

Evil and the Morality of God

by Harold M. Schulweis

DESCRIPTION:

Traditional theodicies, the strategies which seek to reconcile the co-existence of God and evil, fail more on moral than on logical grounds. Those that presuppose an impersonal God substitute metaphysical good for moral good; those that are informed by a personal God deny humanity's competence and right to pass ethical judgment. Both types of what Schulweis calls Subject Theology deprecate the moral understanding of good and evil and leave in their wake a deity devoid of those recognizable moral features found in the biblical and liturgical tradition of monotheism.

After analyzing the idea of perfection which underlies the arguments of traditional theology, Rabbi Schulweis proposes a predicate theology, another way to understand God and the problem of evil. Predicate theology applies an inversionary principle in which the subject-predicate formulation of God and His attributes are reversed. Not the subject but the moral predicates of Elohuth, or Godliness, are the proper concerns of theological study. Elohuth is not lodged in a Thou or an It but in the discoverable predicates of divinity. Predicate Theology frames the question and answer of the problem in such a way that it produces a theodicy which does not trammel the moral sensibilities of post-holocaust man.

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Dr. Harold M. Schulweis was Rabbi of Valley Beth Shalom congregation in Encino, California and taught contemporary Jewish thought at Hebrew Union College and at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. Co-author of Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion, he was also a contributing editor for Moment, The Reconstructionist, and Sh'ma.

ISBN:

9780878201563 (pdf)

9780878205028 (hb)

PRICE:

\$45.00 (pdf)

\$25.00 (hb)

PUBLICATION DATE:

31 December 1984 (pdf)

31 December 1984 (hb)

BINDING:

PDF eBook & Hardback

PAGES:

184

PUBLISHER:

Hebrew Union College
Press

IMPRINT:

Hebrew Union College
Press

SERIES:

Jewish Perspectives

READER INTERESTS:

Jewish Studies

Religious Studies