significant date on the calendar for Orthodox Jews—is a firm understanding that God is a historical agent of change.

The conception of God as a historical agent—also described as a force of causality—has been excluded from accepted historical writing in the West since the Renaissance, when the belief in humanism took hold. Whereas medieval historians desired to relate events to Divine Providence, Renaissance historians replaced the

¹ 9th of the Hebrew month *Av* - Jewish Holy Day set aside to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, it marks the beginning of the Jewish diaspora

² Elsie R Stern, *From Rebuke to Consolation: Exegesis and Theology in the Liturgical Anthology of the Ninth of Av Season*. (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2004), 17, Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*. (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 283.

³ Lamentations 1:5, Lamentations 1:12

control of the Divine with human action. Renaissance historians challenged traditional religious beliefs, which, when combined with the rationalism of ancient writing and the new focus on the individual, transformed the human into the ultimate force of causality. With this new resolve—that human beings could determine truth and falsehood for themselves—historians asked new questions about the validity of tradition and evidence, determining it impossible to prove Divine intervention.⁴ Today, while historical composition maintains causality as a central pillar, it remains devoid of God as a historical agent of that causality.⁵

Writing history without God as a historical agent should present an inherent problem for a believing Orthodox Jewish historian, as Orthodox conceptions of causality are concentrated on God. The belief that God controls what happens on Earth is a central part of Orthodox doctrine, prayer and practice. For example, when reciting the *Thirteen Principles of Faith*, a text said at the end of daily prayers and regarded as the fundamental truths of Jewish religion, one proclaims, “I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is the Creator *and Guide* of everything,” confirming the belief that God has influence on this Earth.⁶ Thus, the historian who says that God has agency on Earth during his or her prayer service must then suppress what is believed with “perfect faith” when writing history—hiding it away so that he or she can be accepted into academic institutions. The same historian, who, on *Tisha B’Av*, sits on the floor and mourns about God’s

⁴ D. R. Woolf, *Reading history in early modern England*. Cambridge (England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 354.

⁵ Ronald F. Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1978), 90.

⁶ Jonathan Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*. 1st ed. (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2009), 203.

destruction of the Temple, must then compose a historical account with no reference to God's ability to influence historical events.

This thesis proceeds by attempting to find a way in which Orthodox historians can participate in academia without putting their truth regarding forces of causality aside. In the first chapter, both *Divine Providence*⁷ and the academic conditions of historical composition are defined and explored. What are the faith requirements for *Divine Providence* in the belief system of an Orthodox Jew? What are the evidential requirements of causation for an academic historian? With a fuller understanding of *Divine Providence* and the academic requirements of historical composition, the first chapter concludes by discussing their incompatibility.

Chapter two begins by delineating the compromises Orthodox historians make within current frameworks of relating the Divine to causality. It then explores the Orthodox historian as the "Marginal Man," one who must either adopt a separate set of beliefs regarding causality or remain within Orthodox circles. Chapter three responds to the issues associated with bringing *Divine Providence* into the realm of historical causality. An analysis of these issues reveals that they do not fully justify the continual rejection of an Orthodox historian's conception of God as an agent of change. With that understanding, this thesis seeks to provide grounds for Orthodox historians to include religiously informed intellectual perspectives regarding Divine causality in their historical writing.

⁷ *Divine Providence* is a translation of the Jewish term "*hashgacha pratit*," and thus is italicized throughout. This indicates that it specifically refers to *Divine Providence* in Jewish tradition, rather than other religions' conceptions of how God interacts with this world, which they may also refer to as Divine Providence. For this reason, I limited the scope of this thesis to the Jewish conception of *Divine Providence*, as the way different religions perceive of God's guidance on Earth would have different effects on the composition of history.

Chapter 1: *Divine Providence* in the context of Collingwood's Scientific Principles

The Jewish concept of *Divine Providence*—*Hashgacha Pratit*—is explained in general terms through the *Torah*—the foundational text of Judaism—and the *Talmud*—the central text of elucidated Jewish Law. According to these texts, Jewish faith hinges on the idea that God rules, watches over, and intervenes in the world. The *Torah* repeatedly describes God as guiding and controlling history, such as extracting the Jews from slavery in Ancient Egypt and bringing them to the land of Canaan.⁸ The *Talmud* explains that God intervenes in the life of the individual through means of reward and punishment and it goes as far as to proclaim that “man does not stub his toe unless it has been decreed so in Heaven.”⁹ These examples are a small representation of the fact that the concept of *Divine Providence* frames Jewish religious life. In fact, the name of the Ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus—who postulated that the gods do not intervene in the world—serves as the basis for the term “*apikores*,” used in the *Talmud* and other rabbinical texts for one who denies the very essence of faith in God.¹⁰

Although the concept of *Divine Providence*—that God guides the world—is critical to Jewish faith, the *Torah* and *Talmud* leave it in generally ambiguous terms. With the recognition that *Divine Providence* is a major foundation of Jewish thought, Jewish philosophic literature has examined it in more detail, exploring its

⁸ Numbers 13:3, Deuteronomy 31:2

⁹ B. Hullin 7b

¹⁰ Haim Navon, "Introduction to The Guide of the Perplexed: Divine Providence." The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash. Accessed January 18, 2015.

manifestations and defining its limitations. Though the literature on *Divine Providence* is plentiful, the philosophical explanations of Nahmanides and Maimonides, two medieval Jewish philosophers, are the central pillars for Orthodox conceptions of *Divine Providence*.¹¹

Nahmanides, Rabbi Moses ben Nahman Girondi, was a leading Spanish Jewish scholar in the early 13th century. In his works regarding *Divine Providence*, he explains that all events in this world are the result of the direct will of God, thus the outwardly natural order of the world is an artifice. While God rarely performs what we would consider to be miracles, nature in it of itself is a miracle, continually directed by God. The kind of Providence that appears as miraculous to the human eye occurs only sparingly, in extraordinary circumstances of individual good or evil, at certain times and regarding specific people. When there are obvious breaches in nature, like miracles, this is a compromise in the natural order of the universe produced by God's will, and thus, God does not oft use this kind of Providence.¹² Based on this explanation, Nahmanides writes in his essay, *Treatise on the Virtue of Torah*, that of the three key foundations of Judaism, one of them is this belief in *Divine Providence*. He writes:

For one who denies and says that God does not know the individual lowly creatures and their doings, denies the entire *Torah*. Similarly, one who denies Divine Providence, saying that God does not govern man, [and that God does not care if] man does good or evil, if they experience profit and success or pain and mishap – for all is chance to them – such an individual is

¹¹ Aryeh Leibowitz, *Hashgachah Pratis: An Exploration of Divine Providence and Free Will*, (Detroit, Michigan: Targum Press, 2009), 33.

¹² Nachmanides, Moses. *Commentary on the Torah*, Vol. 5. Translated by Charles Ber Chavel, (New York: Shilo Pub. House, 1976), 133.

undesirable by God. Moreover, such a person has no portion in the afterlife.¹³

Nahmanides does not only state that belief in *Divine Providence* is a major pillar of Judaism, he also explains that one who fails to have such a belief loses his share in the *World to Come*, the ultimate destination of mankind, according to Jewish eschatology.

In addition to Nahmanides' explanation, Maimonides' explanation of *Divine Providence* underpins much of Orthodox thought. These philosophers are quite different, as Nahmanides employs a mystical school of thought, and Maimonides, a rationalist school of thought. While they certainly differ in their approaches, they both conclude that in Judaism, belief in *Divine Providence* is crucial. Maimonides, Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon, was a Spanish scholar, and one of the most prolific and significant Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages.¹⁴ His position regarding *Divine Providence* is often referred to as the traditional view, as it is the most popular approach presented by Jewish thinkers throughout Jewish literature.¹⁵ In his major philosophical work, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, he discusses God's Providence over the world. According to Maimonides, in the Earthly realm in which we exist, only human beings are governed with individual *Divine Providence*, while all other creations, such as plants and animals, are not.¹⁶ This means that God only extends

¹³ Moses Nachmanides, *Torat HaShem Temima*. Translated by Yehudah Dvir, (Jerusalem, Israel: Hotzaat Machon Megillat Sefer, 1985), 8.

¹⁴ Benzion Dinur, "Moses Ben Maimon." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 3rd Edition ed. Vol. 11. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 754.

¹⁵ Leibowitz, 34

¹⁶ Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Translated by M. Friedlander, (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1936), 283-285.

God's *Providence* to human beings, while *Providence* does not influence all other creatures on an individual level. Maimonides tells us that when God wants to intervene in this way, God influences the divine realm, which starts a chain reaction that eventually leads to an individual human's action on Earth.¹⁷

According to Maimonides, the distinction between humans and all other creatures is not arbitrary; rather it reflects the principle of *Divine Providence*. He explains that individual *Divine Providence* is extended only to humans because the knowledge that specifically humans gain is Divine Intellect. As a result of that connection, God can bring down his *Providence* to humans. Through the means of this Divine intellectual influence, God then intervenes in humans' consciousness— influencing behavior, decisions and actions. Maimonides explains how he arrives at this view:

Divine Providence is connected with Divine intellectual influence, and the same beings, which are benefited by the latter so as to become intellectual, and to comprehend things comprehensible to rational beings, are also under the control of Divine Providence, which examines all their deeds in order to reward or punish them. It may be by mere chance that a ship goes down with all its contents...or the roof of a house falls upon those within. However, it is not due to chance, according to our view, that in the one instance the men went into the ship, or remained in the house in the other instance: it is due to the will of God, and is in accordance with the justice of His judgments.¹⁸

Maimonides explains that *Divine Providence* depends on humans' attachment to the Divine Intellect, the One who has a perfect intellect with a supreme perfection— God. The way that this influences man's consciousness is solely dependent on how

¹⁷ Moses Maimonides, *Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah: The Laws Foundations of the Torah*. Translated by Eliyahu Touger. New York: Moznaim Publishers, 1998, 2:7.

¹⁸ "The Guide for the Perplexed," 287.

attached one is to that Divine Intellect. Steven Nadler, professor of Jewish Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, clarifies Maimonides' view by explaining, "individual Providence is not an all or nothing affair, but proportionate to the degree to which a person is virtuous—that is, proportionate to the degree to which he has...perfected his intellect." When any individual has come closer to attaining parts of this Divine Intellect, they receive a higher proportion of *Divine Providence* in their human consciousness. According to Maimonides, this is Divine justice, and the way that Earth is impacted by the influence of *Divine Providence*.¹⁹

With these conceptions of *Divine Providence*, God is the ultimate agent of historical change for a believing Orthodox Jew. Accordingly, when composing a historical account within this framework, an Orthodox historian ought to acknowledge the intervention of God. One can look at *Me'or Enayim*, the magnum opus of Azariah de Rossi, an Orthodox Renaissance historian, as an abstract example of what including *Divine Providence* in history could look like. In his historical account of the Parthian Empire, he writes of King Izates' ascendance to the throne in the early first century. During his youth, Izates' father sent him to the court of King Abinergaos I in Charax Spansinu, and when his father died, he wished to return to take the throne. His mother, Queen Helena, knew that the citizens would oppose this "foreign" son ascending to the throne, and she warned him that if he returns, his

¹⁹ Steven Nadler, and Eric Watkins. "The Order of Nature and Moral Luck." in *The Divine Order, the Human Order, and the Order of Nature*, (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2013), 33.

life would be in danger. He returned despite her warnings and managed to safely become the king.²⁰

When researching King Izates, and other historical accounts, de Rossi methodically considers tens of sources, holding them all up to source criticism and attempting to verify their truth. Yet, here, instead of attributing a human-centered explanation as to why Izates was not killed, de Rossi attributes the causality to Divine intervention. He writes, “He [God] saved Izates and his children and all that he had from several perils and many troubles.”²¹ Divine intervention moves him to return, according to de Rossi, not rational decision making. De Rossi continues to attribute divine agency to this historical account, as he writes later that, “thanks to divine assistance, [Izates] was loved and blessed in the eyes of the foreigners and natives alike.”²² While this love could have been because of human motivation—perhaps he was a kind ruler, or Queen Helena had been wrong about how the people would perceive him—de Rossi instead relies on divine causality to explain it.

As de Rossi lived during the Renaissance, and historical writing has since evolved in many ways, de Rossi’s account only provides a raw conception of the myriad of ways Divine causality could potentially be written into history by an Orthodox historian. While one who does not believe in a God may dismiss Jewish Orthodox philosophical understandings of *Divine Providence*, the truth of these

²⁰ Azariah de Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*. Translated by Joanna Weinberg. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 644-647.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 645

²² *Ibid.*, 646

perspectives is not so critical as how one who does believe them can compose history within the framework of academia.

In order to understand this framework, one can look to the philosopher of history, R.G Collingwood, whose works provide a history of historical writing and a delineation of its scientific elements. To gain a grasp on the principles of historical composition, Collingwood is key, as he both traces the roots of historical writing and explains its requirements. These elements of his work make him instrumental in determining how *Divine Providence* differs from academic historical scholarship.

In *The Idea of History*, Collingwood explains that the chronicles of the Middle Ages reflected the belief that God was the only causal agent in history. Historians of this age had no need to relate events together, as God, not human action, ordered events.²³ The chronicle form served this belief well, as the listings created a perception that these were separate occurrences controlled by nothing but *Divine Providence*. The chroniclers recorded events based on tradition, and the evidence they used was predominantly oral testimony and eyewitness accounts. Throughout the sixteenth century, historians began to diverge from these medieval methods of historical writing.

By the end of the sixteenth century, Renaissance historians recorded events as centered around human action, thus allowing humans to be considered historical agents. While previous historical texts involved descriptions of human actions, now humans were recorded as the ultimate forces of causality.²⁴ With the focus on

²³ R. G Collingwood, *The idea of history*, (New York: A Galaxy Book, 1956), 51-62.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

humans, history became a medium through which one could learn lessons from the past, as the past was no longer solely in control of the Divine hand.²⁵ Scholarship became very important—with a new interest in the accuracy of facts, historians developed a scientific and systematic method of criticism and analysis for sources and evidence. As these changes took hold, historians broke away from the chronicle and replaced it with a human-centered historical narrative. While historical writing has certainly evolved since this drastic reorientation, the ultimate forces of causality in academia remain restricted to the physical world, as was established during this time period.²⁶

In his other works, Collingwood explains the scientific elements of history. He writes that from the time of Aristotle until the nineteenth century, science and history were seen as contradictory. At the end of the nineteenth century, though, this began to change—history became more valued as a science, although the dichotomy between the two forms of knowledge remained.²⁷ Collingwood argues that the distinction between the two is a misconception, and concludes:

History, then, is a science, but a science of a special kind. It is a science whose business is to study events not accessible to our observation, and to study these events inferentially, arguing to them from something else which is accessible to our observation, and which the historian calls “evidence” for the events in which he is interested²⁸

²⁵ J. R. Hale, *The evolution of British historiography; from Bacon to Namier*, (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1964), 10.

²⁶ E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, 2nd Edition, (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), 80-83.

²⁷ W. J. Van Der Dussen, *History as a Science: The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood*. Hague: Nijhoff, 1981, 36.

²⁸ R.G Collingwood cited in Van Der Dussen, *History as a Science: The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood*, 251-2

Here, Collingwood claims that that the difference between science and history is an illusion, because scientists and historians consult and interpret evidence in their works in very similar ways.

Collingwood explains that no item of historical data is unassailable. Nothing is a given. Rather, history is written through the historian's *interpretation* of evidence, following historical methodology. Having data is not enough. Data must be explained, and explained according to a body of principles that constitutes historical method or technique. Collingwood explains that this method applies universally to all evidence in that it requires historians to make the interpretation of evidence rational.²⁹ He concludes that historians are concerned with how history came to be what it is, and they do this scientifically by giving intelligible and rational explanations to the data that are "accessible to our observation."³⁰ The distinction between science and history is thus a misconception.

Collingwood, in *The Idea of History*, lays out the firm guidelines as to what makes the historical method scientific. He writes that there are four principles:

(a) it...begins by asking questions, whereas the writer of legends begins by knowing something and tells what he knows; (b) that it is humanistic, or asks questions about things done by men at determinate times in the past; (c) that it is rational, or bases the answers to which it gives its questions on grounds, namely appeal to evidence; (d) it exists in order to tell man what man is by telling him what man has done³¹

The first principle defines a work of history as produced through research or inquiry. Collingwood emphasizes that we can only sensibly talk about the past if we

²⁹ Van Der Dussen, 36

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 45

³¹ Collingwood, 18

are in possession of relevant evidence for it. *Divine Providence* is something that is believed, but even with inquiry, we cannot quite fully know how it affects humans. The second principle—focusing on the past actions of human beings—also presents a difficulty, as we can know the actions of human beings, but if these are influenced by the Divine, our questioning of human action in the past lacks value. Moving to the third principle—an appeal to evidence for these actions—*Divine Providence* cannot be explained on rational grounds, nor with evidence to back it up. Finally, Collingwood writes that the purpose of writing history “is to tell man what man is by telling him what man has done.” With a divine agent, the audience cannot learn lessons of the past based on the decisions of their predecessors, which is the hallmark of academic historiography.

Within these scientific principles, Collingwood posits that a force of causality must be part of the natural world and related to human action:

Cause can be recognized by two criteria: the thing described as a cause is always conceived as something in the physical world, and it is always something conceived as capable of being produced or prevented by human agency.³²

Accordingly, causality expresses an idea relative to human conduct, as anything that “causes” is something under human control—both cause and effect are human activities. As it relies on supernatural forces, the historical account written by Azariah de Rossi, and more generally, the conception of *Divine Providence*, opposes this notion of causality.

³²R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 299.

A juxtaposition of the works of Giovanni Villani, a Florentine chronicler in the middle ages, and Leonardo Bruni, a Renaissance historian, provides a clear distinction between relating history to Divine causality and human-centered notions of causality. Villani, writing about the sudden abandonment of Florence by the Guelfs in 1260, explains that the decision was completely senseless, as Florence could withstand an enemy attack with its fortified walls. Since this act was completely irrational, he suggests that God caused the leaders of the Guelfs to completely lose their minds in an act of punishment.³³ Bruni, on the other hand, wrote history within the framework of human causality. He confronts the “undeniable” supernatural cause of this abandonment, and both vindicates and explains the Guelfs’ decision.

the condition of those times is imperfectly understood by those who do condemn them...certain of the more eminent citizens had gone to the other side. The common people could not be counted on...so for the men of distinction to hide within the walls awaiting the enemy was simply to offer themselves up to certain death, to withdraw and preserve oneself for better fate seemed to be a course of action that was at once prudent and bold³⁴

Here, Bruni closely examines the situation in order to determine why, rationally, the Guelf leadership would have made the decision to abandon the city even though it was fortified. He looks at the makeup of the Guelfs: flakey citizens who were not fully determined to protect Florence at any cost. They were unwilling to suffer through a siege, and thus many had already gone to the other side. The leaders could only conclude that many more would abandon their mission. Accordingly, the

³³ Giovanni Villani, and Philip H. Wicksteed. *Villani's Chronicle Being Selections from the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*, (Project Gutenberg, 2010), 7:79.

³⁴ Leonardo Bruni, and James Hankins. *History of the Florentine people*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 171-172

Guelf leaders rationally concluded that they would be abandoned within the city and die, so instead they decided to abandon the city out of their own volition. Thus, the “cause” here is within the physical world, and was produced by human agency. On the other hand, considering God as a historical agent of change, as exemplified by de Rossi and Villani, makes “cause” part of the supernatural world instead of the physical world.

The conception of *Divine Providence* explained by Nahmanides and Maimonides, that provide the framework for Orthodoxy, relate change on Earth to God—a supernatural force—and limit the full capabilities of human agency. In that sense, a believing Orthodox Jew’s conception of causality is antithetical to the scientific principles of history. It seems then, that Orthodox Jews have two options when writing history: either be faithful to academic methods of historical scholarship or be faithful to *Divine Providence*.

Chapter 2: "The Marginal Man"

Much has been written within the Orthodox world regarding the tension between Orthodox Judaism and historical scholarship. This tension arrived full force at the end of the eighteenth century during the *Haskalah*, or Jewish Enlightenment. The *Haskalah* was a movement based on the ideals of rationality inspired by the European Enlightenment, but had a Jewish character. It encouraged Jews to study secular subjects, to learn both Hebrew and European languages, and to enter fields such as agriculture and the arts and sciences. The *Haskalah* went against traditional Judaism and challenged rabbinic authority, therefore many Orthodox Jews fought against it in the firm belief that *Torah*, not secular studies, shaped their understanding of history.³⁵

Jewish historians that were part of the *Haskalah* began to write Jewish history using modern historical methods. These historians' new content, argumentation, reasoning, and form – which, in many ways, had great benefit—created tension with traditional understandings of Jewish history. Specifically using the techniques of Biblical criticism, they found certain historical events to be unfounded with modern methods of history, thus completely denying some sacred traditional beliefs. One of the main bodies that bred these historians was *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the movement dedicated to the study of Judaism by subjecting it to criticism and modern methods of research.³⁶ To traditional Orthodox

³⁵ "Modern Jewish History: The Haskalah." Jewish Virtual Library. Accessed November 26, 2014. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Haskalah.html>.

³⁶ Benzion Dinur, "Wissenschaft Des Judentums." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 2nd Edition ed. Vol. 21. (Detroit: Gale, 2007), 105-114.

Jews, historical study in the spirit of *Wissenschaft de Judentums* involved the sacrilegious criticism of sacred texts and unfounded attacks on rabbinic literature, which caused them to reject this new historical scholarship.³⁷

The works of Nachman Krochmal, a Galician Orthodox historian during the *Haskalah*, provide an example of the difficulties historical scholarship created for traditional beliefs. Israel Zinberg, who writes extensively on the *Haskalah*, explains Krochmal as follows:

Krochmal knew quite well how unfamiliar and backward his readers were in regard to historical questions. Even scholars and savants were certain that the patriarch Jacob had studied in the *yeshivot* of *Shem* and *Eber*...that King David's heroic warrior *Amasa* used to go to the *bet ha-midrash* every day girded with his sword...whoever wished to show that the Psalm beginning "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept" was not composed by King David through the holy spirit, but by a poet of the era of the Babylonian Exile, was a heretic and denier...In a calm, sedate tone...the Galician thinker attempts to analyze the tradition and Scripture in the light of scientific criticism.³⁸

Modern historical research troubled the Orthodox community, as they saw no need to use alien methods to prove or disprove history that they knew to be true. Using the periodization created by modern secular historiography, utilizing non-rabbinic manuscripts and primary sources in the process of historical reconstruction, and adopting the method of historical argument were all deemed unnecessary when the truth of Jewish history was already known. Those against Krochmal and the

³⁷ Jonathan Frankel, "True Knowledge and Wisdom": On Orthodox Historiography." In *Studies in Contemporary Jewry Volume X: Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and the Historians*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 178-180.

³⁸ Israel Zinberg, *The Science of Judaism and Galician Haskalah*. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1977), 75.

historians of the *Haskalah* believed that these methods only served to lead Jews off the path of Judaism.

Orthodox historians have dealt with the issues of privileging academic methodologies of historical scholarship over Orthodox tradition since the *Haskalah*. The question of how to incorporate historical methodology into writing Jewish history remains problematic for those committed to the Jewish tradition. Dr. Moshe Bernstein, the chair in Biblical studies at Yeshiva University describes what he considers to be “intellectual schizophrenia:” Orthodox scholars who live observant lifestyles, yet their research and teachings contradict their Orthodox beliefs. He explains that the trouble with applying historical research methods to Jewish history is the division between sacred texts and non-sacred texts, and “one of the first dilemmas of the Orthodox Jewish scholar is how to minimize that dichotomy in one’s own scholarly endeavor.”³⁹ When it comes to balancing these, an Orthodox Jewish scholar must make a decision: it is important to give credence to science, but one must also make a priority for *Torah*, which secular scholars do not do. There are going to be times when there is going to be a contradiction between the two, when science threatens “inalienable *Torah* beliefs.” According to Bernstein, an Orthodox Jewish scholar must be prepared to give priority to *Torah*, and reject some of the academic conclusions in historical scholarship.⁴⁰

Bernstein’s colleague, Rabbi Shalom Carmy, writes on the same topic, and is even more severe than Bernstein. He calls academics who relegate their beliefs to

³⁹ Moshe Bernstein, “The Orthodox Jewish Scholar and Jewish Scholarship: Duties and Dilemmas.” *Torah U-madda Journal*, 3:14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35

the periphery of study “intellectual marranos,” alluding to forced Jewish converts in the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century, as these historians conform themselves to the academic world. He explains that academics are too pre-occupied with “the approval of men,” valuing the methods of historical scholarship over beliefs that are critical to Orthodoxy. He describes seeing scholars who do not want to speak heresy, but also do not want to “out” themselves in the company of secular scholars, as “a glittering sophistication proclaims the academic clique superior to the stuffy traditionalists for whom heresy is sin and misfortune rather than amusement or professional busywork.”⁴¹ According to Carmy, Orthodox academics are far too eager to leave behind Orthodox principles, simply because they feel that the only way to fit in is to reject their traditional beliefs in their academic work.

Bernstein and Carmy’s ability to give these resolutions for ameliorating the tension between Orthodox Judaism and historical scholarship are perhaps reflective of their institution. Although an institution for higher learning, Yeshiva University is also Orthodox, thus scholars can reject parts of historical scholarship in favor of religious belief.

The issues explicated by Bernstein and Carmy relate to Biblical history and general Jewish history, yet, through the lens of causality, this struggle expands to the composition of any type of history. Neither of them specifically mention the issue of ignoring *Divine Providence* in historical writing, but as causation is a key component of historical methodology, the “intellectual schizophrenia” described also applies to

⁴¹ Shalom Carmy, “To Get the Better of Words: An Apology for Yir’at Shamayim in Academic Jewish Scholarship.” *Torah U-madda Journal* 2 (1990): 17.

writing history devoid of God as a historical agent of change. As outlined above, the Orthodox conception of *Divine Providence*—supernatural causation—opposes the academic conception of causation—limited to the physical world—in academic historical writing. Causal relationships are essential to establishing historical explanations, as without it, historians simply have a collection of unrelated facts. The historian’s goal of explaining the past means that causation is implicitly part of their work. Historical arguments revolve around the question of causes, thus, historians cannot relegate the philosophical problem of causation to a place outside of historical writing.⁴² Causality cannot be ignored when writing history, presenting a real issue for an Orthodox Jew who cannot fully buy into the academic principle of causality. The options are to either be faithful to academic notions of causality, compromising their religious beliefs, or remain within the confines of Orthodoxy.

The latter option—remaining within Orthodoxy—is exemplified by historian Zelig Gleicher, who wrote *We The People: Reflections on American History and Jewish Thought*, an account of American history. At various moments throughout his work, he points out that certain aspects of American history are so fortuitous, that the only way to explain them is through God’s hand. For example, he describes the success of the Louisiana purchase as “God’s hand in Thomas Jefferson’s greatest achievement,” because there were so many miraculous factors: Jefferson, as strict constructionist, did something not written in the constitution, Napoleon’s army succeeded in Santo Domingo but then was decimated by Yellow fever, and according to France’s treaty,

⁴² Carr, 80-83.

the Louisiana territory had to first be offered back to Spain, but it was not.⁴³ The combination of these factors, according to Gleicher, is so miraculous that “even the secular world might call it an act of God.”⁴⁴

Gleicher’s historical writing certainly falls outside of the academic principle of causality, as it deals ultimately with the actions of God, not of the physical world. Recalling Azariah de Rossi’s account of King Izates, de Rossi falls into a similar trap, as he tries to prove Divine causality through Izates’ almost miraculous ability to ascend the throne in such life-threatening circumstances. The issue with this common type of Orthodox historical writing, where the miraculous proves *Divine Providence*, is that it is not the essence of *Divine Providence* for Orthodox Jews. Nahmanides explains that God rarely performs what we would consider to be miracles, as nature itself is a miracle, continually directed by God, while Maimonides explains that God intervenes in human’s consciousness through the means of Divine intellectual influence. Both of these explanations show that *Divine Providence* is not seeing something miraculous and attributing it to God, but an understanding that the every day—whether it be nature, human consciousness or both—is directed by God. The way that these “Divine Intervention” historical works are written, often with the intention to inspire a belief in God, neither fit into the academic principle of causality nor the Orthodox principle of divine intervention. Thus, under current conditions in the Orthodox world, historians are compromising both academic

⁴³ Zelig Gleicher, *We the People: Reflections on American History and Jewish Thought*. Southfield, MI: Targum, 2003, 54

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 56

historical scholarship and historical scholarship reflective of their belief in *Divine Providence*.

Within academia, there is a model in which to discuss the divine influence on history: that causation comes from a human's belief in God. Attributing a person's acts to religious belief falls within the academic confines of causality, as the agent of change is not God, but rather a human acting on their belief in God. An example of this model, which an Orthodox historian could potentially follow, is the work of historian Abigail Lewis, whose research focuses on the interracial activity of the Young Women's Christian Association in the postwar era. She writes that, inspired by their Christian faith, the leaders of the Y movement decided to create an Interracial Charter. Lewis explains that Mary Shotwell Ingraham, the President of the National Board of the Y, appealed to participants' religious beliefs in order to pass this Charter:

as a Christian organization, the Y often linked observance of religious tenets to the taking of particular positions on a variety of issues...thus, in the postwar era, submission to God was viewed under the rubric of the Y's interpretations of Christian teachings as synonymous with the battle for civil rights...A belief that personal faith was the foundation for one's commitment to progressive racial interaction dictated Y policy for the next two decades.⁴⁵

While in this historical account, God is "in the picture," Lewis stays within the realm of the academic principles of causality, as the "cause" here is produced by a human. God is not orchestrating the interracial activities of the Y, rather the women's belief in God, regardless of the validity of that belief. Lewis provides the type of model

⁴⁵ Abigail Lewis, "'The barrier breaking love of God': The multiracial activism of the Young Women's Christian Association, 1940s to 1970s" (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey - New Brunswick, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2008), 93-94.

Orthodox historians may find appealing, as the influence of God remains in history, even though it is really through human agency.

While this attitude toward history seems like a solution, in truth it is essentially opposed to Orthodoxy, because events are to be understood as the result of God's guidance. While writing that the "cause" is a human's belief in God does not explicitly deny the notion of *Divine Providence*, for an Orthodox historian, it does so implicitly by leaving the ultimate force of causality at the human. While Ingraham and the women of the Y caused the change in interracial activity, for an Orthodox historian, leaving out a recognition that a Divine force guided this moment is only a half-truth for one who abides by the tenets of Orthodoxy. While abiding by the academic principle of causality does not force Orthodox historians to explicitly go against their religious beliefs, by limiting causality to the physical world, they certainly are forced to compromise on them.

In the realm of "causality," and thus the historical field, Orthodox historians become what sociologist Everett Stonequist theorized as "the Marginal Man." The Marginal Man arises in a multi-cultural situation, and has the natural desire to advance toward the culture with the higher status, in this case, academia.⁴⁶ Often, the dominant group silences the beliefs and practices of the minority group, in this case, belief in Divine Providence. The individual in such a situation is likely to find his or herself faced with conflict, because the subordinate group must adjust and conform at its own expense.

⁴⁶ Everett V. Stonequist, *The Marginal Man; a Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961),12.

An Orthodox historian straddles life caught between acceptable scholarship in academia and Orthodoxy. As the theory predicts, the ambitious Orthodox historian generally desires to advance toward the dominant academic culture. For an Orthodox historian, outward assimilation of beliefs occur in order for them to be incorporated into the dominant group. Regardless, currently Orthodox historians do not outwardly, or sometimes even inwardly, consider this “Marginal Man” status to be problematic. This struggle is not often discussed for multiple reasons: the first is the need to stay silent in order to progress in the field—by keeping a low profile, the Orthodox historian may blend in and become the successful academic he or she strives to be. Secondly, the type of marginalization this creates is not an overt discrimination: Jews are not being barred from becoming historians. Rather, there is discrimination of thought—Orthodox Jews are just being barred from using their conceptions of causality within academia. Since this is not anti-Semitism, nor a rule of “no Jews allowed,” this creates a sense of complacency. Finally, Stonequist explains that “from an external point of view, the individual appears to be socially adjusted: he has friends, perhaps a good position and a measure of success. But his mind is not quite in harmony with his social world. He need not be unhappy.”⁴⁷ While Orthodox historians may appear to be successful, and even view themselves as content with a separation of public and private beliefs, they are regardless forced to make compromises that create an immense push and pull as they navigate this dual-identity.

⁴⁷ Stonequist, 201

Within academic institutions, Orthodox Jews may write history, but only through the lens of this dominant group. The other option is to remain within the confines of the world of Jewish Orthodoxy, where fantastical visions of *Divine Providence* pass for historical scholarship, which delegitimizes their work. Orthodox Jewish historians can either choose to be faithful to academic historical scholarship, compromising their religious beliefs about causality, or remain within the confines of Orthodoxy, limiting the audience of their scholarship to the Orthodox community. Any Orthodox historian having the “natural desire...to advance toward the group which occupies the higher status” and be accepted in academic institutions, must conform, at least outwardly, to the academic principles of causality.⁴⁸ Allowing Orthodox historians to consider *Divine Providence* as a force of causality would be beneficial to the historian, as he or she can break free from the struggle of the “marginal man.” While giving the Orthodox historian this freedom would certainly benefit the historian, the next chapter will explore how this would also benefit the discipline of history and academic institutions.

⁴⁸ Stonequist, 12.

Chapter 3: An Embrace of *Divine Providence*

i. For the Sake of the Discipline of History

One of the most common objections to using *Divine Providence* as a force of causality in historical writing is that it cannot be proven through scientific and empirical means.⁴⁹ The incompatibility between Orthodox ideas of *Divine Providence* and Collingwood's scientific principles delineated above gives credence to this objection. However, while empiricism was a critical value for historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the composition of history has since evolved into something outside the realm of strict scientific objectivity.⁵⁰

From the establishment of Harvard in 1636, until roughly about the Civil War, most colleges in North America were founded under the auspices of Christian sects, although their purposes were not explicitly linked to the training of clergy. The central mission of these colleges was promoting the development of Christian civilization through education, with their curricula predicated on the assumption that all subjects, like nature and society, could best be understood through the lens of Christian theology.⁵¹ Between the Civil War and World War I, often identified as the University Transformation Era, higher education was radically reorganized, and directly challenged the embedment of religious theology in American higher education. The Morrill Act in 1862 led to the founding and growth of additional

⁴⁹ Solomon Schimmel. *The Tenacity of Unreasonable Beliefs: Fundamentalism and the Fear of Truth*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Letters to the editor, Chronicle of Higher education: Alexander S. Holub, June 1, 1994, P. B5, Robert Primack, May 25, 1994, pp. B5-B6

⁵⁰ Jon H. Roberts, and Turner, James. *The Sacred and the Secular University*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 43

⁵¹ Frederick Rudolph. *The American College and University, a History*. (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1962), 5-23

public universities, which created greater access to higher education and a focus on technical subjects. Simultaneously, there was an immense influence of European—specifically German—ideals of scholarly inquiry, such as the concept of a research university, the refinement of scientific procedures and using science as an engine for exploring the phenomena of the natural world. With these changes, faculty members became specialized in their scholarship—focusing more on research than just teaching—which played a role in the creation of distinct disciplines within the university.⁵² These drastic changes dismissed the development of Christian civilization as the central mission of the colleges and universities.

Although separate courses in history could be found within some colleges in the seventeenth through early nineteenth century, works of history were only taught as *belles lettres*—works of literature viewed as aesthetic pieces, rather than containing information.⁵³ When not a separate course, history as a subject was often taught as a part of moral philosophy, a course focused on the problem of how to reconcile new ideas of man’s reason and natural law with old ideas of Christian theology and law.⁵⁴ With the creation of disciplines during the University Transformation Era, history soon became its own area of study, based on scientific principles of inquiry. The early academic historians made concerted efforts to participate in the community of scientific discourse by appropriating the techniques and methods associated with natural science. They did this to give their discipline an important role within institutions of higher education that equated scholarship

⁵² Turner and Roberts, x

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 45

⁵⁴ Rudolph, 222-240

with scientific inquiry. Perhaps more importantly, they did this because they viewed the work of physical scientists—scientific knowledge and ongoing rational inquiry—as the most reliable modes of acquiring truth.⁵⁵

Historical writing became identified within the university setting as a discipline imbued with the doctrine that worthwhile knowledge is only obtainable through rational and scientific inquiry. Rejection of untestable modes of causality, such as Divine Providence, became science, and it reigned as the methodological principle in historical composition. Historian Peter Novick, in *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* explains that, "no group was more prone to scientific imagery, and the assumption of the mantle of science, than the historians."⁵⁶ This meant that the focus of historical writing had to be limited to the realm of phenomena susceptible to disciplined empirical inquiry. As such, an objection to the idea of God as an agent of historical change during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century would be fair and legitimate. Supernatural causes are outside the realm of phenomena susceptible to empirical inquiry, so *Divine Providence* would not belong in this era.

Today, however, the strict terms of empiricism have become more amorphous, and historians "would doubtlessly deny that they subscribe to such a strong scientific model."⁵⁷ Novick goes on to explain that this centering value of objectivity has been modified, challenged and changed since it was established in

⁵⁵ Turner & Roberts, 43-48

⁵⁶ Peter Novick. *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. (Cambridge [England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 33.

⁵⁷ Prasenjit Duara. "Why Is History Antitheoretical?" *Modern China* 2, no. 24 (1998), 107.

the Civil War era. First, during the World War I and the interwar years, when the climate of disestablishment and nondiscrimination prevailed, produced “historical relativism,” which was the first to put scientific objectivity on the defensive. From World War II until the mid-century, the historical profession partially incorporated the relativist critique in a new objectivist synthesis, officially moving away from the strict guidelines of empiricism. During the 1960s, the idea of objectivity within the historical field as a whole came under assault, leading to the “present period of confusion, polarization and uncertainty, in which the idea of historical objectivity has become more problematic than ever before.”⁵⁸

Scientific inquiry, especially as it relates to history, is no longer a single idea, but rather a collection of assumptions and attitudes that have evolved throughout the century. Today, there is a recognition that there is no universal scientific vision that unites the human race—a recognition that has bled into the historical field. While older usages remain somewhat intact, there is nowadays, even among historians who are the most firm supporters of objectivity, an understanding that scientific ideals are part of a bygone era.⁵⁹

Since method determines what counts as knowledge, the historical profession is flooded with methodological debates, often occurring between established and emerging voices. Historian Prasenjit Duara explains more about the nature of the amorphous and evolving not-quite-objective methodologies that exist for historians in academia. He explains that new historical practices are

⁵⁸ Novick, 16.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

transforming the dominant theoretical paradigm, and that research within the past few decades has been an open-ended process of reconfiguring the field. The boundaries of the dominant theoretical paradigm of the past are constantly changing, because the discipline of history has no intrinsic methodology:

The flows of events and practices over time appear to be inhospitable to the kinds of social science-derived models to which we have subjected them... The borrowing of theory from elsewhere has also reinforced the alienation of history from theory since this theory has not emerged from problems intrinsic to historical change...the absence within history of a tradition and a space—a home, particularly within the institution—for theory has made it hard to be self-reflexive.⁶⁰

Professional historians created this flux in the discipline by borrowing methods from natural science. The historical profession constructs knowledge by a method that determines what questions, perspectives, and data matter, but clearly the rules are not fixed, rather are constantly developing.

Even with the nebulous boundaries of historical research, H. E. Legrand and Wayne Boese set out to explain the difference between what counts as history, and what does not. They explain that historians must couch their conclusions in cautious language, due to the difficulty of determining truth. The “rules” that are currently established exist as follows: one must base one's interpretation of past events based on as many facts as possible to consider. The historian must be sure of what they understand to be facts, and must not ignore ones that do not fit into predetermined ideas or theories. If there is evidence against a view, it cannot be ignored, and difficulties and inconsistencies must be confronted. They should not fill in unknown gaps with guesswork, but seek to answer complex events with

⁶⁰ Duara, 106.

complex analyses. When the facts leave questions of “why” unanswered, then historians, instead of saying that a potential cause “must,” “had to,” or “did,” they instead use words like “might,” “possibly,” or “perhaps.”⁶¹ This implies that the historian can employ a mode of causality that could be true, by delineating that its truth remains a mystery, *and still remain within the boundaries of academic historical writing.*

The recognition that there is no universal vision that unites the human race has been a beneficial one, opening the historical field to a multiplicity of visions, rather than restricting it to a borrowed method from natural science. Now, only after assessing the issues of subjectivity, selection, determinism and free will, a historian can develop a balanced, common sense approach to determining causation.⁶² Having a Divine guide changes the way the lessons of history are learned, but these lessons would not be null, as *Divine Providence* still maintains individual moral responsibility and decision-making. This brings more complexity to the notions of causality, as the interaction of the supernatural and natural require a different mode of intellectual reflection. Adding this new perspective—*Divine Providence* according to Orthodox conceptions—will only serve to further complete the assessment a historian makes in their balanced approach to denoting causality. The extension of the boundaries of the historical discipline, and more specifically, the previous expansions of the theoretical framework regarding causation, show

⁶¹ H. E. Legrand and Wayne E. Boese, “Chariots of the Gods? And All That: Pseudo-History in the Classroom.” *The History Teacher* 8, no. 3 (1975).

⁶² S. H. Rigby, “Historical Causation: Is One Thing more Important than Another?” *History* 80, (1995) : 232.

that the discipline can benefit from the addition of an Orthodox perspective on causality. The discipline is rich when each historian can take responsibility for creating coherence out of a myriad of possible approaches, with this Orthodox Jewish approach adding to these possibilities. While historians generally hope for a time when the complexities of the discipline are reduced, they also know that in a discipline without an intrinsic methodology, expanding boundaries can be an opportunity for further pursuit of historical truth. For now, the historical field can continue to expand, and thus benefit from the Orthodox historian's perspective on causality through *Divine Providence*.

ii. For the Sake of Liberal Learning

America's tradition of liberal learning in higher education aims at developing skills of critical analysis and inquiry in its students, specifically by allowing students to explore different perspectives, according to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the leading association concerned with undergraduate liberal education.⁶³ In its "Statement on Liberal Learning," it explains further that liberal education aims to free us from the constraints of ignorance, sectarianism, and myopia. Moreover, it prizes curiosity and seeks to expand the boundaries of human knowledge.

By its nature, therefore, liberal learning is global and pluralistic...acknowledging such diversity in all its forms is both an

⁶³"Academic Freedom." Association of American Colleges & Universities. Accessed March 26, 2015. <http://www.aacu.org>.

intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives⁶⁴

Based on the ideals of freedom, diversity and pluralism—with an emphasis on critical thinking and the open exchange of ideas—liberal education serves and breeds our democracy. Much of the movement to implement a truly liberal education was part of the disestablishment of the stifling Protestant hegemony in higher education, as delineated above.⁶⁵

In order to protect liberal education, many argue that religious views, like the centrality of *Divine Providence*, must be excluded, as they allow for ideological dogmatism and preaching, which are antithetical to critical thinking and the open exchanges of ideas. One of these thinkers is American legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin, who explains in *A Matter of Principle* that excluding religious views creates a neutral ground of discourse for intellectual exchange. He argues that introducing religious views is necessarily divisive because arguments regarding the Divine cannot be resolved by rational discussion, as people's religious belief is absolute.⁶⁶ In order to have reasonable public discourse, religious arguments must be excluded as they, by nature, distort and cloud rational academic discussion. The arguments associated with religious belief are stable and unchanging, therefore not part of a liberal learning experience—to preserve academic discourse, academics must only include neutral rationales. As this is the prevailing view, the higher education

⁶⁴ "Liberal Learning." Association of American Colleges & Universities. Accessed March 26, 2015. <http://www.aacu.org>.

⁶⁵ Rockne McCarthy, James W. Skillen, and William Harper. *Disestablishment a Second Time: Genuine Pluralism for American Schools*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian University Press:1982), 75-77

⁶⁶ Ronald Dworkin, *A Matter of Principle*. Vol. 1.(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 191-203

system excludes religious perspectives from academia, and more specifically, the historical profession.

In this vein, historians are accountable to the standards set by the academic community, which in fact are only a facade of neutral grounds on which to conduct discussion. Today, non-religious viewpoints hold the advantage in academia. Yale Law professor, Stephen Carter, goes as far as to posit that the old Protestant hegemony in academia has been replaced by a new kind of hegemony.⁶⁷ While academia is meant to hold by a system that is neutral on matters of belief, in the historical field, the reality is that the liberal neutrality becomes a required set of principles that resemble Secular Humanism in many ways. Secular humanists believe that the world of everyday physical experience is all there is, and that the ultimate agents in this physical experience are human beings.⁶⁸ With causality limited to the physical world—that the universe is a self-contained entity—historians are forced to follow this belief system, not a neutral system. Saying that causality is limited to the physical world is not simply the negative or neutral claim that there is no God, but rather a positive thesis about the nature of reality and humans.⁶⁹ If religion is defined more narrowly as a worldview whose adherents faithfully rely on a Divine being, than the required beliefs of an academic historian would not be considered a religion. But if religion is defined more broadly, as a worldview whose adherents faithfully rely on a set of dogmas, but are non-theistic,

⁶⁷ Carter, Stephen L. *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*. (New York, NY: BasicBooks,1993), 51-55.

⁶⁸ "Humanist Manifesto III." American Humanist Association. January 1, 2003. Accessed April 22, 2015. http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_III.

⁶⁹ McCarthy, Skillen and Harper, 75-77

like Buddhism and Confucianism, then this concept certainly applies to the position historians in academia are required to take. While Dworkin and like-minded thinkers have noble intentions in keeping religious views out of academia, in reality, insisting that causality is limited to the physical world does not create neutrality on matters of belief. In place of the Protestant establishment, we now have a different establishment in academia, not the “global and pluralistic...[education that] embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences,” that the *Statement on Liberal Learning* idealizes.

The proposal of liberal neutrality is closely related to the sentiment that religious perspectives should be kept out of academia because of “separation of Church and State,” a constitutional guarantee in place to ensure that churches with sufficient political power cannot require their particular teachings by American law. In this case of historical scholarship, there is no religious institution involved, rather an Orthodox Jewish historian wishing to relate his or her religious beliefs to their scholarship. While the Orthodox historian's beliefs will likely be shaped by synagogues and other Jewish institutions, these nationally powerless institutions do represent the “Church” that has the potential to wrongly require religious doctrine. Although academics have tried to turn the idea of “separation of church and state” into the “separation of beliefs and state,” it is a mistake to restrict the right of individual believers to participate in academic discourse under these pretenses. America’s constitution does not justify the suppression of religious discourse in the

public sphere, nor does it support the denial of equal rights of free speech for all people, religious or not.⁷⁰ As historian George Marsden explains,

Citizens do not lose their constitutional guarantee to freely exercise religion simply because they are engaged in an activity funded by the government. As is true with free speech, however, certain restrictions on those freedoms are necessary or appropriate at certain jobs. In higher education, those restrictions ought to be determined by standards appropriate to that activity.⁷¹

In the historical field, teaching history to inspire forced worship, or for preaching and overt religious proselytizing would be examples of a historian inappropriately bringing *Divine Providence* into the classroom. If, however, teachers' religious viewpoints are relevant to their academic interpretation, they should have the freedom to share that in their publications and research. Using *Divine Providence* as a mode of causality in historical writing is not mandating particular religious teachings in higher education, and is not a violation of the separation of Church and State. In actuality, allowing professors to relate their religious beliefs to their scholarship gives them the opportunity to fully participate in public discourse.

John Stuart Mill, whose philosophy was integral to the development of Liberalism, when discussing the importance of including minority views, speaks almost prophetically to the state of Liberalism in academia today. He writes that opinions should never be suppressed because:

if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility... the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good, but

⁷⁰ McCarthy, Skillen, and Harper, 96-106

⁷¹ George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 41-43.

cumbering the ground, and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction, from reason or personal experience.⁷²

Mill posits that unpopular, minority opinions must be welcome because they might turn out to be correct, and even if they do not turn out to be correct, the truth is made stronger by encountering opposition and other viewpoints. It seems this critical ideal of Liberalism has been lost since Mill contributed to setting its terms in the early 19th century.

If the historical field is to be a part of a liberal academic institution, then open, civil debate must in principle rule. Respectful, critical, two-way conversation with those of different convictions, no matter how false one thinks the opposing viewpoint, must be foundational.⁷³ A diversity that excludes the viewpoints of an Orthodox historian *ex facto* is a contradiction in terms. Critical thought that requires a belief in the universe as self-contained entity is also a contradiction in terms. The ideals of Liberalism are noble—a critical exchange of ideas that allows for continued striving toward knowledge. Orthodox historians must be encouraged to reveal their perspectives so that they can help move academic institutions closer to this ideal of liberal learning. With the addition of the idea of *Divine Providence*, historians may be pushed to consider causality outside of a self-contained universe, creating an opportunity for critical thought on the necessity of limiting causality to the physical world. The introduction of *Divine Providence* as a potential mode of

⁷² John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (2 ed.). London: John W. Parker & Son, (1859), 72.

⁷³ "On Being a Professor: The Case of Socrates" In *Should God Get Tenure?: Essays on Religion and Higher Education*, edited by David W. Gill, by Bruce Reichenbach. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997), 20.

causality further frees academia from the sectarianism and myopia from which it strives to remain apart, and expands the boundaries of human knowledge to which liberal education aspires.

Conclusion

The onus is both on the Orthodox Jewish historian and on academic institutions to remove the marginal status of Jewish Orthodox thought and to further enhance historiography. Charting this new course of institutional innovation certainly incurs risks for the historian. Criticism of colleagues will be difficult to navigate and overcome, as many will be likely be bound to the current norms of historical composition devoid of divine causality. Orthodox Jewish historians who are determined to journey on this distinctive course must be able to withstand the disparagement that will come, in addition to possible risks to advancement and tenure.⁷⁴ Knowing this, it is all the more important to chart this new course in order to make a potentially invaluable contribution to historical understanding.

How an Orthodox historian can begin to use *Divine Providence* as a mode of causality will require individual intellectual reflection rather than a blanket methodology. One way a historian can conceive of doing so is through the means of an introduction. Those who understand *Divine Providence* through the lens of Naḥmanides, may consider writing a historical work that attributes causality to humans, but with an introduction explaining that they believe God caused these human actions. This way, the historical scholarship is still accessible to the academic world, but the historian is not compromising on his or her beliefs.

⁷⁴ Barry Ames, David C. Barker, Chris W. Bonneau, and Christopher J. Carman. "Hide the Republicans, the Christians, and the Women: A Response to "Politics and Professional Advancement Among College Faculty." *The Forum* (2005) : 3.

Similarly, those who understand *Divine Providence* from the perspective of Maimonides—that it enters through human consciousness—can explain in an introduction that the humans' decisions in the historical account are influenced in some sense by *Divine Providence*. Writing these sorts of introductions are but one suggestion of how to bring Divine causality into academia. The academic study of history through the lens of *Divine Providence*—while maintaining legitimacy—is undoubtedly new territory whose manifestations are potentially bountiful.

The onus is also on academic institutions to move in the direction of acceptance, in order to allow these trailblazing Orthodox historians to survive in the field. As Mill explained, minority opinions must be welcome because they might turn out to be correct, and even if they do not turn out to be correct, the truth is made stronger by having to encounter opposition and other viewpoints. In that vein, the perspective that Orthodox historians who are utilizing their religious beliefs bring to the discipline can serve to strengthen historical understanding. While academics may firmly oppose the entrance of *Divine Providence*, as explained above, the grounds to maintain this firm opposition are weak. Additionally, in light of the acceptance of other methodologies that propose other non-traditional notions of causality, like postmodernism, *Divine Providence* should not be rejected just because it is religiously informed. Some postmodern historians argue that causal explanations are not concerned with the past, but are battles between historians for primacy of interpretation, while others reject causation on the basis that time is an

intellectual construct.⁷⁵ As George Marsden explains, “if postmodernists, who deny scientific objectivism as an illusion are well accepted in the contemporary academy, there is little justification for the same academy to continue to suppress religious perspectives”⁷⁶ Eras of methodology in the historical field come and go, but historical understanding deepens with each new expansion of methodology, thus academia should open its the doors to Orthodox notions of Divine causality in historiography.

In the future, Orthodox Jewish historians will sit in synagogues on the *9th of Av*— the lights will be dimmed, and the destruction of the Jewish Temple will be retold vividly by reading the biblical book of *Lamentations*. The text will speak of wearing sackcloth, the wailing of pain, and sitting on the ground, and the community will mimic these acts of suffering, grieving and repentance through fast-day rituals. Orthodox Jewish historians will sit on the floor—unshaven, unwashed and hungry— connecting them to their ancestors that experienced the travesty of destruction of the *Holy Temple* thousands of years before. As they mourn over this tragic historical event, they will signify the cause: God orchestrated this destruction in retaliation for their sins, and when they go to work the next day, they may not need to confine this firm belief to the private sphere. Hopefully, they will work within an academic system in which they may consider God as a historical agent of change.

⁷⁵ Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History*, (London: Granta Publications, 2000), 140-141.

⁷⁶ George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30.

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[note: these are translations, and thus have contemporary publication dates]

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