

# Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature

*Edited by*

Manuel Peontrahal

Joshua Schwartz

Joseph Turner

JOHNSON REED & SONS LTD., LONDON

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# Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature

# Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series

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VOLUME 17

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Marcel Poorthuis  
Joshua Schwartz  
Joseph Turner



B R I L L

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2009



Bar-Ilan University, Israel



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Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, Israel



Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies, Israel

*The editors gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies.*

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in history, religion, art and literature / edited by Marcel Poorthuis, Joshua Schwartz, Joseph Turner.

p. cm. — (Jewish and Christian perspectives series ; v. 17)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-90-04-17150-3 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Judaism--Relations--Christianity—History. 2. Christianity and other religions—Judaism—History. I. Poorthuis, Marcel, 1955- II. Schwartz, Joshua. III. Turner, Joseph.

BM535.I4856 2008

296.3'9609—dc22

2008031295

ISSN 1388-2074  
ISBN 978 90 04 17150 3

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

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## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Judaism and Christianity share much of a heritage. There has been a good deal of interest in this phenomenon lately, examining both the common heritage, as well as the elements unique to each religion. There has, however, been no systematic attempt to present findings relative to both Jewish and Christian tradition to a broad audience of scholars. It is the purpose of the Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series to do just that.

Jewish and Christian Perspectives publishes studies that are relevant to both Christianity and Judaism. The series will include works relating to the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, the Second Temple period, the Judaeo-Christian polemic (from Ancient until Modern times), Rabbinical literature relevant to Christianity, Patristics, Medieval Studies and the Modern period. Special interest will be paid to the interaction between the religions throughout the ages. Historical, exegetical, philosophical and theological studies are welcomed as well as studies focusing on sociological and anthropological issues common to both religions including archaeology.

The series is published in co-operation with the Bar-Ilan University and the Schechter Institute in Israel, and the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the Tilburg University in the Netherlands. It includes monographs and congress volumes in the English language, and is intended for international distribution on a scholarly level.

Detailed information on forthcoming congresses, calls for papers, and the possibility of organizing a JCP conference at your own institution, can be obtained at: [www.biu.ac.il/js/rennert/jcp](http://www.biu.ac.il/js/rennert/jcp)



## INTRODUCTION

Jewish–Christian dialogue has in some sense existed since the inception of Christianity. Recent historical research has shown that much in both Judaism and Christianity, particularly in the Middle Ages, is really but a result of the interaction between them. This, however, is by no means a conclusion accepted by all. From the Jewish side, particularly in Orthodox circles, there is the position maintaining the independence of Judaism from outside influences including Christianity. Traditional Christian theology, on the other hand, held to a supercessionist view in which Judaism was seen merely as a historical preparation for the later revelation of Christianity. Most contemporary scholars do in fact accept the principle of inter-action. Some, hoping to overcome supercessionist theology, emphasized the continuing debt of Christianity to Judaism well into the second century c.e. Recently, the possibility of early Christian influence upon Jewish traditions gained momentum, assuming that even Jewish Bible interpretation originally developed in the context of a conscious polemic with Church Fathers.

Inquiry into the matter of interaction and influence gives rise to the question as to when and how Judaism and Christianity became two distinct religions. Historically speaking, we know that very early on Christians in Palestine constituted a sect within Judaism. Understandably, scholars have been unable to give a precise date as to when and how the ‘parting of the ways’ took place. The split between Judaism and Christianity was pushed ahead further and further until recent works claimed that the ways never parted at all.

It may of course be argued that interactions are of two kinds: conscious and unconscious. Quite often a conscious rejection may go hand in hand with unconscious appropriation and transformation. The present volume takes a bold step forward by assuming that no historical period can be excluded from the interactive process between Judaism and Christianity, conscious or unconscious, as a polemical rejection or as tacit appropriation. Each period must be studied on its own merits to assess the exact nature of the interaction. Perhaps there is no need to determine the point when or where the ‘parting of the ways’ took place, nor is it necessary to assume that ‘the ways never parted’ at all, as the interactions between the two religions change and vary in each period. Even in the long periods during which both religions were not prepared

to accept the possibility that they share aspects of a common heritage, the interactive process is at work both in conscious polemic and unconscious mutual influence.

The significance of there having been an inter-active relationship between Judaism and Christianity throughout the ages has become even more pronounced as the concept of dialogue between religions became popular in the period following World War II. Jewish–Christian dialogue has become in the last half-century an institution of Western civilization. In this spirit, the editors of this volume have sought to bring before the public the following essays considering the complex relationships existing between Judaism and Christianity in a broad spectrum of historical periods and disciplines while making use of a wide variety of methodological orientations.

The volume is divided into six sections. The first is entitled *Jews and Christians in the Roman-Byzantine Period*. This section and the volume opens with an essay by Alon Goshen-Gottstein entitled, ‘Jewish–Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature—Shifting Scholarly and Relational Paradigms: The Case of Two Powers’. It contains a comprehensive and critical analysis of the models of investigation used in the study of Jewish rabbinic and early Christian texts, taking issue with the accepted presupposition that these can best be understood by presuming historical contact and mutual influence. While not denying the historicity of contact and influence, the author expresses his affinity for the ‘parallel spiritual model’, arguing that it is best suited to bringing about an understanding of how rabbinic and early Christian texts serve the purpose of edifying the communities that produced them.

Tamar Kadari’s contribution to this volume is entitled: ‘Rabbinic and Christian Models of Interaction on the Song of Songs’. She suggests that a comparison between the Church Father Origen’s interpretation of the biblical Song of Songs and the rabbinic Song of Songs Rabbah may shed light on aspects of rabbinical exegesis that have heretofore gone unnoticed. Despite the radical difference in literary structure and historical development, particular statements attributed throughout Song of Songs Rabbah to the sage Rabbi Johanan betray a three tiered mode of interpretation very similar to those of Origen’s. As a result, Kadari maintains that the analysis of Origen’s interpretive endeavor may open the way for new considerations of organization, methods and levels of comprehension in other rabbinic works as well.

Gerard P. Luttikhuizen's contribution to this volume is found in his essay: 'Monism and Dualism in Jewish-Mystical and Christian-Gnostic Ascent Texts'. He compares Jewish Hekhalot literature with early Christian Gnostic texts, both of which depict human beings escaping the constraints of their physical existence even before death and ascending to a supernal realm. Through his investigation, Luttikhuizen arrives at the conclusion that while there are many similarities in the mystical descriptions included in each type of text, they noticeably differ with regard to details that reflect their respective biblical and Greek origins.

Gerard Rouwhorst's article, 'A Remarkable Case of Religious Interaction: Water Baptisms in Judaism and Christianity', questions the historical relationship between ancient Jewish ritual immersion and early Christian baptismal rites. Through the chronological tracing of ritual developments and comparison of seemingly parallel phenomena the author arrives at the challenging conclusion that aspects of Jewish tradition in the realm of conversion rituals were influenced by early Christianity (rather than the other way around) and served as a response to the Christian alternative.

In an essay entitled: 'Learning and Practicing—Uses of an Early Jewish Discourse in Matthew (7:24–27) and Rabbinic Literature', Eric Ottenheijm discusses the modes of interaction obtaining between the rabbinic and Christianized Judaism of the first century. He argues that a proper comparison of early rabbinic and Jewish-Christian texts can demonstrate how the two communities shared a common discourse which was then developed in different ways. In this context he compares and contrasts the manner in which the values of 'learning and practice' are exhibited in the gospel of Matthew and the Tractate Avoth., finding that they presume a shared religious discourse , but that each applies to it its own distinct hermeneutic in accordance with its ideal model of community.

In his essay entitled: 'On Trees, Waves, and Cytokinesis: Shifting Paradigms in Early (and Modern) Jewish–Christian Relations', Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra offers a critical survey of the various models used in the delineation of relationships between rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity. Its major contribution, however, is the author's own original formulation of what he calls the 'cytokinesis model', in which the author draws an analogy between the developing relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the ancient period and the biological process by which a single cell becomes two cells. The advantage of this model

is that it acknowledges the split between Judaism and Christianity as a process that occurred over time, without having to determine the definite point at which the two became separate and distinct religions.

Joshua Schwartz discusses the interaction between Judaism and Christianity in a more surprising context. In his study on the ‘Deserts of Palestine’ he shows that the sanctity of the Sinai Desert for both Jews and Christians resulted in a complex web of interaction between the two groups. Both groups indeed began at the same starting point regarding the Sinai. The Jews, however, only grudgingly developed a desert tradition, while the Christians not only developed such a tradition, but established a strong physical presence in this desert area. The negative Jewish reaction, he says, was apparently a reaction to the positive desert developments in the Christian world.

The second section if the book is entitled *Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages*, and opens with a contribution by Sandra Debenedetti Stow. Already in a previous work, Debenedetti Stow has proposed that kabbalistic theories can serve as a new interpretative key in the understanding of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri. Her present study, entitled ‘The Modality of Interaction between Jewish and Christian Thought in the Middle Ages: The Problem of Free Will and Divine Wisdom in Dante Alighieri and Menahem Recanati as a Case Study’, compares the work of Dante with those found in the work of Menahem Recanati, a Jewish Kabbalist active in Rome towards the end of the thirteenth century. An examination of a few common points shows that what appears as a distinctive trait both in Recanati’s thought and in Dante’s cannot be the result of parallel theories developed in total isolation. On the contrary; through her examination of the work of Recanati, Debenedetti Stow illustrates how one can read the developments in Dante’s thought in light of a particular kabbalistic key.

Daniela Mueller’s essay, ‘Die Pariser Verfahren gegen den Talmud von 1240 und 1248 im Kontext von Papsttum und französischem Königstum’ offers a fresh approach to the notorious disputations over the Talmud in Paris, which ended in the burning of many manuscripts. Why were such acts not perpetrated in Spain, where the hostility against the Talmud had also increased? A meticulous analysis of the position of the French royal crown and its attempts at the consolidation of political power sheds new light upon this puzzle. Curiously, this same century witnessed a rise of Christian study of the Talmud.

Syds Wiersma also considers the topic of Christian Jewish disputation in the Middle Ages, but from a different vantage point. His contribution, entitled: ‘The Dynamic of Religious Polemics: The Case of Raymond Martin (Ca. 1220–Ca.1285)’ considers the manner in which the famous disputation between the Dominican friar Paul Christian and Rabbi Moses ben Nahman in 1263 is reported in two study and teaching manuals that were authored by one Raymond Martin, a member of the royal Aragonese committee for the censorship of Jewish literature. The paper demonstrates, through a comparative analysis of the manner in which the disputation is presented in each manual that what starts out as a polemic intended to weaken a religious opponent acquires in the process a dialogical quality through which the dominant position enriches itself by taking into account its opponent’s response.

Lily Glasner’s contribution, ‘The Jewish *Pardes* Metaphor as Reflected in the Magical Garden of a Christian Knight’, focuses on a reading of the final quest in the medieval romance by Chrétien de Troyes, the *Erec et Enide*. During the late Middle Ages, just as their Jewish counterparts did, Christian interpreters of the Holy Text identified multiple layers of meaning in the biblical text. In line with this general theoretical tenet, Glasner attempts to prove how the hidden message of *Erec of Enide* exploits the metaphor of the Jewish *Pardes*. The reading of a Christian romance in light of Jewish tradition raises a number of questions concerning the modalities of interaction between Jewish and Christian thought and tradition in the late Middle Ages, and may prove to be a useful interpretive tool for the study of both literatures and the interactions between peoples and literature.

The third section of the book deals with *The Problems of Modernity*. This section opens with the contribution of Gert van Klinken who discusses Jewish Christian relations on the backdrop of their most tragic episode. In his essay on ‘Calvinist Resistance and Dutch Jewry: The ‘Pillarized’ Background’, van Klinken asks how it is that in the final years of World War II, the Reformed Churches in Holland worked closely with the remains of the Jewish community with its members risking their lives in order to hide Jewish children from the Nazi’s, and yet subsequently tried to prevent the return of responsibility for raising and educating these children to the Jewish community; preferring to leave their upbringing to the Christian families that hid them. The author shows that in order to understand the motivations of the Reformed Church in both instances, it is necessary to take into account the role

assigned to the Jews in traditional Calvinist eschatology and doctrine, and view it on the backdrop of twentieth century events and attitudes.

Staf Hellemans turns his attention to the connection between religious groups and the society that surrounds them in the modern period, focusing on the changes in strategies used by Catholicism. In his essay ‘Religious Insulation as a Mode of Interdependence: Relating Catholicism and Modernity’, Hellemans traces four stages in Catholicism’s changing relationship with modernity. Only the first, he says, is characterized by outright rejection. The others involve deep involvement with modern society in which attempts at ‘insular self-interpretation’ are but part of a web of relations maintained with modernity, some of which are positive.

Attitudes toward Christians and Christianity in Jewish thought in the modern period constitute the topic discussed in Judith Frishman’s ‘Good Enough for the Goyim? Samuel Hirsch and Samuel Holdheim on Christianity’. Hirsch and Holdheim were two of the most important theologians of nineteenth century Jewish reform. Frishman demonstrates that while they both founded their perceptions of Judaism on the universal humanism of such monumental figures as Kant, Hegel, Bauer and Marx, they differed from them by proposing that the essence of religion rather than the essence of the human being is the ultimate source of human ethics. As a result the two developed a concept of the Jewish religion that no longer views Christianity as an imperfect form of Judaism suitable to the gentiles, but rather approaches the non-Jew with a sense of love and belonging aimed at establishing a common messianic society.

Gershon Greenberg asks to what extent parallels that have been noted in the past between rabbinic and patristic concepts of sacred death allude to a common spiritual universe that could inform discussions on martyrdom during the Holocaust. This study focuses on the problem of ‘Sacred Death for Orthodox Jewish Thought during the Holocaust: With a Preliminary Inquiry into Christian Parallels.’ Greenberg concludes that while secondary characteristics such as suffering-love and abnegation of the will do exist for both Jewish and Christian thinkers, the central reality of the atoning passion of Christ precludes substantive identification.

The fourth section of the book is *Ritual and Theology in the Modern, Post-Modern and New Ages*. In his essay, ‘From Monologue to Possible Dialogue: Judaism’s Attitude towards Christianity According to the Philosophy of R. Yéhouda Léon Askénazi (Manitou)’, Yossef Charvit

explores the attitude expressed toward Christianity in the Jewish thought of R. Yéhouda Léon Askénazi, a renowned twentieth century Algerian rabbi who combined Kabbalistic tendencies and a sense for group typologies with a modern historiosophic approach. He applied this method as a means for making sense of the radical changes that the relations between Judaism, Islam and Christianity underwent following the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. Charvit shows that R. Askénazi attributed a redemptive quality to Christianity, provided that it take seriously Judaism's return to history and re-interpret its traditions and beliefs in light of Judaism, as a mother religion returning to its ancient homeland, in a way that parallels its own earlier interpretations of exile Judaism in light of Christian dogma.

Alexander Even-Chen's paper is entitled: 'Faith and the Courage to Be: Heschel and Tillich'. Focusing upon a question of 'greatest concern', Even Chen compares Paul Tillich's Christian existentialism with Abraham Joshua Heschel's Jewish one. He shows that there is a strong common denominator and probably even a mutual influence in the work of these two twentieth century giants, but that there are also significant differences between their religious outlooks. Heschel sees religious language as the means through which the human being can experience the transcendent God as present and thinks religion should be dedicated to God's greatest concern which is the fate of humanity. Tillich understands the notion of God to be symbolic of man's greatest concern without regard to His actual existence.

In Paul Post's contribution, "A Symbolic Bridge Between Faiths": Holy Ground for Liquid Ritual', the question of inter and multi-religiosity is discussed in the context of a dispute on Church architecture. The church in question is the *Tor Tre Teste Jubilee Church in Rome*, designed by the Jewish-American architect Richard Meier. The design of the Church was criticized by many for ignoring traditional modes of Church structure; apparently intended to serve more as 'general sacred place' than a specifically Catholic house of worship. In practice the *Tor Tre Teste* Church has indeed come to be such a place, attracting not only traditional Catholic worshipers but a wide variety of guests and visitors who come to enjoy its unique architecture and the unique aesthetic and cultural experience it offers. The author shows that the unique qualities of this church reflect the fluid character of religiosity and ritual that is prevalent in the post-modern era.

In an essay entitled ‘Kabbalah on the Internet: Transcending Denominational Boundaries in Conflicting Ideologies’, Frank Bosman and Marcel Poorthuis set out to determine how Jewish, fundamentalist Protestant and esoteric/New Age sites depict various images of Kabbalah. They find the political impact on Jewish Christian interaction on the internet to be considerable. Many Jewish sites, while claiming to offer a pure unadulterated Kabbalah, often engage in polemics against other Jewish and Christian perspectives. Fundamentalist tendencies are strongest on American Protestant sites that condemn involvement in Kabbalah together with ‘related occult currents’ that may be associated with such diverse phenomena as Catholicism, New Age religion and hard rock.

Simon Schoon’s essay, “An Indissoluble Bond between the Church and the People of Israel’. Historical Fact or Theological Conviction?” returns to the question of Jewish Christian relations in light of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. Schoon notes that following these events Christian theology has changed its rhetoric in regard to the Jews and Judaism and began to view them as partners in religious endeavor. But he also notes that in the final decades of the twentieth century there has been a noticeable decline in the popularity of this stance. He subsequently asks whether support for Jewish and Christian cooperation will continue in the future, and goes on to suggest an agenda for study and scholarship that may encourage its growth.

In his essay, ‘The Anomaly of Jewish Ethnicity as a Consideration in Contemporary Inter-Religious Dialogue’, Yossi Turner criticizes the prevailing presupposition that there can be any sort of symmetry in discussions comparing Christian and Jewish literature, noting that the religious sources of Judaism serve not only as religious texts but as an expression of Jewish ethnicity as well. After focusing on the tension between the various visions of the Jewish people as a religious and ethnic group in the modern era, he concludes that in order for Jewish Christian dialogue to be fruitful it must take into account the aspect of ethnicity as a factor which historically distinguishes Judaism from Christianity.

The fifth section is entitled *Art*. Artistic creation provides yet another realm for the investigation of interaction between ancient Judaism and early Christianity. In an extremely well researched paper entitled ‘Jewish and Christian Imaging of the ‘House of God’ as an Expression of Religious and Historical Polemics’, Shulamit Laderman and Yair Furstenberg discuss the use of symbols referring to the ‘House of God’ in

fourth century Jewish and Christian works of art. They show that in Jewish art these symbols stress the importance of preserving the memory of the Temple after its destruction and reflect the eschatological hope for the restoration of the Temple in the future, while in the Christian art of the same period they served as a pictorial expression of the Christian victory over both paganism and Judaism.

In a similar vein, Ilia Rodov discusses artistic allusions to kingship and majesty in the design of European synagogues and in Christian allegoric imagery at the end of the Middle Ages and the early Modern Period. The issue at stake in his paper on ‘The King of the King of Kings: Images of Rulership in Late Medieval and Early Modern Christian Art and Synagogue Design’ is the claim of divine majesty attributed to Christ by Christian theology on the one hand, and Judaism’s rejection of that claim while having to acknowledge the sovereignty of contemporary Christian monarchs on the other. Whereas both Christianity and Judaism emphasized kingship as God-given, Ilia Rodov argues that Jewish symbolism of crowns did not emphasize existing power as Christian art did, but rather pointed to a messianic future when God would be King.

In her contribution entitled: ‘The Sun Rays on Top of the Torah Ark. A Dialogue with the Aureole, the Christian Symbol of the Divinity on Top of the Altarpiece’, Bracha Yaniv shows us how inter-religious dialogue is manifest in the architecture of church and synagogue. The earliest depiction of the sun ray motif in Jewish synagogues was in the east European synagogues of the eighteenth century. But these sun rays remind us of the aureole, the Christian symbol of divinity on the top of the altarpiece. Yaniv traces what she believes to be a process of inter-religious dialogue in order to discover its early manifestations and to understand how such a Christian was accepted by halakhic authorities for use in the synagogue. Did this dialogue and interaction result in the sunrays on top of the ark? While the answers are not conclusive, they give new direction to the possibility of dialogue between the two religions in the realm of esthetics.

Mirjam Rajner comments on the subject of the Holy Family in the drawings and paintings of Marc Chagall. In ‘The Iconography of the Holy Family in Chagall’s 1909–1910 Works’, Rajner shows that by the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of Jewish artists had already studied in European art academies, from Rome and Munich to Krakow and St. Petersburg. Increasingly aware of their own Jewish identity, these artists had to focus during their studies on classical and

Christian models of European fine art through the centuries. As a result, when they came to create a different iconography reflecting their Jewish identity, they used such known models but gave them new interpretations.

The final section of the work is devoted to *Literature*. Hillel Weiss's paper, 'Notes on Christians and Christianity in Agnon's Writings', delves into the complex fabric of Agnon's story-telling taking up the question as to how it depicts Christianity. This winner of the Nobel prize in literature demonstrates a fascination for Christianity, though often veiled and subdued. In this case, one can hardly speak of overt polemics nor of conscious adaptation of Christian elements. Still the work of Agnon is replete with interaction between Jewish and Christian elements, especially from the vanished world of Eastern Europe.

Yaffa Wolfman shows us that not all Jewish Christian interaction was direct. In her article on 'Gide and Sartre on Jews and Judaism' she shows that this is certainly the case with these two thinkers. Both felt the need to address 'the Jewish question', since the Jews, in their opinion, were an important component of Western culture, society, and history. But their interaction was less with people and more with a concept. Gide argued that a solution to the Jewish question—a question which he considered deep-rooted and serious—must be found urgently. Sartre believed that a change in the attitude towards the Jews in France would improve the lot of the French people as well.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The papers upon which these essays are based were originally delivered at an international conference entitled 'Isolation, Independence, Syncretism, and Dialogue: Models of Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in the Past and Present'. The conference, which took place between January 24-27, 2007 in Ramat-Gan and Jerusalem, Israel, was the sixth in a series of conferences jointly sponsored by the Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel, the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, Israel, and the Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Tilburg, Utrecht, The Netherlands. The results of all these conferences have been published in a joint series sponsored by the three institutions under the auspices of Brill publishers and entitled *Jewish and Christian Perspectives*.

We should like to express our heartfelt thanks to the Rennert Center and Bar-Ilan University as well as to the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies for offering the opportunity to organize this international conference in Israel. The editors also wish to especially thank series editor Freek van der Steen for his indefatigable efforts in orchestrating all aspects of the editing and production process. We are in particular grateful to Mr. Piper Hollier for his meticulous job concerning the final editing of this volume, and to Mr. Avi Woolf for his help on preparing the indices.

Ramat-Gan–Jerusalem–Utrecht, June 2008

Marcel Poorthuis

Joshua Schwartz

Joseph Turner



## PART ONE

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN THE ROMAN-BYZANTINE PERIOD



# JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS AND RABBINIC LITERATURE—SHIFTING SCHOLARLY AND RELATIONAL PARADIGMS: THE CASE OF TWO POWERS

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*For Gershon Hepner at Seventy*  
ונביא לבב חכמה

## INTRODUCTION

The present discussion seeks to query some of the assumptions that govern much of how Jewish–Christian relations are considered in the context of scholarship of rabbinic and early Christian literature. We find a wealth of references in scholarship to this formative period of Jewish–Christian relations. In fact, for some scholars, Jewish–Christian relations are a major lens through which the rabbinic materials are to be read. I will seek to pose some fundamental questions regarding both the centrality of Jewish–Christian relations as a scholarly enterprise, in particular as it pertains to the understanding of rabbinic materials, and to describe different paradigms of how rabbinic materials have been and can be understood in the context of changing Jewish–Christian relations. I will attempt to suggest there is a correspondence between various scholarly paradigms and corresponding relational paradigms, as these find expression beyond scholarship, in a variety of contexts—the academy, society at large, and conscious theological articulations of Jewish–Christian relations. Thus, adopting a particular scholarly paradigm is never divorced from broader patterns governing Jewish–Christian relations, and changes in these relations constitute an invitation to re-examine some of the assumptions that have governed scholarship for over a century. I thus seek in this article to bring to light our hidden assumptions in working in this field and to explore that which is implicit, and often goes unstated, in scholarship.

### ON THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF ‘JEWISH–CHRISTIAN RELATIONS’

Underlying the present collection of essays, the series in which it is featured, and a budding industry of academic enterprises is the assumption that ‘Jewish–Christian relations’ are important, perhaps very important. We recognize the importance of this field from the manifold institutions devoted to its study. In the United States alone the number of academic centers that are somehow dedicated to Jewish–Christian relations is large enough to have led to the creation of a council of such institutions, called Council of Centers on Jewish–Christian Relations.<sup>1</sup> The importance of this area of study is assumed, but rarely discussed. Why, actually, are ‘Jewish–Christian relations’ as important as their manifold academic expressions suggest?

To begin exploring this question, it might be worth comparing ‘Jewish–Christian relations’ to ‘Jewish–Muslim relations’, on the one hand, and to ‘Jewish–Zoroastrian relations’, on the other. There is no doubt that ‘Jewish–Christian relations’ play a far more important role in the international intellectual community, in its manifold expressions, than do ‘Jewish–Muslim relations’. If the principle was purely historical, one could argue that at least as much importance should be attached to the latter, given that for so much of Jewish history, Jewish life and creativity took place in the shadow of Islam. Similarly, if historical roots and formation were key, we should expect much more attention to be paid to ‘Jewish–Zoroastrian relations’. That only a handful of scholars worldwide are able to address this field of studies suggests that something other than historical interest in origins and influences is driving contemporary interest in ‘Jewish–Christian relations’. The obvious alternative to historical interest would be contemporary efforts at coexistence and peace. But that itself makes the gap between ‘Jewish–Christian studies’ and ‘Jewish–Muslim studies’ almost inexplicable. The proverbial Martian would surely deem ‘Jewish–Muslim relations’ to be of far greater urgency in today’s world. We are led to the conclusion that contemporary interest in Jewish–Christian relations is the product of processes that are broader and more complex than the detached reflection on what areas of study should be cultivated, in order either to do history justice or to best serve today’s pluralist society.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/sites/partners/ccjr/Intro.htm](http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/sites/partners/ccjr/Intro.htm)

It seems to me that we can point to several factors that jointly contribute to the cultural centrality of Jewish–Christian relations as an academic field of study:

- A. Questions of coexistence. These are fuelled not only by contemporary concerns, but above all by the memory of the Shoah, that led to a major recasting of Jewish–Christian relations. Indeed, it is worth noting how many of the academic centers mentioned above are actually devoted to the study of the holocaust and its lessons.
- B. Interest in Jewish–Christian relations seems to play an important role in identity construction. Jews and Christians seem to be increasingly stating their own religious identity not only within their own communities but also in relation to a significant other. The significant other for Jews and Christians are each other, rather than Islam, despite its demographic prominence. Christians obviously need Jews for purposes of their own identity construction, inasmuch as Christian roots are found in Judaism, and any restatement of Christian identity in some way necessitates a restatement of its relation to Judaism. This need is not reciprocal. Jewish involvement in such projects is thus best understood in light of Christianity’s role in Western society and the role it has played in recent Jewish (European) history.
- C. I would like to propose that to a significant degree, the centrality of Jewish–Christian relations as an area of study is not the product of a reasoned process, but rather is part of a contemporary mindset that is self-validating. Academia and society at large, in a mutually reinforcing process, have both adopted this area of study as an important area of study. This adoption could only happen through collaboration with those forces in society that make things happen, and above all through financial support. Jewish–Christian relations seem to have the kind of sex appeal that Jewish–Muslim relations lack. They therefore sell.

This is as true of the ability to identify donors for chairs, academic centers, and publications as it is for the students who are consumers of the products of Jewish–Christian studies. The following quote by Steven Fine, from a recent lecture at the Society of Biblical Literature, is in point: ‘As one who scheduled Jewish studies courses at a major American university for some time, I always knew that the history of Jewish–Christian relations was sure to fill, where Talmudic studies or other issues not of interest to contemporary Christians

would probably not. As an author, I have long known that a book that includes the J or C words—Jesus and Christians—is far easier to market than a Jewish studies book that does not.’ (Fine, 2006).

- D. The self-perpetuating and self-justifying aspects of the cultural and academic centrality of Jewish–Christian relations impact on scholarly tendencies and trends. Accordingly, Jewish–Christian relations become increasingly the hermeneutical lens through which phenomena are understood and interpreted. This, at least, is the case in rabbinic scholarship. One notes recent studies by such scholars as Yisrael Yuval (Yuval 2006) in which the Jewish–Christian lens becomes a defining feature of rabbinic literature and a key to its understanding, possibly to an unprecedented degree.

Thus, multiple factors feed the perception of the academic centrality of Jewish–Christian relations, even as these are in turn reinforced by the academy. Contemporary social and historical needs combine with issues of hermeneutics, the reading of ancient sources, and the reconstruction of history in complex ways. These serve the needs of identity construction of both groups and individuals, thus adding more weight to the entire process. The multiple factors operating often make it hard to assess to what extent texts are read in and of themselves and to what extent a heavy baggage is imported to them that could in principle lead to a misreading of the sources. In conclusion, the totality of factors operating and undergirding the importance of Jewish–Christian relations as an academic enterprise may be greater than the sum of its individual parts. In other words, it is conceivable that we are operating with a bias that is heavily culturally weighted. This bias might lead us to attribute exaggerated significance to the field, certainly in the rabbinic context, and it might influence the results of our textual readings and historical investigations, in line with the conceived importance of this area of study.

### HOW MUCH CHRISTIANITY IN RABBINIC JUDAISM

I am indebted, for the following section, to the work of Steven Fine, cited above. His own methodological reflections dovetail so closely with my own concerns in this area, that I am happy to share his unpublished observations on this question. As the title of the section suggests, one of the often unexamined assumptions concerns the relative importance of Christianity as a means of understanding rabbinic Judaism. To assume

Christianity's importance in the overall interpretation of rabbinic Judaism and its texts is a hermeneutic choice that is at the same time based on a historical reconstruction. One must assume Christians and Christianity figure heavily in the Talmud and rabbinic literature in order to construct this particular lens for reading the literature. Fine questions this assumption by posing first of all the question how much explicit and uncontested knowledge about Christians and Christianity we are actually able to obtain from the Talmud. The sum of materials that can be unequivocally identified as referring to Christians falls short of even the two short chapters that we find in the smaller tractates on Samaritans, in the tractate called *Kutim*. What we have is little. Key issues in Jewish–Christian theology that would be central to the purported Jewish–Christian dispute are never explicitly discussed in the Talmud and rabbinic literature. What we have are dozens of scholarly conjectures that read a variety of texts in light of the prominence of Jewish–Christian relations. However, these must be recognized for what they are: conjectures and speculations. In other words, what we know by conjecture far exceeds our undisputed and unequivocal knowledge. That a clear distinction is not kept between the two is itself a result of the present paradigm, that favors Jewish–Christian relations as a hermeneutic lens for understanding rabbinic literature. It thus becomes a self-validating academic enterprise that draws upon perceived cultural centrality in order to reinforce this centrality with additional data, where it is lacking. The circularity of the enterprise is based on the core assumption that Christians and Christianity are indeed central to rabbinic literature. This assumption must be seriously questioned. Fine illustrates the present situation in the academy, with the help of the following Talmudic story:

Rabbi Abbahu praised Rav Safra to the Minim that he is an important man.  
They released him from taxation for thirteen years.  
One day, they came upon him, and said to him:  
It is written: ‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.’ (Amos 3:2)  
One who has anger, does he oppress he whom he loves?  
He [Rav Safra] was silent, and said absolutely nothing to them [in the face of this taunt].  
They took the scarf from his [Rav Safra’s] shoulders and made him miserable.  
Rabbi Abbahu came and found him.  
He said to them: Why are you making him miserable?

Did you not tell us that he is an important man [and he couldn't even tell us the interpretation of this verse]?

He [Rabbi Abbahu] said to them: I referred to [his knowledge of] Tannaitic traditions, I made no mention of Scripture!

They said to him: Why are you [Palestinians] different, knowing [Scripture]?

He said to them: We who are present among you, we make it a point to study [Scripture].

They [in Babylonia] make no effort in this regard. (*Bavli Avoda Zara* 4a)

Fine offers this story as a parable to contemporary interest in Christianity as a lens through which to interpret Jewish phenomena. For the rabbis, being amidst Christians meant learning their way of doing business—in other words, engaging in Scripture. For us, being in a Christian milieu means favoring Jewish–Christian relations as our way of doing business. In Fine’s reading, our scholarly activity today resembles the social placement of the ancient rabbis. Because ‘we are present among you’, in other words, because Jews operate in a Christian academic milieu—there is a tendency to read rabbinic materials against such a Christian background. Where a considered assessment of the background needed to understand Talmudic sources might have led to a more intense interest in Zoroastrianism, the cultural context in which today’s study is carried out predisposes us to the reconstruction of an imagined Christian context, in light of which the rabbis are understood. Hence, Fine offers a more careful methodology: ‘The degree to which Jewish–Christian relations is close to the pulse of contemporary culture creates a challenge to the historian. In my own work, I search out every other possible interpretation and weigh these carefully before ultimately accepting or rejecting the Christian influence model—fully cognizant of the baggage that comes with that model.’

#### RECONSTRUCTING JEWISH–CHRISTIAN RELATIONS: THREE MODELS

In light of the broader considerations spelled out above, I would like to present three models of how Jewish–Christian relations in the Talmudic period may be approached. Each of these, especially the first two, have figured in the history of scholarship. Each of them represents an emotional and existential stance, as much as a scholarly methodology. Accordingly, I will seek to spell out not only the particular scholarly methodology but also the corresponding emotional and existential attitude, especially as it concerns Jewish attitudes to Christianity.

*The Competitive-Polemical Model*

This is the oldest model, and it has been part of Jewish scholarship for over a century. It assumes a basic situation of competitiveness between Judaism and Christianity and finds the competition between these two religions in its reading of ancient sources. One may speak of two waves of polemics. The first focuses on contemporary polemics, as refracted through different readings of rabbinic literature, while the other makes polemics the subject of the rabbinic materials themselves.

Polemic, comparison, and competition were formative elements of the modern study of rabbinic literature, and in particular rabbinic theology. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century saw much scholarly activity that was born of contemporary religious polemics. Thus, Christian scholars viewed the Judaism of Jesus' time, prior to his coming, as inferior in comparison. Historical reconstruction of the inferiority of ancient Judaism and the superiority of Jesus' teaching thus served a theological purpose. This, in turn, led to a series of readings, mostly by Jewish scholars, who attempted to counter those Christian tendentious readings of rabbinic literature. Thus, contemporary theological concerns dictated scholarship on both sides of the fence. The process has been amply documented by Ed Sanders (Sanders 1977, 33–59).

If the first wave of polemics was initiated by Christian scholars, the second wave is primarily the work of Jewish scholars. Again, since the end of the nineteenth century, but with increasing prominence around mid-century, Jewish scholars have read a variety of rabbinic statements through a polemic lens. The polemic lens was part of a broader historical orientation that has informed much of Jewish scholarship since its inception (see Goshen-Gottstein 2003, 119–123). Polemic provided a historical anchor through which texts could be grounded in a particular time and context. While the reconstruction of Jewish–Christian polemic served principally an academic purpose, it could not be divorced from the worldview at large and the enduring competition between the two religions. An apex of this methodology of reading is found in Urbach's *The Sages* (Urbach 1987). Urbach made polemic the primary interpretive strategy, in light of which rabbinic materials were read. Urbach reconstructed dozens, perhaps hundreds of polemics, through his interpretation of sources. Various sources were read in a context provided by Urbach and accordingly had as their imputed audience the other religion. The quantitative achievement of identifying so many polemical

statements throughout rabbinic literature amounted to a qualitative view of the rabbis and their theological project in polemical terms. Thus, one of the main characteristics of the rabbis was how they defined and upheld their view of Judaism in dialogue and polemic with Christian authors of the early centuries. Most of Urbach's reconstructed polemics were directed towards Christianity, thereby both assuming and providing additional proof for Christianity's prominence in rabbinic literature. Urbach's lens was historical, and much of his history of ideas is constructed through the attempt to bring the rabbis into conversation with major voices of antiquity. Polemic allows Urbach to situate the words of the rabbis in a specific time and place.

While Urbach's project seems to be strictly historical, it is obviously also informed by a worldview and colored by an attitude toward Christianity. Even though I have not encountered express rejection of Christianity or looking down upon it in Urbach's writings, it would seem fair to assume that his worldview is thoroughly informed by the understanding of these two religions as placed in permanent competition with one another. His own proud identification as an orthodox Zionist would naturally make him identify strongly with the one side, though such identification remains implicit and does not color his scholarship. Indeed, in a recent review of Urbach's oeuvre, he is portrayed as striking a balance between highlighting the importance of Jewish–Christian polemics and seeking to limit the influence of Christianity on the formation of rabbinic thought (Irshai 2006).

Urbach's scholarship is primarily informed by the keen intellectual interest in noting differences between the two religions and between their teaching and highlighting it through scholarship. While one does not note hostility in Urbach's writings, nor the kind of superiority that earlier Christian writers such as Bousset, Bultmann, and others exhibit, one cannot divorce this kind of scholarship from the theological premises that informed the theological relations of Judaism and Christianity. The polemical model was formed at a time when the fundamental tenor governing relations between the traditions was indeed competitive. It was not until the mid-sixties that the Catholic Church made its historic about-face in relation to previous teachings on Judaism. By that time, Urbach's work had been more or less completed. He certainly did not have the time to reconsider his worldview and methodology in light of significant changes in Catholic theology in relation to Judaism. While Urbach's work has continued to enjoy influence in Israeli academic circles, it seems fair to say that it was far less influential in the English

speaking world, where this type of reading of sources has generally also been less dominant.

### *The Identity Constructing Model*

The second model shares with the polemical model the basis of conscious contrast. Contrast, however, is different than contest. What informs the second model is not the quest for argument, that leads to uncovering disagreement in a myriad of specific details, but the attempt to identify and characterize wider structures that bring to light the profound differences between the two religions. Accordingly, it focuses on questions of identity and how Jewish and Christian identities are constructed in different ways, as this difference is made manifest through the study of the deeper structures of the religion and thought of both religions. We may be able to distinguish two branches of this model of approaching Jewish–Christian relations, as these find expression in the study of rabbinic literature.

- A. The phenomenological or comparative approach. The phenomenological approach seeks to highlight the differences between the traditions by presenting them alongside one another. Accordingly, a variety of key topics is studied, with Jewish views on the subject presented alongside Christian views. The points of historical contact are less significant than the contours of difference, primarily theological difference, as these emerge from the systematic presentation of both religious systems. Presenting the two religions alongside one another allows the unique profile and identity of each to emerge more clearly. All this can be done without recourse to historical reconstruction of points of conscious disagreement between members of both faiths. It seems that many of the projects that Jacob Neusner has initiated with Bruce Chilton since the 90s fall under this category. (See Chilton and Neusner 2000a, 2000b, and 2004; for continued use of the language of ‘debates’ in the work of these scholars, see Chilton and Neusner 1998. These are, however, contemporary debates and not reconstructions of classical debates.) Properly speaking, the methodology that serves such studies is that of comparative theology. This provides a clear contrast with history, that is the primary methodology that serves the polemical model. The comparative theological project is significant not only because it is inherently interesting, but because it allows one to tackle issues of identity formation, especially in the formative period of both religions, while

avoiding to a large degree the confrontation that characterizes the first model.

- B. The historical-evolutionary model. I use this characterization to describe some of the recent work of Daniel Boyarin, who presents a unique theological analysis that serves the historical project, radically reconceived. In a series of articles and books, Boyarin has offered a new reading of the parting of the ways and of early Jewish–Christian relations. In Boyarin's view, the first centuries saw a broader common basis between the two religions. Both religions came into being, in their present form, through a mutual process of separation from one another that lasted up to the fourth century (see Boyarin 1999, 2004a and 2004b). The historical reconstruction of the coming into being of these distinct religious systems touches on the core of identity formation: what is it that makes Judaism Judaism and what is it that makes Christianity Christianity?

Boyarin consciously replaces the polemical model that characterized earlier scholarship with the identity constructing model, in light of which sources that were previously read in relation to a polemic that was supposed to have taken place in the first century are now read as representing the parting of the ways centuries later. Judaism and Christianity come out much closer to each other than they do according to the polemical model. They were jointly born of the same matrix. However, their differences are no less profound, inasmuch as they express systemic differences, rather than disagreement on cardinal points of view. Most importantly, while the polemical model implicitly validates only one side, this model consciously validates both sides, inasmuch as both are presented as legitimate heirs of the earlier stage of Judaism, in which both phenomena existed without clear borderlines demarcating one from the other. Both religions are thus perceived as valid choices from a reservoir of religious options that the earlier unseparated stage represents. It is thus much harder to speak of truth and falsehood, according to Boyarin's model.

Both branches of the identity constructing model have developed within the American academy, while the polemical model developed first on European soil and then in the Israeli academy. The American context seems appropriate for the development of the identity constructing model. The American academy is based on a pluralistic ethos, where members, often representatives, of different religious traditions work

alongside one another in a way that maintains their religious identity while sharing a broader framework of the humanities or of religious studies. This social situation lends itself to the production of this type of scholarship. While there is no explicit relationship between changes on the theological level in Jewish–Christian relations and academic scholarship, one cannot however assume these two areas are completely divorced from one another. I think one may legitimately consider these scholarly explorations as being indebted, if indirectly, to the new theological formulations of Jewish–Christian relations and to the climate they produce. (For brief allusions to the social and theological context of their projects, see Chilton and Neusner 2004 on p. 9 as well as at various other points in the introductions to their collaborative projects.)

It is also interesting to note the emotional stance that characterizes Boyarin's work. His preface is striking in how honest and revealing it is of his innermost feelings:

As long as I can remember I have been in love with some manifestation of Christianity... For an oddly gendered teenager, St. Francis the Sissy proved an incredibly tantalizing figure of a man.... I find this world endlessly moving and alluring, even when at its most bizarre to me.... Some Jews, it seems, are destined by fate, psychology, or personal history to be drawn to Christianity. This book won't let me be done with it, or so it seems, until I come clean and confess that I am one of those Jews. I cannot, of course, deny the problematic aspects of that desire; desire is frequently unruly and problematic... The question is, then, what creative use can be made of problematic desire—not only what pleasures can it engender but also what *utile* can it be in the world? (Boyarin 2004b, ix)

I believe there is a correspondence between the emotional stance that Boyarin describes here and the kind of scholarship it engenders. If the emotional stance of distance and disdain kept up clear boundaries that constituted the frontiers of polemics, the more complex emotional attitude also leads to a more complex viewing of historical relations. Finding oneself within the other and the other within oneself, in an ambivalent movement that seeks to establish identity and difference simultaneously, yields precisely the kind of history that Boyarin has written. Scholarship is thus conducted in a context that is neither theologically nor emotionally neutral.

*The Parallel Spiritual Activity Model*

Following the first two models, I would like to present a third model. Referring to it as a model of parallel spiritual activity seeks to highlight the fact that in this view one seeks to minimize the contact between Judaism and Christianity, and their activities are viewed instead as parallel activities that do not rely directly upon one another, but rather upon a common source or activity, primarily scriptural interpretation. Both the first and second models assumed contact. The second model assumed such intense contact as to envision a time when the two religious realities were inseparable from one another, and only gradually over time did their separation become a historical fact. What distinguishes the present model is the attempt to cast Judaism and Christianity as parallel religious phenomena, while minimizing their historical contact. It should be acknowledged that constructing a model of Jewish–Christian relations that minimizes contact and maximizes the recognition of parallel activities accords with the methodological call for care and minimizing contact sounded above by Steven Fine.

In my article on polemics in rabbinic literature and early Christian literature, I suggested criteria by means of which we could recognize polemics within rabbinic literature (Goshen-Gottstein 2003, 138–148). More important than the positive criteria for identifying polemics is, in my view, the attempt to establish the clear distinction between conscious polemics and the natural activity of two religious communities engaging in similar activities in parallel. Therefore, much like Fine's own hermeneutical principle, I suggested that one should not suggest a polemical interpretation if there is another explanation that readily accounts for the formation of a particular text. Even more importantly, a polemic cannot be reconstructed out of activity that is primarily hermeneutical if it is not explicitly marked in a polemical manner. As both communities engage in the interpretation of Scripture, there would be nothing easier than constructing every instance of different interpretation of biblical texts as an act of conscious polemics. However, such a reading would turn the entire literature into an extended polemic and would detract from what seems to be its primary purpose: edification of the religious community within and engagement in the reading and interpretation of Scripture as religious activity, as practiced by either Judaism or Christianity. I thus argue that in our reconstruction of the historical past of both communities, we must leave more room for each community to exist on its own terms, without attempting to draw all of

its activities into the orbit of Jewish–Christian relations, polemical or otherwise. This, of course, would necessitate looking at the two communities and their literary output less through the lens of historical influences and more through the lens of comparative theology. Not surprisingly, most of the work of Chilton and Neusner is indeed conceptualized in terms of comparative theology and could have therefore also been treated under the present rubric.

Towards the end of my 2003 article, I raised the question of the relationship between the type of reconstruction of early Jewish–Christian relations and the hermeneutics I recommend to my own engagement in contemporary interreligious relations in general and Jewish–Christian relations in particular (Goshen-Gottstein 2003, 189–190). Even though the different projects are seemingly distinct from one another and grew out of parallel academic and professional activities, I could not avoid considering the relations between these two branches of my own activity and creativity. Blunting the historical-polemical dimension of rabbinic texts meant the rabbis were not constantly battling the very religion with which I was presently engaged in dialogue. In that sense, I was not being unfaithful to tradition by engaging in such dialogue, nor did such dialogue require a restatement or reconfiguration of Jewish–Christian relations, at least not in relation to the formative rabbinic period. With conscious rejection and opposition muted, more room opened up for acceptance of the other. While this was not the explicit purpose of my scholarship on the rabbis, and I genuinely believe it was not designed as a move to make more contemporary space for dialogue or for recognizing Christianity in a Jewish context (one would still have to deal with the legacy of later generations' attitudes to Christianity, so some revision and restatement would be needed, no matter what), I note with interest the possibilities for dialogue that this scholarship opened up. It seems to me that the degree of legitimization is even greater than that made possible by Boyarin's scholarship. Boyarin shows that at some early point in time the two traditions were inseparable. Nevertheless, they did part ways, and to overlook this parting of the ways in the context of recognizing the other would require leaping over most of history. The parting of the ways did take place in the crucial and formative rabbinic period, even if some centuries later than usually described. In my case, if the rabbis were mainly disinterested, then there is little that the formative literature can actually teach us about Christianity. Later developments could, in theory, be more readily telescoped, in a

movement of uncovering the rabbinic foundations of attitudes to Christianity, even if such attitudes turned out to be ‘non-attitudes’.

But what seems to me the most important upshot of my own presentation is not its potential gain as far as reducing the amount of conscious contact and friction between Judaism and Christianity. Rather, the greater the envisioned distance and the more the activities of both communities are viewed in parallel, the greater is the possibility for present-day contact, based on respectful mutual study and understanding. If the core texts of the formative period are not locked into a hopeless competition with one another, it seems easier to pose the question of what the other could teach me. That both Jews and Christians are engaged in similar though different activities, through parallel processes of scriptural interpretation, constitutes an invitation to learn from one another how to go about the business of interpretation and how one’s interpretation may enrich the other. I am aware of the fact that to date there has been great asymmetry in this respect. Christians have shown much interest in early Jewish scriptural exegesis, while Jews have shown little interest in how Christians read the common Bible. However, there are signs that this is changing, as some of the scholarship mentioned above also suggests. How we understand the formative period could facilitate this kind of mutual learning and enrichment. My own historical reconstruction thus has its practical implications for a contemporary program of study and dialogue.

If Boyarin has described his own emotional stance as a hidden and somewhat forbidden love towards Christianity, I would describe my own as a profound spiritual recognition that comes from the security of my own tradition as it is able to gaze outwards. Clearing the path from reconstructed historical tensions is obviously helpful in making the space for such a gaze. In my study of Christian sources, I have little need for the kind of security that a polemical reading of the other might offer me by somehow leading me to identify with the ‘right’ side. I also do not feel the need to highlight how I am different from the other, nor to construct my identity as distinct from the other. The more my self-identity is grounded in the depth of my own religious commitment and belonging to a particular community, the more I am liberated to learn from the other in an open way that does not need to keep issues of identity and otherness at the forefront. Indeed, in this context I would see the possibility of learning from Christianity as not much different from the possibility of learning from Eastern religions, despite the fact that we do not share Scriptures. The asymmetry noted above, according

to which Christians need Jews for the construction of their own identity in ways that Jews do not need Christians, ends up playing itself out, for me, in such a way that I am as able to learn from the Christian, despite centuries of feud, as I am to learn from members of traditions with whom there has been little historical contact. Thus, true respect and openness are born from distance, rather than from the attempt to increase contact in our reconstruction of the past. Letting each side be is accordingly the foundation for a more open, dialogical encounter that shows the deepest respect through willingness to learn and receive from the other without the constant anxiety of identity construction and maintenance.<sup>2</sup>

#### APPLYING THE THREE MODELS: THE CASE OF TWO POWERS IN HEAVEN

According to the criteria I suggested in my earlier work, the case of Two Powers in Heaven should be recognized as a case of rabbinic polemics. It fits the criteria of a valid polemic, on account of the polemical formulae that accompany its usage. The present discussion draws on a still unpublished study of the use of the formula, and some of its insights will be shared below. Closer examination of this instance of seemingly unequivocal rabbinic polemics suggests that even that which we may think is polemical is also part of rabbinic literary conventions and is better understood in light of rabbinic hermeneutical practices. Its proper context is thus the Bible and its interpretation, rather than the historical conflict between competing religious groups, primarily Judaism and Christianity. The case of Two Powers in Heaven also allows me to present how all three models could be applied to it and how my own preferred model opens up new ways of reading the sources. These, as will be suggested below, have direct theological implications to a Jewish view of Christianity.

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<sup>2</sup> I would consider this self-disclosure to be a fair assessment of the reasoning and logic that correspond to my hermeneutical approach. The suggestion made by a reader of this essay that this position is more or less the orthodox Jewish approach, that considers Judaism immune to the influence of Christianity, does not seem to me an appropriate way to characterize my perspective. The reason is that Orthodoxy is actually highly polemical in its attitudes toward other religions to this very day. As Irshai 2006 points out, Urbach's is in many ways actually an Orthodox view.

*The Polemical and Identity Constructing Readings of Two Powers in Heaven*

The classical scholarly understandings of rabbinic sources referring to ‘Two Powers in Heaven’ are that they are historical reports and as such reflect rabbinic polemics with groups outside the rabbinic fold. Half a century of scholarship finds its culmination in Alan Segal’s detailed examination of all reports of this heresy and in his attempt to contextualize them within the current religious landscape (Segal 1977). Many of the reports, in Segal’s reading and those of his predecessors, relate to Christianity. Thus, ‘Two Powers in Heaven’ is seen as an important *topos* in early Jewish–Christian relations. For Segal, this subject is a crucial distinguishing point between Judaism and Christianity, inasmuch as it determines the parameters of Jewish orthodoxy. What lies at the heart of the difference between Judaism and Christianity is thus theological in nature and revolves around different understandings of the divinity. Clearly, this construction of the parting of the ways is very different from many common presentations that highlight praxis and ethnic identity, rather than theology, as the dividing issues. Thus, while Segal’s argument is significant for Jewish–Christian relations, it is equally important for Jewish self-understanding and for establishing the parameters according to which proper Jewish faith is defined.

Daniel Boyarin’s identity constructing model draws heavily on Segal’s work, while reversing its historical significance (Boyarin 2004a and 2004b). Boyarin basically accepts Segal’s readings, including the heavily anti-Christian emphases of ‘Two Powers’ sources. However, these are read by Boyarin not as historical reports, but as later retrojections, seen from the viewpoint of the later historical process through which Judaism and Christianity separated from each other. In that process, Judaism expunged what were previously acceptable beliefs in a second divine power, while these became the hallmark of the newly constructed Christian identity. In the context of his argument, Boyarin explores the meaning of heresy for the two groups and how each group defined heresy according to its particular emerging worldview. Boyarin follows Segal not only in many of his readings, while standing them on their head, so to speak, but also in the importance he assigns to the Two Powers issue. Just as for Segal this was seen as a defining issue, at the root of the split between Judaism and Christianity, so too for Boyarin this issue stands at the heart of the parting of the ways, even if the specific historical reconstruction of the parting is radically different.

One should note that Boyarin does not rely exclusively on the rabbinic reports surveyed by Segal. His work relies also on a reading of several sources in related literatures—Targum, New Testament, etc. Therefore, in tackling Boyarin, it is not sufficient to consider the readings of rabbinic sources referring to Two Powers. Nevertheless, as these do form the heart of his argument, and inasmuch as his work is closely indebted to Segal's, for the present purpose of highlighting different approaches to the same sources, I will limit my comments to how Boyarin handles the rabbinic sources containing the trope of Two Powers in Heaven.

### *Difficulties with Existing Interpretations of Two Powers in Heaven*

It is not possible in the present context to enter a detailed analysis of either Segal's or Boyarin's work. Their work relies on the one hand on particular readings of the sources and on the other hand on a conceptual model through which these readings are interpreted. I take issue with these two scholars on both scores. While I cannot spell out here why I find their specific readings problematic, I will attempt to present an alternative framework in which the data can be interpreted. This alternative framework questions some of the fundamental assumptions that led to the construction of the alternative hypotheses and seeks to undermine their probability. Lowering the probability of these two reading strategies opens the way for me to present a third strategy for reading the sources which, as I suggested above, draws heavily on the hermeneutical dimension of the rabbis' activities and corresponds to the third model spelled out above.

According to the third way of reading the sources that refer to Two Powers in Heaven, what these sources present to us is a hermeneutic response to certain exegetical triggers, rather than a historical response to concrete situations involving other religious communities. What leads me to this conclusion is the attempt to not only read the relevant sources, but also to assess their relative importance in the overall economy of rabbinic literature. The more we attach significance to the discussions of Two Powers in Heaven in the context of Jewish and Christian self-definition, the more weighty the following considerations become, in light of which I am forced to reject both Segal's and Boyarin's readings. I am led to search for other ways to account for the data, in response to the following issues:

- A. A quantitative examination of references to Two Powers in Heaven reveals the relative paucity of reference to the theme. If, as Boyarin

and Segal claim, this issue stood at the heart of the Jewish–Christian divide, one would expect the phrase to have much greater currency. I shall discuss the quantitative dimension of the use of the formula in greater detail below.

- B. Almost all references to Two Powers in Heaven occur in hermeneutical contexts, in the process of the interpretation of Scripture. This poses the question to whom these sources are addressed. The question of intended audience is the focus of Segal's work. Following his working assumption that the sources are polemical, he is led to identify in each and every instance who the referent of the polemic might be. In view of the predominance of interpretative activity in conjunction with the use of the formula, Segal is led time and again to see Christians and gnostics as the conversation partners and to weigh the effectiveness of the specific rabbinic readings as polemical arguments. In so doing, Segal follows the trend of earlier scholars, such as Buchler and Marmorstein, who undertook a similar project of identifying the opponents in the polemic through a consideration of the usefulness and applicability of the *derashot* to the polemic. It is worth noting that while Segal explores a wide range of options, in his attempt to pinpoint the polemic, Boyarin seems to have narrowed the battle to one principal opponent: the Christians. I have not found in Boyarin's work an account of why, in reconfiguring Segal's earlier work, he limits its relevance to Christianity, while ignoring gnostics, whom Segal sees as serious contenders for the title of polemic partners in most of the rabbinic sources he discusses. In any event, understanding how interpretation of Scripture figures in polemics has shaped the entire discussion of the earlier polemical model and indirectly contributed to the identity-constructing model's analysis of these materials.
- C. Not only are almost all uses of the Two Powers trope hermeneutical, but we also note that there is little else besides use of Scripture in the so-called polemics. One could have imagined, for instance, that the Two Powers polemic would be enhanced by contextually appropriate arguments, as relevant to the specific opponents it seeks to address. Thus, if gnostics were the object of the polemic, one could have expected to find references to God's goodness, alongside affirmation of his unity; if Christianity were considered the object of polemic, statements rejecting divine sonship, incarnation, or any other doctrinal specificity that would complement the core argument against Two Powers in Heaven would have been in place. The fact

is that nowhere does the Two Powers in Heaven trope go beyond the basic statement of rejecting the two heavenly powers. Any supportive argument that could also point with greater precision to the object of the polemic is lacking. Thus, all we have are verses and a fixed formula, rejecting the existence of Two Powers in Heaven.

- D. Reading the Two Powers in Heaven sources as directed against Christianity poses an obvious question: Christianity is Trinitarian, not binitarian. Why, then, would the rabbis chose to confront Christianity by means of a formula directed at the wrong theological formulation of faith? A partial answer is provided by the examination of the evolution of Christian doctrine. Moore already attempted to tackle this question in his brief but excellent treatment of the Two Powers sources (Moore 1927, I, 364–368; III, 115–116). Moore argues that earlier Christian faith was dualistic and that Trinitarian belief only became a dogma at a later point in the evolution of Christian faith (Moore 1927, 115), presumably when the formula had already been established. Boyarin would share this understanding. However, this explanation still leaves us with major difficulties. The first is that even if Trinitarian faith only becomes part of Christian dogma in later centuries, it is clear that less formalized understandings of the Trinity (which as such is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament) are already an important part of Christian faith and piety in the first century, as we see in such key passages as Matthew 28:19 and 2 Cor 13:14 (Schowalter 1993). Our own views of dating sources have advanced since Moore's time. The earliest and key texts in which the Two Powers 'polemics' appear belong to the editorial stratum of the Tannaitic midrashim, in other words to the early to mid-third century. Regardless of the focus of Christological debates and their evolution, it would seem that combating Christianity in the third century by means of a binitarian formula would seem ill suited. Furthermore, if somewhere in the course of the period reflected in rabbinic literature a major theological shift occurred within Christianity on a subject that is a defining feature of Jewish–Christian relations, and on whose account the parting of the ways occurred, regardless of which narrative for this parting we adopt, how come there are no traces of this theological transformation within the rabbinic polemics? It seems odd that the same formulae would simply be quoted from generation to generation without any attempt to

update and adapt them to changing theological circumstances.<sup>3</sup> Certainly if the rabbinic sources provide us with a window onto contemporary debates, we would be hard pressed to account for why these debates seem so frozen and out of touch with contemporary developments, if they indeed play an active role in the theological battles of the here and now. In fact, I am not aware of a single rabbinic text that expressly treats Trinitarian belief. Let us assume, for argument's sake, that Two Powers in Heaven had become a routinized trope that could no longer be adapted and adjusted; given rabbinic literary conventions, surely some new way of expressing displeasure with emerging Trinitarian belief could have been found. How is it that rabbinic literature is silent on such a major issue, if indeed Jewish–Christian relations loom so large on the rabbinic horizon, as some scholars would wish us to recognize?<sup>4</sup> Of course, we could argue that the rabbis were not so interested in theology. But that would undermine the entire argument of both Segal and Boyarin. With no reference to Trinitarian faith and with continuing application of the Two Powers trope, the rabbis seem doomed to fighting a losing battle with Christianity. Or perhaps we should consider the possibility that they were fighting no battle at all.

- E. Both Boyarin and Segal assume that the core issue dividing Judaism and Christianity concerns the theological understanding of the godhead, whether alongside God one recognizes an additional divine presence, another God within the Godhead. While this is certainly an issue worth considering, one wonders why the rabbis would focus their attention on this issue in particular, in an attempt to combat Christianity or to distinguish themselves from it. It would seem that Christianity could be tackled from several angles, some of which might prove more powerful and more relevant. For example, the

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<sup>3</sup> The only theoretical answer might be that the texts were originally polemical, but then ceased to serve a polemical purpose. But this would require articulating a theory of what polemics is, when it operates internally and when it operates *externally*, and what changes in historical relations could account for a shift from real polemical engagement at an earlier point in time to frozen literary usage that is no longer polemical. I find such an imagined view of polemics very forced.

<sup>4</sup> The comparison with general rabbinic disinterest in history (Herr, 1976) is unhelpful. While key historical events, such as the Bar Kokhba revolt, may not figure in a clear enough way in rabbinic literature, it will not do to simply consider Christianity a historical event. Once rabbinic literature is seen as polemical, this assumes active engagement with and statement of one's own identity in relation to Christianity. Silence is not an adequate tool in such a battle, inasmuch as it indicates lack of interest.

claim that divinity became flesh and blood or that a human being became God would seem unacceptable to the rabbis. These claims touch upon the heart of Christian belief and would be excellent foci for polemical activity. They are also issues the rabbis treat expressly in relation to various biblical figures (see Urbach 1987, 90–91, who significantly does not read these texts in relation to Christianity). Why not battle Christianity through these arguments, rather than through the seemingly inappropriate and ill-focused trope of Two Powers in Heaven? In fact, we have been able to identify very few explicitly anti-Christian theological polemics in rabbinic literature. One of the few instances of what seems a clear polemic against Christianity deals with the notion of human claims to divinity, rather than with the Trinity or with multiple persons within the Godhead (Irshai 1982). With almost no explicit polemics against Christian faith, scholars seeking to identify polemics against Christianity were forced to relate to the sources on Two Powers in Heaven as relevant to the Jewish–Christian polemic. However, the reconstructed polemic seems not only ill suited but also doomed to failure, as it lacks the needed specificity to target Christianity and as it is couched in terms that are sufficiently far removed from actual Christian faith to make it ineffective.

- F. The failure of the rabbinic polemic is underscored by Boyarin himself, who notes that despite the best rabbinic efforts, binary belief persisted within Judaism in a variety of forms (Boyarin 2004b, 144 and sources noted on 138). Now, not all polemics succeed; perhaps none can fully do the work. That, however, brings us back to the question of the intended recipient. If the polemic is addressed against Christians, then we can assume they would not be unduly impressed with rabbinic hermeneutics and their attendant polemics. But surely the polemic should bear fruit within. If, as Boyarin demonstrates, binitarian belief persists within the rabbinic fold, then we are drawn to one of two conclusions. Either an ill-framed polemic could never have done the work in the first place, not within and certainly not in relation to the outside. But the more radical conclusion would seem to be that the persistence of certain views within normative rabbinic literature might indicate that the failed polemic was never a polemic in the first instance, and hence the legitimate perseverance of certain beliefs within the rabbinic corpus.

*Presenting the Hermeneutical Reading of Two Powers in Heaven*

The sum total of the difficulties encountered in relation to the two existing theories leads me to formulate a third way of approaching these materials, which I believe is as relevant for this case as for much of what has been constructed in over a century of scholarship as Jewish–Christian polemic. I propose that sources employing the Two Powers formula do so as part of rabbinic hermeneutical activity and that therefore the appropriate context for understanding these sources is hermeneutical and not historical, and consequently also not polemical. Both the context and the content of these uses suggests that they were formulated in response to textual triggers and as an answer to textually based questions, primarily biblical texts and secondarily earlier rabbinic texts. Accordingly, one would seek in vain to identify to whom or against whom these texts are addressed, as there is no specific recipient. This would also account for how ill-suited the texts actually are for doing polemical work and why the supposed polemical arguments lack any of the specificity that might make their polemic effective. What we have are hermeneutical reflections, and these, by their very nature, are internal statements, rather than statements directed to the outside. In this context there is, of course, a purported outsider who believes in Two Powers and in relation to whom the biblical texts are read. However, for the sake of constructing the hermeneutical argument, little more is needed than the vaguest awareness that there are others and that these others believe in something that can be summed up under the Two Powers trope. The lack of any further specificity is due to the fact that the imagined outsider's work is referenced by simply positing his existence. If there is an imaginary outsider, the verses have a referent in relation to whom they are formulated. However, this outsider is an imagined reality that serves simply as a hermeneutical trigger and not a concrete other in relation to whom some concrete ideological struggle or polemic takes place. Of course, in this broadest sense the imagined other does affirm identity: the others believe in Two Powers, while we believe in only one power in Heaven. However, this is a much lower level of identity affirmation. Identity is not defined or articulated in relation to a concrete other. Rather, who we are is affirmed by projecting an imagined other who has the basic traits that are the opposite of our own faith. If we believe in one God, the imagined other believes in Two Powers. Our own identity as well as our own faith are affirmed through the Scriptures that are made to address our own identity and

faith by means of the imagined other. Thus, it is not Scripture that serves polemics, but an imagined polemic that brings out the full meaning of Scripture as part of ongoing exegetical activity.

There are at least two ways in which the description of rabbinic reference to Two Powers in Heaven as hermeneutical may be understood, and the different sources that resort to the formula mostly do one of two things. The first is to paraphrase a biblical verse, with the help of the Two Powers formula. In that case, the verse provides the impetus for the use of the formula and its message is somehow amplified with its help. Some of the key Tannaitic sources exhibit this kind of usage (see *Mechilta Bahodesh 5* and *Sifrei Deuteronomy 320*). The second way in which the formula fulfills a hermeneutical function is through its use as a rhetorical device. Accordingly, hermeneutical statements that could be trivial assume new life and meaning when their significance is highlighted in contrast with the imagined other, who believes in Two Powers. Polemic thus functions as a literary device that transforms the obvious into the exciting. In a sense, the same kind of excitement that a century of scholarship found in reconstructing historical polemics was already known to the rabbis, who realized that polemics, as a literary device, add spice to otherwise bland teachings (for example *Qoheleth Rabba 2:11*).

The image of the rabbis as it emerges from this reconstruction, indeed as it emerges from the model of parallel spiritual activity, is to a large extent the opposite of the image commonly portrayed in scholarship. Rather than a group of people who are constantly dealing with outside realities (primarily Christian), combating them, defining themselves in relation to them, and waging an ongoing war for their own existence and self-definition, the rabbis emerge as a class of scholars whose primary concerns are internal to their own religious life and to the value they hold dearest, the study and interpretation of Scripture. Their existence is to a large extent insular, and in the instances considered here, external reality penetrates their world only through its vague and secondary reflections. For the most part, their hermeneutical activity is divorced from the outside world, and it is that which stands at the heart of their inner world and creativity.

#### *Two Powers—Examining the Claim of Centrality*

To support the novel reading I am offering for the Two Powers sources, I would like to offer some specific observations that will, I hope, make

my reading more credible. At the heart of other scholars' work, particularly that of Boyarin, regarding Two Powers in Heaven is the claim that this is a topic of major significance for rabbinic thinking and that consequently it stands at the heart of the parting of the ways and plays a major role in issues of identity construction. Centrality and prominence of Two Powers arguments within the rabbinic corpus are thus foundational to both Boyarin's and Segal's arguments. Boyarin tells us time and again what major efforts the rabbis undertook in order to expunge the faith in Two Powers, what a strenuous process it was, how much energy was invested in the process, and how it is a major phenomenon of the period (see Boyarin 2004a, 337, 340, 351). Boyarin's explicit affirmation of centrality is nowhere supported by any statistical evidence that would measure, quantify, or qualify the occurrences of the phrase. In what seems like a circular argument, Boyarin constructs the theoretical structure in which Two Powers arguments would indeed play a central role, and his overall construction gives the impression that this is indeed a subject of major concern for the rabbis. That Boyarin himself only analyzes a handful of sources does not seem to detract from the claim that much energy was invested or from the consequent implications for the centrality of the subject to Jewish–Christian relations. I believe a closer look at some core facts will cast serious doubt on the claims for centrality of the Two Powers argument and of the entire subject, and will thereby undermine the ensuing reconstruction of historical and theological development. The following facts should be noted:

- A. The number of actual occurrences of Two Powers sources in rabbinic literature is minuscule. In Tannaitic literature we have only three or four sources. In amoraic literature, similarly, we find three or four uses of the formula. A slightly larger number of reworkings of earlier materials appear in some of the later midrashim. It is extremely hard to argue for huge efforts or for ideological centrality with such a limited number of sources upon which to base the claim.
- B. To the quantitative element, we should add an important observation regarding how Two Powers sources are spread between the different rabbinic corpora. In Tannaitic literature the trope is completely absent from both mishna and Tosefta and appears only in the Tannaitic midrashim. This fact itself speaks volumes and obviously points in the direction of the hermeneutical reading I propose. Thus, it is explicitly in the context of interpretation and in its service that

Two Powers formulations are found, suggesting they are best understood in a hermeneutical context.

Also, the amoraic sources that refer to Two Powers are almost exclusively interpretative. Indeed, the formula is almost absent from both Talmuds. The exceptions, upon closer scrutiny, provide further proof. In one instance, the formula is used to interpret a mishna, rather than a verse (*Bavli Berachot* 33b). As the interpretation seems reasonable in context, it teaches us more about the range of probable understandings of earlier materials than about actual contemporary ideological tensions.<sup>5</sup> The other occurrence is, in my understanding, completely playful and teaches us nothing about contemporary beliefs or actual polemics. (For a detailed reading of *Bavli Hagiga* 15a, see Goshen-Gottstein 2000, 89–162, curiously ignored by Boyarin 2004a, 355ff.)

- C. The argument for centrality should, it seems, not only appeal to the number of occurrences, but should also seek to illustrate the centrality of a theme in diverse contexts. The broader the spread an idea has and the more diversified the contexts in which it appears, the more we may claim centrality of an idea. Given the claim for the centrality of the battle against Two Powers theories, one is struck by how thin the actual spread of sources is. We do not find halachot that are directly and unequivocally relevant to this battle, except for the above mentioned attempt to account for one particular halacha in terms of Two Powers. Similarly, we lack stories that can credibly prove the importance of this issue. Perhaps some customs would have emerged that could illustrate the importance of rabbinic rejection of Two Powers understandings. Most importantly, we could reasonably expect to find reports of actual polemics that employ the formula. What we find are almost exclu-

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<sup>5</sup> Though the interpretation is certainly possible, it is also possible to understand *Mishna Berachot* 5:3 in and of itself without appeal to the Two Power understanding, as *Bavli Berachot* 33b does. The absence of this explanation from the *Yerushalmi* is telling, and the *Yerushalmi*'s quote of Ps 63:12 is suggestive of another line of interpretation for this mishna, whose elaboration is beyond the scope of the present note. The interpretation of the first lemma in *Mishna Megilla* 4:9 by the *Yerushalmi* seems a likelier candidate for identification with Two Powers. Still, the fact that 'Two Powers' only comes up in the interpretation and not in the mishna itself is telling. Reuven Kimelman, in a volume on rabbinic polemics that I am editing, discusses rabbinic tendency to explain phenomena that have their own conceptual evolution by appeal to polemics. The present case accords with such an understanding.

sively hermeneutical applications of the formula, small in number and limited in scope of application.

Even within the interpretative context, we could have found the formula functioning, like key rabbinic concepts do, eisegetically. The degree to which the rabbis interject a concept or a verse, whether it belongs or not, indicates how important it is to them. The fact is that the few sources that do employ the formula do so through exegesis, not through eisegesis; in other words, the formula is applied in a very reasonable and limited manner, in accordance with what seems to be its hermeneutical purpose, without in any significant way exceeding it.

Thus, the absence of the formula from key documents, its limited quantitative and qualitative use, and its almost exclusive hermeneutical application all lead me to reject the claim that the battle over Two Powers in Heaven was a central and important one for the rabbis. Its origins must be sought not in historical relations between the rabbis and other religious groups, but in the workings of interpretation and in the way that rabbinical interpretation could use and apply, in a local and limited scope, the formula to underscore specific points relating to individual biblical verses with which it engaged.

### *Implications for Contemporary Theology and Dialogue*

I have tried, throughout this presentation, to point to the relationship between the views we take of early Jewish–Christian relations and how contemporary Jewish–Christian relations are viewed and practiced. The case of Two Powers in Heaven is an opportune moment to illustrate the suggested relationship between my reconstruction of early sources and their implications for contemporary theology and dialogue. The key insight that emerges from my reconstruction of sources is that rabbinic references to Two Powers in Heaven were never intended as a reaction to Christianity, or for that matter to any other specific religious group. If so, they are also not relevant to their view of that group. According to Segal this is the point of contention between the rabbis and Christianity. According to Boyarin this issue is at the core of the divide. Even if belief in Two Powers in Heaven was acceptable at some point in history, the recovery of such a moment would seem to be of little value for contemporary relations. One would be hard pressed to undo such a major move as the expunging of faith in Two Powers from Judaism in

order to recover an earlier stage in which such faith was legitimate. Christianity's very coming into being is related to the core of Jewish identity, and those demarcation lines can no longer be erased.

By contrast, my own reading has consequences to a contemporary Jewish view of Christianity. In my view, the rabbis were never interested in the theological details that lend Christian theology its definition. The case of Two Powers cannot address these concerns. Consequently, we cannot glean any theological instruction from the rabbis regarding how a view of the Christian Godhead can or cannot be constructed and what kinds of views of the Godhead may be upheld from a Jewish theological context, while others must be rejected. If the sources teach us of a knee-jerk hermeneutical response, rather than a concrete historical polemic, this response cannot provide an answer to the many questions that we would need to explore, were we to seriously engage a Two Powers understanding from a theological perspective. For example: is the problem in Two Powers related to tension and conflict between them; how would one view two powers that enjoy fully harmonious and complementary relations between themselves; does it assume some hierarchical relationship between the powers, and would there be a difference between two powers conceived as equal in power or as one being subordinate to the other; would there be a difference in viewing the Two Powers issue in an intra-divine or an extra-divine context? Our sources cannot answer any of these questions. In view of the hermeneutical context from which the teachings are derived, there is little positive that we can glean from rabbinic references to Two Powers in Heaven. At the end of the day, they only tell us what we already know from other contexts: there is only one God. But when it comes to understanding the one God in more complex ways, as indeed Christianity seeks to do, discussions of Two Powers become irrelevant.

The benefits of the suggested approach for contemporary Jewish–Christian relations are obvious. It liberates the discussions of Two Powers from the Jewish–Christian polemical baggage with which they had become associated. It thereby also liberates us to launch a fresh reflection on the types of understandings of the divine that could or could not be recognized from a Jewish context, both ancient and contemporary. While it may be pushing the case too far, in theory the lack of explicit reference to Trinitarian doctrine in all of rabbinic literature might suggest that the problems that later generations associated with this belief were not shared by the rabbis. The rabbis may have been able to deal with this aspect of Christian belief in the same way they

recognized modalities within the divine. Here Boyarin's discussion is so helpful in showing us the arbitrariness of what is recognized as theologically acceptable in the history of how God is understood and how that history has been played out in the context of Jewish–Christian relations. If this is the case, we would be forced to look for the origins of these profound theological differences in other contexts, such as the rise of philosophy, changing political circumstances, the application of force, power, and coercion in Jewish–Christian relations, and more. What seems to be a theological abyss may actually be related to other factors than the fundamental faith of both traditions.

Paradoxically, the more contact we identify in ancient sources, the harder our present-day theological challenge is. Thus, Fine's methodological warning is not only sane advice for the historian, it is also a needed call for the theologian. As we let go of some of the treasured points of reconstructed contact, we may actually be opening the way for new and enriching points of contact in contemporary Jewish–Christian relations.

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## LEARNING AND PRACTISING: USES OF AN EARLY JEWISH DISCOURSE IN MATTHEW (7:24–27) AND RABBINIC LITERATURE

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Early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism are the outgrowth of complex socioreligious and political developments in the Jewish world of the first century, in particular the decades after the fall of the Temple in 70 CE. This era witnessed the birth pangs of two social realities that in retrospect may be named ‘rabbinic Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’. However, social reality seldom reflects what essentialist terminology suggests. This holds especially true for areas such as northern Palestine or Syria, where socioreligious borderlines were not clear-cut and, as late as in the fourth century, people even accepted both designations (Kraft 2003, 92–93). It is our contention that at the end of the first century, both communities shared discourses but used them in different, even polemical ways. This becomes clear when we compare the topic of learning and doing in the Gospel of Matthew with early rabbinic literature, in particular the Tractate Avoth and its Tosephthan counterpart, *Avoth de-Rabbi Nathan* (further: ARN).<sup>1</sup>

Studying Matthew in comparison with rabbinic sources has become standard practice, notwithstanding the fact that the bulk of this literature was edited much later. In principle, we agree with the presumption that oral traditions predate written texts. However, in order to avoid the pitfalls inherent in merely juxtaposing texts, aptly criticized as ‘parallelomania’ (Sandmel 1962), it is our contention that adducing parallels presupposes an analysis of the social history of the communities behind these texts. We are not searching for mutual influence or dependence, an impossible task given the methodological problems inherent in such a quest (Alexander 1983). However, if common motives or literary

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<sup>1</sup> English texts follow the Revised Standard Translation, unless indicated otherwise. Greek texts according to Nestle-Aland, ed. 27; Hebrew Text of the Mishna follows ms. Kaufmann. I would like to thank the participants at the conference and especially Prof. J. Schwartz for their helpful suggestions and remarks. Thanks to Helen Richardson-Hewitt for her valuable corrections of the English text.

structures or genres can be discerned, it is worthwhile studying the literary context that the traditions are supposed to fit into and the rhetorical aims these traditions serve. It is on the level of community documents, we believe, that a comparison is worthwhile, i.e. between Matthew's gospel as written for a specific community on the one hand, and Tractate Avoth and its counterparts, expressing nascent rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand.

This study focuses on a case where commentaries adduce parallels without discussing the nature of their relationship: the parable of the builder of the house (Matt 7:24–27). We approach this case as part of the broader literary theme of learning (or teaching) and practising, in Greek 'hearing' (or teaching) and 'doing' (Daube 1956, 552–562). We surmise that this discussion was an issue which played a significant rhetorical role in the way communities restructured religious leadership after 70 CE. In particular, we shall see how documents that share a theology of minute observance of the Mosaic Law agree as to the necessity of practising it but differ as to the culture of learning. Additionally, both documents reworked and edited older metaphors of Torah wisdom in the light of new circumstances and ideological outlooks. Both phenomena indeed suggest that the communities behind the documents were not isolated from each other but developed in a similar historical environment.

We shall start by discussing the notion of learning and practising in Matthew and Avoth. Following this, modes of interaction as suggested in research will be discussed. In the third part we will analyse the parable of Matthew and its rabbinic counterparts and evaluate the findings from the point of view of the proposed theories.

## MATTHEW

Matthew's gospel dates from the end of the first century (80 CE) and is located in Galilee or Syria (probably Antioch; Luz 1997a, 74, 76). Addressing a Jewish–Christian community, Matthew seems to use the theme of learning and doing in a twofold way. First, teaching and observing the commandments of Jesus is the core activity of religious life in the community. Thus, Matthew stresses the exclusive authority of Jesus as the sole and final teacher of the Law. Second, Matthew contrasts this necessity with the apparent failing practice of the Law by 'scribes and Pharisees'. Thus, Matthew distinguishes his community

from the surrounding Jewish world, led by the early rabbinic movement. These dimensions become clear when we examine various facets of the gospel.

Matthew favours the word ‘μαθητής’, ‘student’ (Davies 1964, 97n.1) for naming the disciples. Matthew depicts the disciples of Jesus as a learning community: in private, Jesus offers additional explanations of his public teaching to his disciples, answering their specific questions (Matt 13:10ff., Matt 15:15ff.; Matt 19:10ff.). This phenomenon, also known in rabbinic sources, qualifies the disciples as an in-group (Daube 1956, 141–150).

Matthew uses this master–disciple relationship also to define the community. This is attested by the specific saying in Matt 10:24–25: ‘A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master; it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.’ The community of Matthew knew ‘prophets and wise men and scribes (γραμματεῖς)’ (Matt 23:34; compare 10:41 and 13:52). However, whether these functions really designated a social stratification is unclear. The impression one gets is that of a primarily egalitarian group (Stanton 1992, 104).

Indeed, Jesus warns his disciples that they should not call themselves ‘rabbi’ (μὴ κληθῆτε ῥαββí), for they have just one teacher (διδάσκαλος; Matt 23:8), i.e. Jesus. The risen Jesus claims that ‘all authority (ἐξουσία) in heaven and on earth’ has been given to him (Matt 28:18) and the disciples are instructed to act as teachers among the nations: ‘Go therefore and make disciples (μαθητεύσατε) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching (διδάσκοντες) them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age’ (Matt 28:18–20). Matthew’s community probably had some form of teaching leadership, but it was rudimentary and subordinated to the sole authority of Jesus. The teaching itself occurs in a twofold way: by ‘showing’ and by ‘telling’. The disciples are urged to preach and teach the words of Jesus (Matt 10:7, 28:20). Knowledge as such is not valued, but righteous practice is, in particular ‘good works’, visible to all men (Matt 5:16). Visibility is what makes the difference; unity of teaching and practice is requested. Every disciple is to practise and teach even the smallest of precepts: ‘Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches (διδάξῃ) men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them (ποιήσῃ καὶ διδάξῃ) shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven’ (Matt 5:19). Note how

the sequence of the verbs ('practising/teaching') underpins the practice of the law, not as an outcome, but as the fundamental principle for any teaching activity. Thus, a good teacher is recognizable by his practice of the most insignificant of the commandments, less by his knowledge.

The concept of practice-based teaching is also used in a polemical sense and aimed at the 'scribes and Pharisees' in Matt 23:2–3: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so *practice and observe* (*ποιήσατε καὶ τηρεῖτε*) whatever they tell you, but not what they do; *for they say (preach), but do not practise* (*λέγουσιν γὰρ καὶ οὐ ποιοῦσιν*).'<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, in one sentence, the authority of Pharisees and scribes is underlined ('Moses' seat', 'practise and observe') and attacked. This paradox can only be explained by presupposing the view that it is an existing religious authority that is attacked as such. Indeed, similar polemics are attested in various sources (Weinfeld 1990; Viviano 1990). Interestingly, it is not lack of faith in the mission of Jesus as such that is decisive in this polemic but the—presumed—failing practice.

Again, practice proves the person's integrity. Indeed, stringent moral requirements are also directed at the members of the community, whose righteousness has to transcend that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 5:20). Membership in the community *per se* does not guarantee salvation. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns his disciples: 'Not every one who says to me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does the will of my Father* (*οἱ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός μου*) who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers (*οἵ ἐργάζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν*)"' (Matt 7:21–23). The rhetorical force of this saying makes not doing the will of the father equivalent to doing evil.

The theme 'not knowing' recurs in the parable of the ten maidens (Matt 25:1–13), a specific Matthean tradition. At the end of the parable, when the five foolish maidens return to the bridal room, the groom rejects them: 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' The cause of this is the apparent lack of 'oil'. This probably symbolizes the absence of 'good deeds', again, failing to practise (Luz 1997b, 477). This is corroborated in the subsequent discourse on the eschatological judge-

ment, where the performance or negligence of ‘good works’ marks the difference between ‘sheep’ and ‘goats’ (Matt 25:31–46).

Finally, although Jesus is the only authoritative teacher, Matthew simultaneously claims that what Jesus refers to as ‘all that I have commanded you’ is but a faithful exposition of the Mosaic Law. This point is explicitly stated: ‘For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished’ (Matt 5:18). Matthew even uses rabbinic terminology to underline this point in his presentation of the love commandment: ‘On these two commandments *hang* (κρέμαται) all the law and the prophets’ (Matt 22:40, adapted translation).<sup>2</sup>

To conclude, it appears that in Matthew the discourse on ‘hearing and doing’ or ‘doing and teaching’ operates within two different social perspectives. It is an incentive for a practice-based and practice-oriented teaching culture within the community. This presupposes an egalitarian community with only a rudimentary stratification of teachers and one based solely on the authority of Jesus’ teachings. Second, it is a polemical device used to denounce the validity of the teachings of the Pharisees and scribes. Not a presumed lack of faith but a—presumed—failure to practise is the issue here.

## AVOTH

The Mishnaic tractate Avoth is considered the ‘Magna Carta’ of the rabbinic movement. The name may refer to the sages quoted (‘fathers’ of the world), but the meaning ‘principles’ (MShab 7:1) has also been suggested (S. Safrai 1987, 263–264). Avoth contains older, Pharisaic and early Rabbinic traditions, even though Finkelstein’s thesis of an incorporated Pharisaic document is contested in contemporary research (Saldarini 1982; Stemberger, 2005). Its final editing seems to have been in the third century, although this has recently been questioned.<sup>3</sup>

Avoth’s main theme is the study of the Torah, in particular its ethical and social dimensions. Some sayings admonish pupils to seek Torah teachers (1:6 and 1:16) and enjoin teachers to raise many disciples (1:1). One should devote as much time as possible to study (2:12, 14); to

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew equivalent is תלי; see Strack-Billerbeck 1926, 907–908; Donaldson 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Stemberger 2005 and 2003b, 298–299; see, however, Tropper 2004, 88–102.

forget an inch of Torah teaching is considered a sin (3:9). Study of the Torah causes the divine dwelling to rest among men (3:6).

Some sayings, however, stress the doing over and against the study of the Torah. According to R. Akiva, man is judged by the number of his deeds (3:16).<sup>4</sup> The tradition (6:5) that enjoins the learner to practise even more than to learn is problematic for our discussion, as this chapter is a Gaonic addition (S. Safrai 1987, 273). A peculiar critique on a solely knowledge-oriented teaching is implied by R. Ishmael's saying (4:5) that one should teach with the goal of learning and observing. The most important case therefore, apart from two sayings we will discuss later, is the saying of Simeon ben Gamliel: 'All the days of my life have been passed among the sages, and I have never found anything better for a man than silence; and study, not practice, is the root (וְלֹא הַמְדֻרֵשׁ הוּא הַעֲקָר אֶלָּא הַמִּשְׁתָּה)' (1:17, adapted translation). The saying has been explained by reference to biographical experiences and out of a certain dismay at the one-sidedness of the learned elite (Viviano 1978, 29). However, it is very difficult to interpret this saying from presumed biographical 'information' (Stemberger 2003a, 402). It appears that it reflects a basic dispute about the structure of Torah learning in the first generations of the rabbinic world: is practising goodness the outcome or the basis of Torah study? Is transmission and accumulation of knowledge the engine of religiosity, or rather the practice of the law? And thus, should cultural priority be given to the accumulation of knowledge or to the practice of piety?<sup>5</sup> Some sayings acknowledge that a learning process is primarily rooted in personal qualities that become visible in a person's behaviour.

As can be noticed in the saying of Simeon ben Gamliel, this debate correlates with a critique on the scholarly elite. Both elements, a certain dismay for primarily knowledge-based religiosity and a critique of scholarly leadership, can be discerned in Matthew as well. How can we explain the existence of a similar discourse in two very different literary and religious settings?

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<sup>4</sup> The saying is problematic, and Safrai (1987, 268) proposes following medieval sources that read 'not according to his deeds'.

<sup>5</sup> The classical debate in Kidd 63a reflects the paradoxical (!) success of the intellectuals. Note that the two versions of ARN reflect a certain preference for study (version a) or 'good works' (version b) (Safrai 1987, 375).

## MATTHEW AND EARLY JUDAISM: MODELS OF INTERACTION

It has been suggested that biblical language can be detected in Matthew's paraenetics, in particular the 'blessings and curses' discourse of Moses in Deut 27–28 (Frankemölle 1994, 278). However, our discourse differs in two significant instances. First, it does not operate in the 'blessing–curse' scheme. Second, the main point here is not obedience or non-obedience to the laws of Moses. It is clear that 'hearing and doing' operates within the parameters of wisdom language, presupposing a social reality of Torah teachers and Torah disciples.

There is indeed a commonality with the language of Ben Sira 22 (second century BCE). However, our documents contain linguistic phraseology and parabolic language not present in Ben Sira, whose style is based on biblical parallelism and repetition (S. Safrai 1987, 268)

It was the comparative religion school (*Religionsgeschichte*), culminating in the classical commentary of Strack/Billerbeck that positioned Jesus and the Gospel of Matthew within first-century Palestinian Judaism. However, similarities and differences were mainly evaluated from the perspective of a fundamentally biased Protestant theology (Levenson 2002). Within this paradigm, parallels only served to prove the originality of Jesus' teaching as opposed to what was called *Spätjudentum*. Jesus opposes the Jewish *Werkgerechtigkeit* and replaces it with his teaching of mercy and grace. In this approach, literary parallels serve to highlight theological differences.

The seminal work of Davies (1964) qualifies Matthew's gospel as a reaction to the emergence of rabbinic Judaism in the generation of Yavne, under the guidance of Rabban Jochanan ben Zakai. Davies shows that Matthew was aware of this reality and created a fitting response to it. Similarities in language and theology testify to the parallel formation of the two communities.

In a modified form, this view recurs in the works of Saldarini (1994) and Overman (1990). Both adduce the model of social, religious competition. This view presumes that the community of Matthew was physically surrounded by communities led by the successors to the Pharisees, i.e. the rabbis. The Matthean community considered itself to be in a struggle; we would say, in a free-market competition. Matthew tries to win the sympathy of the 'people', represented by the crowds (ὄχλοι)

in his narrative.<sup>6</sup> Within this struggle, Matthew uses strong polemics to discredit his opponents and discard the social differentiation of a separate class of Torah teachers (Matt 23:8). As we saw earlier, Matthew in this context adduces the topic of ‘teaching and doing’ in a polemical sense (Matt 23:2–3). The peculiar combination in this verse of ‘scribes and Pharisees’ is a rhetorical device used by Matthew, since ‘scribes’ constituted a different social class in Second Temple Judaism.<sup>7</sup> Matthew’s apparent paradox of acknowledgment and rejection can be explained as a reflection of a social nearness in which a threatening social competitor must be discredited using all possible means. Not practising what you teach was a thing any Jew in antiquity would—in theory—have condemned.<sup>8</sup>

A third approach takes special notice of the apparent similarities on a social level between Matthew and sectarian writings such as the Damascus Scroll. Among the peculiarities of Matthew is the exclusive authority ascribed to Jesus, a phenomenon known from Qumran (‘Teacher of righteousness’) but absent in the Mishna. This theory deduces from the anti-Jewish polemics (Matt 21:43; 27:25) that the Matthean community had split ranks with Judaism and tried to establish an alternative community, much like the community behind the Damascus Covenant (Stanton 1992, 85ff.).

The polemic against Pharisees and scribes indeed has parallels in the Qumran literature, and the accusation of corrupt Torah teachers also occurs (Weinfeld 1990). Moreover, the typical Matthean stress on fulfilling even the least commandment and being perfect (Matt 5:19, 48) is explained as a sectarian attitude (Stanton 1992, 94). However, how can we define sectarianism in a reality fraught with competing groups (Baumgarten 1997)? Moreover, Matthew deviates from a strictly sectarian ecclesiology where he keeps together people of virtue and people of vice in his community (*corpus permixtum*), only in the last instance resorting to modes of expulsion (Matt 18:15–17). Thus, Matthew some-

<sup>6</sup> Cousland (2000) argues that until the passion narrative (Matt 26), the crowd’s position towards Jesus remains undecided.

<sup>7</sup> Here we agree with Schwartz (1985). Stanton (1992, 145) follows the view that detects a coalition between these groups in the era after 70 CE.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew’s stance echoes the saying about preaching and doing (TJev 8:7). A similar critique is voiced in the ‘seven types of Pharisees’ in ARN a 37 (ed. Schechter 1997, 109), ARN b 45 (ed. Schechter 1997, 124), and parallels. On these texts, see Stemberger (1991, 40–46).

how combines aspects of what Baumgarten typifies as ‘integralist’ and ‘separatist’ sectarian policies.

### COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The second paradigm in particular is able to cover both differences and similarities. However, there is a fundamental non-equivalence that religious competition does not explain: anti-Christian polemics and references to competing sages are lacking in the rabbinic discourse. How can we explain the fierce polemical use of it in Matthew? We propose to invoke the social dynamics related to the social-psychological phenomenon of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is the mental conflict that occurs when beliefs or assumptions held by a socially stable entity are contradicted by new information (Festinger 1957). The conflict arouses social unease that must be relieved by specific defensive manoeuvres: rejecting the new information, explaining it away, or associating with like-minded people and attempting to convince others. In this respect, a general rule of thumb can be taken into consideration: the greater the expectations, the more severe the frustrations and the more intense the evolving emotions. The theory has been applied to an array of cases and seriously criticized. Its applicability to biblical and early Jewish sources has however been defended recently (Donaldson 1995). It does indeed explain the fierce and illogical reactions to deeply felt discrepancies in a community.

The results of this process may be detected in both documents, albeit on different levels. It has been argued that the sayings of R. Tarphon (*Mavoth* 2:15–16) originally had apocalyptic overtones. After the traumatic event of the Bar Kokhbah revolt, these were neutralized by adding a second saying, thus emphasizing the ‘wisdom character’ of the original saying. This was possible ‘because their metaphoric language permitted new ideas to be poured into old vessels’ (Silberman 1989, 60). This process transformed a potentially dangerous saying, because of its potential for threatening social stability, into conventional Torah wisdom.

Two vexing problems necessitated an answer in the community of Matthew. The first is the failure of the imminent realization of the Kingdom of Heaven, as preached by Jesus (Matt 4:23). How exactly would this Kingdom be realized in the social and political realm, especially after the fall of the Temple? The second issue requiring explana-

tion was the apparent failure of the mission in Israel, i.e. among the Jews. In the narrative of Matthew, Jesus considers it his prime task to preach to the ‘lost sheep of Israel’ (Matt 15:24) and orders his disciples to avoid the ‘roads of the Gentiles and the cities of the Samaritans’ but instead go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10:5–6). At the end of the gospel, however, the disciples are told to preach among all nations (Matt 28:27). This narrative rupture reflects a deeply felt grief in the community of Matthew, perhaps even in the first generation of disciples of Jesus. The blame for the apparent failure of the mission within the ‘house of Israel’ is placed massively on the Jewish leaders, ‘scribes and Pharisees’.

It is even possible that Matthew connected the postponed realization of the Kingdom with the failure of the mission. This is suggested by Jesus’ concluding remark to the Jewish leaders in the parable of the vineyard in Matt 21:43: ‘Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it (*ποιοῦντι τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτῆς*, lit. ‘doing’ its fruits).<sup>9</sup> Note that here also, the failure in following the Law is the issue, not faith.

But polemics alone do not suffice to account for the apparent gulf between expectation and reality. To solve this apparent contradiction, the community of Matthew views itself as living in an in-between situation, that is, after the first crisis encountered in the ministry of Jesus but still in expectation of a final, imminent judgement. The gospel urges the community to be prepared for this event by practising ‘righteousness’ and performing ‘good works’.

Therefore, Matthew adds the parable of the two sons, taking up the topic of doing the will of God, and urges them to be like the son who initially refused yet later on regretted his decision (*μεθαμελητεῖς*) and went to work in the vineyard of the father (Matt 21:28–32). Similarly, Matthew adds a parable that explains why ‘good’ and ‘bad’ live side by side in his community: the parable of the tares (Matt 13:24–30).

Here as in other parables, Matthew expands the plot by adding a second crisis. For example, in his version of the parable of the festive meal, the guests who finally participate in the great meal have to undergo an examination of their clothing by the King; anyone who is not suitably clothed is thrown out (Matt 22:11–13). This second crisis correlates with the expectation of an imminent eschatological judgement in the community. Thus Matthew explains the apparent contradiction between

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<sup>9</sup> Flusser (1988) qualifies verse 43 as originating from a Gentile, anti-Jewish editor.

the high set of standards set by Jesus and the reality of his community living as a ‘mixed society’.

### BUILDING A HOUSE: PRACTICE AS A TECHNICAL ART

We will put these models to the test by analysing some parallels of the parable of the builder (Matt 7:24–27; parr. Luke 6:47–49). In Matthew, it is the last in a series of three closing the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1–7:29). All of them share the motive of doing the will of God and serve as an epilogue to the Sermon (Keener 1999, 254, n250). To group traditions in threes is a well-attested editorial technique both in Matthew and in Avoth (S. Safrai 1987, 269).

The text runs as follows:

Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them,  
will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock;  
and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon  
that house,  
but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.  
And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them  
will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand;  
and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against  
that house,  
and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

The parable compares two types of men: one who builds his house on a rock and one who builds his house on sand. Only the first house will withstand rains, floods, and winds.

In his version, Matthew emphasizes the dramatic crisis and resulting fall of the house to underline the eschatological character of the situation.<sup>10</sup> The believers had to be prepared for the imminent judgement by righteous practice. The connection of our parable with the saying in Matt 7:21–23 supports this interpretation.

Second, using traditional language, Matthew qualifies the first man as a wise or sensible man (*ἀνδρὶ φρονίμῳ*) and the second man as a fool (*ἀνδρὶ μωρῷ*).<sup>11</sup> The opposition ‘wise/fool’ recurs later in the gospel, in the parable of the ten maidens (Matt 25:1–13). Being wise means doing good acts and observing the commandments in a period when the

<sup>10</sup> Note also the future tense ὄμοιωθήσεται, an acknowledged opening of eschatological Kingdom parables in Matthew.

<sup>11</sup> Compare the alternate use of *φρονίμος* (לְמַשְׁכִּיל) and *σοφός* (חָכָם) in Sirach 21.

community expects the final judgement to come very soon. The wise man relies on Jesus as sole authoritative teacher of the Law, as becomes manifest in the abundance of Greek words in the opening of the parable.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the phrase ‘these words’ (*τοὺς λόγους τούτους*) refers to Jesus’ interpretations of the Mosaic Law in the Sermon on the Mount and is repeated in Matt 7:28: ‘And when Jesus finished these sayings ...’. Here we encounter Matthew’s insistence on a sole and exclusive teaching authority, which his community should accept and follow. According to the narrative, the crowds reacted positively because ‘he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes’ (Matt 7:28–29). Matthew thus highlights the competition for influence between the Jewish leaders and Jesus.

Let us now turn to the imagery and the conceptual opposition it represents. The parable Jesus presents is not unique, as ‘Jesus again employs typical wisdom language familiar to Jewish sages’ (Keener 1999, 254).<sup>13</sup> In terms of the semantic opposition (wise/fool) and imagery (building) three rabbinic texts require discussion. First, a saying attributed to the first-century teacher Chanina ben Dosa:

כָל שְׁמַעֲשֵׂיו מְרַבֵּין (רַבִּין), מַחֲכָמָתוֹ, his wisdom will endure<sup>14</sup> (*מתקימת*); and he whose wisdom is in excess of his works, his wisdom will not endure (*אין מתקימת*). (MAvoth 4:10)

R. Chanina ben Dosa was one of the early pietists, capable of performing miracles, who laid much stress on the necessity of performing good deeds and even cherished reservations about a culture of Torah learning (S. Safrai 1965). In fact, this ‘holy man’ represented a tendency to charismatic leadership in early Judaism, less intellectual and perhaps more appealing to the populace, to which the Rabbis showed resentment (Bokser 1985, 80–81; Ch. Safrai 2004, 65). From this perspective, the motivation of the saying is notable. Practising strengthens the value of

<sup>12</sup> Davies (1964, 94) offers the translation: ‘Everyone then who hears me, in respect to these sayings...’.

<sup>13</sup> Some point to the double-structured judgement oracle in Isa28 as the model for our parable (Stanton 1992, 130). The theme of judgement is, indeed, present. The connection is, however, rather far-fetched, since the imagery ‘rock’ and ‘sand’ does not occur. Moreover, in Isaiah it is God who places a ‘stone’ (vs. 16), whereas our parable depicts merely human activity.

<sup>14</sup> Thus translations of Danby, Blackman, Hertz. Taylor (1897) translates ‘stands’. Note, however, that the hitpa’el can have the connotation ‘fulfilled’.

wisdom (*מחקימה*), whereas knowledge isolated from practice tends to fade away (*אין מתקימת*).<sup>15</sup>

Chanina's saying centres around 'wisdom', and as we saw, this is not only a major issue for the Rabbis, it is also a keyword in Matthew. Both Matthew and Chanina concur that only on the basis of right practice is true wisdom possible. Contrary to Matthew, however, Chanina does not mention a test. The motif of a test, the decisive point where the importance of deeds comes to the fore, occurs in a saying attributed to the second-century teacher R. Eleazar ben Azarja:

כל שבחמתו מרבה (רבה), to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are abundant but whose roots are few (*מממשי לאילן שענפיו מרביין ושורשיו מوطין*);  
 and the wind comes and uproots it and overturns it,  
 But he whose works are more abundant than his wisdom, to what is he like?  
 To a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are many (*לאילן שענפיו מרביין מوطין ושורשיו מרביין*);  
 so that even if all the winds in the world come and blow against it, it cannot be stirred from its place. (MAvot 3:18)

Eleazar shares two features with Matthew. First, he provides a parable (... *למה הוא דומה ל*; compare the opening *όμοιωθήσεται*). The tree with few roots that will not survive a storm serves a similar rhetorical purpose to the house built on sand in Matthew, and the tree with many roots resembles the house built on rock. In both images, it is the quality of the foundation (rock/roots) that is decisive. Second, both introduce a testing by winds. However, whether R. Eleazar refers to eschatology, to life-related events, or to political circumstances remains unclear.

It is clear that both sayings stress the necessity of practice. The main difference lies in their validation of knowledge. Eleazar and Chanina, who use a similar logic ('A more than B') criticize learning as an accumulation of knowledge, emphasizing instead the priority of doing. Matthew's parable is, however, phrased as a contradistinction, 'doing' versus 'not doing'. Together with the claim for the absolute authority of Jesus, this difference suggests an apocalyptic, separatist sectarian world view. The third parable will show, however, that this is not necessarily the case.

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<sup>15</sup> Thus Avery-Peck (2006, 158), connecting our text with 3:10. Without practice, one either stops yearning for new learning or one's learning fades away; this is one of the two lines of interpretation of this saying, see sources quoted in Goldin (1957, 131).

Like Matthew, the author of this parable uses the notion of building. It is attributed to the notorious early second century-teacher R. Elisha ben Abuya. Elisha is considered a heretic and assigned the sobriquet *aher*, ‘other’. In fact, the figure of Elisha facilitates the rabbinic tradition of dealing with the pressures of cognitive dissonance. According to one tradition, Elisha was unable to reconcile the teaching of God’s reward for keeping the commandments with what he experienced during the Bar Kokhbah Revolt (PHag 2,1 (77b); Kidd 39b; Goshen-Gottstein 2000, 73–78). However, in spite of his being a heretic, some of his Torah teachings are transmitted in Avoth and ARN (Goshen-Gottstein 2000, 40).

The relevant parable is the first in a series of four on ‘doing’ and ‘learning’. We present the text according to the editio princeps, but compare it with Schechter’s edition (1997, 77) and the synoptic edition of Becker (2006, 196–197). Disputed readings are indicated by italics in the translation:

אדם שיש בו מעשים טובים ולמד תורה הרבה למה הוא דומה  
 לאדם שבונה אבניים מלמטה ואחר כך לבנים  
 אפילו באים מים הרבה ועומדים בצדן אין מחין אותן ממקומן  
 ואדם שאין בו מעשים טובים ולמד תורה הרבה למה הוא דומה  
 לאדם שבונה לבנים תחילה ואחר כך אבניים  
 אפילו באים מים קיума מיד הופכין אותן

(One in whom there are good works and who has studied *much*<sup>16</sup> Torah, to what may he be likened?

To a person who builds a foundation<sup>17</sup> with stones and afterwards with bricks: even when much water comes and collects by their side, it does not *dislodge*<sup>18</sup> them.

But one in whom there are no *good* deeds and who has studied Torah, *to what may he be likened*?<sup>19</sup>

To a person who builds first with bricks and afterward with stones: even when a little water *gathers*, *it overthrows them immediately*.<sup>20</sup>)  
 (ARN a 24, trans. Goldin 1957, slightly adapted)

<sup>16</sup> ‘much’ missing in ms. Oxford Opp. 95 and added in ms. New York Rab 25.

<sup>17</sup> Thus most mss and ed. princeps; Schechter prefers the reading *תחילה*, extant only in ms. Oxford Opp. 95.

<sup>18</sup> Thus most mss; ed. princeps, suggested as the most correct form by Schechter. Ms. New York Rab 50 reads *ממחין*; ms. Oxford Opp. 95 reads *מייזות*.

<sup>19</sup> Missing in ms. Oxford Opp. 95.

<sup>20</sup> ms Oxford Opp. 95 reads: ‘Even if a little water stands, it moves it from its place.’ Schechter notes: ‘Without doubt, the reading of the printed versions is the older one.’

Like Chanina, Elisha is interested in the quality and preservation of Torah knowledge. The sequence ‘one in whom there are *good* works and who has studied *much* Torah’ suggests that Torah knowledge *per se* is no guarantee that the scholar is a strong, religious person. It is rather the other way around: sound knowledge of the Torah is only possible when it is based on the performance of good deeds. The saying seems to express the idea that the sustainability of ‘a lot of Torah’ ('bricks') is dependent on a man’s character ('stones'). In Eleazar’s view, it was the proportion of deeds and knowledge that leads to his comparison ('more than...'); in Elisha’s saying, the existence or non-existence of good deeds is decisive for the success of Torah study in periods of crisis. His logic of contrast is remarkably closer to Matthew’s than the comparative logic of R. Eleazar. This indicates that Matthew’s rhetorical structure ('doing'/'not doing') is not absolutely necessitated by his apocalyptic and sectarian claims. Both Matthew and Elisha seem to be interested in a person’s character as manifest in his practice or lack of practice.

The parallel is especially apparent in the image of building a structure. Can we imagine that Elisha learned about this motif from a tradition about Jesus? Remarkably, contacts between R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos and early Christians existed, at least according to Rabbinic sources, and R. Eliezer was related to Elisha.<sup>21</sup>

There is, however, another possibility. Comparing knowledge of the Torah with building is attested in a midrash by R. Eleazar in the name of the earlier mentioned R. Chanina. The midrash equates the word ‘your children’ (*בניך*, *banecha*) in Isa 54 with ‘builders’ (*בוניך*, *bonecha*), thus comparing students of the Torah to ‘builders’ (Ber 64a and parr.). This imagery is not an isolated one. The Rabbis consider the Torah the blueprint God consulted to create the world (MAvoth 3:14). Indeed, God created it by looking in the Torah, just as an architect uses a blueprint (R. Hoshayah in GenR 1:1). The imagery used here may have had more ancient roots. Philo describes in parable-like form how an architect plans the structure of the city he is going to build. Thus, it is with the ‘logos’, the realm of rational powers, that God created the world. This ‘logos’ parallels the blueprint of an architect.<sup>22</sup> Were the

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<sup>21</sup> See THul 2:24 and AvZar 17a; on the possible connection of R. Eliezer and Elisha: PHag 2:1 (77b).

<sup>22</sup> Comparing God to an architect and the logos with the ‘idea’ or blueprint, *On the Creation* 15–25; *On the Eternity of the World* 2.

Rabbis indeed aware of this concept?<sup>23</sup> It is feasible to suppose that some Pharisaic and rabbinic circles also depicted scholars and disciples as builders, i.e. studying and practising Torah. If this connection holds true, ‘building’ as a metaphor for Torah study and Torah practice was known in the early Jewish world, and our parallels used already existing imagery.

Finally, what socioreligious setting do these parables reflect? The saying of Elisha presupposes the notion that a person’s character is independent of his knowledge of Torah. Moreover, even without knowledge, a person is able to perform good deeds.<sup>24</sup> Elisha probably agrees with Beith Shammai that only people suited for study should be admitted (ARN a 3/b 4, ed. Schechter 1997, 14–15).<sup>25</sup> This view is in disagreement with Hillel and his school, who state that knowledge of the Torah is a prerequisite for piety and that study is able to change a person’s character (compare MAvoth 2:6; ARN a 15/b 29, ed. Schechter 1997, 60–61). Elisha’s saying on studying in this perspective accords with the requirements for teaching in the community of Matthew: only a teacher who practises even the least important of the commandments is considered fit.

## CONCLUSIONS

Often parallels have been considered problematic with regard to ‘who influenced whom’. Our task was, however, to compare the discourses

<sup>23</sup> Urbach (1979, 200), denies any connection with Philo. However, the first-century dispute between the Houses of Hillel and Shammai on the chronology of plan (*מהות בנה*) and action (GenR 12:14) is much closer to the Philonic concept of a rationality (*λόγος*) preceding creation. ‘The Logos is not primarily God’s spoken word, but his mental activity in the act of creation’ (Stone 1984, 265, see also 273–274).

<sup>24</sup> Note that this is acknowledged in the four categories of ‘learners’:

There are four types among them that frequent the House of Study:  
he that goes and does not practice – he has the reward of his going;  
*he that practices but does not go – he has the reward of his practicing;*  
he that goes and practices – he is a saintly man;  
he that neither goes nor practices – he is a wicked man.  
(MAvoth 5:14, trans. Danby)

<sup>25</sup> The reading of version *a* (‘rich’) is not attested in version *b*, nor in other sources; see Safrai (1987, 188). Earlier hypotheses about the Schools as representatives of the aristocracy as opposed to the lower social strata are mainly based on this reading. It seems, however, that this is an ongoing debate among the Sages as to who is qualified for Torah study; see Ben Shalom (1993, 221–230). Our reading fits in with his analysis.

the parallels serve. From this perspective, some conclusions may be drawn.

First, both communities shared a reservoir of parabolic metaphors and narrative forms to address the problem of learning and practising. In both contexts, the discourse on learning and doing primarily focuses on the moral and intellectual qualities of a socially elite group, the in-group members, i.e. disciples, pupils, and scholars. In this perspective, the issue at stake is the (ideal) social structure of the community and in particular its leading elite.

The criticism of a scholarly elite embodied in the sayings of Chanina, Eleazar, and Elisha, and their rebuttal of study as the mere accumulation of knowledge, points to contradictory tendencies in the first generations after 70 CE. By incorporating these voices into a comprehensive discourse that promotes the study of the Torah, the editor of *Avoth* creates a plurality of religious options and even allows for non-scholarly religious practice. It is tempting to see this ‘pluralism’ as an indication of the antisectarian policies attributed to the rabbinic movement after 70 CE (Cohen 1984, 51). However, it is more feasible to suppose competitive tendencies in religious leadership, at a time when the rabbis were not yet strong enough to ascribe the utmost socioreligious value to the practice of study.<sup>26</sup>

Be this as it may, while upholding the ideal of learning the Torah, the rabbis tried to urge the uneducated, outside the elite of Torah students, at least to practise (some) Torah. Participation of the community was not based solely on study, even if its kernel consisted of a class of Torah scholars who favoured study, because ‘study leads to practice’ (Kidd 40b).<sup>27</sup>

Matthew’s use of the discourse attests to its prevalence in Judaism in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple. Matthew’s community, with its cohabitation of Jews and non-Jews, has to compete with the rival authority of the ‘rabbis’. Study of the Law in the rabbinic way is denounced forcefully; the only viable way of reading ‘Moses

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, Safrai (2004, 69) notices a decline of the Rabbi as a pietist after the Yavne era. For Cohen’s reading as projecting modern (American) democracy, see Schwartz (2001, 13). Boyarin (2006) proposes evaluating the Yavne traditions as the outcome rather than the cause of the transformations in the early rabbinic world. Boyarin perceives two ‘Yavne tales’, a pluralistic ideology and an exclusive ‘production of the “category” of Jewish outsiders’ (5). Note that the historical and ideological problems of the heavenly voice in Yavne (‘these and these are the words of the living God’ [Eruvin 13b and parr., Boyarin 2006, 11]) were extensively discussed in Safrai (1981).

<sup>27</sup> On the historical value of rabbinic ‘decisions’, see Safrai (1981).

and the Prophets' is in light of the teachings and the person of Jesus. The polemic use of the discourse fits in with the sectarian traits of Matthew's community, but the appearance of similar criticism of the learned elite in Avoth betrays a shared concern with moral requirements.

Matthew's inner zeal for practice can be understood against the background of propagating the message of the gospel to the outside world and in view of its apocalyptic expectations. On both fronts, the discourse fulfils its role. Its dominance in Matthew can be explained as the result of cognitive dissonance, to explain the failure of the mission in Israel and the delay in the coming of the Kingdom of God.

In conclusion, both Matthew and Avoth wrestle to bolster a new religious leadership, based upon observance of Torah. Even if their hermeneutics as regards the Torah differed, both used a common Jewish rhetoric to attain their goals.

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## RABBINIC AND CHRISTIAN MODELS OF INTERACTION ON THE SONG OF SONGS

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The complex relationship between Origen's work and Judaism has been the subject of academic study for the last one hundred and fifty years, beginning with Graetz, Bacher, Krauss, Marmorstein, Moore, de Lange, and others.<sup>1</sup> Their comprehensive inquiry enabled later scholars to focus upon more specific topics, including the comparison of rabbinical exegesis on the Song of Songs with Origen's *Commentary* and *Homilies* on the Song of Songs. Origen's work on the Song of Songs has been associated with the study of midrash in various ways:

### *The Polemical Aspect*

Some scholars have argued that the Jewish and Christian interpretations on the Song of Songs were part of a religious dispute. Baer (1956) stresses the influence of Jewish exegesis on Origen's work, while Kimelman (1980, 567–95) and Loewe (1966) emphasize the Christian influence on Jewish exegesis. Urbach (1971), taking both sides, shows that the dispute was of a reciprocative nature. A Christian interpretation was offered in response to a Jewish one, and in turn was confronted by a later Jewish exegesis, and so forth. Clark (1986) and Blowers (1988) present a broad view of the background in the Land of Israel in the third century CE and show a dynamic pattern of religious relations. Clark argues that Origen's exegesis addresses problems occasioned by both a Jewish and a Gnostic presence. Blowers examines the exegetical dispute as part of a wider missionary conflict between Church and Synagogue

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\* Different scholars enriched this comparative research: Marc Hirshman, with whom I have discussed the issues raised in this paper; David Stern was informative on allegory in early Jewish and Christian writings; Daniel Sheerin and Ann Matter helped with Origen's exegesis; I wish to thank them all, and especially my father, Joseph Bodenheimer, for his help and support.

<sup>1</sup> A full description of early scholarship can be found in Baer (1956, 15–16 and n68); de Lange (1976); Kimelman (1980, 567–569). For a thorough bibliographical study up to 1985, see Baskin (1985), with a list of works on the Song of Songs on pp. 63–64. For recent studies, see below.

in Palestine. Lately, Goshen-Gottstein (2004) published an article entitled ‘Polemomania’ that questions the existence of any Jewish–Christian dispute regarding the exegesis of the Song of Songs. He argues that there is an excessive use of polemics and calls for a reexamination of the whole matter.

### *The Genre*

Hirshman (1996, 23–30; 1988) noted the broad range of genres used in Christian writings in contrast to the Rabbis’ exclusive reliance on the form of midrash, that enabled them to distinguish its work from that of the Church, as well as that of its surroundings.

### *The Method of Exegesis*

Urbach (1971, 251–52 and 275) argued that Origen’s allegorical reading of the Song of Songs indicates that this type of interpretation was a widespread phenomenon in rabbinical works of the third and fourth centuries CE. While Urbach indicates the common modes of reading, Boyarin (1990, 107–16) rather focuses on their differences. In his opinion, Origen’s allegorical reading moves from the concrete text to its abstract meaning, while the midrash on Song of Songs does the opposite: it uses abstract metaphors, the ‘proverbial’ text of the Song, in order to explain concrete verses in the Torah that narrate history. Goshen-Gottstein (2004, 160–61 and 187–88) argues that the Jewish and Christian interpretations to the Song of Songs do not share a common allegorical basis. Origen saw the Song as a liturgical text that causes the reader to identify with its contents, while the Rabbis read it as they read other biblical books. In response, Stern (2008) suggests using new and productive categories to explore these issues: exoteric and esoteric, which touch upon the practice, purpose, and function of reading.

### *The Setting*

Some scholars argue that Christian preaching in antiquity can shed light on its Jewish counterpart, both from direct descriptions (rabbinic evidence is rare) and indirectly. Hirshman (1991; 1996) studies the connection between Christian preaching and its intended audience and then makes inferences about midrashic homilies and the educational level and character of the audiences for whom they were composed. Blowers (1988, 103–9) sketches the missionary struggle between the Church and the Synagogue, and their competition for the same reservoir of potential proselytes.

This paper aims to add another aspect of the cultural and religious relations, by showing how Origen's multilayered interpretation to the Song of Songs can offer new insights regarding the diversity and richness of the rabbinic exegesis of the book. Furthermore, Origen's two compositions on the Song of Songs (*Commentary* and *Homilies*), that are of different nature and style, can help us resolve questions regarding the redaction of Midrash Song of Songs Rabbah (ShirR; see below): what were the existing materials, and why were they included or excluded from the rabbinic composition?

#### THE SONG OF SONGS: INTRODUCTION

The Song of Songs contains many daring descriptions:

Ah, you are fair, my darling, ah, you are fair  
Your eyes are like doves behind your veil. (Cant 4:1)  
How lovely are your feet in sandals, O daughter of nobles!  
Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master's hand.  
Your navel is like a round goblet—let mixed wine not be lacking!  
Your belly like a heap of wheat, hedged about with lilies.  
Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. (Cant 7:2–4)

These beautiful sketches, as many others, raised questions regarding the place and status of the Song of Songs as part of the canonic Bible. The problem is clear: the Song of Songs appears as a love song between two lovers. The male lover, who longs for his beloved, describes her virtues with much passion and many graphic details, among them the structure of her body: her round thighs, her heaped belly, her breasts and neck. The maiden, too, spares no words when she tells her friends about her tender beloved who is as majestic as Lebanon: his locks are curled, his eyes are like doves, and his mouth is delicious (Cant 5:2–6:3).

In order to illustrate the great changes in the attitude to the Song of Songs, let us progress a few hundred years to a midrashic composition named Song of Songs Rabbah (ShirR). This is an exegetical work that expounds the verses of the Song of Songs in consecutive order, including almost every verse, with dicta by sages who lived in the Land of Israel between the first and fourth centuries CE.<sup>2</sup> Its redaction took place at a somewhat later period, around the beginning of the seventh century

<sup>2</sup> On the nature of ShirR, see Zunz (1974, 128–29); Theodor (1879; 1880); Lachs (1965). For an overview, see Kadari (2004, 1–9).

CE in the Land of Israel. The Rabbis' leading approach in ShirR can be demonstrated by the same verses quoted above:

Rabbi Johanan interpreted the verse as referring to Israel before Mount Sinai. *Thy hair is as a flock of goats that trail down from Mount Gilead: (...) The mountain you trailed down from (...) Which is this? This is Mount Sinai (...) Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes all shaped alike: matters determined by number, two hundred and forty-eight positive precepts and three hundred and sixty-five negative precepts. Which are come up from the washing: they were cleansed from iniquity (...) Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet: this refers to their proclamation before the Ten Commandments: And all the people answered with one voice, saying, 'All the things that the Lord has commanded we will do' (...) At that moment Moses began to extol them saying: Thy temples are like a pomegranate split open—the emptiest among you is as packed with knowledge of the Torah as a pomegranate with seeds (...) and through whom was the Torah given? Through Thy two breasts, namely, Moses and Aaron.* (ShirR 4:4:1, 182–84)<sup>3</sup>

R. Johanan interprets the verses allegorically, not as describing the virtues of a beautiful maiden, but rather the beauty of the people of Israel at a climactic moment in their history, when they proclaimed their willingness to receive the Torah. R. Johanan's interpretation represents the leading exegetical method in ShirR. As Urbach (1971, 247) and I. Heinemann (1970, 155–57) noted, almost all the verses in ShirR are interpreted allegorically as expressing the profound love and connection between God and Israel.

The questions that arise are the following: did other variant interpretations of the Song exist at the time of the Rabbis? And if they did exist, why do we not find such a variety of interpretations in ShirR? Finally, can we learn from this anything about the intended audience of this composition? In order to answer these questions, I would like to refer to Origen's work on the Song of Songs. I intend to show that Origen's compositions on the Song shed new light on early Jewish interpretations of the book and can resolve questions about the redaction of its midrash.

Origen wrote two separate compositions on the Song of Songs (Nautin 1977; Trigg 1998, 1–66). The first was a set of homilies that were preached in church at Caesarea in the period 239–242. The second was

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<sup>3</sup> The English translations by Simon include some variations and adaptation according to Ms Vatican 76, which is the main manuscript of ShirR; see Steller (1993, 301–11).

a commentary in ten books that was begun in Athens in 245 and completed (books 5–10) in Caesarea in the years 246–247. Unfortunately, neither the *Homilies* nor the *Commentary* are fully extant, nor have they survived in their original form. Of the *Commentary* we have the Latin translation made by Rufinus, consisting of three (or four) books only. Very few Greek fragments have remained, mostly found in the catena commentary ascribed to Procopius of Gaza. Of the *Homilies* only two have survived. Although they were committed to writing in Greek, probably by Origen himself, no Greek fragments have been found. We have the Latin translation of the *Homilies*, composed by Jerome while he was in Rome in the year 383. The surviving *Commentary* and *Homilies* cover only the first two chapters of the Song of Songs.

When addressing Origen's *Commentary* and *Homilies*, one should bear in mind that Rufinus's rendering of the *Commentary* on the Song of Songs is quite free, and he may have expanded upon, or made changes in Origen's writings. Although Jerome's translation of the *Homilies* may be more accurate, we face here another difficulty: these were originally oral homilies that were delivered before an audience. The lively nature of an oral address could never be precisely reconstructed, not even by its own author (Matter 1992, 29; Clark 1986, 387 and n11). Notwithstanding these reservations, I will attempt to show how Origen's work on the Song of Songs can be instrumental in the study of the redaction of ShirR, and I will do so from two perspectives:

- By analyzing Origen's three levels of interpretation to the Song of Songs, and searching for similar levels in the rabbinic exegesis.
- By referring to the differences between Origen's two compositions and comparing their underlying reasons to those of the redactor of ShirR.

#### A THREE-LEVEL INTERPRETATION TO THE SONG

##### *Origen*

In the prologue to his *Commentary* and in the opening of the first *Homily*, Origen explains that the Song of Songs is a marriage-song, an epithalamium (Origen Cant, *Homilies* 268) presented in the form of a drama (Origen Cant, *Commentary* 21–22). He identifies four speakers (or groups of speakers) in this drama: the bride, the bridegroom, the maidens, and the friends of the bridegroom, and assigns them their lines

throughout (Origen *Cant.*, *Commentary* 21–23; *Homilies* 267–68). Origen treats this drama as a single literary unit, though he breaks it into segments dictated by the imagined dramatic situation.<sup>4</sup>

Origen shows how one term can have two meanings, one that applies to the outward man and one that applies to the inner one (Origen *Cant.*, *Commentary* 25–28). Accordingly, Scripture, too, can speak on several levels. Let us see how this is done in his own words, and how he leads his reader through the different levels:

*'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth'* (*Cant* 1:2) (...) Reading it as a simple story, then, we see a bride appearing on the stage (...) but because the bridegroom delays his coming for so long, she, grieved with longing for his love, is pining at home (...) This is the content of the actual story, presented in dramatic form.

But let us see if the inner meaning also can be fittingly supplied along these lines. Let it be the Church who longs for union with Christ (...)

As the third point in our exposition, let us bring in the soul whose only desire is to be united to the Word of God and to be in fellowship with Him, and to enter into the mysteries of His wisdom and knowledge as into the chambers of her heavenly Bridegroom. (Origen *Cant.*, *Commentary* 58–60)

Clearly, Origen perceived three senses of Scripture:

- 1) The first is the corporal or literal sense.<sup>5</sup> Origen opens by explaining the verse in its context of an actual story, and he places the characters within the dramatic situation.
- 2) In the second sense, Origen proceeds to the ‘inner meaning’ of the words, as an allegory of the longing of the community of the Church for Christ.<sup>6</sup>
- 3) The third sense is spiritual or mystical. The drama is understood as a progression of the devout individual soul from its initial entry into the divine mysteries to its final union with Christ.

In her work on Origen’s exegesis, Torjesen (1986, 54–57 and 156–60) shows how these levels of interpretation are consistent and appear throughout the *Commentary*. Origen’s interpretation raises a few ques-

<sup>4</sup> Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus, two fourth-century manuscripts of the Septuagint, assign the verses to various characters in red ink, thus presenting the dramatic interpretation; see Treat (1996, 399–514).

<sup>5</sup> On the different meanings of ‘literal’ by Origen, see Young (1997, 186–89).

<sup>6</sup> Young (1997, 189–192) identifies eight different types of patristic allegory. I use the word ‘allegory’ in this paper in its broad sense, namely, meaning something other than what one says; see Whitman (2000, 1–4). For that reason, I disagree with Goshen-Gottstein (2004, 153–61) and see no problem in calling rabbinic interpretation a kind of allegory.

tions. Can it be that the Rabbis, like Origen, understood the holy text of the Song of Songs on several levels? Can we trace rabbinic teachings that imply the existence of three levels of interpretation: the literal, the allegoric, and the mystical?

I will say in advance that a three-level interpretation of a single verse of Song of Songs has not been found. We can, however, search for sayings of one Rabbi that imply a three-level understanding, albeit not on one and the same verse.

### *R. Johanan*

R. Johanan was one of the most important sages of the third century, as described thoroughly by Bacher (1938), and he is cited by name many times in ShirR. Kimelman (1980, 567–95) suggests that R. Johanan and Origen were aware of each other's exegetical tendency. Origen mentions his frequent disputes with Jews and his having consulted a certain 'Ιούλλος πατριάρχης' (patriarch 'Iullus') and also Jewish Christians who helped him in his study of Scripture. Different studies discuss the nature of these connections and attempt to identify this particular Jewish teacher. Some of the suggestions were: the Patriarch Judah II, his brother Hillel, R. Hoshaiyah Rabbah, R. Simlai, R. Simeon Ben Laqish.<sup>7</sup> Kimelman suggests it was R. Johanan. He points out that R. Johanan dwelt in Caesarea in the 240s CE, the same time that Origen lived there.<sup>8</sup> The two held similar positions, both serving as deans of an academy and as popular preachers.<sup>9</sup>

Without taking a position on the interesting question of whether they had any direct or indirect interaction, I aim to show a communion of concepts regarding the exegesis of the Song of Songs, in the same time and milieu, between religious scholars in Caesarea in the third century. I will attempt to demonstrate that R. Johanan and Origen shared a three-level understanding of the Song of Songs.

<sup>7</sup> For a full summary of the different opinions and their reasoning, see de Lange (1976, 23–28).

<sup>8</sup> As to the way the two communicated, Kimelman (1980, 572–73 and n29) cites de Lange: 'Origen's lack of Hebrew knowledge has no bearing on the question of his access to Jewish scholarship' (155n61). As to R. Johanan, Kimelman is of the opinion he knew Greek and had access to those who did, such as R. Abbahu. Halperin (1988, 326) proposes a daring solution to Origen's lack of knowledge of Hebrew. He suggests that the exchanges between Origen and the Jews must have been conducted in Greek.

<sup>9</sup> Yet see Goshen-Gottstein (2004, 161–65), who maintains that interaction between the two was never a historical possibility.

### *The Allegorical Level*

As many scholars have noted, the leading exegetical method in ShirR is the allegorical interpretation. The verses of Song of Songs are not earthly love songs between a man and a woman, rather they sing about the true love between God and the people of Israel. This main principle is presented in a passage in the beginning of the midrash. As I have shown elsewhere (Kadari 2006, 162–64), ShirR 1:1:10–1:2:1 serves as an introduction to ShirR and should be read as a unit in its own right. It presents the main methods of interpretation of the Song of Songs, such as the following passage:

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth* (Cant 1:2)

Where was it said? Rabbi Hinena b. Pappa said: It was said by the Red Sea  
 (...)

R. Johanan said: It was said on Sinai (...)

R. Meir said: It was said in the Tent of Assembly (...)

The Rabbis say: It was said in the Temple (...) (ShirR 1:2:1, 20–21)

According to Lieberman (1965, 119), the Rabbis present here four different Tannaitic keys to the understanding of the Song of Songs: the splitting of the Red Sea, the Revelation at Mount Sinai, the inauguration of the Tabernacle, and the inauguration of the Temple.<sup>10</sup> Their opinions differ as to the historical event that the Song describes, yet all four keys see the Song as an allegory of the love between God and the community of the Jewish people.<sup>11</sup>

R. Johanan's allegorical key to the understanding of the Song of Songs is that it describes the Revelation at Mt. Sinai (Lieberman 1965, 119n7). Many other sayings of R. Johanan in ShirR demonstrate this understanding of the Song. For example, his exegesis on the group of verses from Song of Songs 4:1–4 ('*Thy hair is as a flock of goats*') that appears in ShirR 4:4:1 presented in the beginning of this paper.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Lieberman (1965, 119) argues that not only does the Song describe those events, but according to these Rabbis, the Song of Songs was also given at that actual time. For another suggestion on the creation of these four allegorical methods, see Gottlieb (1992). On the redaction of this multilayered text, see Kadari (2004, 114–39). Yet Goshen-Gottstein (2004, 160) claims the Rabbis had no systematic interpretation to the Song of Songs. But see n106, where he admits this passage discusses the principal way the Rabbis explain the uniqueness of the Song.

<sup>11</sup> Another type of allegory found in Tannaitic exegesis perceives the Song as an allegory of love between God and His bride, that is, the Torah. See Kadari (2002, 391–404).

<sup>12</sup> Other examples are ShirR 1:2:2, 21 and ShirR 5:14:2, 246. On the last passage, see

### *The Mystical Level*

Urbach (1971, 249–50) shows that some Rabbis perceived the Song of Songs as a portrayal of the passionate love of the individual human soul for God, for the ‘Garden’ of esoteric teachings and the study of the Divine Chariot, which is how he understands R. Akiva’s teaching regarding ‘books that defile the hands’ (Scripture):

R. Akiva says: Heaven forbid! No man in Israel ever disputed the fact that the Song of Songs does not render the hands unclean, for the entire world is not worthy of the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies. (MYad 3.4)

Urbach links this declaration to the mystical exegesis (1971, 249). Moreover, Scholem (1965, 36–42) and Lieberman (1965, 123–26) expressed the opinion that ‘*Shi’ur Komah*’ and ‘*Ma’aseh Merkavah*’, which describe God’s stature and His Divine Chariot, were actually part of an ancient midrash on the Song of Songs. Stern (2008) explains that the act of interpretation of Song 5:11–12 was not solely exegetical, but also performative.

These scholars find external support for the Jewish mystical reading, in Origen’s prologue to his *Commentary* on Song of Songs:

For they say that with the Hebrews also care is taken to allow no one even to hold this book in his hands, who has not reached a full and ripe age. And there is one practice too that we have received from them—namely, that all the Scriptures should be delivered to boys by teachers and wise men, while at the same time the four (...) that is to say, the beginning of Genesis (...) the first chapter of Ezekiel (...) the end of that same (...) and this book of the Song of Songs—should be reserved for study till the last. (Origen *Cant, Commentary* 23)

Origen lists the Song of Songs together with three other texts that are known as esoteric: the interpretation of the creation of the world as described in the beginning of Genesis; the first chapters of Ezekiel, in which the doctrine of the angels is expounded; and the end of Ezekiel, that contains the building of the future Temple. The fact that Origen included the Song of Songs in this list serves as external testimony to an existing Jewish esoteric reading of the Song in the third century in Caesarea.

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Rapp-de Lange (2003, 355–70). R. Johanan’s teachings on the Song of Songs were gathered by Bacher (1938, 103–7).

Turning now to Rabbi Johanan, the fact that he engaged in esoterica such as *Ma'aseh Merkavah* appears in the Talmudic literature:

'Nor (the work of) the Chariot in the presence of one' (...) R. Johanan said to R. Eleazar: Come, I will instruct you in *Ma'aseh ha-Merkavah*. He replied: I am not old enough. When he was old enough, R. Johanan died. R. Assi (then) said to him: Come, I will instruct you in *Ma'aseh ha-Merkavah*'. He replied: Had I been worthy, I should have been instructed by R. Johanan, your master (Hag 13a).

There is evidence that indicates that R. Johanan perceived the text of Song of Songs as describing the passionate love of the human soul for God:

*'The Song of Songs'* (Cant 1:1)—the best of songs, the most excellent of songs, the finest of songs. Let us recite songs for Him who has made us a remnant for the world, as it says, '*The Lord shall lead him in solitude*' (Deut 32:12).

R. Johanan said in the name of R. Aha who had it from R. Simeon b. Abba: Let us recite songs and praises to Him who will one day cause the holy spirit to rest upon us, let us sing before Him many songs. In all other songs either God praises Israel or they praise Him (...) Here, however, they praise Him and He praises them. He praises them: '*Behold thou art beautiful, my beloved*' (Cant 1:16) and they praise Him: '*Behold thou art beautiful, my beloved, verily pleasant*' (Cant 1:17) (ShirR 1:1:11, 19)

R. Johanan interprets these verses of the Song of Songs on a mystical level. He clearly uses the expression to 'cause the holy spirit to rest upon us' with the meaning of revelation, which was perceived as the highest stage of adherence to God that the human soul can attain. R. Johanan goes on to explain the uniqueness of the Song. Unlike other songs, the Song of Songs expresses a special closeness between the bride and the groom. In practice, the praising of God is performed by describing His features: '*Behold thou art beautiful, my beloved, verily pleasant*', which itself indicates a kind of revelation.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Literal Level*

As to the literal interpretation of the Song of Songs, the matter is more complex. There are scholars such as Eissfeldt (1965, 485), Murphy (1968, 506–10), Gordis (1974, 2), and Fox (1985, 250) who claim that the inclusion of the Song of Songs in the biblical canon was made pos-

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<sup>13</sup> Lieberman (1965, 120–22) argues that Israel actually saw the presence of God at these four historical events and therefore were able to describe His stature.

sible only after it had been interpreted as an allegory of love between God and Israel. A good example of this approach is the most convincing essay by Cohen (1966, 1–21).

Yet other scholars, for example Pope (Pope 1977, 89–93), Haran (1996, 70–78, n63), Urbach (1971, 249), and I. Heinemann (1970, 155–57), argue that the Song of Songs was given its allegorical interpretation only after the canonization of the Bible. They point to the literal translation of the Septuagint<sup>14</sup> and to a literal interpretation of the Song by Eupolemus, a Jewish historian from the second century BCE, preserved in a small fragment (Holladay 1983, 132–33 and 152). They argue that rabbinic teachings of the Song of Songs (such as the one by R. Akiva in MYad 3.5 mentioned above) indicate that a non-allegorical understanding was common as well.<sup>15</sup>

Urbach draws the chronological boundary of the literal interpretation of the Song in the days of the Tanna R. Akiva. He writes:

Between the destruction of the Temple and the revolt of Bar Kokhba, the entire scroll (...) was interpreted as an allegorical account of the history of the relationship between the Shekhinah and the Community of Israel (...) Rabbi Akiva gave the *coup de grace* to the plain interpretation of Canticles when he declared (T San 12.10): ‘Whoever trills verses of Canticles at a banquet and makes a kind of melody thereof, has no share in the world to come.’ (Urbach 1971, 249)

Urbach, however, later uses Origen’s allegorical and mystical reading of the Song of Songs in order to prove similar rabbinical phenomena. But what about Origen’s first stage, of literal interpretation? Origen continues on to the other two levels only after he first explains the dramatic situation. Can this literal level be found at all in rabbinical exegesis from the time of Origen?

We find teachings by R. Johanan in which he understands the Song of Songs literally. Thus in ShirR 5:1:1, 228:

‘Let my beloved come into his garden and enjoy [its luscious fruits]’— R. Johanan says: The Torah teaches one proper conduct, that the bridegroom should not enter the bridal chamber till the bride gives him permission. What is the basis for this? ‘Let my beloved come into his garden’ (Cant 4:16), ‘I have come into my garden’ (Cant 5:1)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> On the Old Greek translations to the Song of Songs, see Treat (1996).

<sup>15</sup> Other sayings brought to reinforce this argument are the one by R. Akiva in TSan 12.10 (see as follows) and a saying by R. Jonathan in ShirR 1:1:10, 17.

<sup>16</sup> The parallel of this passage in PRK 1.1 was first mentioned by I. Heinemann (1970,

R. Johanan is interpreting two consecutive verses, with a reading that is sensitive to the dialogical nature of the Song of Songs. The first verse, according to R. Johanan, is an invitation by the bride: ‘Let my beloved come into his garden’ (Cant 4:16) followed by the second verse, the approval or implementation by the groom: ‘I have come into my garden’ (Cant 5:1). But why does the bridegroom have to be invited if this is already ‘his garden’, as the bride herself says? R. Johanan answers this question by applying these verses to a very specific stage in the process of marriage. The bride has already committed herself to the bridegroom by their betrothal (*eirusin*), but they are not yet married. The end of this extended ritual will take place with his entry into the bridal chamber (*nissuin*). That is why she says ‘let my beloved come into his garden’, because she is already engaged. Yet although the bride is committed by the *eirusin*, according to R. Johanan this final stage of *nissuin* should properly be done only with the bride’s consent.

It seems that R. Johanan took the verse literally as a nuptial song, an epithalamium, just as did Origen (see above). In fact, he goes so far as to consider its literal sense as a guide to behavior. R. Johanan refers to the Song of Songs as ‘the Torah’: ‘*Limadetekha Torah derekh erez*’ (the Torah teaches one proper conduct). Various scholars have attempted to explain the complex term ‘*derekh erez*’. Bacher (1923, 172–73) and Safrai (1994, 512 and 534) explain that it is used for matters that are not included within the boundaries of religion, yet the Torah sees fit to teach us something about them. It can appear in the sense of good manners, good breeding, or livelihood; Ish-Shalom (1902, 2–7) emphasizes its use regarding sexual behavior. But all these interpretations leave us with a literal understanding of the verse and its corporal meaning. This passage indicates that R. Johanan understood the Song as both explained by and guiding the conduct of everyday life.

Another saying of R. Johanan from ShirR 1:17:1 reinforces his literal conception:

*Our panels are cypresses* (Cant 1:17)—R. Johanan said: The Torah teaches one proper conduct, that a man should make his ceiling of cedar and his floor of cypress, as it says *The beams of our houses are cedar and our panels are cypresses* (ShirR 1:17:1, 91)

Again R. Johanan says that the meaning of the text is to give good practical advice, here without any sexual connotation. The introduction

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156), however, he does not interpret it. For earlier rabbinic sayings that refer to the literal meaning of the Song, see Stern (2008).

to ShirR contains a dictum of R. Johanan regarding the correct way to interpret the Song of Songs:

R. Judan and R. Levi said in the name of R. Johanan: Wherever you find in this scroll the expression ‘King Solomon’, the text speaks actually of King Solomon (...) The Rabbis, however, say: Wherever you find ‘King Solomon’, the reference is to The King Whose (Name) Is Peace (*hamelekh shehashalom shelo*, meaning God (...). (ShirR 1:1:11, 20)

R. Johanan’s maxim is phrased as an exegetical principle, claiming that wherever the words ‘King Solomon’ appear, they should not be interpreted allegorically as referring to God, but should rather be interpreted literally, as a reference to the flesh-and-blood king.<sup>17</sup>

To summarize this point, we have found evidence that R. Johanan had a three-leveled understanding of the Song of Songs, even if not on the same verse. These three levels are not conflicting, but rather support each other. Viewing the Song of Songs as given at Mount Sinai (ShirR 1:2:1, 20–21; 4:4:1, 182–84), R. Johanan sees it as ‘Torah’ itself. Indeed, we find him calling it ‘Torah’ in ShirR 5:1:1, 228 and ShirR 1:17:1, 91: ‘*Limadetekha Torah derekh eretz*’. For the same reason the Song of Songs could be interpreted at the highest level. It was given in a moment of revelation at Mount Sinai, which could be described as an exciting meeting between the bridegroom and His bride at Mount Sinai, as expressed by R. Johanan in ShirR 1:1:11, 19.

#### TEXT AND AUDIENCE

We have shown traces of a rich variety of interpretations to the Song of Songs given by R. Johanan. But then we must consider why the allegorical method is preferred in ShirR, why other levels of interpretation were set aside by the redactor of the Midrash, and the identity of his intended audience.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> On the image of Solomon in ShirR, see Rapp-de Lange (1999).

<sup>18</sup> The relationship between midrash and its audience has been a subject of several studies. Broadly, one can divide the scholars into four groups: 1. those who emphasize the role of midrash as a public sermon in the synagogue, an opinion presented mainly by Joseph Heinemann (1970) and Shinan (1981, 44–60); 2. scholars who place midrash in the academy, intended for scholars and their students, mainly represented by Fraenkel (1991, 16–43); 3. scholars who perceive midrash as a literary creation of a redactor, see Meir (1989) and Sarason (1982, 557–67); 4. those who maintain that the collections were originally source books for preachers and teachers, see Stern (2004, 128–29).

To resolve this question, we turn again to Origen's work on the Song of Songs, now referring to the differences between his *Commentary* and his *Homilies*. Torjesen (1986, 58–59 and 160–65) shows that the three levels of interpretation: the corporal, or literal; the allegorical; and the mystical, or moral, are revealed exclusively in his *Commentary*. Origen's *Homilies* on the Song of Songs address one level only, its allegorical meaning. The Song in the *Homilies* is interpreted immediately and directly as a love story between Christ and the Church. Origen forgoes explanation of the story, or elaboration of the dramatic situation, and also omits any special reference to the soul. The characters are cast, from the outset, in their roles as Christ and the Church.

The contrast between Origen's *Commentary* and his *Homilies* is explained by Torjesen (1986, 58–59), Matter (1992, 25–31) and Clark (1986, 386–427) as due to the different audiences for whom they were composed. Clark writes:

The *Homilies* and the *Commentary* were probably addressed to different audiences: Whereas the simple *Homilies* rely heavily on moral and spiritual exhortation, the longer *Commentary* is more theologically complex... That Origen would write two works of varying difficulty on the same biblical book accords well with his view that Christianity should be explicated to naive believers as well as to Christian ‘Gnostics’. (Clark 1986, 388)

The *Commentary* was earmarked for more advanced Christians, while the *Homilies* were addressed to beginners. Origen did not want to expose impure beginners to the mysteries of the Song of Songs, nor did he want them to understand the text literally, as he explains in the prologue to his *Commentary*:

To those who are at the stage of infancy and childhood in their interior life—to those, that is to say, who are being nourished with milk in Christ, not with strong meat (...) it is not given to grasp the meaning of these sayings. For in the words of the Song of Songs there is that food, of which the Apostle says that ‘strong meat is for the perfect’ and that food calls for hearers ‘who by ability have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil’ (...) But if any man who lives only after the flesh should approach it, to such a one the reading of this Scripture will be the occasion of no small hazard and danger. For he, not knowing how to hear love’s language in purity and with chaste ears, will twist the whole manner of his hearing of it away from the inner spiritual man and on to the outward and carnal; and he will be turned away from the spirit to the flesh, and will foster carnal desires in himself, and it will seem to be the Divine Scriptures that are thus urging and egging him on to fleshly lust. For this reason, therefore, I advise and counsel everyone who is not yet rid of the

vexations of flesh and blood and has not ceased to feel the passion of his bodily nature, to refrain completely from reading this little book and the things that will be said about it. (Origen *Cant, Commentary* 22–23)

The distinction made by Origen between his two works may enable us to understand the exegetical approach of the redactor of ShirR and identify his intended audience. We have shown that a three-level interpretation to the Song probably did exist at the time of R. Johanan and may have been employed by other sages as well. Yet, the literal and mystical interpretations were set aside, and the midrashic work was founded mainly upon the allegorical method. This suggests that ShirR was designated for a large and varied audience of beginning and advanced scholars, as well as a nonscholarly audience. In short, it seems that similar concerns guided Origen in his *Homilies* and the redactor of ShirR.

In conclusion, this paper shows how Origen's work on the Song of Songs offers new insights about the exegesis and the redaction of ShirR. Origen's three levels of interpretation shed light on the various rabbinic teachings. We found traces of a rich variety of interpretations to the Song of Songs given by R. Johanan and suggested that he, too, had a threefold sense of the Scripture: literal, allegorical, and mystical.

This opens the way to new considerations regarding organization and sequence, methods, and levels of comprehension. Origen's evident concerns for his designated audience reflect upon our understanding of the materials redacted in ShirR and its intended audience. The founding of the midrash mainly on the allegorical method suggests that ShirR was intended for a large and varied audience. Origen's work opens new directions of research and suggests fruitful new understandings of the materials included in and excluded from ShirR.

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## MONISM AND DUALISM IN JEWISH-MYSTICAL AND CHRISTIAN-GNOSTIC ASCENT TEXTS

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A variety of texts from the ancient world depict human beings escaping the constraints of their physical existence even before death and ascending to a supernal realm. This essay<sup>1</sup> will discuss and compare two bodies of ancient esoteric literature in which the ascent theme is prominently present—a group of late antique or medieval Jewish mystical writings commonly referred to as *Hekhalot* texts,<sup>2</sup> and some of the early Christian-gnostic texts which were recovered in Egypt in 1945. In my analysis of the relevant texts, I shall address such questions as who the subject or protagonist of the ascension is, how the journey on high is imagined and depicted, and what its ultimate goal is regarded as. In this way I hope to throw some light onto the distinct features of these two literary corpora as well as onto the possible relationship between them.

### DESCENT AND ASCENT MYTHOLOGY

It is possible to differentiate two complementary basic patterns in the mythologies of various ancient cultures—the so-called *katabasis* or descent pattern, and the *anabasis* or ascent pattern. Alan Segal, who discusses these mythological structures in his article ‘Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and Their Environment’, associates the descent pattern with ‘cosmologies, theophanies or angelophanies and prophetic mediation’ and the ascent pattern with ‘ascensions, ecstatic ascents, journeys to heaven and the heavenly journey of the soul’ (1980, 1340).

In the Hebrew Bible we find various expressions of the descent pattern (creation narratives, stories about the origin of evil, accounts of

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<sup>1</sup> A longer version of this article is included in: A. Hilhorst, E. Puech and E. Tigchelaar (eds), *Flores Florentino. Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez*, Leiden–Boston 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The *Hekhalot* texts are the literary basis for the study of *Merkavah* mysticism. For the meaning of these Hebrew terms, see below.

divine revelations mediated by angels and prophets), while ascent stories are rare. In biblical tradition, God reveals himself by descending to the recipients of his message rather than by bringing the messenger to the divine realm (Idel 2005, 24). In fact, the only clear example of a heavenly journey is the ascension of Elija in the whirlwind in 2 Kings 2:11 (cf. the brief report of God's taking Enoch away in Gen 5:24). In non-canonical and post-biblical Jewish traditions, ascent stories became much more popular. Ascensions are told of Enoch and Moses—who according to biblical tradition mounted Sinai and saw God ‘face-to-face’—and of several other biblical heroes, including Adam, Abraham, Levi, Baruch, Phineas, and Isaiah (Segal 1980, 1352–68; Himmelfarb 1993). The ascent theme took a particular shape in various *Hekhalot* texts. In this literature, the journey on high is presented as a recurring experience of living people. The writings that undisputedly belong to this corpus are *Hekhalot Rabbati* (the Greater Palaces), *Hekhalot Zutarti* (the Lesser Palaces), *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (the Works of the Chariot) and the so-called *Hebrew*, or *Third, Book of Enoch*. They all deal, among other things, with the mystic's journey through the heavenly *hekhalot* ('palaces' or 'halls') to reach the *Merkavah*, the divine Chariot.<sup>3</sup>

In gnostic texts, various versions of the two basic patterns can be found. The gnostic descent myth, or the myth of origins, narrates how God's original unity disintegrated and how, as a result, a portion of the divine substance fell into the world, where it was detained by the demiurgical God and his powers. As a rule, the gnostic descent myth also mentions spiritual helpers sent down from the divine realm to bring the truth to the first human beings and their progeny. In effect, this myth explains the present situation of humanity as the outcome of a conflict between good and evil powers (Luttikhuizen 2006, 44–58). The gnostic ascent myth, on the other hand, concerns the return of the lost spiritual substance to its divine source. We shall see how this ultimate return could be anticipated in visionary ascents.

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<sup>3</sup> Ideas about the divine Chariot were inspired by Ezekiel's Throne-vision, as described in Ezek 1; cf. Isa 6, Dan 7, 1 Enoch 14.

### THE SOURCES

In the last twenty to thirty years, increased attention has been paid to *Hekhalot* literature.<sup>4</sup> Virtually all the relevant texts have become easily accessible in synoptic editions prepared by Peter Schäfer and his research team (Schäfer 1981). It is unnecessary to recall the growth in our knowledge of ancient gnostic texts and ideas following the discovery and publication of the Nag Hammadi collection of books (Scholer 1971, 1997<sup>5</sup>). Thanks to the progress in scholarship in both fields, a comparison of Jewish-mystical and Christian-gnostic ascent texts can be based on more solid ground. By way of introduction, the literary character and the possible time and place of origin of the relevant Jewish and gnostic texts will be presented first.

The earliest textual witnesses to *Hekhalot* literature date from the ninth century—manuscript fragments from the Cairo Geniza. The bulk of the texts is contained in large manuscripts produced in Europe in the late Middle Ages. However, the texts inscribed in these manuscripts might be much older. Gershon Scholem, whose studies mark the beginning of contemporary research of *Merkavah* and *Hekhalot* mysticism, believed that their essential content stems from the first and second centuries CE. This early dating is challenged by several scholars, in particular Peter Schäfer, who relegates the texts to the Gaonic period (the end of the sixth to the middle of the eleventh century) (1988, 277–295; cf. Halperin 1988). It would seem that the majority of contemporary experts hypothesize that some of the *Hekhalot* traditions may go back to third and fourth-century mystical circles in Palestine, but it has also been pointed out in recent studies that Babylonian traditions must have been of central importance in the development of *Merkavah* mysticism (e.g. Davila 2001, esp. 20–22; Arbel 2003).

The *Hekhalot* corpus includes various literary genres and diverse traditions—accounts of ascensions, magical prescriptions and cosmological expositions, descriptions of angelic figures and heavenly rituals, speculations of the nature and the appearance of God, and other topics, interwoven with songs, prayers, and incantations. Owing to the fluctuating and sometimes disorderly and fragmentary character of their content,

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<sup>4</sup> See Don Karr, ‘Notes on the Study of Merkabah Mysticism and Hekhalot Literature in English’, <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/karr/mmhie.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Continued in the journal *Novum Testamentum*.

they can hardly be described as clearly composed ‘books’. Schäfer prefers to speak of them as ‘macroforms’ (1988, 214f.; 1992, 6).

Aspects of the above *Hekhalot* texts will be compared here with three gnostic treatises from the Nag Hammadi collection that are likewise concerned with pre-mortal ascensions, namely *Zostrianos* (Codex VIII,1), *Marsanes* (Codex X) and *Allogenes* (Codex XI,3). The manuscripts date from the mid-fourth century. This can be inferred from the dates and names mentioned on papyrus scraps that were pasted inside the covers of the codices (Barns 1981). The Coptic texts contained in the codices are translations of Greek texts. As we shall see below, there is good reason to assume that the originals of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* were composed sometime before 269 CE. The possibility that the gnostic texts in question are considerably older than the oldest parts of the *Hekhalot* corpus must be considered. Unfortunately, the surviving texts, in particular those of *Zostrianos* and *Marsanes*, are in a very bad physical condition. More than half of their pages are lost or seriously damaged.

#### HEKHALOT TEXTS

##### *The Subject or Protagonist of the Ascension*

The *Hekhalot* texts claim to transmit the teachings of reputed rabbinic teachers such as Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Ishmael, and Rabbi Nehunia ben ha-Kanah. The sages relate how they ascended on high and reached the divine realm. Their reports of previous heavenly journeys are alternated with detailed instructions informing the addressees on what to do to follow the lead of the teacher and also embark on a heavenly journey. The texts are pseudepigraphic for, *pace* Scholem, there can be little doubt that they were written several centuries after the lifetimes—i.e. the early second century CE—of these rabbis.

That we are dealing with pseudepigraphic and fictional texts is also clear from the fact that their message differs on essential points from what we know about the actual teaching of the rabbinic authorities in question (Schäfer 1988, 293: ‘[W]e are concerned here with a type of *pseudepigraphical literature* which is related to Rabbinic literature in a way similar to that by which the biblical pseudepigrapha are related to the Bible’; cf. Dan 1998, 92). In basic agreement with the ancient Scriptures, the rabbis described meetings with God as the result of divine rather than human initiative, while the *Hekhalot* texts declare

that anyone fulfilling the proper requirements would be able to ascend and reach the divine realm. Furthermore, the rabbis insisted that all truth is contained in the Scriptures and in the interpretations given orally by Moses, whereas the *Hekhalot* texts claim to reveal a direct route to coming into contact with the divine, without any reference to Scripture and tradition (Elior 1989, 99). The alleged authorization by classical sages cannot mask the radical differences from rabbinic tradition.

The ascending mystic is seen as a representative of Israel, ‘an emissary of the earthly congregation’ (Schäfer 1988, 288; 1992, 143).<sup>6</sup> After his visit to the highest palace, he is supposed to descend and give testimony of the things seen and heard. A few passages claim that all Jewish people are able to engage in the ‘matter of the *Merkavah*’ and ascend on high (Arbel 2003, 34 with n. 62).<sup>7</sup> However, in point of fact, this is only a theoretical possibility, as the texts make clear that only highly qualified individuals can initiate a heavenly ascent. The requirements include not only a sufficient level of education, spiritual development, and moral integrity but also the willingness to exercise various ascetical practices and to train in magical-theurgic and trance-inducing techniques. Mention is made of fasts and special diets, bodily postures and ritual cleansings, repetition of prayers and adjurations, recitation of divine names, etc. The effect of these practices is discussed in a conversation between two Babylonian scholars (c. 1000 CE). One of the rabbis states:

[O]ne who possesses the qualities described in the books and who wants to behold the *Merkavah* and the palaces (*hekhalot*) of the angels on high, must follow certain procedures. He must fast a certain number of days, put his head between his knees, and whisper many hymns and praises (...) So he can glimpse into their inner rooms (i.e. inside the palaces), as one who sees the seven palaces with his own eyes, entering from one palace into the other and seeing what is in it.<sup>8</sup>

These mystical methods were supposed to lead to an elevated spiritual consciousness enabling the *Merkavah* seekers to surpass their limited human capacities. At the end of their ecstatic ascent they could experience a direct understanding of veiled divine realities. It should be observed that the texts do not presuppose an ontological duality in the

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Hekh. Rabbati*, section 248, where the mystic is addressed as ‘son of the beloved seed’ (apparently for the sake of clarity, one manuscript adds: ‘of Abraham’).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. sections 81, 204, 247, 335, 421, 572 in Schäfer 1981.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Scholem 1941, 49; Schäfer, 1992, 153f.; Arbel 2003, 32.

human being. They do not state that only a higher part—the soul, mind, or spirit—ascends on high while the other components of the person remain behind.<sup>9</sup> Instead of assuming a duality in the human being, *Hekhalot* texts point to a duality—in fact an immense distance—between the human and the divine.

### *How is the Journey on High Imagined?*

Note, first of all, that several texts, in particular *Hekh. Rabbati*, paradoxically refer to the ascent to heaven as a *descent* ('descent to the Chariot', *yeridah la-Merkavah*). Accordingly, those embarking on a heavenly ascent were referred to as *descenders* (*yordei Merkavah*).<sup>10</sup> Gershom Scholem explains this terminology from the synagogal practice to 'descend' to the Torah shrine (1960, 20, n. 1). Other explanations have also been proposed, but unfortunately they all remain hypothetical.<sup>11</sup>

The *Merkavah* mystics had no special interest in the lower universe, as the texts suggest that the 'descenders' crossed the spheres of the planets and the fixed stars and started their journey immediately in the celestial realm above the firmament. Otherwise, the heavenly world resembled the cosmos below the firmament in so far as it was imagined as a structure of superimposed layers of increasing holiness, all of them more or less equal in size and shape (Lesses 1998, 13, and the literature mentioned there). The mystics are likely to have imagined the world above as an immense structure with the features of a temple as well as a royal palace. The highest heaven, the palace of the divine Chariot, is also depicted as a concrete and tangible space, rather than as a transcendent and unlimited realm (Arbel 2003, 75–86).

*Hekhalot* texts present the process of a gradually increasing awareness of transcendent truths as a voyage towards the divine realm. The journey is pictured with the help of various biblical, extra-biblical apoc-

<sup>9</sup> Idel 2005, 28–33 and 56–58, conjectures that a kind of astral body is meant.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the titles of the studies by Annelies Kuyt, *The 'Descent' to the Chariot*, and James R. Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*.

<sup>11</sup> In a later publication, Scholem explains the term from the practice of the mystics 'to reach down in themselves in order to perceive the chariot' (1972, 494). Halperin connects the term with the descent of the Israelites to the Red Sea (1988, 226f.). Wolfson argues that the term only refers to the last phase of the ascension, where the traveller is seated near the throne of glory (1993); cf. the critical discussion of Wolfson's proposal by Kuyt (1995, esp. 372–374). According to Dan, the expression reflects Song of Songs 6:11, 'I went down to the nut orchard' (1998, 40, n. 1).

alyptic, and Near Eastern mythological concepts and modes of expression (Arbel 2003, chaps 3 and 4). In some of the texts, several stages of the ascent are distinguished. During the first stage, where the mystic tries to free himself of all the restrictions of human existence, he often faints or falls backwards. The later stages of the ascent also appear to be difficult and even dangerous as mighty and terrifying angelic guardians or ‘gatekeepers’ try to prevent unworthy voyagers from approaching the Godhead. *Hekh. Rabbati* describes the gatekeepers of the seventh palace as follows:

At the entrance to the seventh palace stand and rage all mighty ones, ruthless, powerful, and hard, terrible, and frightening, higher than mountains and sharper than hills. (...) Bolts of lightning come from their eyes, channels of fire from their noses, and torches of coal from their mouths. They are adorned (with) helmets and armors, lances and spears (...) Their horses are horses of darkness, horses of the shadow of death, horses of gloom, fire, blood, hail, iron, fog (...) And a cloud is over their heads, dripping blood over their heads and the heads of their horses. This is the mark and measurement of the guardians at the entrance to the seventh palace, and such is the entrance of each palace.<sup>12</sup>

Although their frightening appearance and armour might suggest otherwise, the gatekeepers were not seen as demonic figures. On the contrary, they acted on behalf of God in defending the heavenly palaces against intruders. The aspirant ascenders were advised to take certain instruments of protection with them—‘seals’ on which secret divine names were engraved (for the meaning of the seals, see Lesses 1998, 317–323). When the mystic showed the correct seal to the guardians they would let him in and help him continue on his way to the divine Throne.

Large portions of the *Hekhalot* texts consist of technical guides or manuals for mystics. It is clearly implied in these instructions that the heavenly ascent could be performed more than once. Schäfer suggests that the ascension to heaven was primarily conceived and practiced as ‘a ritual, so to speak a liturgical act’ (1988, 294). A few texts relate how an enlightened teacher describes what he experiences in the other world while remaining among his disciples (cf. *Hekh. Rabbati*, sections 198–228, and *Ma’aseh Merkavah*, section 582, discussed by Swartz 1992, 22f., and Idel 2005, 32). It is also reported that attendants called

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<sup>12</sup> Schäfer 1981, section 213; cf. id. 1988, 251; 1992, 33.

an ascender back from his heavenly journey to answer their questions (Arbel 2003, 76).

### *The Goal of the Ascension*

There is some divergence of opinion in recent scholarship about the goal of the heavenly journeys as they are described in *Hekhalot* texts. Schäfer and others, for instance, emphasize the magical aspects of the ‘ascent ritual’ and consider the adjuration of angelic powers as its main goal. For the purpose of this study it may suffice to state that the prospect of a direct encounter with God in his glory must have been at least one of the motivating forces behind the ascents, and a supreme goal in itself (cf. Chernus 1982, esp. 124; Wolfson 1994, 81–84). However, what were the mystics supposed to see and how did they imagine the encounter with God?

Firstly, the God of the *Merkavah* mystics is the biblical Creator and Master of the universe. Much emphasis is placed on God’s kingly aspect. As a rule, he is portrayed as a mighty, anthropomorphic sovereign of enormous dimensions, clothed in garments of light and wearing a royal crown. God is seated on his Chariot-Throne in the seventh heavenly palace, while numerous angels glorify him, exalting his name and accepting his absolute authority. It is possible to see the account of God’s immense bodily dimensions as a paradoxical attempt to express the idea of his imperceptible transcendence. Anyhow, other texts of the same corpus affirm that God is in fact totally imperceptible and beyond human imagination. Arbel speaks of a mythological model of ‘transcendent anthropomorphism’, which in her view is embedded in ancient Near Eastern traditions and found later, in more restricted form, in various biblical and apocalyptic sources. Sometimes the dimensions are so large that they are in fact infinite and immeasurable (2003, 126 and 129). It may be noted that these two seemingly conflicting conceptions of God could already be found in biblical and rabbinic traditions.<sup>13</sup> The *Hekhalot* corpus does not yet distinguish between God’s true essence and his appearance in anthropomorphic form, as later kabbalistic speculation would do (Chernus 1982, 145; Wolfson 1994, 107). As Elliot Wolfson notes, ‘the ancient Jewish mystics lived with the paradox of

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<sup>13</sup> In contrast to the anthropomorphism of God found in various biblical texts, Deut 4:12, 15–16 emphasizes that the Israelites did not see (could not see?) God but only heard his voice.

assuming the visibility of the essentially invisible God' (1994, 90; cf. Schäfer 1992, 139–141).

Gershom Scholem stresses that a total union with the Divine is absent in early Jewish mystical texts.

The Creator and His creature remain apart, and nowhere is an attempt made to bridge the gulf between them or to blur the distinction. The mystic who in his ecstasy has passed through all the gates, braved all the dangers, now stands before the throne; he sees and hears—but that is all (1941, 56).

The final words of this statement perhaps need some qualification. Wolfson rightly observes that according to many *Hekhalot* texts, upon his arrival in the seventh palace the mystic is said to be seated on a throne before God. Wolfson interprets this 'enthronement' as a form of angelification (1994, 83f.) but underlines that this does not make the mystic divine or equal to God's glory. *Hekhalot* literature is rooted in 'Yahwistic dualism', as Wolfson calls it (84, n. 46). The distinction between God and his creature is of an ontological nature and therefore insurmountable. Only in the kabbalistic texts of the later Middle Ages do we find notions such as the mystic's total self-annihilation and subsequent immersion in God—'as a drop of water within the sea'—and the integration of all things in God's infinite Being (cf. Idel 1988, esp. 67–70, and 1999). Here the *unio mystica* is believed to overcome God's otherness.

The awareness of God's sublime and solemn majesty may have prevented the *Merkavah* mystics from describing their relationship with God in the language of love (Scholem 1941, 55: 'What there is of love in the relationship between the Jewish mystic and his God belongs to a much later period'), although Wolfson points to a few passages where, as he suggests, erotic terminology is used (1994, 98–105, 104 n. 139: 'Contrary to Scholem's generalization that there is no love between God and the Merkavah mystic, it is possible that the very moment of visual encounter is an erotic experience. The sexual component may be implied in the terminology "beloved" employed to refer to the mystic'; cf. Deutsch 1995, 132–135). These passages might express the traditional concept of God's love for Israel and Israel's love for God (Schäfer 1988, 289; 1992, 149), since, as previously noted, the mystic was believed to represent God's people. The loving relationship between God and his community can be imagined as a communion but certainly not as a dissolution of the duality of God and man.

## GNOSTIC ASCENT TEXTS

*The Subject or Protagonist of the Ascension*

Three treatises in the Nag Hammadi collection of books relate the visionary ascent of Zostrianos, Marsanes, and Allogenes respectively. Zostrianos was believed to be the great-grandfather or great-uncle of the founder of the Zoroastrian religion, Zoroaster/Zarathustra.<sup>14</sup> The role attributed to him testifies to the widespread ancient idea that religious seers of old, such as Hermes Trismegistos, Zoroaster, and Moses, had extraordinary information about divine truths (Layton 1987, 122). It is not clear from the damaged text of *Marsanes* whether this book likewise presents its hero as an ancient prophetic figure. The Greek name ‘Allogenes’, meaning ‘Foreigner’ or ‘One of another race’, is a generic rather than a proper name. Because gnostics saw themselves as people of another, i.e. divine, race (Jonas 1958, 49–51), it is not unlikely that Allogenes is imagined as a timeless model figure rather than as an ancient seer. Otherwise, his role as a mediator of divinely revealed teachings is comparable to that of Zostrianos and Marsanes in the other two books. Allogenes delivers his revelatory messages to his ‘son’ Messos. The teachings of the books are worded in the first person.

In his biography of the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus, Porphyry writes that Plotinus was engaged in a polemic against gnostic Christians who ‘produced revelations by Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nicotheos and Allogenes and Messos and other such people’.<sup>15</sup> If Porphyry’s information means that the gnostics in question possessed early Greek texts of the books of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* known to us from fourth-century Coptic translations, the original compositions must be dated back to some point before 269 CE, when Plotinus left Rome (he was active in Rome as a philosophical teacher between 244 and 269, and died in 270). First consider a passage of the opening section of *Zostrianos*:

After I parted in mind (*nous*) from the corporeal darkness within me and the psychic chaos and the feminine desire [that is] in the darkness—as I did not have to do with it—and after I had discovered the boundlessness of my material (nature) and reproved the dead creation within me and the

<sup>14</sup> Arnobius, *Adv. nationes* 1.52; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 5.103.2–4 (cf. Turner 2001, 294f., n. 29).

<sup>15</sup> *Vita Plotini* 16 (cf. Layton 1987, 184).

divine ruler of the perceptible world, I powerfully preached wholeness to those with alien parts (VIII 1.10–21).

Two features of this passage deserve special attention. According to Zostrianos it was his mind (*nous*) that travelled on high. This account presupposes a particular anthropology—the human being is composed of two or perhaps three parts—body, soul and mind. Only the highest component is able and worthy to ascend. Note further that Zostrianos speaks in the past tense about his ascent. After his return he summoned potential gnostics to seek the divine truth in the same way as he did (*Allogenes* leaves this task to *Messos*). It is important to observe this, as it means that his teachings are not so much concerned with the final redemption—the *post mortem* ascent of the soul—as with the question of how self-recognition and perfect insight into ultimate reality can be achieved (King 1995, 2 and passim). Insomuch as *Zostrianos*, *Marsanes* and *Allogenes* report the visionary ascents of their heroes, these gnostic texts can be paralleled with the relevant *Hekhalot* accounts.

More than once, Zostrianos insists that those who endeavour to seek the spiritual truth must withdraw from their material body and its psychic accretions, apparently because attention to the body and the emotions is believed to darken the mind and distract from focusing on stability, simplicity, and unity. Indeed, the surviving pages are replete with negative statements about the body, the material world, and its creator and ruler.<sup>16</sup> In the sermon which concludes his book, Zostrianos repeats:

Awaken your divine part as divine, and strengthen your sinless elect soul.  
Mark the passing of this world and seek the immutable ingenerateness.  
(...) You have come to escape your bondage. Release yourselves, and that  
which has bound you will be dissolved (VIII 130.18–24 and 131.10–12).

While the body will disappear ('that which has bound you will be dissolved' or 'nullified'), the spiritual part of the seer is destined to be assimilated with the divine. Zostrianos states that it is possible for a certain type of human to part 'from all these matters' and, 'having withdrawn into God, to become divine' (44.18–22); he then affirms: 'I became divine' (53.18f.). *Allogenes*, too, relates that at the moment of

<sup>16</sup> The material world and the body are associated with darkness, changeability (VIII 5.9), powerlessness (26.9–11), pain and suffering (46.2–15), bondage (46.15–30), multiplicity and boundlessness (46.5f.), death (123.6–8), ignorance (130.7), and perishability. The creator-God is condemned (1.16–190; 9.12–15; 128.7–14; 131.23f.). Cf. Sieber 1991, 13.

his ascension he had to leave behind his body (his ‘garment, *enduma*’):

After [I] had been seized by an eternal Light out of the garment that clothed me, and had been taken up to a holy place whose likeness cannot be revealed in the world, then, through a great blessedness I saw all those things about which I had heard (XI 58.26–37).<sup>17</sup>

Only after a person’s earthly confines have been escaped through ascension to a ‘holy place’ can direct knowledge of the divine truth be achieved. In the preserved pages of *Marsanes* the separation from the body is not reported. However, expressions such as ‘incorporeal spheres’, ‘incorporeal beings’ and ‘incorporeal substance’ are encountered several times. This anthropological dualism is quite common in gnostic texts. An interesting parallel to the above passages of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* occurs in the first *Apocalypse of James* (Nag Hamm. Codex V,3) where Christ summons James:

Cast away from yourself (...) this bond of flesh, which encircles you. Then you will reach Him-who-is (the transcendent God). And you will no longer be James; rather you will be The-One-who-is (V 27. 3–10).

In their statements about the earthly condition of humankind, these gnostic texts are explicitly dualistic. However, they add that the spiritual part is the only thing that counts. Even before death, the body should be escaped from since the corporeal components are completely unrelated to a person’s true identity. Ultimately, everything related to the body will be reduced to nothing while the spiritual core is preserved and will be united with the only One who truly is.

### *How is the Journey on High Imagined?*

The three gnostic books depict the journey on high as an escape from duality and as a search for unity. On the one hand, they do so with the help of philosophical concepts ultimately based on Plato’s doctrine on the soul’s progress to ever higher levels of comprehension (*Symposium* 210a–212a) in order to attain true knowledge of that which really is (*Phaedrus* 247b–e). (See Turner 2000; id. 2001, esp. 693–743; Finamore 2000.) On the other hand, the ascent is described in religious language. Only to a small degree is the progress in knowledge presented as the result of discursive reasoning. For the greater part it is dependent upon

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<sup>17</sup> The phrase ‘about which I had heard’ refers to the first main part of the book in which *Allogenes* is prepared for his ascent by several revelations.

the reception of revelations from divine helpers. They explain what the voyager sees, and they guide him on his way to higher forms of knowledge (King 1995, 6–8). In addition, the gnostic books describe the ascent as a process of gradual initiation. At each stage, Zostrianos receives one or more metaphorical baths in celestial water (VIII 4.21–7.22; 25.10–20; 53.15–54.1; 62.12–14). Anointments in *Allogenes* seem to have a similar function (XI 52.13–15).

The role of the angelic helpers ('powers' or 'glories') is made clear in the following passage of *Zostrianos*, speaking of the souls seeking to escape from the bonds of the body:

Powers have been appointed for their (the souls') salvation, and these same ones are in this place. And (...) there stand at each [aeon] certain glories so that one who is in the [world] might be saved together with [them]. The glories are perfect living thoughts (*noêma*). They cannot perish because [they are] models (*tupos*) of salvation; each one will be saved by them. And being a model (oneself) one will receive strength by it, and having that glory as a helper (*boêthos*), one thus passes through the world (*kosmos*) and through [every] aeon (VIII 46.16–31).

First the souls pass through the cosmic world and then through the various realms above the firmament. As far as we can assess from the extant portions of their texts, the gnostic books under discussion reveal little interest in the cosmic stages of the journey on high. The very damaged second page of *Marsanes* seems to distinguish thirteen levels (designated as 'seals') (Turner 2001, 111 with n. 22). This spatial structure serves as a very long bridge between matter and pure spirit, multiplicity and unity, and ignorance and true knowledge, respectively. It is also an attempt to explain the multiplicity of the universe from the one divine source. In *Marsanes* the first three spheres are viewed as 'material' realms. The fourth sphere is probably imagined as 'incorporeal' and 'divine'. The other 'seals' are connected with increasingly abstract entities or 'aeons'.

The lack of interest in the passage of the soul through the cosmic (planetary and zodiacal) spheres is a particular feature of *Zostrianos*, *Marsanes*, and *Allogenes*. Numerous other gnostic and non-gnostic texts specify in great detail the dangers that threaten the soul when it ascends through these spheres, usually described as the realms of hostile powers. The three books have this almost exclusive interest in otherworldly realities in common with the *Hekhalot* writings.

The higher stages of the ascent reflect the structure of the divine hierarchy. Viewed from above, each aeon is a somewhat less than per-

fect representation of the former or parent aeon. From the point of view of the ascender, each level represents one stage upwards on the way to complete knowledge and salvation. In *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, ‘the all-glorious Youel’ prepares the ascender for the reception of the final revelation of the highest realities.<sup>18</sup>

The central figure in the *pleroma* (fullness) or divine world is Barbelo.<sup>19</sup> She is regarded as the first and only externalization of God’s self-contemplating thought and therefore as the principle of all knowledge and salvation.

(She is) a thought of the perfect mind (*nous*) of the Light that causes immortal souls to acquire knowledge (*Zostr.* VIII 29.17–20).

While the Invisible Spirit remains undivided, Barbelo divides into three aeons, designated by abstract names (Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes). Each of these major aeons in turn has a multitude of constituent parts, often designated as powers, glories, or luminaries. The luminaries of the Barbelo aeon reveal the highest levels of divine Being to the ascender. The ascent through their aeons requires a gradual shift from discursive knowledge to contemplative knowledge and silent intuition. Through this process the mind of the gnostic becomes assimilated to ever higher ontological levels (Turner 2001, 652f.).

### *The Goal of the Ascension*

In *Allogenes*, Barbelo’s luminaries teach the ascender that it is impossible to know the Unknowable. Accordingly, they command him to stop when he approaches the highest level of knowledge because, they caution, seeking the unknowable God would only disturb him (61.25–39). This episode introduces a traditional definition of God’s transcendence with the help of abstractions and negations (the *via negativa*). (See the discussion of various ‘negative theologies’ in Luttkhuizen 2006, 112–116.) However, before warning the seer, the luminaries told him that he would receive a ‘first revelation of the Unknowable’ (59.27–30). This revelatory knowledge, designated paradoxically as ‘ignorant knowledge’ (64.10–11; cf. 59.30–32), enabled the gnostic to reach the completely transcendent God—provided, that is, that he was prepared to abandon all efforts to understand.

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<sup>18</sup> The name of this angelic figure is likely to have been adopted, directly or indirectly, from a Jewish tradition. Cf. Scholem 1941, 68; King 1995, 46.

<sup>19</sup> The name ‘Barbelo’ has not yet been explained satisfactorily.

Do not [know] him, for that is impossible. And if through an enlightened thought (*ennoia*) you should know him: be ignorant of him (XI 60.8–12).

This passage of *Allogenes* shows that the author was aware of the theoretical problem raised by the idea of reaching perfect knowledge of God's unknowable transcendence. In *Allogenes* and in the other two treatises, the highest phase of the ascender's search for knowledge is described as a contemplative vision. In this vision, the gnostic loses the awareness of his individuality. What the seer experiences is only ineffability, tranquillity, silence, and stability (Turner 2001, 666–669).<sup>20</sup>

Closely connected with the pursuit of perfect knowledge of ultimate reality was the gnostic's desire to unite with the Divine. Apparently, this goal could not be achieved by the protagonists of the three books. After all, they were only temporary residents of the otherworldly realm. It may be taken for granted that complete union with God was the ultimate goal of the soul's *post mortem* ascension.

## COMPARISON

So far, the characteristic features of the ascension have been examined within their own literary and conceptual frames, respectively, in *Hekhalot* texts and in three gnostic texts on visionary ascents. In conclusion, I will summarize the most striking similarities and dissimilarities, paying special attention to agreements and disagreements in the religious thought structure expressed or presupposed in the texts.

### *The Subject or Protagonist of the Ascension*

In the gnostic treatises, the journey on high is reserved for the highest part of the human being. The physical body and the irrational parts of the soul are left behind. In the *Hekhalot* corpus we do not find clear traces of a similar anthropological dualism. Apparently, the entire human person is believed to ascend to the celestial world. Perhaps we may compare the ascender and his journey in *Hekhalot* texts to people

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<sup>20</sup> The expression ‘standing at rest’ is often used to denote the stability of the supernal realm in contrast with the chaos and turmoil of the physical world, cf. *Zostr.* VIII 78.15f.; 81.12f.; 82.13–15; *Allog.* XI 46.13f.; 59.20–23; 60.4, 28–37; 66.31f.; Middle-Platonic authors and Plotinus used quite similar terminology to denote the experience of stability and tranquillity in a mystical withdrawal to transcendent reality. See Williams 1982 and 1985.

and their actions as we see them in our dreams. In any event, the *Merkavah* mystics do not seem to have reflected upon the physical nature of the ascender. (As we noted above, n. 9, Idel suggests that the mystic travelled in an astral body.) It is interesting to recall the uncertainty in this respect expressed by the apostle Paul when he speaks of his visionary journey to the third heaven: ‘in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell’ (2 Corinthians 12:2 and 3).<sup>21</sup>

### *How is the Journey on High Imagined?*

The ascension through the realms beyond the starry sky is imagined in quite different ways. Whereas the seekers of the *Merkavah* entered into successive, more or less concrete ‘halls’ or ‘palaces’, all of them guarded by mighty ‘gatekeepers’, the soul or mind of the gnostic had to adapt itself to increasingly abstract levels of existence. In general, the imagery of the *Hekhalot* texts builds on biblical, ancient Near Eastern and Mesopotamian mythology, while the ascent model of the three gnostic treatises had its roots in Later-Platonic ontology and epistemology.

Remarkably enough, the gnostic travellers were somehow guided by angelic beings, while the *Merkavah* seekers seem to have travelled alone. This is striking because the role of the revealer figures in gnostic ascent texts is vaguely reminiscent of the traditional function of the *angelus interpres* in apocalyptic writings, the more so because some of them bear Hebrew-sounding names.<sup>22</sup> As we have seen, the spiritual progress of the gnostic ascender was dependent on his reception of divine revelations.

To an extent, the action of Barbelo’s luminaries in *Allogenes* is comparable to that of the gatekeepers in *Hekhalot* texts. Both groups of celestial powers caution the traveller when he nears the final goal of his journey. However, they had different reasons for doing so. In the *Hekhalot* writings, the guardians of the heavenly palaces act as defenders of God’s holiness, whereas Barbelo’s powers remind the gnostic of God’s fully transcendent and therefore unknowable nature.

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<sup>21</sup> However, note that Paul did not ascend on his own initiative and after serious preparation, as the *Merkavah* mystics reportedly did. Rather, he experienced a sudden rapture to Paradise. Cf. Schäfer 1988, 234–249; Roukema 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Compare the name and the role of ‘the all-glorious Youel’ in *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* to the angel Yaoel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (discussed by Himmelfarb 1993, 61–66). The function and the names of angelic helpers in gnostic texts deserve closer examination. For the time being I refer to Bohak 2003 and Van der Horst 2005.

*The goal of the ascension*

The three gnostic ascent texts do not present the journey on high as the final return voyage of the soul or spirit to its divine origin. In these books, the ascent is basically a quest for perfect knowledge. Interestingly, this epistemological concern can also be found in *Hekhalot* texts, since the heavenly voyage of the *Merkavah* seeker can be regarded as a search for hidden celestial mysteries. Note that they did not share the apocalyptic interest in the mysteries of history and in eschatological issues. Attention was focused on God's presence in his celestial temple-like palace. It is worth mentioning in this connection that the gnostic and the Jewish ascenders returned from their journey in order to share their experiences with those deemed 'worthy'.

However, these similarities are of a rather superficial and general character. Jewish and gnostic ascenders aspired to see or comprehend quite different things. The ultimate goal of the *Merkavah* mystics was apparently to join in the celestial glorification of God's majesty (Schäfer 1988, 286) and so perhaps to confirm Israel's trust in God, whereas the gnostics wished to attain perfect knowledge of ultimate reality and of themselves in anticipation of their final salvation.

When the *Merkavah* mystic worshipped God's glory in the highest heaven, he was as close to God as possible but must nevertheless have been aware of the ontologically infinite distance between God and his creature, whereas gnostics started from the conviction that the innermost core of their being was not created by a demiurgical God but originated from, and was consubstantial with, the metacosmic unknowable God. When attempting to obtain true knowledge of ultimate reality, they were searching for the source of their own existence.

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## A REMARKABLE CASE OF RELIGIOUS INTERACTION: WATER BAPTISMS IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

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### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Since the second half of the twentieth century, Christian liturgical scholars have shown a growing interest in and even a fascination for what they often call the Jewish roots of Christian liturgy (Rouwhorst 2008). For centuries, Christian theologians and historians have emphasized the contrast between Christian liturgical meetings and those of the Jews. On the one hand, they have highlighted the radical freshness and revolutionary newness of early Christian worship, and on the other hand they have situated it against the backdrop of the liturgical and ritual traditions of contemporaneous Judaism. These were depicted by them in dark colours and presented as petrified, legalistic, ritualistic, or at least as being outdated (since the coming of Christ). Since the middle of the twentieth century, this negative attitude has been replaced with a much more sympathetic one which focuses on the elements the liturgical traditions have in common and, in particular, on the indebtedness of the oldest Christian rituals to Judaism. Obviously, this tendency reflects a more general change of approach with regard to the relationship between Judaism and Christianity which took place in the second half of the twentieth century. On the one hand, Christian scholars have become aware of the anti-Jewish biases of Christian research, and on the other hand, they have become interested in Jewish traditions and writings, both the Tenach and sources that date from a later period, especially the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods. As for the field of liturgy, this new tendency has become visible in a huge number of publications dealing with the Jewish roots of practically all of the major Christian liturgical rituals which originated in early Christianity: the Eucharist, the reading of Scripture, festivals, especially Easter, prayer forms.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Marcel Poorthuis for his commentary on the draft version of this paper and for studying and discussing with me a number of passages of the Bavli that are of crucial importance for the subject of this paper.

This new approach is doubtless a tremendous improvement compared with the older polemical views. Moreover, it has proven fruitful in many respects and led to numerous results that at the moment are hardly questioned by scholars competent in the field. In spite of this, the thesis of the Jewish roots of early Christian liturgy has been recently challenged and criticized by various scholars (Rouwhorst 2003 and 2008). This fact in itself cannot be seen in isolation from discussions that are going on regarding a much broader issue, namely the relationship and interaction between early Christianity and early Judaism in general. These discussions often involve a critique of what is called the ‘mother–daughter model’ which has been widespread especially among Christian scholars and strongly emphasizes the dependency of early Christianity on its Jewish roots (see for this discussion especially: Segal 1986; Boyarin 1999, 1–21). More specifically with regard to the origins of Christian liturgy, two major arguments are being adduced against this model. First, several scholars involved in the search for Jewish roots are diagnosed as suffering from parallelomania (Bradshaw 2003). They are blamed for uncritically appealing to parallels between Christian and Jewish liturgical traditions without taking into account the specific Jewish or Christian contexts in which they functioned. Even if it can be established, so the argument goes, that a certain Christian practice has been taken over from Judaism, this fact in itself does not contribute much to understanding its functioning in a Christian context. To get a better insight into a Jewish practice which became part of Christianity, it is necessary to study the way in which it was appropriated and transformed by the early Christians, to the adaptations it underwent in early Christian communities, and to new meanings it received. A second objection that has rightly been raised against scholars arguing in favour of the Jewish origins of Christian rituals is that they often make an uncritical and anachronistic use of Jewish sources (Bradshaw 2002 and 2003). Actually, those scholars are in general inclined to assume that the origins of Jewish liturgical traditions attested by rather late sources can be traced back to a very early period, prior to the destruction of the Second Temple, when Christianity was just beginning to emerge as a religious movement deeply rooted in Jewish traditions. It is, however, precisely these sorts of assumptions regarding the antiquity of Jewish traditions, liturgical or otherwise, that have been seriously questioned by the research of the last few decades.

All this obviously implies that several theories about the Jewish origins of Christian rituals will have to be reconsidered and that, as a

result, they will have to be revised or sometimes even simply abandoned. It may, however, also have further consequences for the study of the historical relationship between Jewish and Christian liturgy. It can become a strong incentive to study this issue no longer from a predominantly Christian, but rather from an explicitly interreligious perspective. As a matter of fact, the search for the Jewish roots of Christian liturgy has mostly been a basically Christian affair, primarily stemming from Christian preoccupations. The research on Jewish liturgical history was not directly affected by it. This may, however, change when the traditional mother–daughter model is questioned. More precisely, if it might turn out that similar liturgical practices developed simultaneously in Jewish and Christian traditions or that they first appeared in Christianity and only afterwards in Judaism, intriguing questions arise with regard to the historical development of Jewish liturgy. Did the Jewish ritual practices develop independently from Christianity or were they, on the contrary, influenced by it in one way or the other? Put differently, was the development of the Jewish liturgical traditions concerned the result of a more or less autonomous, inner-Jewish ritual process, and are the parallels with Christian liturgy due to coincidence? Or did Christian practices rather trigger reactions in Jewish communities and give rise to the development of Jewish variants or to forms of counter-ritualizing? Several recent publications have already shown the relevance of these sorts of questions (see especially Yuval 1999; 2006 68–86, 205–256; see also Poorthuis & Rouwhorst 2008).

The inevitable implication of these considerations is that the much discussed question of the Jewish origins of Christian liturgy should be reformulated. To begin, a comparison between rituals occurring in both traditions should not only be based on the existence of common outward characteristics, but should also take into consideration the various religious and social functions they fulfilled in both religions. Further, the question of possible interreligious interactions and influences should be addressed from a broader perspective. More specifically, the focus should no longer be exclusively upon the possible influences Jewish traditions might have exerted upon early Christian liturgy, but one should equally reckon with the possibility that the development of Jewish liturgical traditions betrays reactions to the emergence of Christianity, and more specifically of Christian liturgical rituals. While exploring these possibilities, chronology should serve as a critically important criterion. In the case that influences from one tradition upon the other can be established or at least made plausible, one should be particularly

alert to processes of appropriation and adaptation. And, finally, at the end of the day it may turn out that that there were no interreligious influences at all and that similar ritual traditions have developed in both religions independently from each other.

A typical and eloquent example of the complicated interaction between early Christian and Jewish liturgical traditions is provided by the origins and early history of early Christian baptism. The study of this issue is a real paradise for parallelogomaniacs who enjoy looking for similarities between Christian and non-Christian—especially Jewish—rituals. There are plenty of ritual purifications by means of water, both immersions and ablutions, in early Judaism and in movements related to Judaism which bear an obvious resemblance to early Christian baptism. One may mention in this regard the ritual baths referred to in the Tenach, especially in Leviticus (ch. 12–15) and Numbers (ch.19), that are required for regaining purity following various sorts of pollution caused by contact with corpses, by skin diseases, menstruation, sexual intercourse, and discharges from the genital areas. One may also point to the ritual washings practiced by Essenes (see Lichtenberger 2000), by the Qumran community (see Lichtenberger 2000; Harrington 2004) and by a great variety of so-called Jewish Christian Baptist movements mentioned by the Church fathers (esp. Epiphanius), such as the Ebionites (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30 2.4–5, 15.3, 16.1; 30.21), the Elchasaites (Hippolytus, *Refutation IX*, ch.13, 15, and 16); the Hemerobaptists ('daily bathers'; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 17; see Eusebius, *Church History* 4.22), the Sampsaeans, who according to Epiphanius were identical with the Elchasaites (*Panarion* 53), the Masbotheans (Eusebius, *Church History* 4.22). One may add groups like the 'dawn baptizers' known from the Tosefta (*tYad* 2.20), the Mandaeans living in the marshlands of southern Iraq, the so-called Sethians, whose supposed baptismal practices are believed by many scholars to have left traces in sources belonging to the Nag Hammadi library, such as the Apocalypse of Adam and the Gospel of the Egyptians (Schenke 1981, 602–607; Sevrin 1986, esp. 275–290; Turner 2000). Finally, we should not forget to mention the baptism practiced by John Baptist and the so-called Jewish proselyte baptism, known from the Babylonian Talmud (*Yeb* 46–47) and the so-called minor tractate *Gerim*. The mere existence of these parallels, however, does not tell us much about either the origins of early Christian baptism or the historical relationship between the Jewish and Christian types of 'baptisms' or baptism-like rituals. To gain insight into the forms of religious interaction that may have occurred with regard to

these rituals, it is first of all necessary to get a more precise idea of each of the purification rites and especially of the ways in which they functioned in various Jewish and Christian communities. Furthermore, chronology is an extremely important issue in the whole argumentation. To account for the parallels between Jewish and Christian ‘baptisms’, it is of crucial importance to know whether the Jewish rituals came into development before or after the emergence of Christianity.

Starting from these principles, I will try to sketch a global picture of the interrelationships and interaction between various forms of ‘baptisms’, rituals involving a purification of the body by means of water, in Judaism and Christianity between the end of the Second Temple period and the end of Antiquity. I will start with Judaism in the period preceding the emergence of Christianity.

#### RITUAL BATHS IN JUDAISM IN THE PERIOD PRIOR TO THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY: THE DIFFICULTY OF RECONSTRUCTING PRE-CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

It is beyond doubt that many of the ritual baths mentioned in the introduction of this article existed in Judaism before the rise of Christianity. This certainly holds for the immersions mentioned in Leviticus and Numbers which were required after ritual impurities caused by contact with corpses, menstruation, and so on. Obviously, the immersions practiced by the Essenes and the Qumran community as well date from the pre-Christian era. The same is true of the baptism of John the Baptist attested by both the New Testament and Josephus.

Apart from these undisputed cases, however, the pre-Christian origins of many other Jewish ritual baths and immersions are far from certain. Thus, it should be noted that the available data concerning most of the baptismal movements is scanty, often derived from problematic or late sources, and anyhow much disputed between the scholars. Thus, it *may* be that the *masbūtā*, the baptismal rite of the Mandaeans of southern Iraq, had its earliest roots in the ritual practice of a Jewish baptismal movement living in the Jordan valley in the first century (Segelberg 1958, esp. 182–184), but even if one does accept that thesis, it will appear practically impossible to reconstruct the earliest, pre-Christian form of that rite. Likewise, it is an intriguing idea to hypothesize that a considerable part of the so-called Sethian writings belonging to the library of Nag Hammadi ultimately derived from a ‘Sethian’

baptismal movement, but, in that case, the uncovering of the original, pre-Christian baptismal rites that have been reworked to fit in with the Gnostic character of the various tractates of the Nag Hammadi Library remains an almost hopeless undertaking. As for the ‘Jewish–Christian’ Baptist movements, mentioned by Church fathers and in particular by Epiphanius, the reconstruction of the theological ideas and ritual practices is a matter of continuing scholarly discussions and depends for a considerable part on the questionable reliability of the work of Epiphanius and of the sources he used. Apart from these problems, it remains difficult to know whether and to what extent the immersions practiced by at least some of these Jewish–Christian groups can be traced back to pre-Christian Jewish ritual traditions. For the rest, while admitting that John the Baptist will not have been the only pre-Christian Jewish Baptist and that Baptist movements were indeed active in the Jordan valley and its surroundings, they must have constituted rather marginal minorities in the Jewish world of that period. Revealingly, Josephus does not make mention of them.

#### THE PUZZLE OF PROSELYTE BAPTISM

The Jewish ritual which of all the Jewish ritual immersions and ablutions bears the closest resemblance to early Christian baptism is Jewish proselyte baptism. It is, however, precisely the parallelism between these two ‘baptisms’ that demonstrates how complicated and puzzling questions concerning the interactions between Jewish and Christian liturgical traditions can become due to the difficulty of reconstructing the origins and early development of the former.

The earliest source which is often adduced as evidence of the existence of proselyte baptism is to be found in the tractate Pesachim of the Mishnah (*Pes* 8.8; see *Eduy* 5.2), where mention is made of someone who converts on the eve of Pesach. According to the House of Shammai, the convert is allowed to eat of the Paschal sacrifice if he first immerses. The House of Hillel, however, does not agree with this and argues that someone who ‘separates from the foreskin’ is like someone who separates from the grave, which appears to mean that he first will have to be sprinkled with the waters of purification on the third and seventh days (see Nb 19). The immersion practiced by the House of Shammai has sometimes been understood as referring to proselyte baptism (see e.g. Schiffman 1985, 25–30). This view has, however, been

questioned by S. Cohen. According to him, the immersion was separate from the act of conversion and probably intended to remove some minor impurity inhering in the convert or to mark the transition to a state in which the convert is permitted to partake of sacrifices, more specifically the paschal sacrifice (Cohen 1994, 284–286). Cohen adds that even if his interpretation were to be incorrect and the Shammaites would have referred to some sort of ‘proselyte baptism’, this would hardly prove that this rite was widely known (*ibid.*).

The second rabbinic text which is of crucial relevance for the whole issue is to be found in *bYeb* 46a/b. While elaborating upon *mYeb* 4.12—dealing with the question as to whether the children of men married to specific categories of women are bastards—the text of the Bavli relates a story about Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba (beginning third century CE) (that has a precise parallel in *bAZ* 59a). According to this story, Rabbi Chiyya came to Gabla where he observed certain practices that did not conform to the purity rules. The first case mentioned pertains to Jewish women who conceived from proselytes who were circumcised but had not performed the required ritual ablution. Rabbi Chiyya reports the matter to Rabbi Jochanan (bar Nappacha) who is of the opinion that the children of these women are bastards since, according to him, to become a proselyte, a man must both be circumcised and have performed ritual ablution.

The tractate *Yebamoth*, then, continues with a baraita that is not mentioned in *Aboda Zara* and has no parallel in either the Tosefta or the *Yerushalmi*. The passage makes mention of a discussion that is said to have taken place between two famous Tannaite sages of the Yavne period, namely Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua. The former is said to have defended the position that to become a proselyte, it would suffice to be circumcised, the ritual ablution not being required. The latter is said to have defended the opposite view, arguing that only the ritual ablution was a ritual *sine qua non* for becoming a proselyte. It is, however, emphasized by the redactor of this passage of the Bavli that both of these views are in contradiction with that of the majority of the Sages. This majority position is ascribed to Rabbi Jose (third generation of Tannaim), and it is the same as that of Rabbi Chiyya and Jochanan: to become a proper proselyte, a man has to first be circumcised and afterwards to perform the required ablution. Further on in the same tractate, a detailed description of the whole ritual of admission is produced (*bYeb* 47a/b). It includes both a circumcision and an immersion, and prior to the circumcision the motivation of the candidate proselyte is tested by

means of a short interrogation. Moreover, the proselyte is given a short instruction in some of the major and minor commandments.

If we take the text of the Bavli at face value, the following reconstruction of the historical development of the ceremony of admission of proselytes emerges. In the Yavne period, ‘proselyte’ baptism would have been a well-known phenomenon (contrary to Cohen’s interpretation of *mPes* 8,8). What is more, it was considered by some Rabbis—at least by R. Joshua—as an acceptable alternative to circumcision. On the other hand, some Rabbis defended the opposite view, maintaining that just circumcision would suffice. At the beginning of the Amoraic period—but perhaps even somewhat earlier—this lack of clarity was no longer accepted. From that time onwards, both circumcision and immersion were considered to be essential for the conversion of a male proselyte, which means that the ritual described in 47 a/b became normative, at least in its broad outlines. Not surprisingly, the text of the Talmud suggests that, in spite of the discussion between R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, the majority of the Tannaim would have held that view.

It should, however, be pointed out that the historical reliability of this reconstruction becomes very suspect if the passage under consideration is compared with a variant of the discussion in *bYeb* 46 that is transmitted by the Yerushalmi (*yQid* 64d, 44–55) and is sometimes overlooked in publications dealing with proselyte baptism (at least in those that deal with the relationship between proselyte baptism and Christian baptism). According to this version, R. Chiyya bar Abba went to Tyrus and visited R. Jochanan bar Nappacha. The latter, then, confronts R. Chiyya with the case of a child of a proselyte who had been circumcised but not immersed. Should this child be considered to be a Jew? In this connection, mention is made of a statement made by R. Joshua b. Levy (middle third century CE) who appears to regard the child as ‘valid’. It is in this connection that reference is made to a discussion between R. Eliezer and R. Joshua. In this case, however, both agree that circumcision is essential for conversion. Eliezer, however, states that, in addition to circumcision, immersion is needed as well in order to become a proselyte (see Cohen 1999, 219). R. Joshua’s view, however, is rejected by R. Joshua ben Levy, who follows his teacher Bar Qappara. The latter is said to have argued that immersion is not required, since every real proselyte immerses (every morning) ‘because of his nocturnal emission’ and that would suffice for the ceremony of conversion.

If we choose this passage of the Yerushalmi as our starting point for the reconstruction of the development of the ceremony of conversion, a picture emerges which differs considerably from the one we have sketched on the basis of *bYeb*. In this case, there is general agreement among the early Tannaim about the fact that circumcision is absolutely essential for the conversion of a (male) proselyte. The major point of disagreement was the question as to whether circumcision *alone* would suffice. Some rabbis argued this was the case, but some other rabbis stated that it was not. R. Joshua appears as a representative of the group who believed that immersion *as well* was essential for becoming a proselyte. On the other hand, R. Jochanan was apparently wrestling with this problem, and he may not have been an isolated case. One gets the impression that during his lifetime, the role of immersion in the ceremony of admission increasingly became a matter of concern, and the whole discussion seems to confirm this. Nonetheless, it is very remarkable that according to the Yerushalmi a considerable group of late Tannaim and even early Amoraim was minimizing the importance of immersion.

There is strong evidence that the picture sketched in the Yerushalmi is closer to historical reality than that which is suggested by the Bavli. Apart from the fact that the redaction of the former occurred earlier than that of the latter, S. Cohen has rightly pointed out the fact that neither the Yerushalmi nor the Bavli cites a single case of a convert who has been immersed but not circumcised (Cohen 1999, 220–221). It may be added that Cohen suggests that the view attributed to Joshua in the Bavli was invented by a *stam*, a late redactor of the Bavli, for the sake of symmetry: apparently, this later redactor wanted to add a logical possibility that still was missing, immersion without circumcision (*ibid.*). Probably this is indeed the most plausible way to solve the problem.

All in all, there are good reasons for calling into doubt the early origin of proselyte baptism. In the period prior to and just after the destruction of the Second Temple, circumcision would have been followed by a sort of immersion, but the status of this immersion is very much open to debate. It appears that the majority of the rabbis did not consider it to be essential for conversion, and one therefore would do better not to call it ‘proselyte baptism’. At the end of the Tannaite or at the beginning of the Amoraic period, the situation seems to have changed. From that time onwards, there was an increasing agreement among the rabbinic

authorities that conversion was not complete unless circumcision was followed by immersion.

#### RITUAL BATHS IN JUDAISM IN THE PERIOD PRIOR TO THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY: SOME MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the preceding observations concerning the dating of the various traditions and practices, the following conclusions can be drawn concerning the role played by ritual baths in Judaism in the period prior to the emergence of Christianity in the first century CE.

a) For the majority of the Jews of this period, ritual baths were primarily, if not exclusively, connected with cultic impurity. The primary and original function of the purity laws and the purification rites was to regulate the access to the sanctuary, i.e. the Temple. Moreover, they were closely connected with physical changes, with the forces of life, death, and reproduction (Sanders 1992, 72). The impurity they were held to remove had in principle nothing to do with the transgression of moral laws. This also holds true of the period after the fall of the Second Temple, when most of the uncleanness rules governing contact with the dead, sexual relations, and menstrual blood continued to apply.

b) In certain Jewish circles, water baptism was associated with repentance and atonement. According to the Rule of the Community of Qumran, having a spirit of uprightness and humility and bringing one's soul into compliance with the laws of God are preconditions for the effectiveness of the water rites, which are incidentally called 'waters of repentance' (1QS III; 4Q255 2; 4Q257 III; 4Q262 1). A clear connection between baptism and atonement is also to be found in the baptism propagated by John the Baptist, which in the Gospel of Mark 1:4 is called a 'baptism of conversion for the remission of sins'. The precise relationship between the immersion into water and the forgiving of sins remains somewhat unclear in the various sources. Was the immersion just a preliminary to, or sign of, the pardon of the sins and the cleansing of the soul—as is emphasized by Josephus (*Ant.* 18, 118)—or did the baptism itself have some spiritual effect, as the Gospel of Mark might suggest? Whatever the case may be, the correspondence of baptism and conversion—in one way or the other—is beyond dispute.

At the same time, it remains difficult to determine how common this moral understanding of baptism was in Judaism outside the community of Qumran and the followers of John the Baptist. Answering this ques-

tion is further complicated by the fact that the antiquity and the Jewish origins of the ritual practices of other Jewish–Christian and Jewish Baptist movements remains difficult to establish.

c) Purifications by immersion into water were part of the rituals of admission practiced by some specific movements inside Judaism, in particular by the community of Qumran (see the passage of the Rule of the Community mentioned above) and by the Essenes described by Josephus in *The Jewish War* (ch. 2, 138). It should, however, be noted that these groups were not familiar with something like a unique and unrepeatable bath of initiation. Once they had been initiated into such a community, their members would continue purifying themselves by regular—often even daily—immersions and ablutions.

d) Once more, it was probably not until the end of the Tannaitic period (end of the second, beginning of the third century CE) that proselyte baptism in rabbinic Judaism was coming to be generally considered an essential part of the conversion ceremony of male Israelites. Prior to that time, there appears to have been no question in rabbinic circles of replacing it with something like ‘proselyte baptism’.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF EARLY CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Early Christianity was characterized by an ambivalent attitude towards the ritual immersions and baths practiced in Judaism prior to and following the fall of the Second Temple. Some of these rituals were explicitly rejected by the majority of the early Christians and some of them were taken over, but in the latter case a process of Christian appropriation took place: new theological meanings were ascribed to them, and they were deeply affected by the social structures of early Christian communities.

Generally speaking, it may be stated that the majority of the early Christians abolished the immersions and ablutions that were intended to remove cultic impurity caused by contact with corpses or bodily discharges. Obviously, traces of these immersions are to be found in ‘Jewish Christian’ sources like the Pseudo-Clementine writings (*Hom.* 7.8.2; 11.30.1; 11.33.4) and among groups like the Ebionites (see e.g. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.15.3, 30.16.2, and 30.21) and other Baptist movements, some of whom took even daily ritual baths. That some Christian groups strongly held on to continuing the practice of purifying immersions after menstruation is also attested by the twenty-sixth chap-

ter of the *Didascalia*, in which such groups are fiercely combated (Vööbus 1979, *CSCO* 179, 255–263; *CSCO* 180, 238–245; see also Brakke 1995). The majority of the Christians, however—and especially the Christian leaders—took the stance of the author of the *Didascalia* and were strongly opposed to immersions connected with cultic impurity. Groups who continued practising them gradually became marginalized, and although the whole notion of ritual impurity, especially that of women, has remained influential in the history of Christianity (Poorthuis and Schwartz 2000), the idea of removing it by water immersions has practically disappeared.

Instead of the purification from cultic impurity caused by bodily discharges, early Christianity associated immersion into water with two other notions that were equally derived in some way from early Judaism, namely: a) the emphasis upon repentance and the remission of sins, and b) the idea of initiation into the Christian community. It is generally agreed and beyond dispute that the former characteristic has its roots primarily in the baptism practice of John. It is far less clear whether or to what extent the second characteristic, the aspect of initiation, has been influenced by the ritual traditions of specific groups such as the Essenes and the Qumran community (assuming that in ‘mainstream Judaism’ proselyte baptism had not yet become common practice). Actually, this question cannot be considered independently from a broader but much-debated and still controversial issue, namely that of the relationship between early Christianity and communities like that of Qumran and the Essenes. However, no matter what position one will take in these sorts of debates, the search for the Jewish roots of early Christian baptism has its limitations anyway. As a matter of fact, however profoundly early Christian baptism may or may not have been influenced by Jewish ritual tradition, it bears some unique features by which it distinguishes itself from all of its Jewish antecedents, including the baptism of John and the immersions practiced by the Essenes and in the community of Qumran (see e.g. Collins 1989; Johnson 1999, 7–32). In this connection, at least two characteristics of early Christian baptism should be mentioned: a) Christian baptism entails the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ or the names of the Trinity, and b) it is an irreversible and once-and-for-all initiation into the Christian community. It marks a radical watershed between Christians and non-Christians which makes all of the other purifying immersions superfluous. Once a Christian had been baptized, she/he would have stopped taking ritual baths. Apart from some Jewish-Christian groups who quite soon

became minorities in the Gentile-Christian mainstream, continuing to do so was radically disapproved of and considered to endanger the uniqueness of baptism.

It clearly emerges from this that the origins and emergence of early Christian baptism itself was the result of a complicated interaction between various Jewish ritual traditions and a new religion in the making. In the rest of this article, I shall show that this process did not simply come to an end everywhere when the nucleus of the specifically Christian ritual of baptism—consisting of the immersion of the body by a baptizer and of the invocation of the name of Christ or that of the Trinity—had taken shape. In doing so, I shall first follow the further development of this nucleus during the third and fourth centuries CE and thereafter, when it attracted a number of additional acts, gestures, and symbols making the original simple baptismal act into a complicated cluster of initiatory rites.

#### BAPTISM IN NORTH AFRICA FROM THE TURN OF THE SECOND TO THE THIRD CENTURY CE

To get an idea of the development and elaboration of the early Christian baptism ritual, it may be helpful to first give a description of this ritual as it appears in the writings of Tertullian, especially in his treatise *On Baptism*, which is one of the oldest sources containing information about Christian baptism. The ritual described by Tertullian, which may be considered as representative of the baptismal practice of North Africa, but probably also of many Western churches of the second and third centuries, has the following pattern (Kretschmar 1970, 89–92; Johnson 1999, 61–64):

- Tertullian underlines that every day of the year and every hour is appropriate for conferring baptism, but the best period is Easter (*pascha*) and the following fifty days of Pentecost because in that period the death and the resurrection of Jesus as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit are commemorated—events and mysteries which for Tertullian are closely connected with baptism (*On Baptism* 19:1–3).
- Baptism is preceded by a catechumenate of an unspecified length, a preparation for baptism by prayer, fasting, all-night vigils, and a confession of all of the sins committed by the candidates (*On Baptism* 20).

- Before the candidate is immersed into the water, a prayer of sanctification is said in which the Holy Spirit is invoked on the baptismal waters (*On Baptism* 4).
- The immersion is preceded by a renunciation of the ‘devil and his pomp and his angels’, (*On Spectacles* 4; *On the Crown* 3), which is a sort of shorthand for pagan religion and its rituals and ceremonies, for ‘idolatry’ (Kretschmar 1970, 98–99).
- The central baptismal act consists of a threefold immersion or submersion which is connected with a threefold interrogatory profession of faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (*On the Crown* 3:3; see also *On Baptism* 6).
- The immersion and confession of faith are directly followed by some postbaptismal rites. They include an anointing (of the body) with oil (*On Baptism* 7), a signing with the cross (*On the Resurrection* 8:3), a laying of the hands on the baptized person ‘in benediction and inviting and welcoming the Holy Spirit’ (*On Baptism* 8:1; see also *On the Resurrection* 8:3).
- The initiation is concluded by the Eucharist, which besides the eating of bread and the drinking of wine also includes receiving a compound mixture of milk and honey (*On the Crown* 3:3).

What is very striking in this ritual as described and commented by Tertullian is that any clear trace of interaction with contemporary Judaism is lacking. In so far as the ritual elements that have been added to the original nucleus have pre-Christian origins, they are to be sought in the bathing customs of Antiquity (the anointing of the body after coming out of the bath) or in Old Testament traditions (for instance the anointing of Aaron, see *On Baptism* ch. 7; or Jacob laying his hands upon Ephraim and Manasse, ch. 8), or in a combination of both, but certainly not in postbiblical Jewish ritual traditions. This holds for the fact that baptism is preferably conferred at Easter, given the fact that the immersion practiced by the House of Shammai was not something like proselyte baptism. At the same time, it should be emphasized that neither Tertullian himself nor the ritual of baptism described by him betray any concern with the conversion of Jews! Although many of Tertullian’s writings contain a lot of anti-Jewish polemics, in *On Baptism* Judaism and Jews do not appear to constitute an issue. His main concern is with the conversion of pagans, and the polemical passages in that treatise are directed against pagans. As for the ritual of baptism, the renuncia-

tion of the ‘devil and his pomp’ implies a rupture with pagan ‘idolatry’, not with Jewish religion.

#### BAPTISM IN THE SYRIAC-SPEAKING CHURCHES OF THE THIRD AND THE FOURTH CENTURY CE

We are confronted with a rather different situation when we turn to another region where Christians were living and were baptized, namely the regions east of Antiochia (northern part of the Roman province of Syria, Osrhoene, Persian Empire), where besides—or instead of—Greek, the majority of the Christians spoke Syriac. This becomes immediately clear from the following two passages of the *Didascalia apostolorum* (a source derived from this region and originally written in Greek, but preserved only in Syriac and Latin translations; see Vööbus 1979).

In a passage of chapter 9 which deals with the bishops, the author emphasizes that Christians should love and honour them. It is through the bishop, so the author argues, that Christians received the Holy Spirit, learned the Word, and heard about God. It is also through him that they were ‘sealed’ and became children of the light and it is through him that in baptism, by the laying on of the hand (of the bishop), the Lord bore witness to each one of them and uttered his holy voice, saying: ‘You are my son: today I have begotten you’ (ch. 9; Vööbus 1979, CSCO 401/402, 109/104).

Chapter 16 provides additional information about the rite of initiation practiced in the church of the Didascalia. It turns out that prior to the immersion or submersion the body of the candidate is anointed. In case of the baptism of a woman, this is not done by the (male) bishop, presbyter, or deacon but by a (female) deaconess. In the case of either a man or a woman, the head of the one who is to receive baptism is anointed by the hand of the bishop, and this act seems to be identified with an imposition of the hand. It is only after that rite that the ‘invocation of the divine names’ takes place ‘in the water’, i.e. during the act of immersion (Vööbus 1979, CSCO 407, 173; 408, 156–157).

Although some details of the baptismal ritual referred to in the Didascalia remain somewhat obscure, it contains at least the following elements (see Johnson 1999, 42).

- a. The rite of initiation is preceded by some form of catechesis under the direction of the bishop.

- b. No mention is made of a renunciation of the devil, i.e. of pagan religion.
- c. The body of the candidate is anointed by the appropriate minister (male or female). The head of the candidate is anointed by the (male) bishop, and this act is associated with a ‘laying on of the hands’. To indicate this prebaptismal anointing by imposition of the hand, the word ‘sealing’ (*rušma*) is used. Further, it is possible that Psalm 2:7 was recited as a formula to accompany the anointing and the imposition of the hand. This, however, remains uncertain.
- d. The immersion is accompanied by an invocation of the divine names, i.e. some version of a Trinitarian baptismal formula.
- e. Contrary to North African (Western) practice, there is no trace to be found of an anointing or an imposition of hands *after* the immersion and the invocation of the divine names.

This rite was certainly no peculiarity of the *Didascalia apostolorum*. It has very detailed parallels in a number of Syriac and Armenian sources and there is no doubt that, in its broad outlines, this ritual was common practice in the early Syriac- and Armenian-speaking churches (Winkler 1978; 1982, esp. 135–165). Most remarkably, in all of these churches, baptism in water was preceded by an anointing and imposition of hands which in Syriac is called *rušma* (sealing, sign; see for instance: *Acts of Thomas* chs. 26, 49, 51, 118, 120, 131, 150, and 152. Syr. text: Wright [1871] 1968. See also Klijn 1962). What is more, particularly in the *Acts of Thomas*, some passages even intimate that it was considered to be at least as important as immersion or even more important than that (Winkler 1982, 135, 170)! Strikingly, the word *rušma*—which first and foremost refers to the anointing—is sometimes employed to designate the entire rite, including the ritual bath (see Klijn 1962, 56–57, with references to older literature). It has even been argued on the basis of these facts that the ritual underlying the *Acts of Thomas* would have consisted exclusively of this prebaptismal anointing, without immersion! (Bornkamm 1975, 437–438). Whether one will accept this conclusion or not, it is beyond doubt that more prominence is given to the prebaptismal anointing than to the immersion and, equally, that the prebaptismal anointing conveys a very rich religious and theological meaning: the word *rušma* indicates that the baptized person is ‘marked’ and thereby becomes a member of the Christian community. Moreover, being ‘sealed’ means to be anointed, just as the priests and kings of the Tenach had been and just as Christ himself was the Anointed One.

Being anointed also meant becoming impregnated with the Holy Spirit, just as the Holy Spirit had descended upon Jesus when he was baptized by John the Baptist (see especially Winkler 1978; 1980, 405–419).

One might ask what this rite has to do with Judaism or ritual interaction between Jews and Christians. Actually, the prebaptismal anointing is a profoundly Christian ritual gesture. There can be no question of the rite as such having been directly borrowed from Jewish tradition. At the same time, there are some indications suggesting that it did not develop entirely independently from the Jewish environments in which many Syriac-speaking Christians appeared to have been living (Rouwhorst 1997).

- a. The order of prebaptismal anointing/sealing corresponds to that of circumcision/immersion as it is found in Jewish proselyte baptism and is definitely attested by the tractate *Yebamoth* of the Babylonian Talmud (47 A–B). For the rest, what circumcision as commonly practiced in Judaism—and definitely so in the first two centuries CE—has in common with prebaptismal anointing as found in the Acts of Thomas is that they (rather than the immersion) are both the high-points of the ritual.
- b. In some early Syriac sources—especially in the writings of Aphraates and occasionally also in those of Ephrem—the word *rušma* which is used to indicate prebaptismal anointing is closely associated with the theme of circumcision. More specifically, in these texts circumcision is characterized as the ‘sign’ (*rušma*) that in the Old Testament distinguished and thereby separated the Israelites from non-Jews, in particular pagans and idolaters.<sup>2</sup> The implication of this fact is that the word *rušma* must have evoked strong associations with circumcision for the Syriac-speaking Christians. Admittedly, the relationship between the two rites is mostly not made explicit, but sometimes it is. Thus Aphraates at one time calls circumcision a precursor of the Christian *rušma* (prebaptismal anointing) (*Dem. XI*:2). Furthermore, in a *madrasha* (hymn) devoted to prebaptismal anointing, Ephrem contrasts this Christian rite with circumcision in the following way:

By the ancient seal (*rušma*) of the circumcision  
He (God) separated the people from the peoples.  
Yet by the seal (*rušma*) of the unction,  
He separated the peoples (the Christians) from the people.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Aphraates, *Dem. XI*, 2.4.6.11; Ephrem, Sermon on Faith III, 241 vv (CSCO 212, 28 and 213, 40).

When the peoples went astray,  
He separated the people from the peoples.  
Now that the people has gone astray,  
He separated the peoples from them.

(*Hymn on Epiphany* III, 3. ed. E. Beck, *CSCO* 186, 147 [German translation: *CSCO* 187, 135])

This is of course a very polemical text. Still, it is remarkable that to Ephrem—and Aphraates for that matter—prebaptismal anointing and circumcision basically fulfil the same function, namely that of establishing boundaries between communities. Circumcision brings about a separation between Jews and (pagan) non-Jews, and that prebaptismal unction separates Christians from non-Christians, whether they be pagans or Jews. What these rituals have in common, in spite of their connectedness with different religious communities, is that they are demarcating boundaries between their own communities and those of others.

The parallelism existing between the Syriac Christian anointing–immersion ritual on the one hand and Jewish circumcision–immersion on the other hand has been noted by several scholars. As one might expect, attempts have been made to explain it by assuming a Jewish origin of the Christian ritual. Thus, T. Manson has argued that the threefold pattern of anointing, immersion, and Eucharist—which followed the first two rites—might have its origins in the threefold ritual of conversion practiced in the Second Temple period, which would have consisted of circumcision, proselyte baptism, and the first sacrifice offered in the Temple (Manson 1947). The German scholar George Kretschmar (1970, 121) has criticized this theory and has instead suggested the existence of a historical link between Syriac prebaptismal anointing and the emphasis laid by the Essenes on moral circumcision (referring to the circumcision of the yetser in 1 QS 5, or of the heart in 1 QpHab 11:13; Jub. 1:23) and cleansing by the Holy Spirit (1 QS 5). Neither of these two explanations is very plausible. Against the first-mentioned theory, one may raise the objection that the whole idea of a tripartite initiation in Judaism in the Second Temple period is problematic, if actually it has to be assumed that proselyte baptism came into existence in a later period. Likewise, the evidence for the view that there would be some historical link between early Syriac Christianity and Essene communities, which is to be found in some of Kretschmar’s other publications, is rather speculative. Nonetheless, there is no reason to entirely discard

the suggestion that there might be a relationship between early Syriac and Jewish initiation, in so far namely as prebaptismal anointing must have been viewed by Syriac Christians as a Christian counterpart or alternative to circumcision.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH PROSELYTE BAPTISM: INTERACTION WITH CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

If nearly all the available sources suggest that Jewish proselyte baptism did develop at a later date than Christian baptism and if, moreover, it appears likely that in some areas there is evidence of ritual interaction between a central part of Christian initiation (anointing) and Jewish circumcision, it should finally be asked if there were possibly forms of interaction that went in the other direction. More specifically, did Jewish proselyte baptism develop entirely independently from the emergence of Christian initiation, especially from the immersion that—apart from an early phase in the development of the Syriac ritual—was considered to be its most central part?

To avoid misunderstanding, it should be emphasized once more that Jewish proselyte baptism is basically different from Christian baptism. By the way, this holds true for the entire rabbinic conversion ceremony (even in its more developed, later forms). As has been rightly stated by S. Cohen, it lacks many of the distinctive features of an initiation ritual that are characteristic of the early Christian initiation (separation, transition, incorporation; see Cohen 1999, 286).<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, while examining the history of the Jewish ritual from the beginning of the second century CE till the post-Talmudic tractate *Gerim*, one may note some remarkable facts which strongly suggests the existence of some form of Jewish–Christian interaction.

To begin, it should be noted that the increasing relevance given to the immersion after circumcision is part of a process in which conversion to Judaism was further ritualized and institutionalized (see Cohen 1999, 237). This phenomenon as such points to a tendency to more strongly demarcate the boundaries between Jews and non-Jews. Obviously, various historical factors may have contributed to this process.

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<sup>3</sup> For the sake of clarity: I have in mind here the (early Christian) initiation of *adults*. Infant baptism is of course a different topic: in so far as the elements of initiation have been preserved in this ritual, they fulfil different functions connected with the birth of a child.

It is, however, not unlikely that the spread of Christianity and its rise to power (from the fourth century onwards) was at least one of these factors. In this respect, the rise of Christianity may have contributed to the development of proselyte baptism in an *indirect* way.

Second, the earliest unambiguous evidence of the tendency to give greater prominence to the immersion after circumcision derives from a third century Palestinian milieu. As is testified *inter alia* by the works of Origen, contacts between Jews (especially rabbis) and Christians must have been rather frequent (De Lange 1976). The Jews, including of course the rabbis, were certainly familiar with Christian baptism. Therefore, one at least cannot exclude the possibility that some of them considered immersion after circumcision as an alternative to Christian baptism, just as in the Syriac area some Christians appear to have considered prebaptismal anointing as an alternative to circumcision.

Finally, strong evidence is provided by the *Gerim* tractate that Jewish proselyte baptism was influenced by Christian baptism, at least in a later period. The description of the process of conversion described in this sources is obviously dependent on this tractate of the Babylonian Talmud (47 A–B), while at the same time developing it further in several respects (Cohen 1999). Some of the additions provided by *Gerim* quite obviously betray a reaction to Christianity. Thus, in *bYeb* reference is already made to the suffering and persecutions Jews have to undergo in this world. This passage may reflect an early situation—possibly after the revolt of Bar Kochba—in which Christianity did not play a role of any importance. In *Gerim*, however, this aspect is further elaborated upon and specified. Thus it is said that Jews are ‘slaughtered for observing circumcision, immersion, and the other precepts of the Torah and cannot hold up their heads like other peoples’ (*Ger.* 1). Most remarkable, however, in this regard is the fact that the exclusiveness of the love between God and Israel is emphasized. Thus it is stated that the world was only created for the sake of Israel, that only Israel are called ‘sons of God’ and ‘beloved of God’ (*Ger.* 5). How can we account for these additions? Why is emphasis laid on the exclusive love bond between God and Israel? Against whom could this claim of exclusive love be directed? It is clear that only one candidate claimed that she herself was God’s only elected and beloved bride. But if so, it is not difficult to recognize an echo of the oppression of Jewish religion by Christians. It is not too hazardous to guess that rather than with the emperor Hadrian or the pagan Romans, the redactors of *Gerim* and many of those who read it will have associated the passage with

other oppressors who lived in their own time and called themselves Christians.

### CONCLUSION

To chart the relationship and interaction between Jewish and Christian rituals, for instance baptism, throughout the centuries, a certain dose of courage is needed. Traditional approaches have to be questioned, sources other than the usual ones have to be taken into consideration, and one will not advance without hypotheses and some speculation. Moreover, one comes across not only dialogue and communities borrowing from each other, but also struggle, rivalry, and interreligious competition.

Nonetheless, studying Jewish and Christian rituals with a special eye for their (possible) interrelatedness may open up unexpected perspectives, and the widespread view that the ways of both of the liturgical traditions may have radically parted proves to be very questionable.

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ON TREES, WAVES, AND CYTOKINESIS:  
SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN EARLY (AND MODERN)  
JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

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The emergence of Christianity as a new religion and Jewish–Christian relations in late antiquity have been a particularly active field of research in recent years with many innovative contributions of major scholars. According to the traditional view, Christianity evolved from a Jewish sect to an independent religion quite quickly, at the latest around the Bar Kokhba revolt, a point after which all relations between the two entities were almost exclusively hostile. Intermediate groups such as Jewish Christians quickly decreased numerically and became marginalized as sectarian, leaving two mutually opposed entities, Judaism vs. Christianity (for an excellent review of the history of research, see Reed and Becker 2003).

The challenge to the old pattern posed by scholars such as Daniel Boyarin (1999, 2004), John Gager (1992, 2000), Seth Schwartz (2001), Marcel Simon (1948, ET: 1986), Israel Yuval (2000, ET: 2006), and many contributors to the volume *The Ways That Never Parted* (Becker and Reed, eds. 2003) is slowly but steadily causing a major shift in the scholarly perspective on this crucial period, yet a new consensus has still to emerge. Doubtless the future picture will have more colors as the variegation among the early forms of Judaism and Christianity is considered more seriously. Several attempts have been launched to see not only Jesus but also Paul as completely embedded in ancient Judaism without the vision of a new religion on its way (e.g. Gager 2000). Jewish Christianity is seen as an influential player in periods much later than the second century. Many favor the view of a Jewish–Christian continuum. The parting of the ways and the establishment of Christianity as an entity separate from Judaism are removed from the first and the second generation, in the most extreme visions by up to two centuries to the Constantinian period when the alliance of Christianity and imperial power is forged (Boyarin 1999, 2004).

Marcel Simon's classic work has to be credited for having laid much of the foundations of the current changes by showing the attraction of Judaism in the second to fourth centuries (1948, ET: 1986). His conception of Judaism, however, was still somewhat that of a fossilized unchanging religion (Baumgarten 1999). Fresh perspectives are proposed e.g. by Seth Schwartz (2001), who sees the success of rabbinic Judaism as the result of a *rejudaizing* reaction imposed by Christianity, and by Israel Yuval (2000), who argues for comprehensive Christian influence on the formulation of ancient Jewish ritual identity. While all these approaches have been met with varying degrees of critique and support, it is clear that the old paradigm is on its way to being replaced by a new one whose contours are currently in the making.

Gerard Rouwhorst (2002) has distinguished three successive phases in the history of the comparative study of Christian and Jewish liturgy that roughly fit the phases in the study of Jewish–Christian relations in late antiquity, too. In the first stage, scholars emphasized the dissimilarities and perceived the relationship between the two liturgical traditions mainly as antithesis. In the second stage, the common elements were underscored and the relation was depicted as mother and daughter. In the current third stage, both are seen as twins, simultaneous offshoots from the common ancestor Second Temple Judaism.

The changing relations between Jews and Christians in the modern Western world may play a role in this paradigm shift. That our contemporary society and the way we want it to be influences our vision and revision of the history of the ancient world becomes at least explicit in Boyarin's words: 'The newly developing perspective on Judaism and Christianity as intertwining cultures is thus dependent on a developing climate of opinion or even *Zeitgeist*' (1999, 8). It seems to me that this *zeitgeist* blows particularly strong in the United States of America where such a (re)vision of the history of ancient Judaism and Christianity corroborates the ideology and self-perception of a society that understands itself (at least partially) as Judeo-Christian. A statement by Robert Kraft equally reminds us of present issues behind our reconstruction of this issue in the past: 'If Judaism and Christianity were not always mutually exclusive by definition, perhaps some sort of contemporary rapprochement can be recreated with reference to the historical developments; history provides basic justification for trying to reset the clock to a more favorable time and situation' (2003, 93). It is important to be aware of the possibility of such ideological motivations in order to double-check one's own bias.

The main difference between the mother/daughter and the twin patterns lies in the relation of rabbinic Judaism to Second Temple Judaism. The mother/daughter model regards Judaism as relatively static (e.g. M. Simon). Differences between rabbinic Judaism and Second Temple Judaism are minimized. Rabbinic sources can be used as background for early Christian sources without much methodological reflection. The twin model in turn sees rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity as simultaneous developments from Second Temple Judaism that both differ considerably from their common ancestor. In a world where Christianity and Judaism perceive themselves as heirs of early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism, the twin model that gives equal standing to both interpretations of—or developments from—Second Temple Judaism has constructive ramifications for contemporary Jewish–Christian relations (Lieu 1995).

On the other hand, both the mother/daughter and the twin paradigm use genealogical terminology and follow a thought pattern that I would call the pedigree or ‘tree-stemma’ or *Stammbaum* model. According to the ‘rigid’ interpretation of this stemma, parallels between Christianity and Judaism that are attested in texts later than the ‘parting of the ways’ indicate either a *common root*, i.e. a tradition adopted in the ‘apostolic’ times before the parting of the ways, or an independent ‘accidental’ development. (The latter would often be based on the Bible as source shared by Judaism and Christianity.) *Dis-similarities* in turn are explained either as independent developments or as the result of polemical interaction.

Recently many scholars have complained about rigid applications of the *Stammbaum* model.<sup>1</sup> It completely neglects the possibility that parallels could have been caused by ‘positive’ influence after the ‘parting of the ways’. Facing similar problems, scholars in linguistics have therefore for more than a century often worked with a ‘wave-model’—diffusion by cultural contact. Daniel Boyarin has to be credited for having reintroduced this model into the methodological discourse concerning early Jewish–Christian relations (1999, 9). One example for a case in which the wave-model provides a much better explanation is the Ember Days of September in fifth- to seventh-century Rome (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003b). Concerning this festival, we can observe a number of very detailed parallels between the Christian liturgical practice and Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the poignant remarks by Paul Bradshaw (1991) with regard to intra-Christian comparative liturgy.

traditions from late-antique Palestine and Babylonia and medieval Europe. According to the tree-model we would have to assume that these parallels are either accidental (Chavasse 1965 and 1970) or that the late-antique Christian practice is a heritage from the first or second century (as suggested by Leo the Great in the fifth century). Both possibilities are, however, highly unlikely. It is much more plausible to suppose they were caused by an influence of contemporary Jewish traditions on *post*-Constantinian Roman Christian ritual.

The readings chosen for the Ember Day of September parallel in many respects the choice of lections for Jewish liturgical events in the month of Tishri (which means the weeks around September). The choice of Christian readings is very exceptional as they are drawn particularly from the Minor Prophets, a group of books that is quite neglected in the early Roman lectionaries. It is equally important to note that the ‘author(s)’ of the lections in this liturgy have chosen passages that do not seem to have played a role in Latin exegesis. This makes the possibility of accidental parallelism rather implausible. Why should Christians choose passages that they do not use as proof-texts in their works from books that they usually do not read in the liturgy, other than for the reason that they are read by their neighbors *in the same liturgical time*? It is highly unlikely that these lections are a survival from before the parting of the ways. Otherwise we would have to assume that a Jewish practice adopted by the first Christian communities of Rome would have survived unchanged for 600 years, from the apostolic period to the first lectionaries in the seventh century, without being attested even once before. Even the substantial body of Ember Day sermons by Leo the Great from the fifth century does not allude to the existence of these lections. Therefore, for this case here, the wave theory provides a better explanation model. To explain the liturgical parallels, it is more plausible to assume some kind of interaction (in either direction) in a time (*after* the parting of the ways) and in an area (Rome) where such an interaction is usually not supposed to have been important. As the Jewish parallels to the Christian practice come partially from late-antique Babylonia, an influence from Judaism on Christianity is more probable than the other way round.<sup>2</sup>

Despite instances like this, I regard the tree-stemma still as a very useful paradigm in many respects. There are many cases in which later

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<sup>2</sup> The option of Christian influence on Jewish practice (as Yuval’s case for the Pass-over Aggadah) is often unjustifiably neglected a priori.

Jewish sources can elucidate ideas or practices attested earlier in Christian sources (e.g. conversion baptism). In one point in particular, the critique of the old paradigm seems to be overstated in my eyes: ascribing the separation of Judaism and Christianity to the fourth century seems to me to be an over-interpretation of the impact of the Constantinian Revolution. Maybe sometimes our perspective is still impeded by (the theologically informed) dichotomist thinking that would not allow for the presence of separation and non-polemic interaction. Separation does not mean absence of positive, peaceful interaction (Lieu 1995, 117). Vice versa, the presence of peaceful interaction does not mean that there is no separation.

Radically denying that the *Stammbaum* model can still explain many features in the history of religions would come close to throwing out the baby with the bath water—and I would like to emphasize that Boyarin does not do this. From his linguistic background he knows clearly that both models, tree and wave, are not mutually exclusive. While the wave-model can explain some phenomena in linguistics and the history of religion more convincingly, the *Stammbaum* model can do so for other phenomena. Being problematic, the *Stammbaum* model should be used with care, and we should be aware that sometimes the wave-theory can provide a more satisfying answer. Similarly, giving up talking of the ‘parting of the ways’ (for example because the reality is messier than any theoretical model) seems to me to resign too early.

If we want to stick to metaphors, maybe the concepts of mitosis (duplication of chromosomes in a cell in order to produce two nuclei) and cytokinesis (division into two cells) could further help with regard to the question of emergence of a new religion and the interaction of several religions with each other. The most important difference with respect to the tree model is that it enables us to think *en longue durée*, periods of time instead of moments. There is a phase in which there is one cell with one nucleus and another in which there are two cells with one nucleus each. In between lies the intermediate *phase* where two nuclei share the same cell. In addition, tree branches do not have contact besides beating each other during storms. Using the model of cytokinesis, however, it is easy to imagine that the new cells resulting from cytokinesis are often still part of one and the same body or plant; they counterinfluence each other after the separation and exchange material; simultaneously they are clearly *two cells*. There is an important difference between the interaction of *two cells* and the interaction of two DNA strings inside the same cell.

Martin Goodman (2003) has provided us with an illustrative comparison of various attempts to pinpoint the parting of the ways of Jews and Christians somewhere between Jesus and Constantine. Part of the divergence is clearly due to the different opinions as to what the minimum criteria for a parting would be—is it differences or new ideas with regard to ideology or practice, kinship, etc. It seems to me that the model of cytokinesis might be helpful in addressing the divergences of this scholarly discourse. It replaces the single point of departure of the tree stemma with a period of time. Do two scholars differ because one is talking about the beginning of the process of separation and the other about the end? Does one talk about the processes leading to the reduplication of the DNA, while the other refers to the last phases in the formation of separate cell walls? Or do both talk about the beginning (or the end) but differ in its assessment? The first is a *dialogue des sourdes* with no resort, the second a difference in opinions whose scholarly discussion is of utter importance. It seems to me that the very early datings of the parting can be compared to the study of the reduplication of the DNA (or the steps leading to it), the first step that will eventually lead to the separation of cells: Jesus or Paul or the post-Pauline generation developed ideas and worldviews that finally—and not necessarily consciously or willingly—lead to the emergence of a new religion with its own rites, calendar(s), institutions, kinship and marriage regulations, etc.

In addition to that, for better or worse, research objects in the field of humanities are usually much more complex than in the ‘exact’ sciences. With regard to the emergence of Christianity from early Judaism, our picture is complicated by the fact that Jewish and Christian groups were dispersed over a large geographical area with many geological, political, and cultural differences. We are, so to speak, researching a highly complex process of cytokinesis of many cells into even more, and the moment of this cytokinesis may have varied from place to place.

If the difference between me and Boyarin in dating the separation of Christianity and Judaism to the second or the fourth century would be that he takes the last cell to split while I take the first cell, then our disagreement would be of minor importance. In Syria, for example, the ‘cytokinesis’ may have happened later than in Egypt. Still, I would be very hesitant to ascribe too much influence of the imperialization of Christianity on the emergence of Christianity from Judaism, as there were large and important zones where both were clearly different reli-

gions about 100–150 years before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. And it is for this reason that I regard our disagreement as important.

I would like to bring forward two examples from my own recent research that demonstrate that Judaism and Christianity were already clearly two different entities in the late second century at the latest, long before the Constantinian period. Both examples use data pertinent for Christianity and Judaism as *collective* entities. Collective data seems more useful in this respect than individual data (especially statements by leaders of what would become the two mainstreams). However, one could always argue that authors like Ignatius of Antioch speak first and foremost for themselves and some of their readers. The interest of the former is to exaggerate their importance, and the numerical importance of the latter is largely unknown to us. These authors could have been exceptions, chosen by the later victorious mainstream that picked out this text to survive the history of transmission. Therefore, I suggest we turn to two indicators for collective identity: the festival calendar and book collections.

According to Philo, Yom Kippur was the only liturgical event observed by every Jew. Even those who did not care for religion the rest of the year would unite with more religious people to pass this day in praying and fasting (*De Specialibus Legibus* 1:186, Colson 1950, 204–207). Several other observations support the validity of Philo's assertion with regard to the observance of the Day of Atonement among Jews. Among the yearly Jewish festivals, Yom Kippur is the only one to have attracted wider attention among pagan writers (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003a, 68–70). The observance of Yom Kippur is attested for non-Jews by Philo, Josephus, Acts, the Palestinian Talmud, and patristic sources.<sup>3</sup> The (non-sectarian) festival prayers attested in Qumran are exceptionally extensive for this festival, suggesting a particularly well-developed liturgical service (Falk 1998, 165–169; Stökl Ben Ezra 2003a, 37–46). If we turn Philo's statement upside down, we may conclude that anyone not observing this festival would not have been regarded as being Jewish, even in the widest sense—at least by Philo. Yom Kippur is a positive identity marker. Whoever is Jewish and even those close to Judaism observe this festival. Whole ‘Christian Jewish’ communities *not* participating in the Day of Atonement liturgies in places where such an

<sup>3</sup> Philo, *De vita Mosis* 2:20–23; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2:282; Acts 27:9; PT *Meg* 3:2 (74a) and PT *Sanhedrin* 10:8 (29c); Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 1:13:4 and compare Stökl Ben Ezra 2003a, 213–218.

observation was the norm would set themselves apart. The Christian apologists of the second century have transmitted numerous polemics against this festival that show clearly that a substantial number of Christians did not observe Yom Kippur and in fact regarded its observance as non-Christian (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003a, 219–221). Acts 27:9 is the only text that suggests a whole Christian community might have observed the fast, but already Justin Martyr limits its observance to Jewish Christians. Statements by Origen, Chrysostom, and others show that observance of the Day of Atonement among some Christians continued but that it was limited to individuals (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003a, 273–283). From their perspective, Yom Kippur had become a negative identity marker. Whoever observes Yom Kippur was *not* a Christian. The number of Christians observing the fast might have been quite substantial. Yom Kippur seems to have stayed attractive for non-Jews for quite some time. As Yom Kippur does however not seem to have become part and parcel of any early Christian festival calendar other than that of Jewish Christians, ‘non-Jewish’ Christianity as a collective differed visibly from Judaism in a crucial point from the early second century onwards at the latest. Individuals did revolt against this distinction, but it is clear that there was a non-Jewish Christianity. How large was this group? Do we have a way to quantify? Using the metaphor of cytokinesis, we speak here of a new generation of cells. How many cells did split?

The second example deals with this question from a quantitative perspective. Judaism and Christianity have been termed ‘religions of the book’ (Lang 1990, Stroumsa 2003). Each group uses a certain choice of texts, some of them more central, some of them more peripheral, and there is a correlation to the central or peripheral status of the community with regard to its ‘Jewishness’.<sup>4</sup> Adopting and adapting a division employed by Devorah Dimant in a landmark analysis of the ideological composition of the book collections in each of the Qumran caves (1995), I suggest using three heuristic categories, core, shared and group-specific literature, and calculating their relative ratios in a given book collection. More peripheral groups will have a greater ratio of group-specific literature than more mainstream groups that will focus on books shared with other forms of Judaism (i.e. core and shared literature). The three categories can be defined as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> Of course one can apply this methodology on other religions, such as medieval Christianity.

- a. core-Jewish literature: cherished by *all or almost all* Jewish groups
  - the books of the Bible that are in the Masoretic Text.
- b. shared literature: used by *more than one* Jewish group
  - the additional books of the Septuagint, Philo, Josephus, Pseudepigrapha (these books were used by at least one Jewish group and Christian Jews).
  - the non-sectarian compositions of Qumran, which were used by at least one Jewish group before being adopted by the Qumranites who used them, too.
- c. group-specific literature: honored by *only one* group
  - sectarian compositions as the *Rule of the Community* for Qumran.
  - e.g. books of the NT and other compositions containing key-expressions such as ‘Jesus Christ’ used by Christians but not by other Jewish groups

While the borders between these categories are obviously blurred and there will be doubtful cases, they are sharp enough to function as *heuristic* categories for the majority of texts. Dimant arrived at the following results for Qumran: about a quarter of the books include community-specific terminology and belong to our category of group-specific literature, about one-third of the books are biblical manuscripts (core), and another third of the books do not contain community-specific terminology (shared literature in our terms). The rest, about one eighth, is unidentified. In other words, more than two-thirds of all books would also be used by other Jewish groups not belonging to the community network. Qumran may have been the library of a Jewish sect but it was clearly a *Jewish sect*.

Regretfully, this is the only example we have for an ancient ‘Jewish’ book collection properly spoken. For ancient Christianity, the situation is even worse. We do not have a single collection of comparable scope to Qumran, and our oldest complete library catalogue comes only from the time of the rise of Islam.<sup>5</sup> But we can work with a *virtual* library, a library reconstructed from Christian and Jewish papyri thrown onto the trash heaps of ancient Oxyrhynchus, Antinoopolis, and other cities of ancient Egypt. We have around 120 Christian (and Jewish) papyri

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<sup>5</sup> Ostracon IFAO 13315, see Coquin (1975). On the early history of Christian libraries, see van Elderen (1998), Gamble (1995, 144–202), Plümacher (1980, 414–415), Wendel (1954), Leclercq (1910). On the wider intellectual scale, see now also Grafton and Williams (2006), Frenschkowski (2006).

from the unambiguously pre-Constantinian period, the second to third century. This is certainly not the same as a real book collection. Yet, assuming that texts from the three categories had the same chances to land on these rubbish mounds and to survive wind, mice, and vermin, these 120 manuscripts would represent proportionally the ensemble of Christian book possession in this geographical zone. In a similar way, a modern poll extrapolates the state of opinion of a whole population from questions posed to a limited number of people.

If we compare the ideological composition of the Qumran collection with the remains of early Christian book possession as reflected in the papyri from pre-Constantinian Egypt, we arrive at the following results: Among the Christian papyri before the Constantinian revolution, about 60% are group-specific Christian compositions and even less than one third are biblical (Stökl Ben Ezra, 2008). Less than 10% of the manuscripts are books belonging to (non-Christian) Judaism—primarily Philo, Josephus, and LXX books not in the Masoretic Text. We therefore face the reverse situation compared to Qumran. There the vast majority of books would have been used by other Jews, too, and a minority was group-specific, while among the Christian and Jewish papyri of ancient Egypt the vast majority is group-specific Christian literature. Even if we allow for a certain amount of error, it is clear that early Christianity is much less ‘Jewish’ than the Jewish sectarians from Qumran. This is not the library of a Jewish ‘sect’. Christian textual identity has a new center from quite early on, around 200 CE at the latest, but probably even earlier. These texts clearly reflect a situation in which the owners of these manuscripts can be qualified as Christians reading also some Jewish books rather than as Jews reading some Christian books. If there was a Jewish–Christian continuum, most probably the vast majority of people were not in the middle, in the area blurring the boundaries, an area that in all likelihood seems to have been rather limited.

Going back to the metaphor of cytokinesis, the three examples mentioned here fit the following aspects: That many Christian communities did celebrate Yom Kippur demonstrates the existence of Christian cells separate from Jewish cells. The comparison between the ideological composition of the Qumran ‘library’ and early Christian ‘book collections’ from Egypt shows that around 200 CE these Christian cells already were not an exception but represented the vast majority, at least for this geographical area. Therefore the alliance of Empire and Christianity can not be drawn upon as a factor in the separation of Judaism and

Christianity. This alliance may have spurred the separation in other areas, but that was merely a mopping-up exercise. Such quantification is useful to separate the important major phenomena from the less important margins. Intermediate groups certainly existed between the Christian and the Jewish fields, yet they seem to have been rather marginal in terms of numbers. Of course, marginal phenomena are very valuable to understanding the religious mosaic of any given society in all its details.<sup>6</sup> Yet, we first have to sort out the chief groups and principal processes before turning to the secondary ones. Finally, the example of Yom Kippur influencing Christian liturgical events as late as the fifth century shows a vivid interaction between two cells in an area where we would not have expected it. If we continue to search, we might find more examples. ‘Exceptions’ like this case might, after all, not be so ‘exceptional’. To me it seems not so much the sheer assumption of a ‘parting of the ways’ of Christianity from Judaism that might impede progress in the research of early Jewish–Christian relations but rather the unnecessary conjecture often going with it that non-violent interaction stagnated after such a parting. In addition, the metaphor of cytokinesis—though obviously far from perfect<sup>7</sup>—illustrates the emergence of early Christianity better than the model of the parting of the ways as it replaces a moment of separation with a complex process that has many beginnings and several ends.

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<sup>6</sup> Judaism itself is an example of a numerically minor religion that has influenced and is continuing to shape the religious world history more than many other groups ten times as big as it is.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the DNA does not usually change from one generation of cells to the next, while for our model, mutation would rather be the norm.

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## THE DESERTS OF PALESTINE

### Wilderness in the Thought of the Rabbis and the Desert Fathers: Geographic Reality and the Crisscrossing of Motifs

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#### INTRODUCTION

At first glance, it might be difficult to understand what the deserts of Palestine, in either rabbinic thought or in the thought of the Desert Fathers, might have to do with ‘Modes of Interaction between Judaism and Christianity’. However, as we shall see, at least some of the deserts of Palestine provide ‘isolation and independence’, to use the catch words of the theme of our conference, and consequently one might ask to what extent there is or there can be ‘syncretism and dialogue’, once again using thematic catch words of the conference, when the desert in question was sacred to both Jew and Christian. Does the sanctity of a geographic entity provide for modes of interaction? The answer is more complex than one might imagine.

The desert in question is the Sinai Desert. My interest in desert and wilderness, whether of Sinai or the Judaean Desert or the Desert of Samaria, is not new and has occupied me on and off for two and a half decades (Schwartz 1980, 79–87; Schwartz 1981, 7–14; Schwartz and Spanier 1991, 252–271; 1992, 3–20; Schwartz 2000, 104–117). It is the Sinai, however, which initially attracted my attention, and the first article I ever published dealt with the Sinai Desert in Jewish tradition and thought (Schwartz 1980, 79–87). The thrust in those early studies was on Judaism with some very small amount of comparative Christian material. There was nothing there that even vaguely resembled ‘desert studies’ or ‘desert theology’ in either Judaism or Christianity and certainly nothing on eco-theology in either religion (Goehring 2003, 437–451; Kearns 2003, 466–484; Adler 2006, 4–37). Moreover, desert and wilderness in general have since become trendy topics of research in modern and postmodern studies (e.g. Jasper 2004). It was time, therefore, to return to the study of the desert and particularly to that which had first aroused my attention, the Sinai Desert.

## DESERT AND WILDERNESS

Desert and wilderness left an indelible imprint and an ‘eternal’ one on both Judaism and Christianity. Israel received the Torah and became a people in the desert. While Christianity may not have accepted this as the Jews did or seen it in the same light as the Jews, these events likewise made a lasting imprint upon Christianity, with the route of the Exodus and the giving of the Torah in the desert serving as geographic typologies for the future. John preaches in the wilderness and meets Jesus there, and following his baptism Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and tempted by the devil for forty days (Matt 4:1–11; Mark 1:9–13; Luke 4:1–4). Without going into detail here, it is clear that these events described as taking place in the desert or wilderness made a lasting impression on Christian thought and theology.

Before we proceed, it is necessary to make one point of a technical nature. In English, ‘desert’ and ‘wilderness’ are often used interchangeably, reflecting the Hebrew *midbar* and the Greek *eremos*. Wilderness is the better translation, although regarding the monks of Palestine and Egypt, desert is the term that has entered the theological lexicon. The *eremos* or *midbar* refers to an area that is usually lonely, uncultivated and uninhabited, and not necessarily a desert in the modern sense of the word in that it is deprived of water, although that may indeed be the case (Amir 1962, 674–678). Both *eremos* and *midbar* might also be translated as grazing land or steppe. We shall in any case continue to use the English words wilderness and desert interchangeably, although it is clear that wilderness might have other definitions in English. And one final caveat, obviously we cannot present the entire spectrum of desert–wilderness traditions of Sinai either of the Rabbis or of the Desert Fathers. Our purpose is limited to pointing out the highlights with the goal of showing what is common and what is different and perhaps what passes from one to another, or a ‘crisscrossing of motifs’, as in our title.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As my friend and colleague Dr. Marcel Poorthuis has pointed out to me, there is a basic difference between rabbinic literature and that of the Desert Fathers. The literature of the former is basically ‘community oriented’ while the latter is less so. Thus, one might claim that the differences between the motifs found in both literatures might relate to the nature of the literature and not necessarily to intrinsic matters of the desert. We have, however, made every effort to discuss traditions that are intrinsic to desert and wilderness and not those overly dependent on the ‘form’ of the traditions.

### THE BIBLE

As the attitude of both the Rabbis and the Christian Fathers to desert and wilderness derives to some extent from the Bible, we shall briefly point out the basic biblical motifs which influenced both Judaism and Christianity. The first and most blatant motif is that the desert is a bad place (Num 20:5; Deut 8:15; Jer 2:2, 6; Ps 107:4–5 et al.; Hoffmeier 2005, 35–46). It is deprived of fertility and God's benediction. It is a place of desolation and demons and is often punishment for human error and sin, such as the wandering in the desert for forty years. However, biblical theology also knows a second, more positive motif. The desert, particularly in relation to the Exodus, is where the nation gelled, being in constant contact with God who often showed His power through both miraculous appearances and acts. An offshoot of this develops during the Prophetic Age when the desert serves as a contra to the corruption of the city and civilization. It becomes a place of purification in which man worships God in his heart (Talmon 1966, 31–63).

These basic biblical motifs served as the basis of the desert theology for both Rabbi and Desert Father, but with one major difference, and this was such a major difference that in our view it affected both theologies in their entirety: when it came to the Desert of the Exodus, there was no Jewish settlement and very little Jewish presence in the Sinai Desert. It was far away from the heartland of Jewish settlement, was probably not even in the halakhic Land of Israel (Sussmann 1976: 213–257), and few Jews and/or Rabbis had any business there or really knew anything about it. Their knowledge was based on the Bible and not on first-hand knowledge of the area. Ironically, the same was also true of the other 'closer' deserts, such as the Judean Desert and its various sub-branches. Thus, while the Dead Sea Sect might have been in the Judean Desert, and while all the deserts of the Land of Israel or surrounding it might have occasionally been used as a refuge, there was little 'normative' settlement in the Judean Desert. The Rabbis wrote about the desert as 'outsiders'; as we shall see below, the Christians wrote as an 'indigenous' desert people. Whether or not this allowed for a crisscrossing of motifs is something we shall see below.

The Rabbis, seemingly because of the inhospitality of the desert and distance of the desert from Jewish population centers, at least in the case of Sinai, were willing to make do with a virtual acquaintance, based on the Bible and the motifs briefly mentioned above, and this in turn resulted in a further development of negative desert traditions to

continue to explain their lack of physical acquaintance. Ironically, as we shall see, their lack of knowledge also limited their ability to develop negative traditions. This is not to say, of course, that they were totally ignorant of basic geographic reality. One did not need to have the experience of Marco Polo to be able to describe the desert somewhat, as well as its inhospitality. And of course, there might have been the odd Rabbi who really was familiar with the desert and its lore from personal knowledge, and this might have filtered into the Talmudic tradition. General knowledge was not a problem; specific knowledge was, and it hardly existed.

The Fathers, however, reacted in exactly the opposite manner. The Bible drew them, like a magnet, to these desert sites, the ‘desert a city’ as in the title of D. J. Chitty’s classic (and based on a famous sentence of Athanasius who says this of Antony) (Chitty 1977), even if at times this was a city of anchorites. Obviously there were other reasons for this in addition to the Bible motifs mentioned above, as we shall point out, but these secondary reasons and surrounding traditions and motifs became possible and developed only because there was a physical presence. While one might argue that the Christian presence kept the Jews away, the Jews could have been there first had they so wanted. Also while one might argue that Christianity was pilgrimage-oriented and Judaism—or at least Roman-Byzantine Judaism—was not, this was not the case regarding other regions in Palestine. Thus the same biblical basis had apparently opposite results for Jews and Christians. There was, of course, much more to it, but that will be discussed below. For the moment, suffice to say that this does not seem to be fertile ground for any crisscrossing of motifs.

We can now begin with a discussion of Sinai in rabbinic literature. Although the sources are not many, we cannot present them all. While it would be nice to be able to abide by methodological strictures and to maintain a strict chronological framework differentiating between tannaitic and amoraic material, unfortunately this is not always possible.

#### THE RABBIS AND SINAI

The Rabbis echo the first motif of biblical tradition. The desert is a place of danger and desolation full of poisonous reptiles (*ExodR* 24:4), and it is difficult to imagine why anyone would want to enter it. Jethro, for instance, deserves extra praise because he left all the amenities of

home at Midian to go into the desolation of the desert in which there is nothing (*Mek Yitro, Masekhta d'Amalak*, 1, 192, ed. Horovitz-Rabin). Traveling in the desert without sufficient provision is obviously foolhardy (*Mek Beshalah, Masekhta de-va-Yisa*, 1, 152, ed. Horovitz-Rabin). Not only is travel dangerous, but it is also exceedingly difficult because of physical conditions such as the sand which prevents the establishment of real or permanent routes. Caravans can travel only at night, guided by the stars, and not by day (*Tan Masei* 3; *NumR* 23:3), unless, of course, you have a guide such as in the case of the Talmudic traveler Rabbah b. Bar Hana which we shall now describe.

This is the longest rabbinic desert tradition that there is, and we shall cite a good part of it:

Rabbah b. Bar Hana related: ‘We were once traveling in a desert and there joined us an Arab merchant who, [by] taking up sand and smelling it [could] tell which was the way to one place and which was the way to another. We said unto him: “How far are we from water?” He replied: “Give me [some] sand.” We gave him, and he said unto us: “Eight parasangs.” When we gave him again [later], he told us that we were three parasangs off. I changed it; but was unable [to nonplus] him’ (BT BB 73b–74a).

We mentioned before that the Rabbis had limited first-hand knowledge of the desert. This tradition would seem to belie that claim. However, it is important to remember that Rabbah b. Bar Hana was an exception to the rule. He was one of the *nehutei*, sages who traveled back and forth between Palestine and Babylonia bringing traditions of one Torah center to the other, and BT BB 73b–74a includes his detailed itineraries and travel, although not necessarily the Palestine–Babylonia circuit, which in any case would have been of limited help for our present study. While much of it seems to fall within the realm of the fantastic, some of the desert traditions seem to be grounded in reality. In any case, he apparently spent a good deal of time in travel, and subsequently he was not unfamiliar with deserts. As for the fantastic, though, the tradition continues:

He said unto me: ‘Come and I will show you the Dead of the Wilderness.’ I went [with him] and saw them; and they looked as if in a state of exhilaration. They slept on their backs; and the knee of one of them was raised, and the Arab merchant passed under the knee, riding on a camel with spear erect, and did not touch it. I cut off one corner of the purple-blue shawl of one of them; and we could not move away. He said unto me: ‘[If] you have, per adventure, taken something from them, return it; for we have a

tradition that he who takes anything from them cannot move away.' I went and returned it; and then we were able to move away (BT BB 73b–74a).

He subsequently reported this to the Sages who did not seem all that surprised on hearing the report of these adventures.

While we will deal with Mt. Sinai below, we present here the continuation of the tradition dealing with Mt. Sinai:

He said unto me: 'Come and I will show you Mount Sinai.' [When] I arrived I saw that scorpions surrounded it and they stood like white asses. I heard a *Bath Kol* saying: 'Woe is me that I have made an oath and now that I have made the oath, who will release me?' (BT BB 74a).

Rabbah reported these adventures to the Rabbis who expressed distress at the fact that he did not absolve God of His oath. It is not impossible that this tradition might reflect the proliferation of monasticism in the Sinai, and especially around Mt. Sinai, in spite of the fact that Rabbah clearly lived before the expansion of monasticism in Sinai. The formulation of the tradition, though, might certainly be late, and in any case, monks had begun to arrive there even by his time, as we shall see below.

The tradition concludes with the following:

He said unto me: 'Come, I will show you the men of Korah that were swallowed up.' I saw two cracks that emitted smoke. I took a piece of clipped wool, dipped it in water, attached it to the point of a spear and let it in there. And when I took it out it was singed. [Thereupon] he said unto me: 'Listen attentively [to] what you [are about to] hear.' And I heard them say: 'Moses and his Torah are truth and we are liars.' He said unto me: 'Every thirty days *Gehenna* causes them to turn back here as [one turns] flesh in a pot and they say thus: "Moses and his law are truth and we are liars"' (BT BB 74a).

As fantastic as this all may be, the relationship of the desert to *Gehenna* seems to strengthen the motif of desert as a punishment. There is at the very least a potentially competitive element in this tradition vis-à-vis Christianity, and perhaps even a polemical one, bearing in mind that the Christians monks used to show visitors to the area of the Mt. Katherine monastery, and in particular to the Valley of the Forty, the place in which in their tradition the earth opened up and swallowed Korah (Hobbs 1995, 127).<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Christians, for the Jews this site never became a place of pilgrimage.

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<sup>2</sup> We do not claim that the Jews identified Korah with Christianity, but as just stated above, the Mt. Sinai monks did make use of the Korah tradition for their own purposes as

Bearing in mind the negative characteristics of the desert, some of which we have described, one might ask why the Children of Israel went through the desert to begin with when they departed from Egypt. The Bible (Exod 13:17–18) of course provides an answer. The short route through the Land of the Philistines might have resulted in war, and the Children of Israel might have been disheartened by this and returned to Egypt. For the Rabbis, however, this served as an excuse to elaborate on the second motif found in the Bible which allows for something of the positive to seep into the negative framework of the desert. The desert was chosen in particular because of its harsh characteristics: it will toughen up the Children of Israel, especially in the spiritual realm.

Thus, for example, were the Children of Israel to have entered Canaan immediately, they would have engaged in everyday life and not in Torah. The miracles of the desert, the manna and water, brought them into close contact with God and allowed them to engage in Torah (*Mek Beshalah, Masekhta de-va-Yehi Beshalah, Petihta*, 76, ed. Horovitz-Rabin). This period was also necessary because, according to the continuation of the tradition, the Canaanites, upon hearing of the Exodus, had destroyed their own land, and the forty years in the desert allowed the land of Canaan to recover. The Canaanites assumed that the Israelites were forever lost and doomed in the desert (*ibid.* and *ExodR* 20:16). There remained, however, the gnawing fear among the Canaanites that somehow the Children of Israel were surviving the desert and would eventually come out, much stronger than before, and conquer their land (*ExodR* 20:16).

The continuation of the midrash in *Mekhilta* provides four reasons which basically encapsulate the positive elements of the desert and the sojourn in the desert vis-à-vis the Exodus:

‘But God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea’ (Exod 13:18). Why? In order to do for them miracles and wondrous

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part of the pilgrimage itinerary to the Sinai area. The Christians were clearly associated with Esau, who had a son named Korah (Gen 36:5) and possibly a grandson by that name (Gen 36:16). God clearly hated Esau, whose territory was associated with desert (Mal 1:3). While the Rabbis would not have confused the names, the Esau–Korah identification might have allowed the motif to include not only elements of competition but also of polemic. See Letter 63.55 of the fourth century CE Frankish Church Father Ambrose of Milan ([www.newadvent.org/fathers/3702e.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3702e.htm)). Ambrose states that the followers of Korah were swallowed up and so removed from polluting the air, the heavens, and the earth (through their sepulchers). The Rabbis might have wished that the earth would swallow up the Christians of Sinai to cease their pollution, as it were.

deeds with the manna, the quail and the fountain. R. Eliezer said: ‘by the way of’, in order to tire them out ... ‘wilderness’, in order to purify them ... ‘Red Sea’ ... in order to test them ... R. Joshua said, ‘by the way of’, in order to give them the Torah ... ‘the wilderness’, to feed them the manna ... ‘Red Sea’, in order to do for them miracles and wondrous deeds (*Mek Beshalah, Masekhta de-va-Yehi Beshalah, Petihta*, 76, ed. Horovitz-Rabin).

Thus, the positive elements can be summed up as follows: 1. Desert and Torah, 2. Desert and the inhabitants of Canaan, 3. Desert and purification, and 4. Desert and miracles. As was the case regarding the two biblical motifs, positive and negative, which were basically able to coexist, the same would seem to be true regarding the Rabbis’ view of the desert. None of this, though, was apparently enough to arouse real interest on the part of the Rabbis or Jews in general to visit or to live in the desert.

In the final analysis, in the messianic era, the deserts of Israel, or those surrounding Israel, would become settled, and the settled areas (of Esau) would become desert (*Tan Masei* 3 and parallels). However, the underlying negative perception of the desert is clear, and thus it is not surprising that in spite of all of the above-mentioned traditions, God did provide some comforts to the Children of Israel there and even cured some of those who were maimed during their servitude as a result of their hard work so the Torah would be accepted by those who were whole (*NumR* 7:1).

Up until now our comments have related to the Sinai desert in general. We shall briefly describe the way that the Rabbis related to some particular sites in the desert—briefly, because the knowledge of the Rabbis on this matter was indeed brief, and they were fully aware that they were lacking in this matter: ‘For Moses did not know how to write the itinerary of travels, until the Holy One blessed be He, provided a hint’ (*Midr Ha-Gadol* on Num 33:2). We shall not deal with all the desert sites, but rather shall briefly provide a few examples of their methodology regarding these sites.

The Children of Israel entered the Desert of Shur after they crossed over from the Sea of Reeds and could not find any water there (Exod 15:22). A tradition in *Mekhilta* (*Mek Beshalah, Masekhta de-va-Yisa* 1, 153, ed. Horovitz-Rabin) identifies this desert with the otherwise unidentified Desert of Kov, but does add that it is a place of poisonous reptiles, a standard desert motif. A tradition in *Exodus Rabbah* (*ExodR* 24:4) admits, however, that it has no idea where this wilderness is. Other

traditions made feeble attempts at etymological explanations, none of which really have anything to do with the desert or even with established halakhic principles certainly not related to the desert (*ExodR* 24:4; *Mek Beshalah*, *Masekhta de-va-Yisa* 1, 155, ed. Horovitz-Rabin). Elim was the site of springs and palms (*Exod* 15:27). Bearing in mind the troubles that the Children of Israel had with water in Shur and in Marah (*Exod* 15: 26), it is not surprising that the Rabbis praise these springs and palms, and according to one tradition they were there from the very time of the creation of the world (*Mek Beshalah*, 158–159).

### THE RABBIS AND MT. SINAI

As seen above, the attitude of the Rabbis to the Sinai Desert was ambivalent. The desert, any desert, including this one, was a bad hostile place, although this very nature might have some positive purpose for the Children of Israel. However, they had nothing good to say about the physical nature of Mt. Sinai. Not only did the Rabbis basically ignore the physical geography of the mountain, but they made every effort to play down any intrinsic connection between the eternal sanctity of the giving of the Torah and the site of the mountain itself. The ignoring of Sinai is, in our view, a reaction to the Christian adoption of the area and mountain.

Mt. Sinai is inconsequential; it has no inherent holiness, but rather its holiness is dependent on the presence of God there (BT *Taan* 21b), or on the fact that Mt. Sinai was originally part of Mt. Moriah, and was ‘ripped off from that mountain as *hallah* from dough’ and destined to return to Jerusalem. Any sanctity Mt. Sinai had was borrowed (*MidrPss* 68:9: 318, ed. Buber). The message was always more important than the mountain.

Why then did God choose to reveal himself on Mt. Sinai? One tradition maintains that famous mountains like Mt. Tabor and Mt. Carmel came before God to be chosen, but they were rejected because they had been sites of pagan worship (*GenR* 99:1, 1271, ed. Teodor-Albeck; cf. *Mek Yitro*, *Masekhta de-va-Hodesh* 5, 220, ed. Horovitz-Rabin). Another tradition maintains that it was the very unimportance of Mt. Sinai that made God decide to give the Torah on it as opposed to the haughty mountains. God sought out the unimpressive mountain, a ‘humble’ mountain, and the others are ‘blemished’ in contrast to lowly Sinai (*PesR* 7, 21a; *MidPss* 68:9; *NumR* 13:3; BT *Meg* 29a; BT *Sot* 5a).

There might also be a polemical strain in the traditions that associate hatred towards non-Jews with Mt. Sinai. Thus, a tradition trying to understand the different names of Mt. Sinai associates the name Mt. Horeb with the root *hrv* meaning destruction and states that the verdict decrying the destruction of the non-Jews was handed down at Mt. Sinai. The name ‘Sinai’ is interpreted in light of the root *sn'* meaning hatred, and from Mt. Sinai descended hatred to the non-Jews (*ExodR* 2:4; *BT Shab* 89a; *NumR* 1:8). The plain fact is that the desert and this mountain belonged to no one, and this was another reason why the Torah was given here. Anybody could have come there and accepted the Torah; it was open to all. On a personal level, just as the desert was *hefker*, i.e. free to and for all, so it was necessary for one to become *hefker* in order to receive the Torah. The desert was a ‘freeing’ experience and provided an emotional model, as it were, for accepting the Torah (*NumR* 1:7). Ironically, this last part of the tradition is extremely close to one of the major Christian motifs which we shall discuss below. The beginning of the tradition, however, firmly connects it to the polemic, perhaps attempting to abrogate the similar Christian motif. The vehemence and hatred found in these etymologies might be explained as part of a Jewish polemic against the massive Christian presence in the Sinai in general and in the Mt. Sinai area in particular. Everybody had a chance to come there, and it belongs to all or none; now it is not acceptable that somebody lays claim to the area and takes it as his own, and if there were to be a ‘freeing experience’, it was to be Jewish.

#### MONKS AND SINAI

Obviously, we cannot discuss in detail all that there is to mention regarding the desert and the wilderness in the Desert Fathers, and we shall make do with comparing certain prominent Christian concepts with the reality we have described above. As we have pointed out a number of times, it is important to remember that the Bible is always in the background for Christians as well as for Jews.

While we will basically deal with the Sinai desert, geographically speaking, there are three areas that provide Christian desert traditions that might contribute parallel information for us. While this sometimes parallels the development of monastic communities, this is not always the case: 1. Antony left his village in Egypt for the desert around 271 CE, and the Thebaid became the region of the Egyptian Desert idealized

in early monastic tradition (Harmless 2004, 61) 2. Chariton arrived in Palestine in 275 CE, and monasticism began to spread in the Judaean Desert (Gariotte 1941, 16–42). 3. The Sinai Peninsula. It is clear that by the mid-fourth century CE monks lived as hermits in communes in Sinai. Subsequently, monasticism flourished in Sinai throughout the Byzantine period (Dahari 2000, 13, 21–24). Sinai was neither in Egypt nor in the halakhic Land of Israel, although some of the monastic centers were at least nominally connected with those in Egypt or Palestine, while some were more ideologically independent. For the Desert Fathers and monks, the draw of Sinai was the route of the Exodus, the forty year wandering, and the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Monasticism spread along the purported route of the Exodus and wandering, at least within the realms of geographic and physical possibility.

There are of course desert references outside of these geographic areas. Desert became ‘wilderness’ for the fathers of the Jura Mountains, but Merovingian Gaul is outside the scope of this article, and while *De Laude Eremi* of Eucherius of Lyons (5th century CE), for example, contains many interesting theoretical traditions on the wilderness, it too is outside the scope of our study (Lenkaityte 2006).<sup>3</sup>

I should like to discuss the general attributes of desert and wilderness in the Desert Fathers based on a number of rather broad categories. We have made use *inter alia* of the ‘sayings of the Desert Fathers’, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, a collection of sayings, dialogues, and short narratives that preserve the words of the monks of the period. While it had been assumed that the work originated in the monastic center at Scetis, in the Wadi Natrun Valley, south of Alexandria in Lower Egypt, there are those who ascribe it to the Scetis diaspora, when many renowned figures had left there. There are also those who argue that the text originated in Palestine, and a number of Palestinian monks appear there. In any case, we make reference only to general desert traditions (Gould 1993, esp. 9–17; Stewart 1990, 25–39) which should help understand the Sinai desert experience.<sup>4</sup> As with the Rabbis, we shall first discuss the Sinai desert in general and then Mt. Sinai.

<sup>3</sup> Eucherius withdrew to the monastery of Lérins after the death of his wife and subsequently to the nearby island of Lerona. He devoted his time there to study and mortification. He imitated the virtues of Egyptian solitaries and sought to become an anchorite in the East. He kept in touch with those renowned for learning and piety such as St. Hilary of Arles, and it was to him that he wrote his letter ‘*De laude Eremi*’ (c. 428) (Lenkaityte 2006).

<sup>4</sup> On textual and technical matters of the *Apophthegmata* (‘anonymous’, ‘alphabetic’, and ‘systematic’), see Gould 1993, vii, 7.

The Desert Fathers sought to establish a ‘New Society’ in the desert (Gould 1993, 106). This new society was a society of both men and to some extent women, but their experiences at this time basically went unrecorded or were suppressed (Stewart, 1990, 25–29).<sup>5</sup> The Rabbis too would have ignored or suppressed any parallel Jewish traditions, but apparently there were none. If Jewish ‘men’ refrained from pilgrimage or visits to Sinai, it is likely that the matter never even came up for women, who were unlikely to have traveled to the desert. Some monks also remained outside of the ‘New Society’, because not all monks who went to Sinai (or other deserts) were seeking spirituality. Indeed, some of these first monks to arrive at Sinai were fleeing taxation or military service or the long arm of the law seeking them for criminal actions. They did not go there for a spiritual experience but as refuge from persecution, justified or not (Hobbs 1995, 66).

This ‘New Society’ was an ‘active society’—a stadium, as it were, in which athletes perform, and a good part of that performance was a cultivation of self, although monastic *ascesis* or regimen was demanding not only spiritually but also physically (Adler 2006, 25). To achieve this active, new society, there first had to be liberation from the old, and the desert fulfilled this task. In the words of Peter Brown: ‘Desert was a myth of liberating precision. It delimited the towering presence of the world from which the Christian must be set free, by emphasizing a clear ecological frontier’ (Brown 1988, 216). It was necessary to withdraw from the old and Near Eastern landscapes, and geography provided a good backdrop for the Christian interpretation of this withdrawal. The geography of the new ‘community’ or ‘society’ allowed for solitaries and anchorites, in spite of the occasional tension between ideal levels of solitude desired by certain of the leading monks and the desires for an active community by their disciples.

While there was asceticism in the cities, the new community was possible only in the desert, and there seems to have been a connection between rising ascetic power and withdrawal from the *oikoumene*—the inhabited world (Harmless 2004, 65). What made someone like Antony unique was not his ascetic lifestyle but where he practiced it—no longer in his home village, but in the great desert. There were few ascetics

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<sup>5</sup> See, however, Ward 1985, 63–66. In the ‘sayings of the Desert Fathers’ there are also three *ammas*, or spiritual mothers. They did enjoy somewhat equal footing in their theological standing, but they were a distinct minority vis-à-vis the Desert Fathers. My thanks to my friend and colleague Dr. Marcel Poorthuis for this reference. Cf. also Swan 2001.

among the Rabbis, and fewer still practiced their asceticism in a desert of any kind; in fact there are none that I know of.

While the desert community for the Church Fathers was initially a transient community, a city of monks who left their previous communities and homes but eventually sought for themselves citizenship of the heavens, as it were, eventually the desert began to include elements of ‘paradise’ (of monks) and became, nominally at least, a final destination in itself. Jewish tradition, including even the Dead Sea Sect, never exalted the wilderness or desert as final destination. At best it was a temporary refuge to be endured or redeemed by cultivation. The ultimate destination for the Christian was heaven; for the Jews it had been earthly Canaan or the Land of Israel. The transience of the desert helped the Christians arrive at their ultimate spiritual destination. For the Jews it was just a necessary evil; perhaps it was necessary at the time of the Exodus to toughen them up spiritually, as we mentioned above, but they would have been better off if they had not needed this.

The desert, free of the problems of the cities and vices harbored there, also offered a universally accessible haven, spiritually serving as a bridge to the Scripture of God, even for the ignorant and unlettered. The desert gave the monks a landscape that mirrored what they sought for their own hearts: an uncluttered view through clean air (Harmless 2004, 250). Antony tells us that a monk out of desert is like fish out of water—the monk loses his spiritual life (Ward 1975, 3, 49; Gregg 1980, 85, 93; Festuguière 1983, 175). This spirituality might be accessible through the ‘community’ or might be found in solitude. In the case of spirituality, at first the desert was a final destination, a living afterlife. By the fourth century, however, the desert became identified with spiritual stability which, ironically, returned a bit of the transient nature to the desert, which now could serve as a vehicle for bigger and better things, even perhaps contributing to the reversal of the Fall (Adler 2006, 18, 23, 27). This Christian spirituality might seem at first glance to parallel the Jewish motif of purification in the desert mentioned above, but it goes far beyond anything that the Jews might have imagined or postulated. For the desert monks, the desert allowed for a full expression of the spirituality, even in such mundane matters as clothing (or the rag-like nature of such) (Schwartz 2004).

We learn from Antony that living in the desert in spiritual solitude delivered one from three conflicts: hearing, speech, and sight—one is left only to worry about fornication (Ward 1975, 3). Desert became for the monks the geographical equivalent for celibacy. This is as far

removed from Judaism as celibacy itself.<sup>6</sup> For some, the desert could free from all cares, as in the case of John the Dwarf (born 339 CE) who went to the desert to be like the angels, who did not work (Ward 1975, 86). Ironically, the spirituality, as it soars, might become ‘virtual’ and become detached from desert or wilderness geography, at least in the pristine sense. Thus, mountains and forests might provide a different geographic background for wilderness, replacing the desert and creating a new type of wilderness asceticism and spirituality, similar perhaps to the purification motif in Judaism, but far beyond it.

As was the case for the Jews, the desert is the site of divine epiphany and intimacy with God. However, unlike the Jews who limited this to Mt. Sinai and to basically a single experience, for the desert monks the entire desert could serve for such epiphany and intimacy, and it was ongoing, as we find in the words of Jerome: ‘O Desert!... O Solitude!.. O Wilderness that rejoices in intimacy with God! (*O desertum Christi... O solitudo...O heremus familiari Deo gaudens!*)’ (Jerome, Letter 14.10, [www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npmf206.v.XIV.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npmf206.v.XIV.html); Wright 1933, 48–49). This could be a ‘high-grade’ epiphany such as that in keeping with Christian motifs and typologies, as when John Cassian (d. ~435), who left Bethlehem for the Egyptian desert, tells us that the monk experiences in the desert what the Apostles did in the Transfiguration (Harmless 2004, 397). In this case, the mountain ‘wilderness’ of Tabor is transferred to the (Egyptian) desert. Or the epiphany could be a low-grade constant as when Euthymius (5th century CE) tells us of being guided to caves in the Judaean Desert as if by God himself (Life of Euthymius 8, Price and Binns 1991, 11). The sites of these epiphanies, major or minor, are usually also the site of additional miracles, far and beyond the ‘paltry’ Jewish miracles described by Rabbah bar Bar Hananah. Only the Jewish desert miracles of the past might perhaps compare to any of this.

Because the desert was such a hard place, one might meet God there, and in any case it was common for monks to wander in the desert during ‘hard times’ such as Lent (Dahari 2000, 24). However it was not only God who could be found in the desert. Sacred landscape may induce a feeling of wellbeing, but it was also a landscape of fear. The

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<sup>6</sup> In general, Judaism frowns upon celibacy, for both laypersons and Rabbis. There were, though, some exceptions to the rule, such as Simeon ben Azzai who never married, although he had been betrothed to the daughter of R. Akiva (BT Ket 63a). He explained his celibate marital status as a result of his desire to study Torah without interruption. The few exceptions to the rule prove the rule itself.

desert also was the site of demonic temptation, whether ‘high’ temptation in the form of the devil or ‘low’ in the case of snakes and scorpions. This was not just a matter of anti-epiphany, as it were, but often the translation of the difficult conditions of the desert into the demonic (Harmless 2004, 86). For the desert Christians, the desert atmosphere was one of epiphany, but also fraught with upgraded danger from an ongoing hosts of demons and devils. Taming them was part of the challenge, and monks such as Antony were often depicted as taming the desert and reclaiming it from the demonic (*ibid.*).

Whether the Desert Fathers considered the dangers of the desert real or supernatural, many did seem to have a sense of the real physical realities (and dangers) of the desert and of the caution that desert dwellers should exercise in everyday life, such as being aware of snakes and scorpions which might hide under pots or pans or be found in dark places in the house. There were those like Abba Poemen who used this realistic desert imagery in their writings. They were also aware of the psychological dangers of desert life and that there was no guarantee that the experience would be positive (Harmless 2004, 208–209). The Jews seemed to be aware of the dangers inherent in desert life and stayed away; the Christians, monks and pilgrims, came anyway, and sometimes this indeed may have been what they sought. One might expect that the difficult desert conditions had a harmful effect on the health of the Fathers. Moreover, in addition to the dangers, the sources indicate that the diet of the monks was often quite limited. Perhaps all this did impair their health, but this is not the impression that one gets from the sources, at least regarding the prominent solitaries, who are often depicted as being robust and healthy. Many seem to have acquired a good knowledge of wild plants and potential edibles in the desert, and as desert monasticism developed so did the agricultural prowess of the monks (Adler 2006, 18; Dahari 2000, 43). In spite of all of the theology and other-worldly aspects of their attitude to the desert, the Fathers often became quite adept desert dwellers.

When all was said and done, though, there was a constant tension between ‘landscape’ and ‘mandscape’, between imaginative and geographic space, and ultimately it was possible to find an ‘inner desert’ almost anywhere. While it might be best, for example, to walk or sleep in the desert, obviously in an ascetic manner, if one can’t do it in the desert, he or she should do it as if in the desert (Ward 1975, 49).

Mt. Sinai was the major pilgrim attraction in Sinai and more people traveling to Simai meant the development of more traditions associated

with Exodus. Perhaps not surprisingly, and most conveniently, the majority of popular Exodus sites were close to Mt. Sinai, allowing for a more efficient sweep of the holy sites. Thus, by the time one arrived at Sinai, there had been an opportunity to stop at many supposed stations of the Exodus, although geographical conditions and food supplies often had more to do with establishing identifications than the Exodus account did (Dahari 2000, 140; Coleman and Elsner 1994, 75–76). The Rabbis, as we saw, for instance, made do with the occasional feeble etymology of Exodus sites. The monks established monasteries at these sites such as that at Elim identified with Raitho in southern Sinai, and local monks guiding the 4th-century pilgrim Egeria pointed out Kibroth Ha-Taavah (Num 11:34) near Mt. Sinai and many other sites also near there (Dahari 2000, 138; Egeria 1.2, Wilkinson 1981, 91).

We conclude this section on the Sinai desert with a description of travel in it not by a monk but rather by one of those many pilgrims who traveled through the desert on the way to Mt. Sinai. The 6th century Piacenza Pilgrim describes his travel in the desert from Elusa in the Negev to Mt. Sinai and beyond, apparently with Saracen guides: ‘For five or six days we traveled through the desert. Our camels carried our water, and each person was given a pint in the morning and a pint in the evening. When the water in the skins had turned bitter like gall we put sand in it, and this made it sweet... The people that traveled through that utter desert numbered twelve thousand six hundred’ (Antoninus Piacenza 36, Wilkinson 2002, 146). It is doubtful that Rabbah bar Bar Hana had met many travelers two centuries before. By the 6th century, the desert roads to Mt. Sinai apparently could become congested. Water, though, had remained an important motif in desert travel literature, with the skills of the local guides a *sine qua non* for desert survival as evident from this tradition as well as from the Rabbah bar Bar Hana tradition above.

#### Mt. SINAI

While it was the Exodus that drew monks and pilgrims to Sinai, it was around Mt. Sinai (Jebel Musa) and its environs that Sinaitic monasticism flourished. The geography of the region allowed for both solitude and the development of monastic centers, or in the words of Procopius of Caesarea: ‘A precipitous and terribly wild mountain, Sina [Sinai] by name, rears its height close to the Red Sea, as it is called... On this Mt.

Sina live monks whose life is a careful rehearsal of death and they enjoy without fear the solitude which is very precious to them' (Proc. De Aed. 5.8,Dewey and Downy 1954, 355, 357). To some travelers, the very geography of the place looked to them as they imagined the end of days would.

The geography heightened the fear and the solitude, and the monks tried to keep it that way. Byzantine tradition states that people avoided the mountain and that even hermits or solitaries never spent the night there. Later traditions relate that the mountain should be ascended only by those who have undertaken spiritual preparation, and here too geography was instrumental. The spiritual preparation could be earned by climbing the 'Stairway of Repentance' which begins just southeast of the monastery of St. Katherine, tracing a steep route up Jebel Musa and according to tradition carved there by 6th century monks. At a place two-thirds of the way up, monks tested the knowledge and piety of the pilgrims. Ironically, the tradition was that Jews could not make it up the mountain, but this information relates to the 15th century and afterwards, when apparently there was some Jewish travel in and pilgrimage to Sinai (Hobbs 1995, 110–111).

For the pilgrim, at least, Mt. Sinai and its environs embodied the geography of movement from sacred space to sacred place. In a rather brief paragraph, the 6th-century pilgrim Antoninus of Piacenza, whom we mentioned above, lists the rock where Moses struck water, a day's journey from St. Katherine, the burning bush, the spring where Moses watered sheep, the cave where Elijah fled from Ahab, and the peak of Mt. Sinai where Moses received the law. In the case of Antoninus, he was met by and accompanied by monks who initiated the pilgrim into some of the liturgy and ritual associated with the sites. Antoninus describes Mt. Sinai as rocky with little soil. However, Mt. Horeb, Jebel Sufsafa near Mt. Sinai, had good soil. In the valley between the two, one could find manna which could be drunk (Antoninus Piacenza 37–38, Wilkinson 2002,146–147; Dahari 2000, 48–49).

The 4th-century CE pilgrim Egeria, whom we have also mentioned above, provides even more detail regarding biblical sites in the environs of Mt. Sinai. We mentioned above Kibroth Ha-Taavah. She continues and mentions, all in the area of Mt. Sinai, the Valley of the Golden Calf, the spot where Moses pastured Jethro's cows and saw the burning bush, the church and cave of Moses on the summit of Mount Sinai, Elijah's mountain and cave, the place where Aaron and the seventy elders stood, the site of the burning bush, the place where Moses stood

in front of the bush, the site of the Israelite's camp, the place where the golden calf was made, the rock on which Moses broke the first tablets of the law, the place where Moses had ordered the Israelites to run from gate to gate, where they destroyed the calf, where they drank its remains, and more (Egeria 2.1–5.12, Wilkinson 1981, 91–98). In spite of the detailed description of sites, she does not spend much time, however, on the surrounding physical geography or surroundings, but it seems clear that all of these sites were located where physical conditions allowed for at least some degree of access. Access, convenience, and proximity to Mt. Sinai were apparently the most significant factors in the proliferation of these sites throughout the centuries.

### CONCLUSIONS

Both Jews and Christians began at more or less the same point regarding the Sinai desert and its holy sites. However, the Jews related to the desert grudgingly. From a theological standpoint they had to do so because of the Bible traditions, and there were indeed some mitigating positive elements. The Christians took the same starting points from the *Jewish* Bible or Old Testament and built an empire in the desert, both real and virtual. Perhaps the fact that they benefited from the support of the Byzantine Empire helped, but this does not explain the lack of Jewish interest, even before the Christians poured into the area.

In general, the Jews and the Rabbis of the Roman-Byzantine period seemed to prefer to experience their theology and normative Jewish lifestyle in some degree of comfort. Perhaps this was so because they had to fight for it in the face of ever growing surrounding hostility. Why fight to suffer in the desert?

One wonders, though, why the Rabbis ignored desert traditions, and specifically the Sinai ones, even if they had no desire to experience the physical reality behind them. By ignoring physical elements, they missed out on the opportunity to develop both positive and negative traditions. It is a commonplace that sacred place is storied place. It is our contention that Sinai was not really 'sacred place' for the Jews. This was so before the advent of Christianity, when the Jews might have developed some sort of Sinai or pilgrim tradition, perhaps for the reasons just cited, and was certainly so during the period of monastic hegemony there during the Byzantine period. The more the Christians flourished there, the more sites they identified, the more the Jews turned

aside. If this were Jerusalem, for instance, they would have fought back theologically. In the Sinai, they did not do so.

The Christians, whose position improved over the course of the Roman-Byzantine period, took much more to asceticism. The Bible jump-started their view of the desert; afterwards they just let these motifs develop further and they did not let Jewish tradition get in the way. The Bible came alive through a tapestry of physical sites, ritual, liturgy, and material remains such as mosaics and inscriptions. Indeed, they might have felt a large degree of satisfaction from their *Verus Israel* status there.

The desert might have had its disadvantages, but its advantages were much greater (and one could be an ascetic elsewhere). The desert's physical separation and the exposure to sacred sites and knowledge led to transformations on a personal and religious level. The Jews sought their personal and religious transformations elsewhere.

It would seem, then, that Jew and Christian did not really begin at the same point regarding Sinai. Holy sites 'shared' in common would seemingly serve as a catalyst for interaction. This is true regarding many of the holy sites in the Land of Israel, but Sinai is apparently an exception. In spite of the common biblical roots, the 'sharing' was minimal from the beginning, and the relationship to the sites was different. When there was some degree of interaction, whether real or virtual, for the Jews it was negative. The theological roots of Israel might have been in Sinai, but those roots were divorced from geography. The epic continued elsewhere, and there was little interest in Sinai.

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## PART TWO

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE AGES



THE MODALITY OF INTERACTION BETWEEN JEWISH  
AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT IN THE MIDDLE AGES:  
THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL AND DIVINE WISDOM  
IN DANTE ALIGHIERI AND MENAHEM RECANATI  
AS A CASE STUDY

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Investigating the evolution of linguistic theories in the European culture, Umberto Eco stresses the ties that linked Christians, Jews and Muslims in the lands of the northwestern Mediterranean basin in the thirteenth century and suggests the possibility of an influence of Jewish kabbalistic currents (that in the twelfth century were beginning to be known outside the limited Jewish circles) on medieval Christian Neoplatonic thought (Eco 1993).

Eco's thesis is important since it offers the Middle Ages as a starting point for the development of an interaction between Jewish and Christian thought, based on kabbalistic theories—an interaction that, up to now, was believed to have started only in the Renaissance period. Analyzing Dante Alighieri's linguistic theory, as expressed in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, the scholar of semiotics points out significant similarities to the hermeneutic theory developed by the Spanish mystical Kabalist, Abraham Abulafia.

In my book, *Dante e la mistica ebraica* (Debenedetti Stow 2004), I have gone a step forward and, focusing on the parallels between Jewish mysticism and the thought of the Italian poet, I have proposed kabbalistic theories as a new interpretative key, instrumental for understanding the whole of the poet's work as a gradual ladder of ascent, from the lowest level of mystical experience, exposed in the *Vita Nuova*, to the highest level, that of prophecy, exposed in the *Commedia*.

We find a wide range of Neoplatonic notions and ideas, inherited from late antiquity and high Middle Ages texts, in mystical texts that greatly influenced the Italian poet connected to the school of Chartres. These same notions and ideas can be found in the texts of Jewish thinkers operating in Spain, France, and at the Sicilian court of Emperor Frederick the Second (a detailed bibliography of the studies on the rela-

tions between the Jewish interpreters of Maimonides' text and Christian Scholasticism is given in Debenedetti Stow 2004, 9–10). The Neoplatonic substratum present in Jewish and Christian cultures alike is active as a movement of intellectual self-comprehension—as Roberto Gatti notes in his critical edition and translation of the Hebrew version of Ibn Gabirol's work *Fons Vitae* (Ibn Gabirol 2001, 15)—and permeates all mystical-philosophical works dealing with the research of the ties linking the spiritual to the sensible world.

In order to illustrate the common ground that Aristotelian and especially Neoplatonic thought created in Christian, Muslim and Jewish cultures, and selecting from a wide range of common elements shared between Dante and Jewish mysticism, I have chosen to focus in this paper on the question of mediated creation, through the intervention of Divine Wisdom, and on the question of human free will. An analysis of these themes will enable us to underline the similar perception of mystical adhesion in Dante and in Jewish Kabala, and show how—unlike the attitude that appears, for instance, in the mystical texts belonging to the St. Victor School—the mystical effort in Dante and in the Jewish Kabalists is perceived not as a way to retreat from this world, but rather as a means to improve it.

The concepts I will be stressing here are:

- 1) The relation between *Intellectus Possibilis*, a strengthened human reason, and *Intellectus Agens*, the divine agent sent to help human reason to reach beyond its limits.
- 2) The idea of Love, expressed through the concept of emanation, and the perception of freedom of the will.

I will begin by mentioning—just mentioning, since Arabic thought is not my field—the central role played by Divine Wisdom in the fifth *Fann* of Even Sina's (Avicenna) *Physics*, where there is a passage, corresponding to Aristotle's *Metereologicon*, stating that one of the causes of the fact that water and earth are in different places than those required by their nature, is due to stellar influence, as an operation of Divine Wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

I mentioned Avicenna's passage because the concept of Divine Wisdom as a link between God and creation expressed there becomes a

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<sup>1</sup> I will not go into the question of water and earth; it is too long and complicated for a short presentation. I will only mention that, just as it is discussed in a *Quaestio* attributed to Dante, it was debated, almost 100 years before the Italian poet, among Jewish thinkers. See Debenedetti Stow 2004, 95–107.

vital issue both in Christian and in Jewish thought from the twelfth century on, and the debate around determinism in creation and free individual will stems from it.

Aviezer Ravitzki states, for instance, that in order to understand Maimonides' standpoint on the relation between faith and Aristotelian philosophy, one has to understand first the relation between Divine Wisdom and Divine Will (Ravitzky 1982, 7–38). This is not so simple. The interpreters of Maimonides' text looked at this relation in two different ways:

1) The first distinguished entirely between will and wisdom: *wisdom*, as eternal intellect, was God's attribute, while *free will* belonged only to man, as a voluntary decision of the believer to feel bound or not by God's law.

2) The second reserved to the divinity both possibilities, by perceiving the terms *will* and *wisdom* as equivalent to the ontological categories of *matter* and *form*. Through will and wisdom both fundaments of unity and multiplicity are contained in God. Up to here everything is fine. Problems arise, and different paths are taken, when trying to define who is responsible for what and what are the modalities of operation of Divine Wisdom *vis-à-vis* creation.

Shemuel Ibn Tibbon, the first interpreter of Maimonides' *Guide*, seems to perceive Divine Will as the divine form impressed upon reality. Divine Wisdom is seen instead as a mediator between God and being, as an agent acting, causing, mediating.

The study of Tibbon's Glossary opened the way to the development of different currents of thought among Italian Jews.

Yaaqov Anatoli, who worked together with the Christian philosopher Michael Scotus at the Sicilian court of Frederick the Second, between the years 1232 and 1236, perceived Divine Wisdom as the intermediary between God and Creation. Anatoli believed in a graduated hierarchy of creation where, immediately below the seat of metaphysical light (the 'roof of the world'), the stars (the 'inundators of light') were created at first, together with the angels and metaphysical light. These spiritual entities are considered the source for the emanation of an elevating influx towards the material world created afterward.

It is, however, the Roman Zerahia Hen who develops the concept of Divine Wisdom to its full potential. He considers it as an entity united with God, the principle responsible for creation and maintenance of being.

The concept is strikingly similar to that developed by the Neoplatonist Macrobius (fourth–fifth century) concerning the second person of the Neoplatonic Trinity (*Deus*, *Mens*, and *Anima*). In the words of C. S. Lewis (Lewis 1964, 67):

The Second Person of the Christian Trinity is the Creator, the provident wisdom and creative will of the Father in action. The idea that He became less one with, or turned away from, the father by creating would be repugnant to Christian Theology. In *Mens*, on the other hand, creation is almost a sort of infirmity. She becomes less like God by creating, declines into creation only because she turns her gaze away from her origin and looks back. The next step is the same. As long as *Anima* fixes her attention on *Mens* she puts on the nature of *Mens*; but gradually, as her contemplation withdraws, she sinks (*degenerat*), though herself incorporeal, to the making of bodies. This is how Nature comes into existence. Thus from the very beginning, when Christianity sees creation, neo-Platonism sees, if not exactly a Fall, yet a series of declensions, diminutions, almost of inconsistencies. The universe seeps, as it were, into existence at those moments (...) when Mind is not perfectly ‘waiting upon’ God, nor Soul upon Mind.

Human reason is the mirror of *sapientia* in the created world ‘the image of the Sapiential Christ’, as John Fleming puts it in his *Reason and the Lover* (Fleming 1984, 30, 33), where he examines the role of Reason in *The Romance of the Rose*. He points out that the author, Guillaume de Lorris “is talking not about the creation of man but the creation of Reason, that is the emanation of the preexistent and eternal Logos, the Jesus-Sophia. We do not have here the precision of theological debate, but the evocativeness of theological poetry in the manner of Alain de Lille or Dante. Lady Reason is the link between the God made man and the God-made man”.

Mediated creation and the modalities of the relationship between Creator and creation, a central issue in Neoplatonic philosophy in the twelfth century, is also a major problem in Dante’s thought and in Jewish mysticism. For my comparison with Dante, I have chosen one individual in particular from among Jewish Kabalists, Menahem Recanati, active in Rome towards the end of the thirteenth century. I think that even a short examination of a few common points between them can show us that it is hard to believe that what appears as a distinctive trait both in Recanati’s thought and in Dante’s can be the result of parallel theories developed in total isolation (my considerations on Recanati are based on the research carried out in Idel 1998).

My aim is not to strive to prove the existence of a climate of friendly cooperation and reciprocal understanding (as claimed, for instance, in Battistoni 2004). Each of the authors proceeds to further what he believes to be the best interest of his own faith, exploiting to this end a common Neoplatonic platform and whatever else he can find that belongs to other traditions. Perhaps it is possible to claim, as I think it is, that Dante's mysticism—a type of mysticism whose earthly dimension, political implications, and social goals are considerably different from the *contemptus mundi* (worldly contempt) that characterizes Christian mystical impulse—is indeed directly influenced by Jewish mysticism. However, to remain on the conservative side, we can say that it is the common Neoplatonic heritage, shared by the Christian mysticism Dante feeds on and Jewish mysticism, that allows us to exploit Jewish mysticism—and in this case Recanati's detailed mystical system—as a key for a new reading and a better understanding of Dante's mystical and social goal of a global renewal. This is a renewal based on eschatological-philosophical directives, to be brought about by the active will and choices of the individual—an effort bound to upturn the primacy of the corrupted political and religious establishment, towards the attainment of a new harmony of thought, faith and social order.

Menahem Recanati deals with two themes strictly connected with Dante's religious and social perceptions: the survival of individual soul after death, and the modalities of Divine Will's intervention in creation.

Recanati's goal is that of introducing the novelties of the Sephardic Kabala to the Roman Jewish Community. He stresses the importance of the individual effort of the single believer as a means of activating the flow of the Divine Blessing upon the whole community. In order to create a link between theosophy and theurgy he envisions two types of mystical adhesion:

According to the first, the strife of the individual soul to adhere to the supreme entity, the Holy Spirit that created it of its own essence, can be crowned by success only after a final separation of the soul from the body.

According to the second, there is the possibility of reaching a less definitive state through a cognitive adhesion in which the mind arises towards the source of different levels of knowledge.

In Dante's *Convivio* (*Banquet*, Book 2, ch. 7, 5–8), we can find the same distinction between the two kinds of mystical adhesion, where the poet states:

I say, then, that the life of my heart (that is, of my inner self) used to be a sweet thought (...), a thought which would often go to the feet of the Lord of those beings whom I address, namely God; this is to say that I, in thought, contemplated the kingdom of the blessed. (...) Then subsequently I tell the effect of this thought, which was so great that to make its sweetness understood it made me long for death, so as to go where it had gone, and this I say with the words Of whom it would speak to me so sweetly That my soul would say: 'I wish to go there.' This is the root of one of the conflicting thoughts within me. It should also be known that what ascended to behold that blessed one is here called 'thought' and not 'soul', because it was a thought especially conceived for that act.

(Dico adunque che vita del mio core, cioè del mio dentro, suole essere un pensiero soave (...): questo pensiero se ne già spesse volte a' piedi del sire di costoro a cu' io parlo, ch'è Iddio: cioè a dire che io pensando contemplava lo regno de' beati. ...) Poi susseguentemente dico l'effetto di questo pensiero, a dare a intendere la sua dolcezza, la quale era tanta che mi facea disioso della morte, per andare là dov'elli già; e ciò dico quivi: di cui parlava me sì dolcemente, che l'anima dicea: Io men vo' gire. E questa è la radice dell'una delle diversitadi ch'era in me. Ed è da sapere che qui si dice 'pensiero', e non 'anima', di quello che salia a vedere quella beata, perché era spezial pensiero a quello atto.)

According to Recanati, in the adhesion of the mind three different stages can be reached:

In the first, the power of *imagination* is activated by drawing the images of what he calls *things* in the mind, as if they were 'inscribed' in the heart of the mystic. These *things* are the *sefirot*, identified by one of the most influential kabbalistic texts, the *Sefer Yesirah* (*The Book of Creation*), as the fundamental powers for the order of creation. They are ten gradual links that form a chain for the descent of energy from Heaven to earth.

In the second stage, adhesion of both mind and soul to these *things* is achieved. After that stage is successfully completed, the soul can adhere to the Superior Soul and the third and final stage becomes operable.

In the third and final stage, the theurgical action takes place, with the emanation of the 'blessing' from the source towards the *things*, that is, the sefirotic system. As a result of this action, the mystic gains revelation of the supernal powers.

The whole process not only begins from down below, but it also involves a great responsibility, since it is human thought that ensures its results, obtained according to the type of influence it is able to origi-

nate. Furthermore, since it is the individual who imagines within his own mind, or ‘draws’ the ‘form’ he aspires to in his intellect, he is fully involved in the process as a *subject* of knowledge.

This allowed Recanati (as it allowed Dante) to overcome the obstacle against which Guido Cavalcanti, Dante’s best friend, crashed—an obstacle posed by the belief in the mingling of all souls in one entity in the supernal world and by the negation of existence of an active individual intellectual soul. This was a belief held according to the philosophical theories of Averroes as were taught at the time at the University of Bologna. What we can assume from the analysis of Recanati’s system is that this is a more personal concept of individual spiritual survival, where the adhesion to the different levels of the sefirotic world depends on the ability of the individual mind to purify itself and get in touch with the highest possible power. The adhesion is differentiated according to the degree of freedom from the material world achieved by the mystic.

As a consequence of the adhesion, a knot (*kesher*) is tied, transforming man into a spiritual entity, since his soul is now bound to the supernal world. The *sefirah* in which this transformation is reached is called *Malkhut*, The Reign, a place of mediation between the sefirotic and the created world, the *sefirah* that allows the dynamic connection between man and God.

This last *sefirah*, *Malkhut*, receives all the influences from the *sefirot* above, mixes them and then passes them on to the inferior worlds. It is interesting to note that, according to Recanati, this last *sefirah* seems to have a feminine nature. Its status is different from that of the other *sefirot*; it is a link endowed with the power of the *Shekhinah*, the Holy Presence, and it contains the potentiality of the connection with the supernal powers.

In short, man, created as a resemblance of the Superior Form, has the power of transforming this potential into action and through the observance of the precepts, the *mizwoth*, he can activate the descent of the influx from the sefirotic world.

On the basis of Recanati’s theories, which I briefly (and of course insufficiently) tried to summarize above, I will now try to illustrate and exemplify how one can read the developments in Dante’s thought in light of the kabbalistic key.

According to the second kind of adhesion of the mind, described by Recanati as a cognitive adhesion in which the mind arises towards the

source of different levels of knowledge, Beatrice, the object of the poet's love, represents in Dante's major works the Active Intellect.

In the *Vita Nuova*, Beatrice is described as an angel sent on earth to perform the miracle of love, and acting as a divine mediator she exercises her influence on the intellect of the lover of knowledge. From the beginning of what the poet calls 'the book of my memory' (*il libro della memoria*), Dante's terminology clearly indicates the setting of the process of adhesion of the mind. Dante not only calls Beatrice the 'lady of my mind' (*donna della mente*), but indicates the knot of the adhesion by using this expression (emphasis mine):

From that time on Love governed my soul, which became so readily *betrothed* to him (...)

(D'allora innanzi dico che Amore segnoreggiò la mia anima, la quale fu sì tosto a lui disponsata ...) (*Vita Nuova*, II, 7)

She is able to elevate the mind of the poet, who, under the rule of reason, has succeeded in restraining his passions:

And though her image, which remained constantly with me, was Love's assurance of holding me, it was of such a pure quality that never did it permit me to be ruled by Love without the trusted counsel of reason (dealing in those things wherein such would profitably be heeded).

(E avvegna che la sua imagine, la quale continuatamente meco stava, fosse baldanza d'Amore a segnareggiare me, tuttavia era di sì nobilissima virtù, che nulla volta sofferse che Amore mi reggesse sanza lo fedele consiglio de la ragione in quelle cose là ove cotale consiglio fosse utile a udire.) (*Vita Nuova*, II, 9)

But the elevation is only to a lower level of knowledge. Dante is not strong enough at this point (the *painful illness* of chapter 23) to pursue higher levels of knowledge, and Beatrice disappears from this world. Broken the knot that tied it to the individual intellect, the Active Intellect has gone back to fulfill its supernal role as a link in the chain for the spreading of divine energy:

This is because the pleasure of her beauty, / having removed itself from mortal sight, / was transformed into beauty of the soul / spreading throughout the heavens / a light of love ...

(perché 'l piacere de la sua bietate, / partendo sé da la nostra veduta, / divenne spirital bellezza grande, / che per lo cielo spande / luce d'amor...) (*Vita Nuova*, XXXIII, 8)

In Dante's next major work, the *Convivio (Banquet)*, the second stage of adhesion of both mind and soul with the sefirotic world is reached. Here the poet succeeds in climbing to a higher level of speculative knowledge. The appearance of the *form* is indicated here by the phrase (emphasis mine):

And I say that this new thought that appears has the power to seize me and to conquer my entire soul, saying that it so rules that the heart (that is, my inner self) trembles, and my outer self shows it by a certain *new semblance*.

(E dico che questo pensiero, che di nuovo apparisce, è poderoso in prender me e in vincere l'anima tutta, dicendo che esso segnoreggia sì che 'l cuore, cioè lo mio dentro, triema, e lo mio di fuori lo dimostra in alcuna nuova sembianza.) (Book 2, ch.7, 10)

The new appearance in the *Banquet* is the *form* of the '*donna gentil*', the gentle lady who will guide Dante towards philosophical perfection.

Dante is able to employ Beatrice's full potential only with the *Commedia*, where he feels he is invested with a prophetic mission of global social renewal. The Active Intellect, that is also the allegorical representation of Divine Wisdom, now activates the sole power of imagination, thus conferring prophetic powers to the individual subject, as a gift from Divine Grace. Beatrice, as a figure of Christ, mediator of the mystical union with God, is able to elevate the poet to the highest level of knowledge possible to a living creature. This level is reserved to the 'chosen', the very few who were able to reach the stage of detachment from sensible experience and are thus transformed into a spiritual entity. At this point, just as in Recanati's system, God crowns the soul, irradiating it with His elevating influx.

This concept of irradiation is expressed in the third canticle (*Paradiso* XIX, 86–90), where Dante puts the following words in the mouth of the Eagle, a symbol that unites both concepts of Divine and earthly justice:

The primal will, good in Itself,  
has never from Itself, the highest good, declined.  
Only what accords with It is just:  
it is not drawn to a created good  
but, sending forth Its rays, It is the source of every good.

(‘La prima volontà, ch’è da sé buona, / da sé, ch’è sommo ben, mai non si mosse. / Cotanto è giusto quanto a lei consuona: / nullo creato bene a sé la tira, / ma essa, radiando, lui cagiona.’)

According to Boccaccio’s *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia*, Dante’s goal in composing the *Commedia* is to ‘remove those, that in present life live, from the state of misery, to the state of happiness’ (*Accessus*, 12).

The *due felicitadi*, the two kinds of happiness envisioned by Dante in *Banquet*, Book 4, chapter 17, 9, are first that of active life, and second that of contemplative life:

We must know, however, that we may have two kinds of happiness in this life, according to two different paths, one good and the other best, which lead us there. One is the active life, the other the contemplative life; and although by the active, as has been said, we may arrive at a happiness that is good, the other leads us to the best happiness and state of bliss, as the Philosopher proves in the tenth book of the *Ethics*.

(Veramente è da sapere che noi potemo avere in questa vita due felicitadi, secondo due diversi cammini, buono e ottimo, che a ciò ne menano: l’uno è la vita attiva, e l’altro la vita contemplativa; la quale, avegna che per l’attiva si pervegna, come detto è, a buona felicitade, ne mena ad ottima felicitate e beatitudine, secondo che pruova lo Filosofo nel decimo dell’Etica.)

They are the same two ways open to Jewish mysticism, in its two versions, the sefirotic and the ecstatic. The latter sets out to reach individual bliss through adhesion to the One; the former sets out to bring the *blessing of things* onto earth and through the observance of the Precepts, to make Israel worthy of that Garden of Eden that was planted for him. Both empower man with the responsibility of transforming the Divine seed, given as a gift, from potential into action, by the right exercise of his own free will.

Free Will, defined as ‘free judgment of the will’ (*Monarchy*, I, 12), is a faculty common to man who, having once apprehended a thing, judges it as good or bad, and to purely intellectual substances who possess this freedom in spite of being separated souls endowed with immutable will.

The question of free will is such a central pillar in Dante’s thought that he positions the discussion of the issue in the middle of the central cantica of the *Commedia*, the *Purgatorio* (cantos XVI–XVIII).

The way to the search for mystical perfection was probably indicated to Dante by the works of Pietro di Giovanni Olivi, active in Florence

after 1280 and one of the sharpest critics of the doctrine of Papal theocracy. In his commentary to John's *Apocalypse*, the Spiritual friar voices his horror towards the theses of radical rationalists whose belief in the eternity of the world and negation of individual spiritual survival made freedom of will almost impossible and therefore weakened the very basis of Christian faith. Following Olivi's lead, Dante's perception of the role of free will is strictly connected to the question of the conflict between Papacy and Empire. This is why the lesson concerning free will is first delivered, in the sixteenth canto, by a character linked to the political generation of Frederick the Second, Marco Lombardo. Dante criticizes the failure of the two 'Suns', the two supreme authorities, Empire and Papacy, that according to Divine Will should be in charge the first of earthly and the second of spiritual happiness:

Rome, which formed the world for good,  
once held two suns that lit the one road  
and the other, the world's and that of God.  
The one has snuffed the other out ...

(Soleva Roma, che 'l buon mondo feo, / due soli aver, che l'una e l'altra strada / facean vedere, e del mondo e di Deo. / L'un l'altro ha spento ...) (*Purg.* XVI, 106–109)

This failure has caused the lack of spiritual direction and has resulted in the need for man to make the right choices with the help of his own individual intellect and will. What is amazing, however, is the fact that the way indicated by Dante for the solution of this major problem in Christian society is expressed—as I will try to show by a short examination of the three cantos—through the use of the same concepts and wording we find in the mystical system of Recanati.

The issue that Marco Lombardo is concerned with is the dichotomy between stellar influences and individual freedom of choice:

You who are still alive assign each cause  
only to the heavens, as though they drew  
all things along upon their necessary path.  
If that were so, free choice would be denied to you

('Voi che vivete ogne cagion recate / pur suso al cielo, pur come se tutto / movesse seco di necessitate. / Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto / libero arbitrio ...') (*Purg.* XVI, 67–71)

The truth he reveals, is that astral influences are relevant solely as tendencies inherent to the soul, and man has been given the light of reason

and the freedom of choice between good and evil. The intellective soul, with its own power of judgment and free choice, is the gift God endowed man with and expects him to activate.

The discourse concerning the need for a human behavior according to will and reason, a disposition called '*amor d'elezione*' (love of choice), is presented in the next canto, the seventeenth, where the positive value of this moral duty is voiced, on purpose, on the very ledge where the sin of sloth is located. Just as in Recanati, who bases his mystical system on the importance of the Precepts, the *mizwoth*, the message here is that those who exercise their love according to a right measure and establish a fervent and productive relationship with God will reach eternal survival.

In the opening of this canto, Dante makes a comparison and uses a terminology that, in light of the mystical process described by Recanati, leaves little doubt to the fact that the poet is aiming at disseminating keywords for the opening of the anagogical sense; the plea to the reader, '*Ricorditi, lettore*' (Remember, reader, v. 1), underlines the importance of memory in a mystical process that requires, as a first step, activating the power of imagination (emphasis mine):

then you can readily *imagine*  
how, on my seeing it again, the sun appeared

(e fia la tua *imagine* leggera / in giugner a veder com'io rividi / lo sole in  
pria...) (*Purg.* XVII, 7-9)

A few lines later, the poet appeals directly to the power of imagination, a power that at times is able to function without any tie with sensible reality, and then goes on to describe all the elements involved in a mystical experience of this kind:

O imagination, which at times so rob us  
of outward things we pay no heed,  
though a thousand trumpets sound around us,  
who sets you into motion if the senses offer  
nothing? A light, formed in the heavens, moves you  
either of itself or by a will that sends it down.

(O *imaginativa* che ne rube / talvolta sì di fuor, ch'om non s'accorge / per-  
ché dintorno suonin mille tube, / chi move te, se 'l senso non ti porge? /  
Moveti lume che nel ciel s'informa, / per sé o per voler che giù lo scorge.)  
(*Purg.* XVII, 13-18)

The question Dante asks is: Who is responsible for the stimulation of the imagination to create mental images? The answer is: a light which takes its *form* in heaven, and operates either by its own initiative or by the human will that, down on earth, perceives it (Dante's perception of this light as the intermediary for the descent of metaphysical knowledge mirrors the positions we have seen earlier on in Yaaqov Anatoli). The drawing of the *forms*, that results in metaphysical knowledge, is therefore enabled through the operation of a heavenly mediator, a 'light' Dante calls Beatrice and Recanati *Malkhut*. The English translation, as well as most Italian interpreters, prefer to read the '*giù lo scorge*' as 'sends it down'. I prefer the reading: 'by a will that, down below, succeeds in seeing it'. I believe that Dante, just like Recanati, here wants to stress the fact that it is a movement that runs in both directions: from up above, it emanates downwards, and from down below, it needs to rise upwards.

We cannot find a similar description of the stages and of the powers involved in the onset of mystical vision in any of the works of Christian mystics, or in the works of theoreticians such as Thomas Aquinas, who investigated the differences between outer and inner senses, the tasks fulfilled by the intellect and the will and the ability to form mental images (see Kenny 1994).

Dante next describes the images produced in such a way by his fantasy, moral examples of wickedness caused by wrath, taken one from Ovidius' *Metamorphoses*, the next from the Scriptures, and the last from Virgil's *Aeneid*. The poet makes clear that these mental images are not created by his individual intellect alone, but rather they are intellectual contents coming from up above:

Then there rained down into my lofty phantasy

(Poi piovve dentro a l'alta fantasia) (*Purg.* XVII, 25)

The examples of wrong behavior, which always results in violent death, are countered by the lesson Virgil delivers in the eighteenth canto: man has an innate disposition to follow knowledge and love; reason, however, is there to guide him in his choices and help him distinguish between good and evil. Freedom of choice is therefore, by definition, the power to follow or reject the counsel of reason:

'Let us posit as a given: every love  
that's kindled in you arises necessarily.  
Still, the power to constrain it lies with you.  
That noble power is called free will by Beatrice,

and so make sure that you remember this  
if she should ever speak of it to you.'

('Onde, poniam che di necessitate / surga ogne amor che dentro a voi  
s'accende, / di ritenerlo è in voi la podestate. / La nobile virtù Beatrice in-  
tende / per lo libero arbitrio, e però guarda / che l'abbi a mente, s' a parlar  
ten prende.') (*Purg.* XVIII, 70–75)

Virgil offers this explanation concerning the relation between human freedom of will and human reason, but he warns Dante that the task of addressing the question of the relation between human will and Divine Wisdom does not pertain to him and will be dealt with later on, by Beatrice herself (in the fifth canto of Paradise). There she will address the question in connection with the problem of the absolution from vows. I mention this because portions of the sixteenth canto of Purgatory, together with parts of the fifth canto of Paradise, were among the passages from Dante's *Commedia*, transliterated into Hebrew letters by the Jewish scholar and philosopher Jehudah Romano (see Sermoneta 1963).

This is indeed a proof that, in their search to harmonize the demands of faith with the needs for a philosophical frame, Jewish thinkers at Dante's time were willing to include in their investigation matters pertaining to the Christian faith.

My reading of the anagogical level of Dante's texts proves, I believe, the same effort on the part of the Italian poet.

We can therefore conclude that a considerable interaction was indeed taking place between Jewish and Christian scholars in the Middle Ages, an interaction not intended on building a bridge between the different faiths but rather based on a similar need: on the Jewish side, to find a suitable compromise between faith and philosophy in order to avoid the dangers posed by a life in a diasporic environment and strengthen the ties between the individual believer and his community; on the Christian side, to provide the individual with the means to adhere to a moral behavior in a society where political and ecclesiastical corruption and strife undermined the very basis of Christian belief.

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# DIE PARISER VERFAHREN GEGEN DEN TALMUD VON 1240 UND 1248 IM KONTEXT VON PAPSTTUM UND FRANZÖSISCHEM KÖNIGTUM

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In den Jahren 1240 bis 1248 richteten sich in Paris auf ein päpstliches Schreiben hin zwei Verfahren gegen den Talmud, das jüdische Kommentarwerk zur Thora, das Orientierungsbuch jüdischen Lebens schlechthin. Diese Verfahren zählen zu den folgenschwersten Auseinandersetzungen um das Judentum im europäischen Mittelalter überhaupt<sup>1</sup>. Gewalt gegen einzelne Juden oder jüdische Gemeinden war in Europa zwar immer wieder sporadisch angewendet worden. Neu hingegen war der systematische Angriff der Kirche auf die bislang offiziell geduldete Religion in Form eines allgemeinen Aufrufs zu genauer Untersuchung des Talmuds auf häretische Aussagen hin. Mit den Pariser Verfahren begann eine lang andauernde Tradition von Anfeindungen, die das Bild des europäischen Judentums nachhaltig prägte (Patschovsky, 1992, 13–27; Katz, 1893).

Wenn man nicht von einer historischen Zufälligkeit ausgehen will, stellt sich die Frage, warum dem universalen päpstlichen Aufruf gerade in Frankreich Folge geleistet wurde mit der Konsequenz der Verbrennung des Talmuds und warum gerade der französische König die Anordnung hierzu gab—in auffallendem Kontrast zu den übrigen europäischen Ländern. Im Nachbarland Spanien hatten etwa die Erfolge der Reconquista einerseits Macht und Selbstbewusstsein der regionalen Herrscher gestärkt, andererseits eine konzentrierte Politik erforderlich gemacht, die sich nicht in Einzelinteressen verlieren konnte (Vones, 1993).

In Frankreich war die Situation stattdessen anders konzipiert. Um dies deutlich zu machen, werden zunächst die bekannten Pariser Vorgänge überblicksartig geschildert werden, bevor sie in den damaligen Kontext eingebettet werden können. Das spezielle Augenmerk richtet sich hierbei auf die bis 1240 geübte Vorgehensweise von Papst und

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<sup>1</sup> Die Literatur hierzu ist vielfältig, siehe etwa Battenberg 1990, 88–89; Schubert, 1976/77, 161–186; Rengstorff/S. von Kortzfleisch, 1988; Rosenthal, 1956/57, 58–76; 145–169; Lewin, 1869, 97–110; 144–156; 193–210.

französischem König den Juden gegenüber. Der letzte Teil befasst sich mit den zukunftsweisenden Veränderungen im jüdisch-christlichen Verhältnis.

### DIE VERFAHREN

Als Auslöser der Verfahren wurde ein aus dem Judentum stammender Konvertit benutzt, der sich im Frühjahr 1239 an den päpstlichen Hof gewandt hatte um den Talmud schwer zu belasten. Dieser nämlich enthalte schwerste Schmähungen gegen Gott und die Kirche. Der Konvertit hieß mit seinem christlichen Namen Nikolaus Donin<sup>2</sup>. Er war weniger aus Liebe zur christlichen Religion konvertiert als vielmehr aus inner-jüdischen Konflikten heraus (Blumenkranz, 1966, 264–282; Schubert, 1988, 1–10). Ein gewisser tragischer Aspekt liegt dabei in der Tatsache begründet, dass Donin seine religiöse Ausbildung ausgerechnet Rabbi Jechiel ben Josef verdankte (Rosenbaum, 1971, 167), der später gezwungen wurde, als Verteidiger des Talmuds in dem ersten Pariser Verfahren aufzutreten, wie noch zu sehen sein wird.

Die weitreichenden Beschuldigungen Donins fielen auf fruchtbaren Boden, da sie ja für christliche Gelehrte, die in dieser Zeit des Hebräischen gemeinhin unkundig waren, nicht überprüfbar waren: Papst Gregor IX ordnete eine Klärung des Sachverhalts an. Hierbei wird sich der Papst über die Bedeutung des Talmuds innerhalb des Judentums im Klaren gewesen sein<sup>3</sup> und er wird auch gewusst haben, dass eine Verurteilung des Talmuds die Ausübung der jüdischen Religion verunmög-

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<sup>2</sup> So lesen wir zumindest in einem Brief von Gregor IX.: „...quatenus litteras nostras ad negotium super libris Judeorum...per dilectum filium Nicolaum quandom Judeum ... presentandas...recipiens...”, Grayzel, 1966, Nr. 95, 240.

<sup>3</sup> Man beachte die Worte, die der Papst in seinem Schreiben an die Erzbischöfe von Frankreich hierfür gebrauchte: “...Si vera suntque de Judeis in regno Francie et alius provinciis commorantibus asseruntur, nulla de ipsis esset pena sufficiens sive digna, ipsi enim sicut accepimus lege veteri, quam Dominus per Moysen in scriptis edidit, non contenti immo penitus pretermittentes eandem affirmant legem aliam que Talmud id est doctrina dicitur et Dominum edidisse...Cum igitur hec esse dicatur esse causa precipua, que Judeos in sua tenet perfidia obstinatos...”, (Wenn es wahr ist, was über die Juden, die in Frankreich und in den anderen bereits erwähnten Gebieten leben, gesagt wird, kann keine Bestrafung angemessen und scharf genug sein. Wir nahmen Kenntnis davon, dass sie sich nicht mehr mit dem alten Gesetz, das Moses durch Gott ausgehändigt worden ist, begnügen, sondern dass sie darüber hinausgehen und behaupten, dass Gott noch ein anderes Gesetz verordnet habe, das ungeschrieben sei und von ihnen Talmud genannt werde. Und dass dies, wie man sagt, der Hauptgrund dafür ist, dass die Juden in ihrer Untreue stur verharren...) CUP 1964, Nr. 177, 202f.

lichen würde. Er schickte jedenfalls eine Reihe von Briefen an weltliche und geistliche Fürsten Europas, um sie zu veranlassen, alle verfügbare jüdische Literatur einzuziehen und einer sorgfältigen Prüfung zu unterziehen (CUP 1899, Nr. 173, 202). Zuerst erfolgte also die Konfiszierung der Bücher, dann die Begutachtung.

Tatsächlich aber gelangte das päpstliche Ansinnen nur im Bereich der französischen Krone zur Ausführung. Dort wurden am Samstag, dem 3. März 1240 die erreichbaren jüdischen Bücher konfisziert. Die Beschlagnahmung erfolgte, gemäß der Anordnung Gregors, sicher nicht zufällig an einem Sabbat: Unter den Juden gab es eine Kontroverse über die richtige Auslegung des Sabbat-Gebotes, die den Christen bekannt gewesen sein muss. Die Christen mögen davon ausgegangen sein, dass selbst das Tragen von Waffen für Juden am Sabbat verboten gewesen sei<sup>4</sup> und dass deshalb ein Angriff leichter hätte glücken können, da man mit keiner bewaffneten Verteidigung von jüdischer Seite hätte rechnen müssen (Neubauer/Stern, 1892, 170). So hatte ja schon der französische König Philippe II. Mitglieder der jüdischen Gemeinschaft am 14. Februar 1180 während ihrer Sabbatfeier in der Synagoge festsetzen lassen, um Lösegeld zu erpressen (Gesta Philippi II Augusti, 1882, 15–16). Das dürfte auch der Grund gewesen sein, warum der Papst explizit darauf hingewiesen hatte, dass an diesem Tag „an dem die Juden in ihren Synagogen zusammenkommen“ (CUP, 1899, Nr. 173, 202) die Bücher zu konfiszieren seien. Allerdings war der Papst vorsichtig genug, um noch eine spezielle Eventualitätsklausel in seinen Aufruf einzufügen, die der weltlichen Macht die Legitimation gab einzutreten—natürlich nur, wenn es „notwendig“ sei<sup>5</sup>—und was im damaligen Kontext nur ein Zeichen dafür sein konnte, dass damit gerechnet wurde, dass es unter Umständen doch zur Gewaltanwendung kommen könnte.

Eine gewisse Rolle spielte sicher auch die Prinzipienfrage, welcher Tag heilig sei, also der seit alters her etablierte Kontrast, um nicht zu sagen die alte Konkurrenz zwischen Sonntag und Sabbat.

<sup>4</sup> So zumindest berichtet Flavius Josephus in seiner Schilderung der Makkabäerkriege vom Ende des 2. Jahrhunderts v. Chr., Ant. Jud. XII, 6, 101: „Hierüber erbittert, griffen die Soldaten sie an einem Sabbat an und verbrannten sie in ihren Höhlen, ohne dass sie Widerstand geleistet hätten. Sie enthielten sich nämlich wegen des Feiertages jeder körperlichen Tätigkeit und wollten den Sabbat selbst in ihrer gefahrenvollen Lage nicht entheiligen“.

<sup>5</sup> CUP 1964, Nr. 173, 204: „si necesse fuerit, auxilio brachii secularis“ (wenn es notwenig ist, mit Hilfe des weltlichen Arms.). Der weltliche Arm aber war bei solchen Aktionen zur „tatkräftigen“ Hilfleistung verpflichtet, da die geistliche Macht kein Blut vergießen durfte.

Zwar bildete sich schon früh eine liturgische Trennung von Sabbat und Sonntag in der Kirche aus, doch vollzog sich die Auseinandersetzung der nach wie vor bestehenden Sabbatobservanz der jüdenchristlichen Gemeinden mit dem Streben nach einem eigenen Profil des Sonntags nicht von heute auf morgen. Je nach Standort, sowohl in geographischer wie in theologischer Sicht, hatte der Sabbat noch lange eine Auswirkung auf das Fest der Erlösung in den christlichen Gemeinden (Haag, 1991).

So können wir sehen, dass Christen noch lange Zeit statt des neutralen römischen Begriffes „*feria*“ an dem alten Terminus Sabbat für den sechsten Wochentag festhielten, was die Christen noch immer in eine gewisse theologische Nähe zu den Juden rückte. Kirchliche Leiter wie etwa Johannes Chrysostomos (ed. Migne, PG XL, 843–942), die über die Konsequenzen einer undeutlichen Grenzziehung beunruhigt waren, kritisierten deshalb diese Gewohnheit scharf.

Seit den frühesten Zeiten des Christentums gehörte die Sabbat-Frage also zu den wichtigen und sensiblen Punkten in der Beziehung von Juden und Christen. Für die Christen ging es hierbei um die eigene Selbstdefinition und die sichtbare rituell-religiöse Abgrenzung von den Juden. Nicht zufällig tauchte bei mittelalterlichen Kirchenautoritäten regelmäßig der Begriff *iudaizare* in Verbindung mit *sabbatizare* auf. So etwa beklagte Agobart von Lyon (ed. Migne, PL CIV, 111), dass aufgrund des allzu vertrauten Umgangs und des Beisammenwohnens Christen und Juden bisweilen miteinander Sabbat feierten. Nachdem durch die Kalenderreform des Abtes Dionysius Exiguus, der im Auftrag von Papst Johannes I. (523–526) die Osterzyklen neu berechnen sollte, statt der römischen Kaiserzyklen eine originär christliche Zeitrechnung, die mit der Geburt Christi beginnen sollte, etabliert worden war, verschwand langsam aber sicher ein religionsübergreifendes gemeinsames Zeitrechnungssystem, so dass der Unterschied zwischen Juden und Christen in diesem Punkt sichtbar wurde.

Vielleicht also hatte Gregor den Hintergedanken im Kopf, mit dem angeordneten Tag der Ergreifung auch den von den kirchlichen Leitern schon lange anvisierten Unterschied zwischen Juden und Christen nochmals augenfällig in Szene zu setzen. Jedenfalls beinhaltete allein schon die Tatsache, dass die Beschlagnahmung an einem Sabbat stattfand, ein erhebliches Spannungspotential.

Zudem stand das Purimfest vor der Tür, das bei Christen schon häufig zu heftigen Reaktionen geführt hatte (Grayzel, 1966; Roth, 1933, 520–526; Browe 1926, 167–197), da sie sich am Beginn ihrer eigenen

Fastenzeit durch das ausgelassene Fest, auf dem reichlich Speisen und Getränke genossen wurden, verspottet fühlten.

Die Bedeutung von Purim für die Juden war allerdings eine vollkommen andere: Das Fest bezieht sich auf die stark legendarische Geschichte des biblischen Buches Esther, der Frau des Perserkönigs Ahasver (=Xerxes). Sie—and damit das jüdische Volk überhaupt—besaß in der Gestalt des königlichen Großwesirs Haman einen gefährlichen und intriganten Gegner. Letztlich gelang es Esther, die drohende Gefahr für ihr Volk und sich abzuwenden und zu erreichen, dass Haman gehängt wurde. Purim bedeutete also für die Juden ein Fest der Befreiung und Erlösung und um dieses sinnfällig zu feiern wurde im Verlauf des Festes eine Puppe, die Haman in effigie darstellen sollte, verspottet und verbrannt. Zwar legen die Tradition schriftlicher Quellen zu Purim und erhaltenes bildliches Material die Vermutung nahe, dass christliche Zeitgenossen bis zu einem gewissen Grad mit dem jüdischen Brauchtum des Purimfestes vertraut waren<sup>6</sup>, aber dennoch werden sich die Christen durch den Brauch herausgefordert gefühlt haben, eine Puppe unter öffentlicher Zuschauertstellung zu verspotten. Von den Christen konnte dies deshalb als Blasphemie aufgefasst werden, weil das jüdische Fest gerade zu der Zeit stattfand, als die Christen des Leidens und des Todes von Christus gedachten. Die Haman darstellende Strohpuppe konnte dann als verächtliche Repräsentation von Christus missverstanden werden (Roth, 1933, 520–526). Allerdings wurden schon von Peter Browe in den zwanziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts Überlegungen angestellt, ob nicht die Juden tatsächlich der Interpretation des Festes auch eine anti-christliche Spur gegeben haben könnten. Dies wurde jüngst von Israel Yuval untermauert (Yuval, 2006, 130–132; 165–167). Schon die Verbote der römischen Kaiser Honorius und Theodosius II., keine auf ein Kreuz gehefteten Hamannachbildungen zu verbrennen, lassen solche Rückschlüsse zu (Roth, 1933, 520–526).

Jedenfalls dürfte eine Gewaltaktion gegen die Juden an genau diesem Fest auf einen Rückhalt in der Bevölkerung gerechnet haben können, da sich die meisten Christen nicht über die eigentliche theologische Implikation von Purim für die Juden bewusst waren und eine gezielte anti-christliche Spur von Seiten der Juden nicht ausgeschlossen werden kann.

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<sup>6</sup> Von den christlichen Exegeten befasste sich erst Hrabanus Maurus im 9. Jahrhundert mit dem Purimfest, ed. Migne PL 109, 635–670.

Am Montag, dem 25. Juni 1240 sowie den beiden darauf folgenden Tagen wurde vor einem hochrangigen Forum, bestehend aus Vertretern der Kirche und der Krone sowie aus dem Judentum, die Frage behandelt, ob der Talmud blasphemische Teile enthalte. Zu den Teilnehmern auf christlicher Seite zählten unter anderem König Ludwig IX., Wilhelm von Auvergne, der Bischof von Paris, Erzbischof Walter von Sens und die Königinmutter, Blanca von Kastilien. Daneben werden einige Professoren erwähnt, darunter die Franziskaner Alexander von Hales, Simon von Sandwich und Johannes von Rupella<sup>7</sup>. Der erhalten gebliebene jüdische Bericht über das Verfahren gibt keine dominikanischen Vertreter an. Doch einige Jahre später bezeichnet Thomas von Cantimpré den Dominikaner Heinrich von Köln dann auffälligerweise als die treibende Kraft des Verfahrens<sup>8</sup>.

Auf jüdischer Seite standen dieser erdrückenden Übermacht nur vier, allerdings prominente Schriftgelehrte gegenüber: Rabbi Jehuda ben David, Rabbi Samuel ben Salomo, Rabbi Jechiel ben Joseph und Rabbi Moses aus Coucy. Allerdings ergriffen im Verlauf des Verfahrens nur zwei davon, Rabbi Jechiel aus Paris und Rabbi Jehuda ben David das Wort.

Die von Donin zusammengestellten erhobenen 35 Vorwürfe betrafen unter anderem Äußerungen gegen Christus und Maria, die Abwertung von Nichtjuden gegenüber Juden im talmudischen Recht, die theologische Stellung des Talmuds. Allerdings werden lange nicht alle Punkte dann auch verhandelt. Dies war wohl von Beginn an auch nicht bezweckt, sollte doch eher durch die Anhäufung der Anklagen die Verderblichkeit des Talmuds unterstrichen werden. Die Zusammenkunft wurde formal als Disputation abgehalten. Sie ist aber konkreter als Prozess zu bezeichnen, da die Frage der Existenzberechtigung fundamentaler geistlicher Schriften schwerwiegende rechtliche Konsequenzen nach sich zog, denn das Ergebnis war, wie vorherzusehen, für die jüdische Seite vernichtend:

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<sup>7</sup> Wir besitzen zwei unterschiedliche Schilderungen der Vorgänge: eine christliche, basierend auf dem Manuscript BN. Lat. 16558, und eine jüdische, basierend auf dem Manuscript BN. Lat. 722. In der ersten sind alle von Nicolaus Donin versammelten Anklagepunkte zu finden sowie eine Art Verhandlungsprotokoll der drei Tage dauernden Disputation. Die jüdische Beschreibung geht dagegen nur auf den Ablauf der Disputation ein. Siehe: Kisch, 1874, 10–18; 62–75; 123–130; 155–163; 204–212; und Loeb, 1880, 247–261; 1881, 248–270, 1882, 39–57.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Cantipratensis, Bonum Universale de Apibus, I c, 3, fol. 3 : « ...1239, instigante Fratre Heinrico dicto de Colonia O. Pr., praedicatore per optimo, sub poena mortis congregari fecit Parisiis nefandissimum librum Judaeorum qui Thalmud dicitur...».

Der Talmud wurde als blasphemisch verurteilt und der Vernichtung anheim gegeben. Doch es fand sich ein den Juden zugeneigter bischöflicher Fürsprecher, in dem wir Walter von Sens identifizieren können<sup>9</sup>. Er verhinderte zunächst Gewaltmaßnahmen, starb aber binnen Jahresfrist. Nun wurden die zunächst zurückerstatteten jüdischen Schriften in großer Zahl erneut konfisziert und auf den Scheiterhaufen geworfen und verbrannt (Dahan, 2004).

Doch damit war die Angelegenheit noch nicht zu Ende. Nach dem Tode Gregors IX. stimmte 1247 der neue Papst, Innozenz IV., einem aus jüdischen Kreisen vorgebrachten Ansinnen zu, das Verfahren neu aufzurollen. Anstoß hierzu hatten Vertreter des französischen Judentums gegeben, die den Papst um eine Überprüfung des Pariser Urteils batzen, da sie ohne Talmud Exemplare kein genügendes Unterrichtsmaterial mehr hätten (CUP 1899, Nr. 172, 201f). Mit der Durchführung des Verfahrens beauftragte Innozenz einen päpstlichen Legaten im Range eines Kardinals, Odo von Châteauroux (CUP 1899, Nr. 172, 201), der zugleich Kanzler der Pariser Universität gewesen war und zudem als Vertrauter des französischen Königs Ludwigs IX. galt (Meyer, 1915, 21). Die Prüfung oblag dieses Mal der Pariser Theologischen Fakultät, womit die Juden selbst in keiner Weise mehr am Verfahren beteiligt waren.

Aus den Teilnehmern und deren Anzahl lassen sich einige Schlüsse, insbesondere über den Stellenwert, der der Frage beigemessen wurde, ziehen. Von den 41 Gutachtern gehörten 7 den Bettelorden an—die sich gerade profiliert hatten—, vor allem die Dominikaner Albertus Magnus, Theobald von Sézanne, Heinrich von Köln (der schon für 1240 verantwortlich gemacht wurde) oder Johannes de Monte Mirabili. Aber auch 14 Rechtsgelehrte und weitere profilierte Theologen waren zu finden (CUP 1899, Nr. 178, 71–79).

Das Gutachten der Universität stützte sich auf Auszüge aus dem Talmud in lateinischer Sprache, für die der Dominikaner Theobald von Sézanne verantwortlich zeichnete. Theobald konnte im zeitgenössischen Kontext zu Recht als geeignet hierfür gelten, da er selbst vom mosaischen Glauben zum Christentum konvertiert war (CUP 1899, Nr. 178). Man sieht also deutlich, dass die Kirche zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch auf

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<sup>9</sup> In den Quellen wird zwar kein Name überliefert, sondern nur gesagt, dass “ein Erzbischof” den Talmud verteidigte, so Thomas Cantipratensis, I c. 3, n. 6. Aber Walter von Sens ist der einzige der drei in Frage kommenden Erzbischöfe, der kurz nach dem Verfahren starb, so wie es Thomas von Cantimpré berichtet, nämlich am 20. April 1241.

die Hilfestellung jüdischer Konvertiten angewiesen war, denn erst 1311 sollte das Konzil von Vienne eine gezielte Sprachausbildung derjenigen bewilligen, die Andersgläubige missionieren sollten. Doch blieb die Sache „verdächtig“: Johannes XXII. schrieb noch eine strenge Kontrolle der hebräischen Lehrer vor, deren man dringend bedurfte (Newman, 1925, 71). Wer als Christ hebräisch beherrschte, hatte noch lange Zeit damit zu rechnen, selbst als Häretiker verdächtigt zu werden.

Auch das 1247 gefällte Urteil fiel dann negativ aus, ganz im Sinne Odos von Châteauroux. Es war der Auftakt zu einer allgemeinen Such- und Vernichtungsaktion, weshalb aus dieser Zeit dann auch nur noch ein einziges Exemplar des Talmuds erhalten ist<sup>10</sup>.

Wie lassen sich diese Vorgänge nun in der bisherigen Haltung, die Kirche und Krone dem Judentum gegenüber einnahmen, verankern?

#### HALTUNG DER KIRCHE

Solange es noch kein einheitliches, quasi kodifiziertes Kirchenrecht gegeben hatte, galt gewissermaßen als Konsens das alte reichsrömische Judenrecht fort. Doch mit der Entstehung des Decretum Gratiani um 1140 änderte sich die Situation: in dem Augenblick, in dem ein originäres allgemeines Kirchenrecht formuliert war, beanspruchte die Kirche auch das Interpretationsmonopol hierüber. Die Juden waren im Kirchenrecht geschützt vor Zwangstaufe, Verletzung, Totschlag oder Beraubung ohne gerichtliches Urteil, ihnen wurden Gewohnheiten und ungestörte Festgebräuche sowie Friedhofsruhe zugesichert. Verordnungen bezüglich des Synagogenbaus sowie die Festlegung der Zinspflicht des Zehnten wurden dabei ebenso festgelegt (Lotter, 1984, 41–63).

Parallel mit der Entstehung eines universalen Kirchenrechts entwickelte sich der allgemeine Jurisdiktionsanspruch des Papstes. Die Bedeutung der überragenden Position des Papstes als Richter und Wächter der *christianitas* und darüber hinausgehend aller Menschen erwies sich hierbei gerade in der zunehmenden Ausgrenzung von alternativen Bewegungen als „häretisch“ im 12. Jahrhundert (Müller, 2008), wodurch der Eindruck einer allgemeinen Ausbreitung der Häresie entstand. Das quasi päpstliche Monopol auf die Häretikergesetzgebung lässt sich ansatzweise schon im can. 28 des III. Laterankonzils von 1179 erken-

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<sup>10</sup> Nämlich Cod. Hebr. 95 der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek in München. Vgl. hierzu: Patschovsky, 1992, 13–27.

nen. Eine strenge Unterscheidung von Häretikern und Juden wird hierbei von Beginn an nicht gezogen.

1199 hatte Innozenz III. seine Position in der *Constitutio pro Iudeis* umrissen (Grayzel 1966, Nr. 5, 92–94), die bereits die typische kirchliche Haltung zwischen Schutzbestimmungen und religiöser Diskriminierung—with dem Kennzeichen „verstockt“ als Haupt eigenschaft—erkennen lässt. Die *Sicut Iudeis* Bullen, in denen bereits die zwingende Unterordnung der Juden unter die christliche Kirche festgeschrieben wird, leiten dann über zu der realen Knechtschaftstheorie (Battenberg 1990, 105). Diese wurde 1234, also 6 Jahre vor dem Talmudverfahren, von Gregor IX. dadurch manifestiert, dass er den folgenschweren Brief Innozenz III. in seine eigene verbindliche und autorisierte Dekretalsammlung, den Liber Extra, übernahm. In diesem Brief hatte Innozenz III. erklärt, dass die Juden ewiger Knechtschaft unterworfen seien, weil sie den Herrn Jesus Christus gekreuzigt hätten<sup>11</sup>.

Diese Argumentation aufgreifend konnte dann Innozenz IV., auf dessen Veranlassung hin das zweite Verfahren stattfand, wiederum den Jurisdiktionsprimat des Papstes über das Judentum feststellen. Er leitete dies aus seinem speziellen, sich auf Joh. 21,17 stützenden allgemeinen Hirtenauftrag und aus der mit Mt. 16,19 gegebenen universellen Bindungs- und Lösegewalt ab. Davon wiederum leitete er explizit das Recht des Papstes ab, Juden zu strafen, wenn sie gegen ihr eigenes Gesetz verstießen und verband dies mit der ergo erlaubten Verbrennung des Talmuds in Paris (Peterse, 1995; Kedar, 1979, 79–82), da die Juden nicht mehr der allein gültigen, göttlich erteilten Richtschnur des Mosaischen Gesetzes folgten, sondern den Talmud in den Rang eines göttlichen Auftrags erhoben.

Diese rechtliche Entwicklung lässt deutlich den Zusammenhang erkennen zwischen der Normierung des gesellschaftlichen Zusammenlebens—unter dem Dachbegriff der *christianitas*—und der Verschlechterung der Position der „anderen“, die nur bedingt, quasi als Negativfolie, in ein solches Konzept einzupassen waren, wie eben Juden, Ketzer, Andersgläubige (Müller 2007, 107–125).

Außer wenn Juden vor christlichen Richtern aussagen mussten—ab dem 13. Jh. vermehrt vor Inquisitoren in Ketzerprozessen—fand eine Auseinandersetzung zwischen den beiden Religionen meist in Form einer *disputatio* statt. Gespräche dieser Art sind seit den Karolingern bekannt. Allerdings lassen die aufgezeichneten Gespräche meistens den

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<sup>11</sup> X. 5,5,13: „*Etsi Iudeos, quos propria culpa submisit perpetuae servituti..*“

apologetischen Zweck gut erkennen: am Ende steht so gut wie immer die Bekehrung oder zumindest die Niederlage des Juden (Funkenstein, 1971, 373–382; Cohen, 1992, 93–114). Doch wurde kein einziges dieser Gespräche vor 1240 mit offizieller Beauftragung durch eine höhere kirchliche Behörde geführt. Ganz im Gegenteil verbot noch 1227 die Trierer Provinzialsynode solche Diskussionen (Mansi XXIII, 32). Gregor IX. hat dann 1233 noch einmal die geltenden Rahmenbedingungen geändert, indem er in einem Schreiben an die deutschen Bischöfe einschränkte, zumindest ein Laie dürfe nicht mit Juden disputieren (Grayzel, 1966, Nr. 69, 198–200).

Dies sollte sich erst durch die Talmudverfahren ändern.

### KRONE

Bislang hat die päpstliche Haltung den Juden gegenüber im Mittelpunkt gestanden. Nun soll der Blick auf das französische Königtum gerichtet werden. Die hier interessierende Frage ist, warum von den europäischen Ländern allein Frankreich das päpstliche Ansinnen der Talmudkonfiskation und –prüfung unterstützte und die Mittel bereitstellte, um es in die Tat umzusetzen.

Die Bemühungen der französischen Könige, der territorialen Zersplitterung des Landes entgegenzuwirken, führten im 12., und stärker noch im 13. Jahrhundert, zu ersten durchgreifenden Erfolgen. Dabei wissen wir, dass im Süden prosperierende jüdische Gemeinden zu finden waren (Shatzmiller, 2000, 173–182; Iancu, 1995; Passerat, 2006; Müller 2008). Auch für den Norden hat Robert Chazan bedeutende jüdische Gemeinden nachweisen können. Für den Bereich der Ile-de-la-Cité in Paris setzte William Chester Jordan dabei sogar einen Bevölkerungsanteil von 20% an.

Dies blieb nicht ohne Folgen in der Territorialpolitik der französischen Könige. So schlug Philippe II. (1180–1223) unmittelbar nach seiner Thronbesteigung einen restriktiven Kurs den Juden gegenüber ein und verfügte 1182 sogar die Ausweisung sämtlicher Juden aus dem Bereich der Krondomäne (Jordan, 1988; Coulet, 1990, 9–16). Dies war ein offenkundiger Bruch mit der Politik seines Vaters, Ludwigs VII., der die Juden noch in traditioneller Weise protegiert hatte. Von den Ausweisungen waren vor allem die Städte Paris, Orléans und Bourges betroffen. Die Flüchtlinge konnten aber, gerade aufgrund der territorialen Zersplitterung, in den Nachbarterritorien Asyl finden, so zum Bei-

spiel in Bray in der Champagne. Aber dies ließ Philippe nicht auf sich beruhen: als Reaktion auf die Bestrafung einer seiner Dienstleute durch Juden dort ließ er, unter Missachtung der Souveränität der Gräfin der Champagne, Juden verbrennen. Er setzte sich damit über die Rechtsprechung der Gräfin der Champagne—der legitimen Gebietsherrin—hinweg, die den Juden als legale Vergeltung die Bestrafung des königlichen Dienstmanns erlaubt hatte, da der christliche Ritter zuvor einen Juden ermordet hatte (Ehlers, 1987, 120–122).

Auch wenn hinter der auf königlichen Befehl hin erfolgten Judenverbrennung möglicherweise auch ein persönliches Rachemotiv des Königs, gepaart mit antijüdischen Ressentiments, gelegen haben könnte, so ist doch wohl an erster Stelle von primär politischen Überlegungen auszugehen: Die Champagne nämlich hatte durch ein Bündnis mit Flandern und Burgund 1181 die Krondomäne gefährlich einkreisen können, was der König sicher auch als persönlichen Treubruch verstanden haben dürfte. Doch letztlich war ja Philippe der Sieg gelungen und damit war die selbständige Fürstenpolitik, wie sie auch von der Champagne betrieben worden war, gescheitert. Seitdem hatte Philippe den Zugang zu den lukrativen Messen der Champagne, womit sich die Chancen eines vereinheitlichten Wirtschaftsraumes ergaben. Das königliche Eingreifen in Bray hatte also eine Vorgeschichte—and schuf nun den Boden für ein Abkommen, das Philippe 1210 mit der Gräfin von der Champagne schloss und in dem die alleinige Zuständigkeit des Königs für die dortigen Juden festschrieben wurde.

Unter diesen Bedingungen florierte dann auch das Kreditwesen, wobei die Juden auf diesem sich neu formierenden Finanzmarkt kaum mehr in Erscheinung traten (Pirenne, 1994, 112–113). Tatsächlich hatte der König schon 1206 eine Übereinkunft zur Regulierung des jüdischen Geldverleihs getroffen, die deren wirtschaftliche Aktivitäten erheblich beeinträchtigt hatte (Chazan, 1973, 52).

Den Befehl von 1182 zur Ausweisung der Juden hatte er allerdings zuvor schon zurücknehmen müssen, da seine Art der territorialen „Aneignung“ teuer war und die Juden sich ihre „Freiheiten“ teuer erkauften mussten –womit sie die leeren Kassen des Königs wieder füllten. So hatte er 1198 den Juden die Rückkehr gestattet.

Sein Sohn Ludwig VIII., dem nur eine dreijährige Regentschaft blieb, folgte in dieser kurzen Zeit der Politik seines Vaters. Bei seinem frühen Tod war sein Sohn, Ludwig IX. noch minderjährig, so dass dessen Mutter, die energische Blanca von Kastilien, als Königinmutter die Regentschaft übernahm. 1230 stellte der junge König dann in Aussicht,

dass fällige Schuldverschreibungen, die bei Juden eingegangen seien, künftig nicht mehr eingetrieben würden. Vier Jahre später drohte er damit, jüdische Wucherer des Landes zu verweisen. Hiermit schließt er an die Politik seines Großvaters an, die vor allem unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Reorganisation der Königsmacht zu sehen ist (Langmuir 1980, 25–54; Vones, 1993, 182).

#### RESÜMEE

Von Seiten der Kirche bildet die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Talmud ab 1239/40 eine entscheidende zeitliche Wegmarke für das christlich-jüdische Verhältnis. Ein Merkmal der bisherigen Disputationen war es gewesen, dass sie ausschließlich ihre Autorität aus der Bibel bezogen hatten. Die neueren Disputationen hingegen enthalten auch Auseinandersetzungen um die nachbiblische jüdische Literatur, insbesondere den Talmud. Die Pariser Prozesse weisen in diesem Sinne zwei wesentliche qualitative Änderungen auf, die das intellektuelle Klima im jüdischen Umfeld erheblich verschärfen: Zunächst wurde die bisherige Gesprächsbasis ausgeweitet zugunsten nichtbiblischer Literatur. Sodann formulierte Papst Innozenz IV. erstmalig die formelle Zuständigkeit der kirchlichen Lehrautorität über ein jüdisches Kommentarwerk und definierte gleichzeitig die konkreten Bedingungen, unter denen die Kirche zwingend tätig werden musste (Browe, 1942; Schimmelpfennig, 1988, 304–327). Dies wurde vor allem mit der päpstlichen Autorität auch in Fragen des Naturrechts begründet, dem letztlich alle Menschen unterworfen waren, die wiederum alle dem Papst als demjenigen unterworfen waren, dessen Macht sich direkt von Gott ableitete. So trat der Papst vortan als Richter auch über nicht christliche Glaubensgemeinschaften, wie die der Juden, auf. Unter den geschilderten Umständen entbehrt der Zugriff auf den Talmud somit jeglichen Charakter eines traditionellen Glaubensdisputs, zumal auch keine Missionsbestrebungen mehr als ideeller Antrieb innerhalb dieses Rahmens sichtbar sind. Vielmehr wird das bisherige Modell der neben dem Christentum geduldeten jüdischen Religion durch eine kirchenjuristisch definierte Unterordnung jüdischer Exegese unter die christliche ersetzt. Zudem beenden die Pariser Verfahren eine—zumindest in der Theorie—bestehende Disputationsvielfalt. Auf Geheiß der höchsten geistlichen Institution des Abendlandes sollte das fernere Vorgehen unter offizieller Einbindung der staatlichen Gewalt erfolgen.

Dass diese staatliche Gewalt eigene Motive dabei verfolgte, wird überdeutlich, wenn wir die Entwicklung der französischen Monarchie in diesem Zeitraum betrachten. In die Regierung Ludwigs IX. fällt ein fundamentaler Wandel der Monarchie. Dieser war geprägt durch starke Zentralisierungstendenzen und große territoriale Gewinne, wobei die Auseinandersetzung mit Andersgläubigen, etwa den Katharern, wesentlich zur ideologischen Untermauerung der neuen Positionierung benutzt wurde (Müller 2008). In den hier in Frage kommenden Jahren trieb Ludwig eine erfolgreiche, pragmatisch geprägte Expansionspolitik voran, wobei Gregor IX. und Innozenz IV. dem zum Heiligen erklärten König wesentliche Hilfestellung leisteten.

Wie schon an anderer Stelle nachgewiesen werden konnte (Müller 2008), war es Ludwig aufgrund des Vorwurfs der Häresiebegünstigung gelungen, in Südfrankreich den Adel „alter“, also feudaler Prägung umzuschmieden in einen neuen, der französischen Krone treu ergebenen Dienstadel. Das Vorgehen seines Großvaters Philippe II. gegen die Gräfin der Champagne weist in die gleiche Richtung: Die Tatsache, dass die Gräfin den Juden legale Genugtuung wegen der Ermordung eines der Ihren durch einen Ritter des Königs zukommen lassen wollte, nahm der König zum Anlass, um die Gräfin politisch außer Gefecht zu setzen. Der Judenschutz, so machte der König deutlich, gehörte nicht zu den Belangen der Gebietsherren, sondern war nunmehr alleinige Aufgabe des Königs. Hiermit entzog der Monarch dem Adel ein traditionelles Zuständigkeitsgebiet und konnte ihn finanziell, aber auch via Legitimationsbefugnis entscheidend schwächen. Mit der Eröffnung des Pariser Verfahrens demonstrierte Ludwig IX. eindrucksvoll seine königlichen Befugnisse und zeigte sich den Forderungen des Papstes mehr als gewogen. Das Papsttum benötigte er ja dringend als Einheitsband in dem neu entstehenden Gebilde der französischen Königsmacht und um seine erstarkte königliche Position unwiderlegbar als von „Gottes Gnaden“ zu legitimieren. Durch parallel laufende Aktionen des Königs gegen Ketzer und gegen Juden zeigte sich die spätestens seit Innozenz IV. rechtlich gezogene Nivellierung der beiden Gruppen auch in der Praxis. Angehörige des noch auf Selbständigkeit pochenden Feudaladels wurden entweder, wie im Falle der Katharer, als pervertierte Ketzerbeschützer angeprangert oder, wie im Falle der Juden, ihrer alten Schutzherrnenrolle zugunsten des Königs entkleidet. Dem Adel alter Prägung wurde sowohl die Existenzgrundlage materiell (durch Güterkonfiskation) wie finanziell (durch Einbußen der Judensteuer) entzogen. Stattdessen entstand der neue Dienstadel, der sein Wohl und seine Güter der Gunst des Königs

als Lehnsherr verdankte. Dies waren Meilensteine auf dem Weg Frankreichs zur stärksten Kontinentalmacht im 14. Jahrhundert. Die Behandlung der Juden—wie die der Ketzer—konnte nun flexibel dem jeweiligen Verhältnis der Mächte angepasst werden, da sie jetzt zentral und weitgehend einheitlich durch den König geregelt war.

Dies erklärt, warum gerade in Frankreich der päpstlichen Aufforderung zur Talmudverbrennung nachgekommen wurde und warum gerade der französische König der hierbei mehr als willige Vollstrecker war.

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## SUMMARY

The Talmud Trials of 1240 and 1248 in Paris in the Context of the Papacy and the French Royalty

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From 1240 to 1248, two legal proceedings were instituted in Paris against the Talmud, the Jewish commentary on the Torah. As a result of both trials, the Talmud was condemned as being blasphemous and left to its destruction. What proper place in history can we now attribute to these proceedings, which have influenced the attitude of the Church and crown against Judaism over the years?

We shall start with the point of view of the Church as background of these trials. In 1199, Innocent III had outlined his position in the *Constitutio pro Judaeis*. Here the typical ecclesiastical attitude between protection and religious discrimination—the main characteristic of the Jews was described as stubbornness—was discernable. The papal bull *Sicut Judaeis*, in which the compulsory subordination of the Jews in the Christian world had already been laid down, then led to the practical theory of bondage. This theory had already been formulated by Gregory IX in 1234, six years before the first Talmud proceeding with its portentous consequences. Innocent IV, who was responsible for the second Talmud proceeding, was now able to decree the pope's supreme jurisdiction over the Jews in his several books of commentary. He deduced this from his special general pastorate, as found in the Gospel according to Matthew 16:19, where the universal power of 'forbidding and allow-

ing' is mentioned. From these scriptural passages he inferred explicitly the pope's right to punish the Jews when they had violated their own law, and he linked this with the consequential burning of the Talmud in Paris.

With regard to the French monarchy we have to pose the question why of all European countries it was France in particular that supported the papal request to confiscate and investigate the Talmud and used all available means to put the intention into effect. The efforts of the French kings to counteract the territorial fragmentation of the country led to the first decisive results in the 12th century and even more forcefully in the 13th century.

Immediately after his accession, Philippe II (1180–1223) adopted a restrictive policy towards the Jews, and in 1182 he even ordered the banishment of complete Jewish settlements from the crown's property. This was an evident reversal of his father's policy. From that time on, Philippe had access to lucrative financial markets, which increased the chance of a greater, unified economic area. The credit system flourished, although the Jews hardly played any role in this newly developing financial market.

His son Louis VIII, whose reign lasted only three years, continued his father's policy in this short time span. When he died at an early age, his son Louis IX was still a minor. In 1230, the young king promised that the overdue promissory notes which were said to have been written by the Jews no longer needed to be honoured. Four years later he threatened that Jewish usurers would be banished. By doing so, he continued the policy of his grandfather, which above all must be viewed as the reorganization of the royal power.

In conclusion, we can see that from the point of view of the Church, the quarrels about the Talmud since 1239/40 turned out to be a temporary but decisive milestone in the interactions between Christians and Jews. Characteristic of previous disputes was that they had a purely biblical basis, whereas the later disputes were also directed at post-biblical Jewish literature, notably the Talmud. In this sense the Parisian proceedings point to two essential qualitative changes, which considerably intensified the intellectual climate in Jewish circles. The topics now also included non-biblical literature. It was Pope Innocent IV who for the first time formulated the idea that the formal jurisdiction over a Jewish commentary book should be carried out by a theological authority. At the same time he laid down clear guidelines of a compulsory ecclesiastical intervention in such a condition. Under the circumstances

described above, the discussions about the Talmud consequently lack the character of a traditional religious dispute. It appears that the position of the Jewish religion that had so far been allowed to exist beside Christianity was now replaced by a canonical subordination of the Jewish exegesis to the Christian one. In addition, the Parisian proceedings put an end to the existing multiplicity of disputes, in theory at any rate. By order of the highest religious institution of the Occident, future procedures would take place only with the official concerted action of the state.

It becomes patently obvious that the state authorities pursued their own motives, when we look at the development of the French monarchy in this period. During the reign of Louis IX, a fundamental change took place in the monarchy. The new situation is characterized by strong tendencies of centralisation and large territorial expansion. In the process, the quarrels with infidels, for instance the Cathars, were basically used to ideologically underpin the new priorities. In the years we are discussing, Louis pursued a successful, pragmatic expansion policy. In this the king, who had now been canonized, was actively supported by the popes Gregory IX and Innocent IV.

By reproaching them for having favoured heretics, it was possible for Louis to turn the old feudal nobility into a new nobility which had a servile function and was loyal to the French crown. The actions which his grandfather Philippe II had taken against the Jews point in the same direction. The king made it explicitly clear that the protection of the Jews did not belong to the competence of the territorial rulers but was now the sole concern of the king. Herewith the monarch withdrew the traditional legitimacy from the jurisdiction of the nobility, and thus he could weaken their financial power decisively. With the institution of the Parisian proceedings, Louis IX then impressively demonstrated his royal authority and was more than willing to meet the pope's wishes. However, he urgently needed the papacy to legitimize his strengthened royal position as irrefutably granted by God's grace and as a unifying factor of the newly formed French royal power. Subsequently, since Innocent IV, simultaneous actions of the king against heretics and Jews now legally levelled these two groups, as was evident in practice. Members of the feudal nobility who were still boasting of their autonomy were either denounced as perverted protectors of heretics, such as the Cathars, or were divested of their traditional role as protectors of the Jews. The old nobility had to suffer the loss of their basic existence in a material way (e.g. through confiscation of their belongings) or finan-

cially (e.g. through forfeiting the taxes paid by Jews). It was replaced by a new servile nobility, which owed its welfare to the king's good graces in his function as their liege.

These were the milestones on the road to France becoming the strongest continental power in the 14th century. The treatment of the Jews, like that of the heretics, could now be adjusted flexibly to the prevailing powers that be, as it was now regulated centrally and to a large extent by the king. And this is the background for understanding why it was France and why it was the king who fostered the trials and the burning of the Talmud.



# THE DYNAMIC OF RELIGIOUS POLEMICS: THE CASE OF RAYMOND MARTIN (CA. 1220–CA.1285)

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## INTRODUCTION

Marcelo Dascal and others have recently pointed out the important internal function of religious polemics. According to Dascal, polemical confrontations are a primary source for understanding doctrine. It is in ‘such confrontations that it takes shape, sharpens itself and clarifies for itself its content’ (Dascal 2004, 18). An interesting part of a polemical process of doctrinal clarification is the possible inclusion of elements of the adversary’s position in the faith system of the polemicist. When polemics bear an outspokenly missionary component, it would seem that this contaminative aspect of polemics is less significant. After all, the main goal of the missionary is to persuade his addressee of the inadequacy of his faith and to offer him the superior alternative. But the case presented in this paper shows how a missionary may become inspired by his opponent’s arguments, so that an innovative power enters the articulation of his faith. What starts as missionary strategy leads to a process of learning and inclusion, no matter how exclusive the missionary goals are. The conflict between demonstration of one’s own truth and the confrontation with ‘foreign’ truth elements causes an extraordinary dynamic which shows that missionary polemics, even if they are medieval as is the case in the following example, are a fruitful source for the study of interreligious interaction and the history of doctrine.

It is well known that the young Dominican movement showed a great willingness to study the beliefs and practices of Christian heresies and foreign religions on behalf of the missionary work. In the course of the thirteenth century, the order founded ‘language schools’ (*studia linguarum*) in some of their convents laying at or over the edge of Latin Christianity in Spain, North Africa, Greece, and the Holy Land. It should be noted that the term ‘language school’ is a *pars pro toto* here. Not only the language of the target group was studied but also its religion and beliefs, especially its holy books and tradition. The ‘errors’ of

Greeks, Saracens, and Jews were mapped and refuted in study manuals. These could have a more general apologetic character, such as the *Summa contra Gentiles* (1260s) of Thomas Aquinas, or one more specifically polemical, such as the *Pugio fidei* (ca. 1278) of Raymond Martin. Raymond was the most prolific student which the Spanish language schools brought forth.<sup>1</sup> He was one of the eight friars who were sent by the Spanish Provincial Chapter of 1250 to a *studium arabicum*, probably located in Tunis. Dominican chroniclers have ascribed to him several works written against Islam, not all of which are traced. He is the author of the *Explanatio simboli apostolorum* (ca. 1257) and probably also of the anonymous *De seta Machometi* (1250s).<sup>2</sup> In the 1260s and 1270s he seems to have shifted his attention to Judaism. Immediately after the famous disputation of Barcelona between the Dominican friar Paul Christian and Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (1263), a royal Aragonese committee for the censorship of Jewish literature was installed. Raymond became a member of it in 1264.<sup>3</sup> This resulted in two study and preaching manuals directed against Judaism: the *Capistrum Iudeorum* (ca. 1267)<sup>4</sup> and the *Pugio fidei*.<sup>5</sup> In 1281, the Provincial Chapter mentioned him as lecturer at the *studium hebraicum* in Barcelona.

In this paper I want to show how the missionary method employed by Raymond resulted in a process of learning and incorporating from Jews and Judaism. Though Raymond certainly was not a ‘judaizer’—on the contrary, he reproached judaizing Christians repeatedly and severely—and his approach was paradigmatic for the increasing anti-

<sup>1</sup> Useful, recent introductions to Raymond’s life and work can be found in e.g.: Williplein (1980), Cohen (1982), Chazan (1983; 1989), Robles Sierra (1990).

<sup>2</sup> An edition of the *Explanatio* was published by March (1908), of the *De Seta* (also known as *De origine, progressu et fine Machometi et quadruplici reprobatione prophetiae eius*, or abbreviated, *Quadruplex Reprobatio*) by Hernando (1983). Hernando argues that Raymond was the author of the work.

<sup>3</sup> For the text of the royal edicts regarding the committee, see Denifle (1887, 236–237, #5; 238–239, #7); for a commentary on the edicts, see Chazan (1992, 90–92).

<sup>4</sup> Edited by Robles Sierra in two parts (I: 1990, II: 1993).

<sup>5</sup> The *Pugio* was published in 1651 (Paris) and 1687 (Leipzig). The edition of 1687, published and introduced by J. Carpzov, was a reprint of the edition of 1651, published, introduced, and annotated by J. de Voisin. The Carpzov edition (repr. Farnborough 1967) is the common edition to quote from. Though further study of the twelve extant manuscripts of the *Pugio* is a desideratum (see e.g. G. Hasselhoff 2004, 285–316), I have concluded after a provisional comparison of the Carpzov edition with the Sainte Geneviève manuscript (13th c.), which according to P. Fumagalli (1986, 93–98) is the oldest manuscript, that quotation from the Carpzov edition is sufficient for the purpose of this paper.

Judaism which marked his age and his order,<sup>6</sup> I would nonetheless call his method ‘dialogical’. I am aware of the problem of designating a medieval polemic in terms of dialogue. But in my opinion it is the best word to use here, since discussion and oral exchange were central to Raymond’s approach. His arguments were not only based on the study of the written sources of Judaism but also developed and tested in debate with Jews.<sup>7</sup>

In order to show my point, I have chosen a small body of texts from the vast collection of rabbinic texts absorbed by Raymond in the *Capistrum* and the *Pugio*: the *aggadot* and *misdashim* related to the rabbinic statement that the Messiah was born on the day of the destruction of the Second Temple. Since this topic was already launched by Paul Christian during the disputation of Barcelona and was further elaborated by Raymond Martin in the *Capistrum* as well as in the *Pugio*, the development of the friars’ argument can be followed during a period of some fifteen years (1263–1278). A comparison of three fixed points—disputation of Barcelona, *Capistrum*, and *Pugio*—enables us to detect at least a part of the dynamic and interaction behind it.

Before jumping into these texts, a few remarks are in order. First of all, it should be noted that Robert Chazan has already discussed how the topic evolved from Paul Christian to Raymond Martin. But he only compared the facts of the two Barcelona accounts (especially from Nahmanides’ Hebrew account of it) to Raymond’s *Pugio*.<sup>8</sup> The *Capistrum* was not part of his research, since a critical edition was still lacking then. So, when Chazan draws his conclusions, he gives no answer as to which was the singularity of the treatment of this rabbinic material in the *Pugio* and which the advance already realized a decade earlier in the *Capistrum*. Another student of Raymond Martin’s work, Jeremy Cohen, shows that ‘the *Capistrum Iudeorum* gives expression to several of those ideas in which scholars have discerned the singularity of the *Pugio fidei*'.<sup>9</sup> He states that ‘the *Pugio* attests to a broader, more sophisticated mastery of rabbinic literature’ (Cohen 1999, 347). My

<sup>6</sup> See Cohen (1982, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Raymond refers several times in the *Capistrum* and the *Pugio* to debates he held with Jews. Raymond Lull mentioned regular exchanges between a ‘certain Christian religious’ and a ‘certain Jew, very learned in Hebrew and a Rabbi’ in Barcelona. Jeremy Cohen argues convincingly that, very probably, these were Raymond Martin and Rabbi Solomon ibn Adret. See Cohen (1980).

<sup>8</sup> Chazan (1983; 1989, 115–136).

<sup>9</sup> Cohen (1999, 348).

review of the material will be an examination of these conclusions. Secondly, scholars agree that one of the intentions of the *Capistrum* and the *Pugio* was to supply answers to the way Rabbi Moses countered the arguments launched by Paul Christian during the disputation of Barcelona. Raymond augmented and refined Paul's argumentation, he even adjusted his strategy, and thus Rabbi Moses's responses were formative for the development of argument.<sup>10</sup> So, my statement that there is a connection between the disputation of Barcelona and the writings of Raymond Martin is not new, but, thirdly, it is obvious that the research on the reception of the Barcelona experience in the works of Raymond Martin is only at an initial stage. The same goes for the development of Raymond's argumentation from the *Capistrum* to the *Pugio*. Therefore, though the main purpose of my paper is to describe the implications of Raymond's missionary strategy and the kind of exchange between Christians and Jews connected to it, I will also submit some results concerning the development from Paul Christian to Raymond Martin and from the *Capistrum* to the *Pugio*.

#### RAYMOND MARTIN'S REDEFINITION OF PAUL CHRISTIAN'S AIM

After the disputation of Barcelona, Raymond started to write the *Capistrum Iudeorum*, 'Muzzle for the Jews'.<sup>11</sup> The work was not only a biblical and doctrinal refutation of rabbinic Judaism,<sup>12</sup> it also was meant to be a manual for preaching and mission to the Jews. This becomes clear from the preface to the work, which describes the method preferred for discussion with Jews and a variety of *doli*, 'tricks', the Jews resort to during such debates (Robles 1990, 56). Central methodological aspects of the work are a literal Latin translation of the adduced biblical passages in order to meet the Jewish criticism 'that it is not so in the Hebrew' (Robles 1990, 54) and the bringing forward of rabbinic exege-

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Willi-Plein (1980, 17); Cohen (1982, 132–134); Chazan (1983; 1989, 115–136), Robles (1990, 35–36), Cohen (1999, 346–348).

<sup>11</sup> It is unknown whether Raymond was present at the disputation. His name is not mentioned in the Latin or in the Hebrew account of it. But, since he was sent to a *studium arabicum* in 1250 (see above) and he informs us in the *Capistrum* that he lived for about twelve years in a Muslim environment, it is possible that he was back in Barcelona in 1263. See *CI* II, neq. 5, n. 9 (Robles 1993, 184).

<sup>12</sup> *CI* I, praefatio: '[A]d Iudeorum caecitatem illuminandam et cordis duritiam conterendam, vel ad eorum malitiam refrenandam et perfidiam confundendam' (Robles 1990, 54).

ses that according to Raymond corroborate the Christian position, in order to negate Jewish contentions ‘that it should not be understood or explained so’ (*ibid.*). The *Capistrum* consists of two parts. The first has seven *rationes*, arguments centred around Old Testament passages, which aim at proving that the Messiah has already come. Part two consists of seven *nequitiae* (futilities), refutations of Jewish arguments that the Messiah still is to come. Thus, the *Capistrum* is about the proper interpretation of Hebrew Scripture, particularly as to the question of the date of the messianic advent.

When Robert Chazan discusses the relation between the *Pugio* and the disputation of Barcelona, he concludes that the former addressed ‘every major criticism raised by (...) Rabbi Moses ben Nahman’ and that much of its advance was ‘simply the result of careful consideration of the issues raised by Rabbi Moses’ (Chazan 1989, 115). But what about the *Capistrum*? Was it an early response to Nahmanides’ refutation of Paul Christian’s claims?<sup>13</sup> Did it already receive the purport of Nahmanides’ responses, as Chazan holds that the *Pugio* did? The short prologue to the first ratio shows that it indeed did. The central aim of the first part of the book is formulated there as follows:

Since no one can advance a better fundament than Christ Jesus (...), in this first part it will not only be proved that the Messiah, that is Christ, must have come, but also that before the destruction of the Temple he was born and has come, and that no one except Jesus our Lord was or could have been the Messiah. (Robles 1990, 68)<sup>14</sup>

We have a clear adjustment here of one of Paul Christian’s goals during the disputation, as we meet it in the Latin account of the disputation: ‘Brother Paulus (...) proposed to the said Jewish master that he would prove (...) that the Messiah (of which the interpretation is “Christ”) whom the Jews expect, has undoubtedly come’ (Baer 1931, 185).<sup>15</sup> Raymond not only wants to prove that the Messiah has come, but (1) that he has come before the destruction of the Temple, (2) that he was born and has come, and (3) that Jesus was this Messiah. These differences

<sup>13</sup> The suggestion that the *Capistrum* was a direct, unofficial response to Nahmanides was already put forward by Willi-Plein (1980, 17). But her suggestion is only based on circumstantial evidence (the title and date of the *Capistrum*) and not on textual evidence.

<sup>14</sup> Translations of quotations from the *Capistrum* and the *Pugio* are my own, except when stated otherwise.

<sup>15</sup> The Latin account of the disputation of Barcelona was edited by Baer (1931, 185–187). My English translations are drawn from Maccoby (1982, 147–150).

reflect the lessons which the Dominicans learned from Nahmanides' argumentation during the disputation (or in his Hebrew account). This needs some clarification.

Nahmanides' Hebrew account shows that when Paul Christian advanced the rabbinic story of the Messiah's birth on the day of the Temple's destruction (*LamR* 1:51) in order to prove that Jewish tradition holds that the Messiah has come, Moses confronted him immediately with the consequences of his argument: if the aggadah is true, Jesus cannot be the Messiah, since he was born long before the destruction of the Temple. The only response to this came from the King's justiciary, a certain master Guillem: 'The argument at present does not concern Jesus. The question is whether the Messiah has come or not. You said that he has not come, but this book of yours says that he has come' (Chavel 1971, I: 306).<sup>16</sup>

Apparently Raymond was dissatisfied with the effect Paul's approach on this point produced. Raymond's proof concerns Jesus very much: *before* the Temple and *only* Jesus, as the aim of the *Capistrum* says. Further, Raymond says that he wants to prove that the Messiah was born and has come: *Quod natus fuerit, ac venerit*. Nahmanides obviously forms the occasion for this specification. According to his Hebrew account, he pointed out that the aggadah only tells that the Messiah was *born* on the day of the Second Temple's destruction. When this fact is combined with other aggadot on the Messiah's appearance in Rome and his dwelling in the Garden of Eden, the conclusion forces itself on the reader: the Messiah is already here but still waits for his moment to come. The Rabbi anchored the plausibility of this solution in Scripture. He made a comparison with Moses, who was not the redeemer at the time he was born but only from the time he stood before the Pharaoh. Similarly, the Messiah will one day stand before the Pope and say to him by God's command: 'Let my people go' (*Exod* 5:1). The Messiah will only be the Messiah after Elijah has anointed him. Only then will he start to redeem the Jewish people.

The third point, that is, Raymond's focus on proving that only Jesus could have been the Messiah announced and described by the Old Testament prophets, was provoked by another of Nahmanides' answers. The Rabbi stated, as pointed out in his Hebrew account, that Jesus'

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<sup>16</sup> The Hebrew account of the disputation of Barcelona was edited by Steinschneider (1860), which was reproduced by Chavel (1971, I:302–320). My English translations are drawn from Maccoby (1982, 102–146).

deeds simply did not correspond to the messianic promise revealed in Scripture. His rule was not ‘from sea to sea, and from the River until the ends of the earth’, as Psalm 72 predicts. The peace described in Isaiah 2:4 was not fulfilled. The Jewish people were not liberated but brought into exile again. The dispersed people of Israel were not gathered. And the Temple in Jerusalem was not rebuilt.<sup>17</sup> In view of this image of the Messiah and his time, and the connected rejection of Jesus as Messiah (and Christian society as messianic), the objective of the *Capistrum* proves to be much broader than only a demonstration of the date of the messianic advent. To be sure, the seven rationes in the first place try to prove—from Hebrew Scripture and sustained by examples of Jewish exegesis—that the Messiah has come before the Second Temple’s destruction. But the proof that Jesus was the only one who met his criteria means that the *Capistrum* also touches many aspects of Christian doctrine.

To conclude, the three points which dominate the aim formulated at the beginning of the *Capistrum Iudaeorum* are directly inspired by the responses Nahmanides gave to Paul Christian. This concurs with Chazan’s conclusion that the disputation of Barcelona was a testing ground for a new missionizing strategy invented by these Catalan Dominicans.<sup>18</sup> Not only Raymond’s *Pugio*, but even his earlier *Capistrum* was an attempt to improve Paul Christian’s strategy. ‘Dialogue’, that is, debate, disputation, was the key to improvement and further shaping of argumentation, as dispute was an integral part of the curriculum followed in every Dominican convent in the world.<sup>19</sup>

#### FURTHER ADVANCE IN THE *CAPISTRUM* (CA. 1267)

Especially Nahmanides’ first response—the incompatibility of the messianic dates of aggadah and Jesus’ life—had direct consequences for Raymond’s employment of the aggadic stories on the Messiah’s birth in Bethlehem and his abiding elsewhere until his advent. Whereas Paul Christian seems to have adduced these aggadot rather uncritically, Raymond started to stress that they were Jewish errors.

<sup>17</sup> See Maccoby (1982, esp. 120–122, 131–133).

<sup>18</sup> Chazan (1989, e.g. 72)

<sup>19</sup> See Mulchahey (1998, 130ff.).

Here we should not leave undiscussed the error of the Jews, who say and have written in the Talmud Jerushalmi, Tractate Berakhot, chapter Haya Qore [PT 2.4/10ff. (5a)] and in the gloss on Lamentations, called Echa Rabbati [1.51]: ‘A comforter is far from me, one to revive my soul’ [Lam 1:16], and in many other places in their scriptures, that the Messiah was born in Bethlehem on the day of the destruction of the [Second] Temple, as was treated above in the first ratio of this [first] part [of the book]. However, with all this they do not confess that he has come, but some of them have written that he hides at the islands of the sea, others that he lives in the earthly Paradise. Others have stated that he abides among the lepers of Rome. He is, they say, a leper, as it was written [Isa 53:4]: ‘We have seen him as a leper.’ (Robles 1990, 80)

Beside an adjustment of the strategy pursued by Paul, this text may witness development on the level of knowledge of rabbinic source material. First, while in the Hebrew account Paul adduces one rabbinic source for the birth of the Messiah on the day of the Temple’s destruction (LamR 1.51), Raymond mentions a second explicitly (PT Ber 2.4–5a) and even states there are many more. Second, the tradition concerning the Messiah hiding at the islands of the sea is mentioned in neither of the two accounts of the disputation of Barcelona.<sup>20</sup> Raymond’s membership of the royal committee for the censorship of Jewish literature will certainly have contributed to a growing knowledge of rabbinic sources. Censorship and discovery of new sources for the benefit of preaching and missionizing were joint activities.

In the passage cited above, Raymond refers to the first ratio. The title of this ratio is: ‘That the Messiah was born before the destruction of the Temple’ (Robles 1990, 68). It starts with the quotation of Isa 66:7–8: ‘Before she was in labour, she gave birth; before her labour pains came upon her, she delivered a son. Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things?’<sup>21</sup> After this Raymond adduces two passages from GenR 30:41. The first explains the image of the woman in labour pains as the people of Israel crying because their Temple is destroyed:

In the hour when the house of the Sanctuary was destroyed, the Israelites cried, as if they were in labour, as it is written [Jer 4:31]: ‘For I heard a cry as of a woman in labour, anguish as of one bringing forth her first child.’ (Robles 1990, 68)

<sup>20</sup> Raymond does not specify his source here, but in the *Pugio* he adduces GenR 30:41, which says that the Messiah will dwell 400 years in ‘the large sea’, 80 years in the highest heaven (*in ascensu sumi*) with the sons of Korah, another 80 years inside the gates of Rome, and the remaining years until his advent.

<sup>21</sup> My English translation of Raymond’s own Latin translation of the Hebrew text.

The second poses the question why it was said that the Messiah was born on the same day that the Temple was destroyed. The answer of the midrash is: because Isaiah says, ‘when she was in labour, she gave birth; during her labour pains she brought forth a boy’ (Robles 1990, 68).<sup>22</sup> Then Raymond starts his argumentation: The Hebrew בטרם, used twice in Isa 66:7–8 (בטרם she was in labour, her labour pains) means *in antequam*, ‘before’ and not ‘during’, as the second midrash holds.<sup>23</sup> Raymond has three different arguments for translating with ‘before’. First, there are several biblical passages where בטרם clearly means ‘before’.<sup>24</sup> Second, there is a proof from rabbinic literature: According to David Kimhi in his *Sefer ha-Shorashim* the word טרם means generally, and certainly here in Isaiah, ‘before’. And third, there is the argument of context and common sense: If this woman had given birth *during* her labour pains, which is quite normal, why would Isaiah have exclaimed then, ‘Who has heard of anything like this? Who has seen any such thing?’

Some interesting methodological aspects should be noted here. First of all, Scripture forms the heart of Raymond’s argumentation. He starts with it (Isaiah), he makes its correct translation the key effort of the argument, and, when he argues that his translation is the correct one, his first evidence consists of other scriptural prooftexts. Taking Scripture as the prime authority was a principal choice. It was an integral element of the Dominican apologetic and epistemic method. In an earlier publication, I have discussed the theological method which Thomas Aquinas describes and employs in the *Summa contra Gentiles*.<sup>25</sup> Thomas stresses (*ScG* I, cs. 3, 7) that the articles of the Christian faith, though it can be shown that they do not contradict reason, cannot be proved by reason, only by Scripture. I have shown there as well that Raymond applies a very similar method. Just as Thomas does, Raymond holds that people should not get the impression that the Catholic faith is based

<sup>22</sup> The emphasis is mine.

<sup>23</sup> Cohen (1999, 347) holds that Raymond accepts the second midrash here, while he dismisses it in the *Pugio*. He sees this as an example of the more sophisticated mastery of rabbinic literature in the *Pugio*. I agree that the *Pugio* shows a greater mastery of rabbinic literature, but the example is wrong. There is no difference in the treatment of this midrash in the *Capistrum* and the *Pugio*. In both cases Raymond accepts it as being a reference to the birth of the Messiah and dismisses it in its translation of בטרם as ‘during’.

<sup>24</sup> He mentions three: Jer 38:10, Prov 18:13 and Prov 8:25.

<sup>25</sup> Wiersma (2006, 9–41).

on weak, rational arguments instead of on solid scriptural doctrine: rational arguments adduced on behalf of the mysteries of faith are at best *probable* and certainly do not lead to necessary conclusions.<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, rabbinic exegesis is used by Raymond in a twofold manner. He seems to differ here with Paul, and again the differences may have been inspired by Nahmanides. Nowhere in the Hebrew nor in the Latin account do we meet examples of Paul rejecting rabbinic traditions as error. But in Raymond's *Capistrum* the use of rabbinic statements alternates. Some are adduced to support the Christian truth, some are rejected as false. Robert Chazan has suggested that it was Nahmanides who supplied Raymond with the rationale to correct Paul's strategy on this point (Chazan 1989, 119–120). The Rabbi's confession that in Judaism midrash and aggadah do not have the same authority as Scripture and halacha would have made Raymond realize that he did not need to use midrash solely in a supportive way. As Nahmanides showed, the rejection of certain midrashim was not foreign to Judaism. Chazan may be right that Nahmanides' position licensed Raymond to reject midrashim and aggadot which he perceived as erroneous. At the same time, however, it should be stressed that, as the primacy of Scripture was an integral part of Dominican apologetics, the refutation of error was as well. To mention only a few examples: At the outset of the *Summa contra Gentiles* (I, c. 1), Thomas Aquinas discerns a 'twofold office of the wise man (...): to meditate and speak forth of the divine truth (...) and to refute the opposing error' (trans. Pegis 1975, I: 60–61). Further, the *Capistrum Iudeorum* is divided in two parts, of which the first is a demonstration (*rationes*) that the Messiah has already come and the second a refutation of Jewish objections against it. Finally, in the prologue to the *Pugio*, basing himself on Tit 1:9, Raymond says that 'a preacher of the truth should be able to instruct the faithful in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict the truth' (Carpzov 1687, 2; trans. Harvey 1991, 39).

Another refutation of the tradition of the Messiah's birth on the day of the Temple's destruction is found in the second ratio of the *Capistrum* (Robles 1990, 82–84). It follows immediately after the passage quoted above in which stories about the abiding of the Messiah in Rome, the

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<sup>26</sup> See e.g. *PF* I, c. 13, where Raymond states that the articles of faith cannot be proved rationally. The assertion is made in relation to the discussion on the creation of the world. See also Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 46 a. 2.

Garden of Eden and the islands of the sea are called Jewish error. The argumentation is very similar to that of ratio one. Again, a biblical quote is the starting point and, again, it is followed by the adduction of midrashic material, used partly in a supportive, partly in a rejecting manner.

Raymond reproduces a Jewish exegesis of Isa 10:34–11:1: ‘And the Lebanon will fall by strength. A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse’ (Robles 1990, 82). He notes that the Jews explain ‘the Lebanon will fall’ as the destruction of the Temple, and the ‘shoot from the stock of Jesse’ as the Messiah. These two verses together would imply then that the Messiah was born on the day of the Temple’s destruction. Raymond’s objection to this explanation has a historical and a linguistic component. He starts to note that if it is true that the shoot of Jesse followed upon the fall of the Lebanon, one would have expected that Isa 11:6, the prophecy on the wolf living with the lamb etc., was realized as well. But there was no such peace after the fall of the Lebanon. On the contrary, war and revolt dominated the period. There was, however, a long and unique period of peace at the time of Jesus’ birth, during the reign of August. This historical observation brings Raymond to argue that the sequence of the fall of the Lebanon and the shoot of the stock of Jesse should be read in reverse order. Hebrew grammar does not exclude such a reading. Again Rabbi David Kimhi is adduced to confirm this: a *t-consecutivum*, with which the Hebrew text connects Isa 10:34–11:1, does not necessarily have the meaning of sequence, it can also have a conditional meaning. If so, in the case of these specific verses, the birth of the Messiah does not necessarily follow after the fall of the Lebanon (the Temple).

#### DEVELOPMENT IN THE *PUGIO FIDEI* (CA. 1278)

In the *Pugio*, the refutation of the rabbinic traditions on the birth and advent of the Messiah has gained in coherence. Whereas the *Capistrum* has two arguments at two different places (I, r. 1 and r. 2, nos. 11–13), in the *Pugio* these are brought together in one chapter under the heading: ‘That the Messiah of the Jews according to them was born on the day when the Temple was destroyed by Titus and Vespasian’ (Carpzov 1687, 348).<sup>27</sup> Further, while in the *Capistrum* the question is immedi-

<sup>27</sup> The Latin heading reads: ‘Quod Messias Judaeorum secundum ipsos natus est illa die qua templum destructum est a Tito et Vespasiano.’

ately brought up in the first ratio, in the *Pugio* it only appears in the sixth chapter (II, c. 6).<sup>28</sup> This sixth chapter is preceded by two introductory chapters on the divine rejections of, first, the ten tribes of Israel and, then, the tribe of Judah (chapters which are not the *Capistrum*), and three chapters centring around the prophecies of respectively Dan 9:24–27, Gen 49:10 and Dan 2:31–45.<sup>29</sup> Raymond's choosing to put the reading of central biblical texts (of course in combination with much rabbinic material) in the *Pugio* before the discussion on aggadic material on the birth of the Messiah is understandable. It leads to a more balanced composition: introduction—several scriptural demonstrations of the true messianic date (including refutation of alternative, erroneous rabbinic exegeses)—refutation of rabbinic ‘tales’ that the Messiah was born when the second Temple was destroyed. The choice of starting with his own Christian exegesis of Hebrew Scripture instead of with rabbinic ‘errors’ has the advantage that it is less defensive. By starting with his own exegesis, the polemicist takes the initiative and marks off the direction in which he wants to push his audience.

Chapter six of part II of the *Pugio* has a clear structure. After a short introduction, the proof is delivered in two steps: first, the tradition about the birth of the Messiah; second, the tradition on the Messiah waiting for the moment of his advent. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks. The two arguments are equally structured. In each case, first the sources are quoted, then the argumentation follows. I will only discuss the first argument. But before that, some observations on the evolution of the sources from the *Capistrum* to the *Pugio* are in order. As to the story of the Messiah’s birth on the day of the Temple’s destruction, the *Pugio* quotes PT Berakhot (2.4–5a), mentions LamR 1.51, and then quotes GenR 30:41. This is an elaboration of the *Capistrum*, which quotes GenR 30:41 in ratio one and only mentions the two other sources in ratio two. As to the tradition that the Messiah is dwelling elsewhere until the time of his advent, the differences between the *Capistrum* and the *Pugio* are greater. In the *Capistrum*, Raymond only notes that some rabbinic sources have it (Robles 1990, 80), but in the *Pugio* he actually quotes two of these: GenR 30:41 and BT Sanh

<sup>28</sup> As was mentioned above, part II of the *Pugio* is a recapitulation of the *Capistrum*.

<sup>29</sup> The order of these three texts in the *Capistrum* is rearranged in the *Pugio*. The *Capistrum* has the order: Gen 49:10, Dan 2:31–45, Dan 9:24–27. Thus, in the *Pugio* the argument centred around Dan 9:24–27 (the prophecy on the seventy weeks) was put in front. The *Capistrum* already shows that for Raymond this text was gaining importance, since it got a double redaction there. See Robles (1990, 33, 126–201).

98a (of which a small part was adduced by Paul Christian at Barcelona). So, at the level of source material the *Pugio* extends the *Capistrum*. It quotes where the *Capistrum* restricts itself to only mentioning a source or to referring to the existence of a story. The *Pugio* is obviously the result of a next stage of research and presentation. That is fully in line with a general difference between the *Capistrum* and the *Pugio* regarding the quotation of sources: the *Capistrum* only gives Latin translations of Hebrew Scripture and rabbinic traditions, the *Pugio* consistently reproduces the Hebrew original as well.

Then the course of the arguments. I will summarize them briefly. The first argument concerning the messianic birth starts with an attack on Talmudic ‘fables’, such as PT Berakhot (2.4–5a). Ps 119:85, ‘shameless men spread tales about me, which are not in your law’, becomes a reproach against Judaism that fabulates rather than taking Scripture seriously. Then the tale itself is treated. It is (parallel to LamR 1.51) about a ploughing farmer who after his ox lows is told by a raven that the Temple has been destroyed and after a second lowing that the Messiah has been born.<sup>30</sup> After Rabbi Yudan has told this story, Rabbi Abbun criticizes it. He wonders why we need a raven to tell us this. After all, Abbun says, the fact is clear enough from Isa 10:34–11:1: the ‘shoot from the stock of Jesse’ follows the ‘fall of the Lebanon’. Raymond of course accepts Rabbi Abbun’s criticism of placing the proof from a fable above that of Scripture, but he attacks the Rabbi’s explanation of the Isaiah passage.

Raymond’s argumentation against the Rabbi’s exegesis proves that the *Capistrum* is not only extended and rearranged in the *Pugio*, but that there is also a change of argument. In the *Capistrum*, we saw that Raymond employs a linguistic argument to solve the problem of consecution in Isa 10:34–11:1. In the *Pugio*, the linguistic argument has disappeared. Instead, Raymond uses a historical argument: Isaiah lived in the First Temple period. His prophecy on the fall of the Lebanon must therefore be applied to the fall of the First Temple. It was not Titus who was the ‘iron’ which cut the Lebanon down, but Nebuchadnezzar. After that, in the Second Temple period, the shoot would spring from the trunk of Jesse, ‘when the virgin Mary was born from the stock

<sup>30</sup> In Raymond’s version of LamR (as in the version in the Hebrew account of the Barcelona disputation) the informant is an Arab; in Raymond’s version of PT Ber it is a raven. Apparently different versions of the story were circulating, since in the margin of his edition, De Voisin gives ‘Arabs’ as an alternative reading for *corvinus*; see Carpzov (1687, 348–349). The modern edition of PT Ber has ‘Arab’, not ‘raven’.

of David, and from her the Lord Jesus Christ' (Carpzov 1687, 349).<sup>31</sup> Thus, the common consecutive meaning of the *i-consecutivum* between Isa 10:34 and 11:1 is restored.

There may have been several reasons for this change. Possibly the argument of the *Capistrum* was tested in discussion with Jews and found to be unconvincing on the point of the interpretation of the *i-consecutivum*. Since Raymond evidently wanted to stick to the identification of the fall of the Lebanon with the fall of the Temple, he solved the problem of consecution by a historical reading of Isaiah, that is, that the Lebanon was the First, not the Second Temple. The result is the same: the Messiah was born in the Second Temple period. Another reason for the change may have been the different position of the argument. The sixth chapter is directly preceded by the argument centred around Dan 2:31–45, Daniel's interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. An explanation of the 'fall of the Lebanon' in relation to the destruction of the First Temple connects much better to Dan 2:31–45 than the explanation of the *Capistrum*, where the topic preceded the discussions on Daniel and was connected to Gen 49:10.

The argument sets forth then with a repetition of the argument of the first ratio in the *Capistrum*, the explanation of Isa 66:7–8 on the basis of the translation of the Hebrew word מְרֻט. Here the *Pugio* simply reproduces the argument of the *Capistrum*. The translation of מְרֻט as 'during' is attacked; the authority of Rabbi David Kimhi is adduced to prove that the correct translation is 'before' (including Kimhi's references to biblical proof-texts); it is argued that Isaiah describes a miracle, so that מְרֻט should be translated as 'before'. One new element is added in the *Pugio*, which again shows that the *Pugio* is a material extension of the *Capistrum*: in addition to Kimhi the Targum is mentioned (not cited) as evidence for the translation of מְרֻט as 'before' instead of 'during'.

## CONCLUSIONS

Robert Chazan's conclusion that the *Pugio fidei* of Raymond Martin shows a reception of the disputation of Barcelona needs correction insofar that Raymond's *Capistrum Iudaeorum* was already intended as a response to Nahmanides' argumentation and as a correction of certain

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<sup>31</sup> *PF* II, c. 6.

elements in Paul Christian's strategy. Having noted this, I found two important methodological principles at work in the *Capistrum* and the *Pugio*. The first was the primacy of scriptural reasoning in the explanation of the Christian articles of faith, and the second a focus on the refutation of Jewish error. These principles prescribed Raymond's use of rabbinic literature. The part of it which harmonized, or could be harmonized, with the common Christian explanation of Scripture and Catholic doctrine was accepted and exploited, the part which contradicted it was rejected. In a way this concurs with a statement of Nahmanides during the disputation. When the Rabbi reflected on the authority of rabbinic tradition, he called Scripture the first book which Judaism believes 'with perfect faith' and compared Midrash with 'sermons' from which a Jew could distance himself without any harm. It is hard to determine whether the risk Raymond took in dismissing certain midrashic traditions before a Jewish audience as erroneous had something to do with this statement of Nahmanides. It is possible, but I emphasized that the rejection of error lay at the heart of the Dominican polemical method. On the increasing focus on Scripture in the thirteenth century, both in Christian theology and Judaism, there is much to be said. I leave it with the observation that this focus is obvious in Raymond as well as in Nahmanides.

As to the advance of the *Pugio* in relation to the *Capistrum*, my paper shows that it lies predominantly in the extension and fuller quotation of rabbinic material and in the reorganization of argument, sometimes leading to a change of argument. The extension of material in the *Pugio* has a lot to do with the process of ongoing study which the Dominicans practiced in view of their core business, the art of preaching. Raymond's work as a royal censor of Jewish literature explains his growing knowledge and mastery of rabbinic sources. We may further assume that changes in the argumentation from the *Capistrum* to the *Pugio* were the result of experience gained in real debates with Jews. After all, an important clue to the evolution of argument from Paul Christian to Raymond was the experience of the disputation of Barcelona, as was already shown by Chazan and confirmed in the previous pages. Nahmanides' responses were indeed heard (and probably also read) and thought over. It is therefore likely that other debates functioned in a similar manner. Several times, both in the *Capistrum* and in the *Pugio*, Raymond referred to moments of real debate and the lessons he learned from it.

Finally, Raymond's approach was intrinsically dialogical, no matter how exclusively Christian and how anti-Jewish his argumentation was. The Dominican principle that preaching and mission work could only be successful if there was the readiness to immerse oneself in the opponent's position, inevitably stimulated a process of dialogue. The learning of Hebrew Scripture, the reading, contemplation, and incorporation of Jewish sources, and the debates with Jews impelled Raymond to bring Christian exegesis and doctrine in an ongoing dialogue with Judaism. This inspired him to propagate the *veritas hebraica* above extant translations of the Old Testament and made him exclaim in the prologue to the *Pugio* that though rabbinic literature is a 'dunghill' there are 'many pearls' to find for Christianity (Carpzov 1687, 2–6). Raymond's work forms an extraordinary example of the dynamic of religious polemics. He clarified Christian doctrine in conversation and opposition to rabbinic Judaism in a way that was unprecedented in the Middle Ages. If his polemics had not been part of a larger history of increasing Christian anti-Judaism, eventually leading to the destruction of Iberian Jewry, it might have been possible to judge it more positively.

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## THE JEWISH *PARDÉS* METAPHOR AS REFLECTED IN THE MAGICAL GARDEN OF A CHRISTIAN KNIGHT

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR LAYERS OF INTERPRETATION: AN OVERVIEW

During the late Middle Ages, just as their Jewish counterparts did, Christian interpreters of the Holy Text identified multiple layers of meaning in the biblical text. This approach is well demonstrated by Guibert of Nogent's *Ad Commentarios in Genesim* (Commentary on Genesis).<sup>1</sup> In a short treatise he added to his commentary, *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat* (A Book about the Way a Sermon Ought To Be Given), Guibert determines:

There are four ways of interpreting Scripture; on them, as though on so many scrolls, each sacred page is rolled. The first is History, which speaks of actual events as they occurred; the second is Allegory, in which one thing stands for something else; the third is Tropology, or moral instruction, which treats of the ordering and arranging of one's life; and the last is Anagogy, or spiritual enlightenment, through which we who are about to treat of heavenly and lofty topics are led to a higher way of life. For example, the word 'Jerusalem': historically it represents a specific city; in allegory it represents the holy Church; tropologically, or morally, it is the soul of every faithful man who longs for the vision of eternal peace; and anagogically it refers to the life of the heavenly citizens, who already see the God of Gods, revealed in all his glory in Sion. (Murphy 1988, 362; original in PL, CLVI, cols. 25–26).

This approach was soon adopted in literary texts also, and we find Christian scholars who identified three or four layers of meaning in a given text. Thus, in the prose prologue to his *Anticlaudianus*, Alan of Lille, the twelfth-century champion of Neoplatonic thought, finds it necessary to warn his readers as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> On medieval interpretation views and methods, see Caplan 1927, 292–293; Caplan 1929; Dronke 1974, ch. 1; Robertson 1980; Eco 1990, 11–14.

For in this work the sweetness of the literal sense will soothe the ears of the boys, the moral instruction will inspire the mind on the road to perfection, the sharper subtlety of the allegory will whet the advanced intellect. Let those be denied access to this work who pursue only sense-images and do not reach out for the truth that comes from reason, lest what is holy, being set before dogs be soiled, lest the pearl, trampled under the feet of swine be lost, lest the esoteric be impaired if its grandeur is revealed to the unworthy. (Alan of Lille 1973, 40–41; original in Alain de Lille 1955, 56).

Alan identifies three layers of meaning; it is important to realize that what Alan calls Allegory is, in fact, Anagogy in the sense Guibert defined it. However, the ‘fourfold method’ reappears in Dante’s *Convivio* (The Banquet) and in a letter known as the *Epistola a Cangrande*. Leaving aside here the problem of the writer’s identity, be it Dante or not, the letter illustrates the adaptation of the fourfold interpretive method into the reading of non-sacred texts. In the exposition of the *Convivio* that serves as a commentary to his own canzoni, Dante reminds the readers of the traditional fourfold interpretive method: ‘As I stated in the first chapter, this exposition must be both literal and allegorical. To convey what this means, it is necessary to know that writings can be understood and ought to be expounded principally in four senses.’ (Dante 1998, book 2, chapter 1). The *Epistola a Cangrande*, in which the writer discusses the appropriate way to comprehend the *Commedia*, illustrates once again the conscious adaptation of the fourfold interpretive method regarding non-sacred texts, though the writer seems to integrate the three inner senses into one unit: ‘And although these mystical senses are called by various names, they may all be called allegorical, since they are all different from the literal or historical’ (Dante 1973, 99). The importance of these late examples lies in the fact that the fourfold method is employed to read not only literary texts but even those texts that were written in the vernacular. Through these examples we clearly see that in the Middle Ages thinkers and writers approached the text as a dispenser of a multiple message with several layers of meaning and that the textual strategy required the advanced reader to seek more than just the literal sense of the text. At this point one may also call to mind Umberto Eco’s words on the matter. According to the Italian semiologist, the most distinctive cultural phenomena of the Middle Ages consists in the allegorical-symbolical frame of mind of medieval man. Moreover, Eco stresses the fact that this need for an epistemological comprehension is strictly combined with the need for a deep aesthetical pleasure:

Yet to an even greater extent, symbolical interpretation had to do with relations of decorum. The formation of symbols was artistic. To decipher them was to experience them aesthetically. It was a type of aesthetic expression in which the Medieval took great pleasure in deciphering puzzles, in spotting the daring analogy, in feeling that they were involved in adventure and discovery. (Eco 1986, 55)

In line with these theoretical tenets, and in order to underline the importance of the hidden levels of interpretation, in this paper I will focus on a reading of the final quest in the medieval romance by Chrétien de Troyes, the *Erec et Enide*. I chose this episode because it will allow me to prove how the hidden message conveyed by the anagogical level is a message that exploits, as I hope to show, the metaphor of the Jewish *Pardes* and will therefore raise quite a number of questions concerning the modalities of interaction between Jewish and Christian thought and tradition.

#### EREc ET ENIDE: SYNOPSIS

*Erec et Enide* is the first romance written by Chrétien de Troyes, the twelfth-century French poet. The literal level tells the tale of Erec, one of King Arthur's worthiest knights. Erec falls in love with and marries a beautiful maiden, Enide. His passionate love for his wife makes him forsake knightly duties, as he prefers spending his time making love to her. One day, on the verge of waking up, Erec hears Enide sobbing that, because of her, her husband's good name is ruined. Following this revelation, Erec decides to go on a quest accompanied only by his wife, whom he orders to ride ahead of him in complete silence. Shortly after, they encounter a series of adventures. They are assaulted by robber-knights, by a dwarf-king who attacks Erec wishing to test his prowess, by a lustful count who tries to seduce Enide into betraying her husband, and so on and so forth. In the end, Erec is fully convinced that his wife truly loves him and he makes peace with her. Accompanied by their new friend, Guivret, the dwarf-king, they turn back to King Arthur's court. There Erec receives the news of his father's death and is subsequently crowned king.

This is the plot of the *Erec et Enide*. The literal level conveys no more than a simple adventure story. However, if we adopt Guibert of Nogent's and Alan of Lille's poetic approach to the text, we will be able to unveil hidden layers of meaning in Chrétien's romance. My analysis will be concerned with what has been deemed by the critics as

one of the most enigmatic episodes in the *Erec et Enide*. This episode is Erec's last adventure, called *La Joie de la Cort* (The Joy of the Court), taking place just before the hero's return to Arthur's court and his coronation.

In this adventure Erec, Enide, and their friend, Guivret, the courageous dwarf-king, approach, towards nightfall, a beautiful fortified castle. Erec wishes to take lodging within. Surprisingly, Guivret, who had never before refused a challenge, tries very hard to convince his friend that for his own sake they would be better advised not to enter this place, for inside a mortal adventure awaits. Nonetheless, Erec insists. Their host, King Evrain, turns out to be a most generous and kind man, but he too repeats Guivret's warning. However, Erec is convinced that an adventure bearing the name *Joie de la Cort* must be good. The next morning, King Evrain and his retinue accompany Erec to a magical garden. The garden is filled with ripe fruits, flowers, spices, medicinal plants, and every sort of singing birds. Although there are no walls around this garden, it is enclosed on all sides by enchanted air, impenetrable as though it were made of iron. Inside the garden they see a line of sharpened stakes and on top of them the impaled heads of all the beheaded knights who had tried and failed to succeed in this adventure. The last stake carries a horn. King Evrain warns Erec that this last stake awaits the head of the next knight that will fail. As for the horn, no one was ever able to sound it. He who succeeds will receive the greatest honor possible. Erec is now left alone in the garden, for *Joie* is about to come. He continues along a path until he reaches a luxurious bed; upon it is seated a beautiful maiden. Erec draws nearer, when all of a sudden a huge knight appears on the scene threatening him. A fierce battle springs up between them, and finally the huge knight surrenders. The defeated knight reveals to Erec both his and the maiden's identities. He also tells him that Erec's victory has set him free from his vow, given long ago to the maiden, to stay in this garden, secluded from both knightly and courtly existence, till defeated in duel. Now Erec must sound the horn he saw on the last stake as he entered the garden. By this act he will fully free the knight from his prison and the *Joie* will begin. Erec sounds the horn and indeed a great Joy fills every heart. From all over the country, nobles are pouring into King Evrain's court, and the celebration continues for three full days.

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE *JOIE DE LA CORT* EPISODE:  
FROM GASTON PARIS ONWARDS

As I already noted, this episode, comprising over 1000 lines of verse, puzzled many a critic. In a well known and much quoted review by Gaston Paris, he judged this episode to be absurd, incoherent, and not very interesting (Paris 1891, 154). While challenging Paris's sentence as 'unsound', Glyn Burgess agrees that 'the details, if not useless, are at times somewhat disconcerting and they combine with an unnecessarily slow build-up and Erec's combat with a rather unconvincing opponent' (Burgess 1984, 81). Nevertheless, over the years, many interpretations were offered in an attempt to justify this 'odd' episode.

For example, Helaine Newstead, following in the footsteps of R.S. Loomis, identified in the *Joie de la Cort* episode an echo of the Celtic tale of Bran's Horn. According to the scholar, the word *Cort* (Court) in the adventure's title is an understandable, 'almost inevitable', confusion with the original Celtic word *Cor* (Horn). Her theory, she argued, dispelled the mystery of the *Joie*, which is to be interpreted as 'the joy that follows the acquisition or restoration of the horn of plenty' (Newstead [1936] 1967, 20). W.A. Nitze, whilst rejecting the '*Cort-Cor*' explanation (Nitze 1954, 699), considered the episode as an 'integral part of the *matiere*' (Nitze 1954, 692) and interpreted it in light of his claim that the main issue Chrétien was concerned with in this work was the contemporary debate around the impact of marriage. The role of the *Joie de la Cort* episode was to contrast unfavorable views of love and marriage, such as the one expressed by Andreas Capellanus in his *De Amore* (Nitze 1954, 695–696, 699). A different evaluation of this episode is to be found in T.A. Shippey's article, which focuses on the comparison between Erec's character, as developed in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, and Gawain's character, as presented in the anonymous work *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Weighing Erec's behaviour in accepting the challenge of the *Joie*, Shippey states that:

[O]nly then can he make the same grand gesture of forcing himself into needless danger for no apparent gain—the 'aventure cherchée'. This is the episode of the 'Joie de la Cort'. Its whole presentation serves to make clear the lack of any logical motive for pursuing it. (...) It is important to remember here that the *reason* for the adventure's curious name is not given until much later (vv. 6068–75), and even then is hardly convincing. (...) Erec has thrust himself into this adventure light-heartedly and without responsibility; (...) A sensible condemnation of his action is very near the surface, as it is when Gawain rebukes Arthur at the start. But the ethic

being presented is not one that rests on sense. (...) *Sir Gawain* can, with *Erec*, be seen as exemplifying an attitude which was perhaps available and comprehensible to many intelligent members of the knightly class during the Middle Ages, an attitude which justified carelessness and frivolity by setting up ‘joie’ or ‘merthe’ as an ethical absolute, and saw the hero as a man who created joy out of nothing by setting himself at risk. (Shippey 1971, 243, 244, 249)

Indeed, Shippey does not dismiss this episode, intended to re-establish social bonds (Shippey 1971, 245), however the case that he makes for it stands in sharp contrast to Reason’s (the medieval literary personification) well known lesson to man: to act prudently, as in Alan of Lille’s *Anticlaudianus*:<sup>2</sup>

She [Reason] instructs him not to adopt any sudden course of action, to undertake no venture without preparation, to think over every action first, to take thought before he acts and first examine his projects ... (Alan of Lille 1973, 178; original in Alain de Lille 1955, VII, lines 171–174)

A Celtic influence, direct or indirect, may certainly exist at the root of the episode; issues of marriage, courtly love, and social bonds are indeed imbedded in the text. However, each of these sociocultural views (out of a vast body of research material on the matter) is quite illuminating as an illustration of a reading that fails to recognize the existence of a hidden anagogical layer and therefore falls short with respect to the effort of moving on from the literal layer to deciphering the inner meaning of the text. Furthermore, even an attempt to interpret the episode as an allegory which serves as a key to the understanding of the whole work, as in M.S. Murphy’s article (Murphy 1981), ultimately misses the point. For the terms she employs, ‘the inner level of meaning’, ‘to veil arcane truth from the uninitiated’ (Murphy 1981, 114), seem to stem from modern theorists such as Northrop Frye, whom she explicitly mentions, rather than from medieval hermeneutical theories, such as Alan’s or Guibert’s (Murphy 1981, 110–111). Thus, describing the fight between Erec and his opponent in this episode, she writes:

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<sup>2</sup> In this short paper I cannot dwell on the relationship between Alan’s *Anticlaudianus* and Chrétien’s *Erec et Enide*. I therefore turn the reader’s attention both to Luttrell’s survey on the matter (Luttrell 1974) and to my recent Ph.D. paper, which further explores the issue (Glasner 2006). On the significance and crucial role of ‘reason’ in man, see: S. Debenedetti Stow’s article in this volume: ‘The Modality of Interaction Between Jewish and Christian Thought in the Middle Ages: The Problem of Free Will and Divine Wisdom in Dante Alighieri and Menahem Recanati as a Case Study’, pp. 168, 172, 175–178.

[W]e, Chrétien's readers, in the midst of narrative, temporarily share this blindness to the inner level of meaning, to the larger significance that the 'Joie' as allegory might trace. Often the purpose of allegory is to veil arcane truth from the uninitiated. In such a vein this 'Joie' will be Erec's initiation into knowledge of his kingly role of liberator: he liberates a vassal from isolation into the community and protection of the court as he liberates him from an uxorious passion. (Murphy 1981, 114)

Towards the end of the article Murphy stresses 'marital bliss' and 'courtly esteem' as Erec's achievements in this adventure (Murphy 1981, 125, 126). To be sure, all these elements are present in the text; however, the fact that she neglects to relate them to a larger medieval philosophical-theological framework keeps her from exploiting the text's full potential and restricts their meaning to the simple social sphere. Therefore, her analysis of the allegorical level of the text fails to reach the depths of the hidden meaning, one that, to quote Alan's phrase, '*proficien tem acuet intellectum*' (whets the advanced intellect).

Terence Scully, declaring that the educated medieval audience would have expected to find an allegorical meaning in the story (Scully 1980, 72), suggests that the *Joie de la Cort* is an allegory of *joie courtoise* (courtly delight) intended as the perfect pleasure obtained by what is defined as 'good love', that is, spiritual and moral love; this allegory, he maintains, serves as a key to the understanding of the whole romance. While employing several times the word *spiritual* and once the word *mystic* (Scully 1980, 84, 90), the conclusions Scully derives from his allegorical interpretation do not rise beyond the plain social and literary sphere. Nowhere in his article does he employ these terms in a way that may indicate a true and meaningful spiritual development of the hero through his quest for the perfect 'spiritual delight', as one finds, for instance, in Dante's love for Beatrice, to mention just one well known example.

The unveiling of the hidden message carried by the anagogical level of the text will not only reveal the centrality of this episode and prove the full impact of Chrétien's mystical and philosophical aim but will also unveil the existence of hidden threads tying Christian and Jewish traditions. Indeed, it is my claim that one cannot fully perceive or appreciate the importance of this episode without opening the text with the 'Jewish Key', as I will try to do below.

## THE NATURE OF TRUE JOY

Because of the limited scope of this paper, I will refrain from going into many significant and even essential details of this adventure and will just focus on those elements indispensable to proving my point concerning the links between Christian and Jewish texts. Therefore, I will start by considering King Evrain's assertion that the mortal adventure called *Joie de la Cort* holds the potential of being the greatest honor a knight may win. In order to understand the real essence of this adventure, I would like to turn to the words of St. Bonaventure: 'In the initial state of creation, man was made fit for the quiet of contemplation, and therefore *God placed him in a paradise of delights*' (Bonaventure 1978, 62). But, continues Bonaventure, the original sin infected the entire human race and, ever since, man sits in darkness, blinded and denied the light of heaven. Even so, 'the universe itself is a ladder by which we can ascend into God' (Bonaventure 1978, 60). When describing the peak of contemplation, at the stage where the mystic becomes worthy of beholding the First Principle, Bonaventure uses the Latin verb *laetari*, which conveys joy (Bonaventure 1994, 90, I:2). One can not miss the Platonic and Neoplatonic idea of the happiness and joy that seizes the fortunate soul upon gazing on the eternal and highest truth, as poetically described in the fable of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, or in the sixth *Ennead* of Plotinus.

The same idea we can find in the writings of Jewish authors of the late Middle Ages. Thus, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, in a long poem dedicated to the glory of God, writes: וְהַפְגִיעַ לְסֹדֶךָ יְמִינָא תַעֲנֹג עַולָם (He who reaches your secret will find eternal joy, Solomon Ibn Gabirol 2005, 258, par. 4). Maimonides, on analyzing the story of the biblical Job as an allegory, in which Job's original opinion symbolizes the erroneous but common opinion admitted by the many, differentiated between false happiness, based on earthly concerns such as material wealth, and true happiness—the joy of knowing God (Maimonides 1928, 300–301, III:23).

Enlightened by the mystical slant that the texts examined above lend to the semantic field of the term *joy*, we can now return to the episode of the *Joie de la Cort*, holding the first clue concerning the possibility of an esoteric meaning of both the name and the essence of this adventure—a mystical experience.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For a different analysis of the term 'Joie', in light of the 12th century troubadours poetry and John of Salisbury *Policraticus*, see Topsfield 1981, 49–55.

THE JEWISH *PARDES* METAPHOR AND THE MAGICAL GARDEN IN THE  
*JOIE DE LA CORT*

The scene Chrétien provided for his hero's last challenge is described as a magical garden, and the feeling that we are confronted with a mystical experience becomes stronger once we take into consideration the traditional mystical elements we find associated with the Hebrew words גן (garden) and פרדס (which literally means orchard). In her book, Rachel Elior points to the semantic–etymological connection between these words and the word Paradise (in Hebrew גן-עדן), through which they acquired both mythical and mystical meanings (Elior 2004, 246–247).

In the Talmud and in the *Heikhalot Literature* we find the well known episode called The *Pardes* Story. In this context, the word ‘*pardes*’ does not denote an orchard, but rather the realm of the mystical experience.<sup>4</sup> Let us follow the story as it is told in the *Heikhalot Literature* (*Hekhalot Zutarti* 1982, 23). Four entered the *pardes*: Rabbi Akiva who entered in peace and left in peace, Ben Azzai who asked the wrong question and died on the spot, Ben Zoma who escaped death but lost his mind, and Elisha ben Avuyah who ‘peeped and cut down the seedlings’, that is, became a heretic. At the beginning of the story, Rabbi Akiva explains to us why he was able to enter and leave the *pardes* safe and sound: ‘not because I’m greater than my friends but because of my deeds’.

Considering the allegorical meanings given by both Jewish and Christian thinkers to the words ‘garden’ and ‘orchard’ in the *Song of Songs*, we can view both Rabbi Akiva’s *Pardes* and the garden that Erec, the Christian knight, enters as parallel key symbols for a mystical experience (on the connection between Rabbi Akiva and the *Song of Songs*, see Green 2002, 2–3, 8).

The immanent connection between ‘joy’ and the mystical experience taking place in a realm connected semantically to the word ‘garden’ is hinted at in the version of the *Pardes* story that appears in the CantR (*Midrash Rabbah [Song of Songs]* 1983, 46–48). The *Midrash* follows closely the order of the biblical text, while it strives to interpret the

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<sup>4</sup> Not all critics accept this evaluation. The purpose of this paper is not to deal with the question of the ‘original’ sense of the episode and hence its ‘true’ meaning, but to exploit a well established tradition concerning the interpretation of the *Pardes* story, in order to use it as an interpretive tool for unlocking the hidden sense of our medieval Christian text. On different perceptions concerning this issue, see Sweeney 2004, 44–45, 55–56; Be’eri 2007, 9–18; Liebes 1990, 1–10.

biblical text allegorically. Thus, when decoding *Song of Songs* 1:4, after examining the first part of the verse, משבני אחיך נרוץך (Draw me, we will run after Thee), it retells the *Pardes* story in connection with the interpretation of the second part of the verse, היבאני המלך חדריו (the king hath brought me into his chambers). The connection between the story and the biblical text is made clear by a reference placed at the end of the story: היבאני המלך חדריו ועליו [רבו עקיבא] נאמר (Of him [Akiva] it is said: The king hath brought me into his chambers).

The following section analyzes the next phrase in the biblical verse: גילה ונשמחה בך (we will be glad and rejoice in Thee).<sup>5</sup> This phrase, the *Midrash* says, denotes that in the Bible, Israel was given ten different names, all expressing ‘joy’. The proximity of the discussion of the two issues (*Pardes*—joy) in the text of the *Midrash* allows us to assume a thematic connection between the two.

In Chrétien’s narrative the connection between the *Joie* and the *garden* is much more explicit, as the writer cleverly hints at the two elements involved in the achievement of the mystical union: the heavenly gift of joy granted from up above (symbolized by the joyous singing of the birds) and the fervent will of the subject involved in the experience, from down below:

Erec aloit, lance sor fautre,  
par mi le vergier chevauchant,  
qui molt se delitoit el chant  
des oisiax qui leanz chantoient,  
qui la Joie li presantoient,  
la chose a coi il plus baoit.

(Chrétien de Troyes 1987, Lines 5722–7, original & translation)

(Erec rode along through the garden,  
his lance in its rest,  
delighting in the singing  
of the birds that sang therein,  
presenting to him the Joy,  
the thing to which he most aspired.)

There is, however, one essential condition without which one cannot enter the mystical realm, and that is moral perfection. In the first book

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<sup>5</sup> In between, the *Midrash* briefly refers to the words of Rabbi Jannai and Rabbi Be-rekiyah on creation and the Ten Commandments. By doing so, the *Midrash* does not drift away from the theme of the *Pardes*; on the contrary, we are being reminded of another prominent mystical figure that the king has brought into his chambers, the prophet Ezekiel.

of the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides reminds his readers that not all four who entered the *Pardes* were truly fit to do so, even though they were all renowned sages. In order to be worthy and fit to enter the *Pardes* one must be filled with ‘bread and meat’. What are these? Maimonides explains: bread and meat are the knowledge of what is permitted and what is forbidden, and the rest of the commandments (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Sefer Ha-Madda, Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah, 4:13).

Erec’s reconciliation with his wife, an act which denotes the harmony reached within the hero’s soul, and his victory over all his adversaries during his quest, symbolize that he has overcome his faults and vices and is worthy now to enter the *Pardes*.

#### ENTERING THE MYSTICAL REALM: A MORTAL DANGER

While St. Bonaventure offers connection between Paradise and joy, his mystical perception only hints at the crucial element of mortal danger that may result from the mystical experience (Bonaventure 1978, 56, Prologue:4). In the fifth book of the *Anticlaudianus*, Alan of Lille claims that the ascent and the approach into the heavenly realm are dangerous and potentially full of destruction even for the virtuous. However, the dangers awaiting the mystic are not explicitly named, and in fact, this does not seem to be Alan’s main concern, as he does not bother himself exploring this notion in detail (Alan is by no means sparing words). In contrast, in the story of the Jewish *Pardes*, just as in Chrétien’s episode, entering the *Pardes* is perceived as a mortal danger except for the truly worthy, and in accordance, the writers emphasized the fate of those who failed. In light of this, I believe that the Jewish key of the *Pardes* is a more satisfactory one to unlock this specific episode in Chrétien’s text.

The story of the *Pardes*, as told by Rabbi Akiva, proves that entering this realm is indeed dangerous. Four entered the *Pardes*, only one came back safe and sound. Three dangers await the mystic, as exemplified by the fate of Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, and Elisha ben Avuyah: death, madness, and heresy.

The dangers of entering the *Pardes* arise from the viewer’s inability to comprehend the vision he is witnessing. This point is well emphasized in the description of the sixth *hekhal* in the water episode (*Hekhalot Zutarti* 1982, 31). This Heavenly Sphere appears to be gushing with waves of water, but in truth it does not contain even one drop of

water, only the pure radiance of marble stones. The ability to distinguish between appearance and true essence is the quality that distinguishes between one who is ‘worthy to see the King in his beauty’ and one who is not. Ben Azzai, standing at the entrance of the sixth *hekhal*, was deceived by his sight, and as he saw the radiance of the marble stones he cried out ‘Water, water’. In the wink of an eye he was beheaded and eleven thousand iron stakes were thrown at him by the angels. Rabbi Akiva concludes this episode thus: ‘[That severe act] was to serve as a warning sign for all generations to come that no one shall make a mistake when standing at the entrance of the sixth *hekhal*’.

In some versions of the story, Rabbi Akiva actually warns the other sages in advance, ‘when you reach the pure marble stones beware not to say water water’ (BT Hag 14b, *Synopse Zur Hekhalot-Literatur* 1981, 246, paragraph 672). Despite the warning, it seems that Ben Azzai was doomed to fail. In Chrétien’s romance, King Evrain keeps warning Erec of the dangers of the adventure he is so anxious to embark upon. Ironically, in light of the story of the *Pardes*, King Evrain’s warning does not echo the clear voice of Rabbi Akiva; on the contrary, it reflects the inner blindness of one who mistakes the pure radiance of the marble stones for water. That is, he who lacks the ability to distinguish between appearance and true essence cannot comprehend the vision he is witnessing. As in the story of the *Pardes*, the danger lies in the erroneous decoding of the mystical experience. It is this misunderstanding that brought so much misery to King Evrain’s court and resulted in the death of all the previous knights that confronted this adventure. The fate of the defeated knights—beheaded and impaled upon sharpened stakes—is amazingly similar to Ben Azzai’s: ‘he was beheaded and eleven thousand iron stakes were thrown at him’ (*Hekhalot Zutarti* 1982, 31).

#### THE MISTAKE OF MIS-SPEECH

However, an essential point of difference between the two mystical experiences, with regard to the danger they present, should be noted. In his book *Kabbalah and the Art of Being*, Shimon Shokef interprets, in light of Kabbalistic terms, the Talmudic version of the *Pardes* story, in which Rabbi Akiva warns the other three sages ‘not to say water water’, and in which the verb **הצין** (gazed) is attributed to both Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma just before they are being inflicted:

[T]here are two forbidden conducts that cause immediate punishment: do not *speak* ('Rabbi Akiva said to them ... do not say "Water Water"'), and do not *gaze*. Why does the Talmud set these two restrictions if the human being is required to have the courage to be? Is it possible to achieve any degree of courage without speaking and gazing? The answer to this question can be found in the concept of language in Kabbalah and in the mystical notion of sight in Jewish spirituality. (...) [T]he Hebrew language according to Kabbalah is expressed as the most profound spiritual reality. All things exist by virtue of the Divine language, which is the thread that makes up the tapestry of God's essence. God uses language in the process of the creation of the world, and at the same time He *is* language; for when He shifts from the *Ayin* to the *Yesh* he transforms Himself into verbalized consciousness. And since God created the entire body of the Hebrew language, each and every word, even the simplest word is divine. Hence, at the very instant that the human being expresses an internalized thought and says a word, he participates in the Divine process of creation and becomes attached to God. (...) Did the sages who wanted to enter the *Pardes* understand the Divine concept of the Hebrew language? Did they realize that when one enters into the Divine realm of the *Pardes* it is possible to mistakenly replace 'Marble' with 'Water'? Rabbi Akiva apparently was trying to warn them not to make the mistake of mis-speech, for when one sees 'marble' and says that it is 'water' one violates the realm of God's speech. (Shokek 2001, 85, 86)

The issue of the *parole* (speech) is at the core of Chrétien's romance, as many scholars have noted when analyzing Enide's speech during the bedroom scene and Erec's direct and strict command to her: 'Tenez vos de parler a moi' ('Take care not to speak to me', Chrétien de Troyes 1987, line 2734, original & translation). This command is reiterated again and again in the course of their quest, and each time Enide disobeys by warning her husband against upcoming danger he may not be aware of. In my Ph.D. thesis I claim that Enide's character functions simultaneously as an individual person and as a part of Erec's psyche, a role I compare to that of *Prudentia* in Alan de Lille's *Anticlaudianus*. From this perspective, Enide's '*parole* trial' is indeed Erec's trial and educational development (Glasner 2006, ch. 2).

The issue of the *parole* then, which at the literal level has an important role in advancing the plot, is a crucial component at the allegorical level, where the lesson to be learned by the progressive quest of the hero concerns taking full command of the *Trivium* (the three verbal arts: grammar—logic—rhetoric), as the first step towards becoming the perfect king, he who can bring (back) the *aurea aetas*, the Golden Age characterized by justice, harmony and prosperity to his earthly kingdom. Once Erec gains mastery over the *Trivium*, he is able to make peace with his wife, restoring harmony to the marriage bond, the basic bond

of society, and therefore he is ready to bring the *aurea aetas* to King Evrain's kingdom.<sup>6</sup> Where harmony prevails, there is no need to silence either his spouse or any part of his own soul. Moreover, the entrance in the magical garden during the *Joie de la Cort*'s adventure enables the hero to demonstrate the right and just use of the *parole*. Entering the magical garden, Erec will not, quoting Shokek's words, 'make the mistake of mis-speech'; quite the contrary, Erec is now ready to teach others the difference between true-speech and mis-speech:

‘Amis,’ fet il, ‘dire puet l’an  
folie ausi tast come san.’

(Chrétien de Troyes 1987, lines 5873-4, original & translation).

(‘Friend,’ said he, ‘one can speak  
folly as easily as wisdom.’)

Erec indeed has learned his ‘*parole* lesson’, therefore no mortal danger overcomes him in the magical garden, nor does he lose his mind (as will befall another hero of Chrétien's romances).

#### CONCLUSION

Both narratives, the Jewish and the Christian, depict heroes who did not shun the mystical experience and were able to return safe and sound, carrying back a better understanding of the relations between microcosm and macrocosm. Nonetheless, whereas we understand that Rabbi Akiva has reached the highest mystical level (as the one brought into the King's chambers), the lengthy description at the end of the tale of the robe worn by Erec for his coronation, depicting the four arts of the *Quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy), clarifies that, in spite of Erec's spiritual achievement, the Christian knight of the Arthurian Romance still has a ladder of perfection to climb. The acquisition of the seven liberal arts, as beautifully portrayed in Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, is indeed essential for one who aspires to heavenly revelation. Nonetheless this is but the gateway, the lowest rung of a ladder that requires mastering Theology and acquiring complete Faith before one can hope to reach the ultimate Truth (or, adopting Bernard

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<sup>6</sup> Köhler, who views Erec's adventures as a purifying quest, follows Bezzola and points to Erec's last adventure, the *joie de la cort*, as the final shift from a battle undertaken for one's own sake to a battle engaged for the entire community's welfare (Köhler 1984, 140).

of Clairvaux's phrasing, before reaching God, who awaits his people at the top of Jacob's ladder).

In this short presentation I have tried to demonstrate how the reading of a Christian romance in light of Jewish tradition may prove as a useful interpretive tool for probing the depths of the anagogical level in a given text. One may ask what proof can be offered that Chrétien was even familiar with the Jewish texts, more so as the research done until now did not yield much fruit regarding the poet's life. To that I would answer that if indeed the metaphor of the Jewish *Pardes* constitutes an interpretive key that helps to clarify how the poet, who dedicated over 1000 lines of verse to this episode, meant it to be the climax of the hero's spiritual development, then that in itself provides the textual evidence legitimating a claim of existing links between Jewish tradition and a single Christian author called Chrétien de Troyes. Furthermore, the fact that this author expected his learned audience to be able to understand his hidden message constitutes ample proof of the vast knowledge Jewish mystical theories enjoyed in Christian society.

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PART THREE  
THE PROBLEMS OF MODERNITY



## CALVINIST RESISTANCE AND DUTCH JEWRY

### The ‘Pillarized’ Background

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During the initial stages of the German occupation of Holland, resistance against the oppression of Nazi rule never became a mass movement. The few who shared the risks of this dangerous undertaking, and often paid the ultimate price, belonged to various strata in society. Politically they could belong to the Right or the Left, religiously they might be Roman Catholics, Jews, or Calvinists. Cooperation was not easy. The social, religious, and political boundaries between most of these groups in pre-war Holland had become quite strict, even if strategic alliances (such as the political tandem of Roman Catholics and Calvinists) were not uncommon. Personal overlaps did occur, for instance in the case of the Social-Democratic Party attracting many members from both the secularised Christian and Jewish labour population. In other cases, different denominations simply remained worlds apart, though their members were citizens of the same country, sharing the same constitutional rights. In his article dealing with the Dutch churches, Bob Moore has noted the consequences during the occupation: ‘The lack of contact with Jews—and even the lack of understanding of their plight—may well have restricted help before knowledge of the deportations became more widespread through the illegal press’ (Moore 2001, 277–288). Dutch historians have coined a catchword for this situation of living apart together, which was so characteristic for their country during the interbellum years: ‘pillarization’ or *verzuiling* (Blom and Talsma 2000).

This concept implies the graphic idea that early 20th-century Dutch society resembled a Greek temple: autonomous denominations coexisted as the pillars of the structure. They all shared the same constitutional foundation. They also carried the same governmental roof, with the monarchy as its symbolic apex. Nevertheless, every single pillar remained free-standing, literally out of touch with the others (Croes and Tammes 2004, 393–402). Dutch Jewry and the Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) exemplified this ‘living apart together’. Yet they

would become rather close during the last two years of the German occupation. The mainstays of the ARP were the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, whose members accounted for about 8% of the Dutch population. According to De Jong they harboured 25% of the Dutch Jews who survived the war in hiding (De Jong 1976, 325–344). Croes and Tammes have argued that this estimate is exaggerated. They rather emphasise the effectiveness of help given by Roman Catholics. Bivariate regressions analysis with 122 municipalities where over 24 Jews lived showed that there was a significant positive relation between the percentage of Catholics and the percentage of Jews who survived the war (Croes and Tammes 2004, 602), a relation which could not be established for the members of the Calvinists. However, it should be noted that most Jews who survived the war in Reformed homes originated from other municipalities than those of their hosts.

Though probably a smaller affair than originally estimated by De Jong, the importance of the Reformed actions is not seriously in doubt. At the same time, the phenomenon of Jews hiding in Calvinist homes is still something of an enigma. The men, women, and children concerned, who were to become so close during the later war years, belonged to very different and even mutually suspicious segments of society. In politics, the ARP was a bulwark of the Christian Right, while the Jewish electorate belonged squarely to the Left. That the Calvinists liked to describe Holland as a Protestant nation was a well-known fact. In Jewish eyes, they could not be trusted to uphold the constitutional principle, decided in 1796 and reconfirmed in 1848, of the separation of Church and State. The Calvinist attitude in these matters was indeed rather ambivalent. Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) was the founder of the ARP and the Free University, and of great influence in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. He had expressed doubts whether the Jews ever could become true Dutchmen in their attitudes and way of thinking, simply because of the fact that they were not Christians and that their ancestors had arrived from the Middle East (Kuyper 1879, 168). On the other hand, in daily life all parties were willing to respect each other's civil rights. They were citizens of the same society (in pillarized terms: under the same roof) but apart from that went their own separate ways. It was to remain so during the first decades of the 20th century.

## THE FAILED DIALOGUE BETWEEN FORMER ALLIES

Did the shared experience of the German occupation change this distant relationship in any way? In a famous and well-documented case, the Jewish resistance in Amsterdam organised the ‘disappearance’ of children from the Hollandsche Schouwburg, the assembly station of the impending deportations (Flim 1997, 104 and 241). Among those who managed to smuggle these children out of town and to take them into hiding, a relatively high proportion belonged to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Evers-Emden 1994, 23). One might be inclined to think that the resulting common experience would be the best possible starting point for future cooperation (Léons and Douwes 2000). Alas, as it turned out, this optimism was not vindicated after liberation, at least not initially. On the contrary: during the first years after the war, the surviving Dutch Jews and the former Calvinist resistance movement clashed bitterly. As is well known, the argument was triggered by the contested guardianship of the orphans who had lost their parents in Hitler’s *Endlösung* and had managed to survive in Christian homes between 1943 and 1945.

Who was to care for these children and ensure the best possible future for them? Unlike Belgium<sup>1</sup> and France, in Holland this responsibility was not delegated to the Jewish community. Instead, a national committee was installed to make recommendations for each individual Dutch war orphan. The drafting of the instructions and the appointment of the membership of this Government Commission for War Foster Children preceded the return of Holland to customary parliamentary and democratic procedures. In fact, the Commission started its operations as early as May 1945. A prominent member of the Calvinist resistance held the chair: Dr. Gezina van der Molen (1892–1978). The surviving adult members of the Jewish community, re-emerging from hiding and returning from concentration camps, discovered that the future of its orphans was to be decided by a Commission in the formation of which they had had no say and in whose deliberations the former resistance held the majority of the votes (Creveld 1946).

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence with the Oeuvre de la Protection de l’Enfance and the Sécrétariat Général du Congrès Mondial Juif in Brussels, in: Historical Documentation Centre for the History of Dutch Protestantism from 1800 (HDC, Amsterdam), personal archive G.H.J. van der Molen inv. nr. 43.

From the start, tensions ran high. In theory, all parties agreed to the principle that a child should be brought up according to the convictions and wishes of its murdered parents. Especially in the case of assimilated Jewish families, however, this principle failed to establish a *communis opinio*. The majority of the committee could and often did decide that the best future of orphans of assimilated descent lay in the Christian families that had taken care of them during the years of hiding. The surviving Jewish community was horrified. Rabbi Justus Tal, who had been in hiding in a Calvinist home himself, declared that Van der Molen's true aim was missionary instead of humanitarian. According to Tal, she wanted to turn as many Jewish children as she could into Christians.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, the estimation of the Commission for War Foster Children has hardly improved. In 2004 Emmy award winner, writer, and filmmaker Willy Lindwer was quoted as saying that the children would have done better to die in the concentration camps than to fall into the clutches of the former resistance in the guise of Gezina van der Molen after 1945 (Gray 2004).

Clearly, something turned out very wrong in the relations between Calvinist and Jewish resistance *after* liberation. The clash is the more striking because it occurred between recent friends, not between enemies. Though the conflict surrounding the guardianship issue and the Jewish war orphans in the Netherlands has been competently analysed by Fishman (Fishman 1974), Verhey (Verhey 1991), Brasz (Brasz 1995), and many others, there may be room for some more continued reflection in this matter. In doing so, I will focus on the Calvinist side of the original argument—not because this is the most important one, but because it has been criticised so sharply even recently. ‘A dangerous mix of pseudo-progressive ideas, anti-Semitism and assumed Christian superiority’, to quote Verhey, isn’t really a verdict one would expect for people who belonged to the very small group of non-Jewish Dutch citizens who staked their lives to come to the aid of the victims of the *Endlösung* programme. How could the dialogue in the Dutch Government Commission for War Foster Children turn into such a disappointment for those concerned, with such bitterness as an enduring result? Searching for answers, it may be useful to retrace the steps of Dutch

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<sup>2</sup> Letter of J. Tal, Amsterdam 15 Feb 1952, in: Historical Documentation Centre for the History of Dutch Protestantism from 1800 (HDC, Amsterdam), personal archive G.H.J. van der Molen inv. nr. 43.

Jews and Calvinists a bit further into their common history since the seventeenth century.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

One of the most contentious issues is the question whether Calvinists tried to convert Jewish children to Christianity and may have used the guardian issue to do so. It may be useful to investigate whether such a conversion program belonged to the Dutch Protestant tradition.

In a legal sense, Jews and Christians in the Golden Age of the 17th century had considered each other as different nations, and for that reason non-equal (Peterse 2005). The Dutch Republic was a system of checks and balances. Only the Reformed Church was entitled to address the population in its entirety. Non-Reformed communities, such as the Jews, were required to restrict their own tenets strictly to their own autonomous flock. The aftermath of a few Christian conversions to Judaism, in the early days of the Republic, met with a negative response from both Church and State. Measures were taken to prevent something like that happening again (Huussen 2001). The striking thing, however, is that conversions the other way round, from Judaism to Christianity, also remained very rare. The Reformed Church of those days was less missionary than we are likely to suspect. The dogma of predestination held that the true faith was not an obligation for all citizens, but God's gift to a privileged few. And so, by the Calvinist logic of that age, no one could be forced to convert to a faith he couldn't possibly attain. The dissenters, so many of whom lived in the Republic, of course were required to respect the unique paramount position of the established Church. On the other hand, following the hallowed principle of freedom of conscience, laid down in the Utrecht Union of 1579, these dissenters enjoyed the uninhibited sanctuary of their own mind and their tolerated autonomous communities (Meijer 1964). The theologian Gisbertus Voetius noted that Jewish intellectuals like Menasse ben Israel were free to publish their ideas in Hebrew, 'absque censore aut censura, absque licentia aut permissione', provided they kept these ideas to themselves (Voetius 1655, 51–60; Battenberg 1990, 257).

As a result, Dutch Jews came to know Calvinists far better than vice versa. Calvinism was a very public phenomenon, while the tenets of Judaism were limited to the inside sphere of the *kehillot*. Yet on the whole, especially in Amsterdam, the situation was one of mutual respect

(Van den Berg 1969). After some initial frictions, mentioned above, the Calvinists had nothing to fear from Jewish proselytising. The Dutch Jews learned to live comfortably alongside a law-abiding Church which confessed predestination. Potentially dangerous was not the State Church, once it was clearly established. Dutch Jews were far more apprehensive of what happened in the Protestant middle class.

That class was not unlike its Jewish counterpart during the Sabtai Zwi crisis (Israel 2003, 223–260)—it professed a deep interest in eschatology (Schoon 2006, 123). In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul had observed that the Jews at that time quite simply were unable to accept Jesus as the Messiah, even if they wished to do so. It was a statement both the Reformed Church and the Jewish communities could accept. However, St. Paul had added that conversion would follow nevertheless, in the end of days. It was precisely for this reason that missionary effort retained its appeal for the Protestant population, despite the doctrine of predestination. The Jewish conversion would usher in the ardently desired messianic age of Christ's return. This tendency in popular thought received an extra momentum in the 18th century, during which self-made Protestant communities thrived in Northern America (Heimert 1978). The impact of the ‘great awakenings’ was considerable, even in Holland. Unlike classical Calvinism, the impetus behind this Evangelical movement stressed the free human will. Every member of the human race was invited to accept the Lord Jesus and was apparently presumed to be able to do so. In Christian historiography, this new Evangelical movement has sometimes been perceived to be kinder than its stern Calvinist predecessor. Not so in Holland. Not only did Evangelicalism transgress the monopoly of the Reformed Church to preach, it also morally condemned those who had been invited to join the Christian faith and had declined the offer.

The new trend was strengthened by the momentous decision in 1796 to separate the realms of Church and State, and the consequent emergence of Dutch nationalism (De Bruijn 1998). From now on, the Jews were recognised as full members and citizens of Holland. It brought with it the breakdown of the autonomy of the *kehilot*. General Dutch instruction would take preference over the curriculum of the *jeshiva*. Once it had become a principle of State that the Jews had to become Dutchmen, it was easy enough to conclude that conversion to Christianity would be a logical next step. The missionary drive was thus connected to Dutch nation building and was aided by cheap printing on a truly massive scale. From an orthodox Jewish point of view, the liberal

constitution of 1848 didn't make things any easier. The age of democratisation had arrived, affecting even the proletariat. The citizen was required to take his stand in national affairs as a voter. No community could avoid the pressure emanating from an emerging party system. Liberalism and Social Democracy attracted many Jews, introducing them to sets of ideas which differed widely from the traditional values in the *kehilot* of the 18th century (Bloemgarten 1996). Worst of all, one of the paradoxes of the Enlightenment was that anti-Semitism in this modern world seemed to be on the rise instead of on the wane. Jews were mistrusted; whether they opted for Liberalism, Socialism, Zionism, Orthodoxy, or (in a very few cases like Isaäc da Costa) Christianity didn't seem to matter. One of the underlying causes was Nationalism, offspring of 19th-century Romanticism. Though the Dutch had sprung from quite different genetic stocks, many embraced the idea of the nation as an extended family, sharing a common bloodline. Nationalist feeling considered the Jews as strangers, even if they were equal citizens before the law and had been living in the Low Countries for many generations.

#### REFORMED ATTITUDES IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Dutch Calvinism in the late 19th century had experienced both a sense of loss and glimpses of regeneration. The sense of loss concerned the downfall of Holland as one of the leading countries of Europe, coupled with the separation of Church and State enforced by the French Revolution. How keenly these reversals were felt was expressed during the indignation after the suppression of the Dutch Boer Republics in South Africa by the forces of Great Britain. The Boers were not considered as a minority in a faraway country. They represented the ideals of global trade expansion and the propagation of Dutch Calvinist values. Renewal of these values would imply true regeneration. Together with the baptised Jewish Romantic Isaac da Costa (1798–1860), Reformed Dutchmen believed in a national vocation. A reactionary undertone could not be denied, especially in the stress on Calvinism as a dominant principle in society. Many Jews were convinced that the Reformed community would gladly abolish the separation of Church and State. The fact that the ARP propagated 16th-century values in the context of a modern constitutional democracy didn't make things any easier.

For the Pietistic wing, eschatology was the main focus of interest. The Jews, unable to convert in the present, would do so at the dawn of the latter days. The Book of Revelation was interpreted as saying that Christ's blissful reign of a thousand years would be administered by the Christian saints from heaven and by the converted Jews who by then would have returned to Jerusalem. There were some marked implications. Firstly, lifting the hardening of the Jews' minds was a miracle God alone could perform. The only way Christians could be of any help was by the act of prayer. For the Pietists, prayer was the backbone of the Jewish Mission. Secondly, the forces opposed to the coming of Christ's reign on earth would do their utmost to prevent this scenario. Thirdly, the entire scenario was deterministic (Van Andel 1885).

Abraham Kuyper opted for a different approach. The present was his main concern. Kuyper had a habit of using theocratic language for the propagation of views in which the sovereign sphere of the State was in fact very much respected. His Anti-Revolutionary Party was a democratic phenomenon, not an autocratic one. But within the margins of the law, the members were determined to make their own set of beliefs as dominant as possible. In their own opinion, they were tough but fair players.

The Reformed Jewish Mission was a recent phenomenon, founded in 1875 (Van Gelderen 1982, 6–17). Soon, the eschatological impetus was required to conform to the standards of the dominant Kuyper faction. In fact, the Jewish Mission became everything its Pietist founders had not been: activist instead of deterministic, driven by the idea that proselytising—quite a useful craft in modern Dutch party politics—could be used in the field of religion as well. Needless to say, traditional Calvinists either wanted to have as little to do with it as they could, or simply interpreted the aims in their own way. The Kuyperians were hardly interested at all. Their passion was the struggle for Dutch national identity, a competition in which the Jews were simply one of the opposing teams. And so the Jewish Mission foundered on, neglected and often ridiculed by those who were supposed to be its masters. The principles were expounded by Jacob van Nes (Van Nes 1933). Efforts to improve its reputation by recruitment of converts led to the ill-considered decision in the twenties to target children as well as adults (Van Klinken 1996, 124–126). By then, there was no turning back.

## DUTCH JEWS ON CALVINISM

Yet, the clash could have been avoided. Dutch Jewry didn't object to Calvinism—visitors in 18th and early 19th-century Holland even noted the similarity between synagogues and Calvinist architecture—but it very decidedly resented conversion efforts. Dutch Jewry couldn't help wondering whether there was a connection between the recent phenomenon of Jewish Mission and resurgent anti-Semitism. The Jews were loyal members of the Dutch state, most of them having lived and worked there for many generations. Why then suddenly the assertion that they were of different blood, why then the assumption that the fact they were not Christians made them the natural targets of missionary efforts? Dutch Jewry simply wanted to be left alone, protected by the same laws as any other denomination. Joseph Chumaceiro, born in Amsterdam in 1844 and rabbi in Curaçao in the Dutch West Indies, made the point very clearly in 1902 (Chumaceiro 1902). He didn't want any conflict with the Protestants. However, confronted by the latest developments, he felt obliged to make a public statement. Freedom of speech and press, combined with the idea that Dutchmen should be united in everything, tended to create its own antithesis: pressure to renounce the freedom of conscience and to conform to the dominant religion in society. Chumaceiro objected to the idea that God could only and exclusively be approached via Jesus Christ as His intermediary. In the intimate relation between man and the divine, ethics alone truly mattered: virtue, truth, love, and justice. Neither the concept of original sin nor the idea that those who didn't believe in the Messiah were lost for eternity belonged to the Jewish Bible—or the Old Testament, as the Christians knew it. Damnation of the unbelievers would imply that any Jewish convert was obliged to count father and mother among those who were rightly tortured in hell. For Chumaceiro this was clearly absurd. To oblige the Calvinists, he cited Scripture to make his point: 'Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death' (Exod 21:17). It's interesting to note how Chumaceiro repeated an ancient tradition from the earliest stages of Dutch history. The same argument against Christianisation had once been used by a pagan Frisian king in the days of Willibrord and Boniface (Von Padberg 2006, 58; Jelsma 2003).

Seven years after Chumaceiro's publication, the Hollandia press in Baarn published a treatise called *A Medieval Man in our Present Days*, by A. B. Davids (Davids 1909). The author concluded that the way Kuyper dealt with the so-called 'Jewish Question' denied any autonomy

to non-Calvinists. Kuyper simply refused to meet them as they were or considered themselves. In the writings of the Anti-Revolutionary leader they were mere puppets, obliged to play the part he had devised for them. Rabbi Justus Tal repeated Davids's line of argument in 1916. Tal was especially annoyed by the habit of uttering statements about Jews without taking the trouble to listen or to read what the Jews had to say for themselves and about themselves (Tal 1916).

#### MOTIVES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Despite these differences, the thinking of Jews and Calvinists shared a common biblical background. Paramount for those who chose to confront the Germans was the ideal of justice implied in the Word of God. Gezina van der Molen is an example (Van Klinken 2006). She admired the writings of Théodore de Bèze (Theodore Beza). As a pupil of Calvin, Beza had belonged to the so-called Monarchomachs, who opposed the absolute claims of rulers like Philip II of Spain. Far more emphatically than John Calvin had ever done, they claimed that armed resistance against tyranny was a legitimate act. In critical situations, it might even become a moral duty (Hoogerwerf 1999, 98–101). Beza pleaded for both active and passive resistance, provided that—and this was the important point—some of the intermediary magistrates, acting between the people and the monarch, take responsibility for it (Smitskamp 1960). The Bible contained universal tenets, valid for all men. That Nazism implied a gross breach of Mosaic ethics was a major impetus for the emerging resistance. The importance of this point can clearly be discerned in the conduct of Gezina van der Molen. In 1940 she refused to sign the declaration of 'Aryan' or non-Jewish descent, as this implied a distinction between people based on their parentage. She supported the February strike of 1941 in a treatise *Occupation Law* (Van der Molen 1941) and from 1943 became engaged in the rescue of Jewish children. What made her, and others like her, do it?

We are lucky to have some documentation in which members of the Reformed Churches who had harboured Jewish fellow citizens answered the question right after the war. Two collections are especially relevant. The first is an enquiry sent to all parishes, asking for details about community life during the occupation, any possible help given to the Jews

included.<sup>3</sup> Even more interesting is a questionnaire by the Jewish Mission in 1946, sent to the Reformed families who had sheltered Jews during the recent years.<sup>4</sup> The staff of the Jewish Mission clearly appreciated this situation as a favourable moment for conversion. Anyone who reads the papers and the reports of the Reformed Churches' Jewish Mission between 1940 and 1945 can see for himself why Dutch Jewry was so distrustful of its intentions. The *Messiasbode* (*Herald of the Messiah*) stated many times that every Christian should do the utmost to make the Jews accept Jesus Christ, adding that the war situation created the psychological momentum for this (Douma 1940). Yet we must not forget that this Mission was a rather short-lived phenomenon in Dutch history, emerging in the 19th century and dwindling after 1948. The aim of conversion is strikingly absent in the enquiries mentioned above, as answered by those who had recently taken Jews into hiding. Their motives were different.

For them, the influence of 16th- and 17th-century Calvinism was a deeper and far more powerful current than the Jewish Mission. During their stay, the Jewish guests were required to accept Christian house rules, like their ancestors during the Dutch Republic. This implied attendance while grace was said and while the Bible was being read after meals, for some youth even attendance at catechism, but *not* an urge to convert. The whole concept simply did not fit into the traditional dogma.

Secondly, the eschatological influence of Pietism was still very strong in the twentieth century. One impetus for Christians to harbour the persecuted Jews was the desire to save a remnant of God's old Chosen People from the clutches of Satan, and thus to ensure that it could play its prophesied part during the impending Latter Days.

Conversion of individuals, if it happened, was hailed as a premonition of the *eschaton*, but once again there was no conviction that human effort could achieve this. As such, religious matters differed from the practice of fighting a war. In the resistance, Calvinists considered themselves active champions of their nation's cause and beliefs. This sense

<sup>3</sup> Enquiry by Th. Delleman, in: Provincial Archive of Utrecht (Utrechts Archief), archive of the General Synods of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, inv. nr. 752-753.

<sup>4</sup> Enquiry by Jac. van Nes, in: Provincial Archive of Utrecht (Utrechts Archief), archive of the deputees for Church and Israel of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, inv. nr. 394.

of being an elite may have affected relations with Dutch Jewry more adversely than the ineffective Jewish Mission ever did. The Jews were regarded as passive receivers of help given by others. This condescending view needed the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 before it could be changed and improved. The reception of the State of Israel in the Dutch Reformed press during the fifties shows a new appreciation: the Jews as men and women in charge of their own fate. The Dutch consul general in Palestine in 1948 was J.A. Nederbragt. He became an active champion of the Jewish state. The Israelis were no longer a minority in a country dominated by others, but a nation of their own. It was a situation Nederbragt had known from the reading of the Old Testament, but now also from personal experience. To adapt to it would require a complete review of earlier attitudes. The willingness to do so was brought about by a reference to eschatology. Nederbragt was convinced that the re-emergence of the Jewish State had been prophesied, and as such was an act of providence (Nederbragt 1952). Gezina van der Molen witnessed the change from another angle. As a delegate to the United Nations, she understood that the days of Holland as a great colonial nation were over. From now on, the best this small country could do for the sake of peace and international law was to cooperate with all others who were willing to work within the framework of the UN's Charter (Van der Molen 1951). For her, Israel was a natural ally of the Western world and its values, provided that it came to terms with the Palestinians (Van der Molen 1949). In the sixties, Van der Molen supported the Nes Ammim project in Galilee and explicitly renounced the Jewish Mission.

Theology and, to a lesser extent, international law remained the mainstays of Dutch Reformed opinions on Judaism during the age of polarization. Actions of the Calvinist resistance during the war years were fuelled by a conception of the will of God (both in theology and in human ethics), *not* by appreciation of the Jewish point of view. From the sixties, religious dialogue has ushered in a new era. Nevertheless, some of the attitudes exemplified by Nederbragt and Van der Molen have remained typical of Dutch Calvinist attitudes, even today. Both an eschatological view (in which the contemporary history of Israel is linked to the expectation of the end of days) and a political view (in which Western values and decision-making in the United Nations are paramount) are well-known features of the present. It is interesting to note that these vital traditions share a background in the Dutch Republic of the 17th century, when eschatology enthralled both the Jewish and

the Protestant middle classes, while the intellectual elite preferred to focus on the framework of international law (Van der Molen 1937). In striking contrast, such 19th-century heirlooms as Romantic nationalism and Jewish Mission have turned out to be ephemeral, dwindling very quickly after 1948. Any student of relations between Jews and Christians in the Netherlands should keep in mind the fact that history is a cumulative process in which contemporary events are merely the crest of the waves.

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## RELIGIOUS INSULATION AS A MODE OF INTERDEPENDENCE

Relating Catholicism and Modernity

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The problem I wish to address concerns not the interaction between individual theologians of different religious backgrounds nor the interplay between religions, but the connection between religions and the societies that surround them. How must we conceive of the relationship between religions and societies? In particular, how can we interpret the strategies of insulation—the formation of subcultures and subsocieties—which many sects, churches, and religious groups have frequently embraced, in modernity as well as in earlier times? My analysis will take the relationship between Catholicism and modernity between 1800 and 1960 as an example. Similar questions arise, however, when the interrelations between other religions and their respective societies are scrutinised.

I will start by introducing the traditional view, which holds that there is a natural, self-evident and unbridgeable opposition between religion and modernity. Both the Catholic Church and its opponents thought predominantly along these antagonistic lines up to 1960. I will describe only the Catholic Church's perception and its strategic response of insulation against what was felt to be the threat of secular modernity.

Secondly, I will assume an observer's perspective and argue that this antagonistic view fails to notice the connections and interdependences which exist between Catholicism and modernity on a deeper level. I will point to one side of this relationship in particular: the issue of how modernity constituted or 'framed' Catholicism. This I will refer to as the modernity and modernisation of Catholicism.

Thirdly, I will claim that the approach which argues for the modernisation of religion in modernity concurs with new theories about religions that have been developed by the social sciences and religious studies in the last decades. These theories regard religions as labels that refer to groupings of religious practices. Considering practices as the essential constituents of religion entails viewing interdependence as the

primary concept and practices of insulation as forms of interdependence.

Bearing these reflections in mind, I subsequently propose interpreting the insular self-interpretation and policies of Catholicism in the 19th and 20th centuries up to 1960 as a way of constructing interdependences in modernity. Catholicism was not a premodern entity alien to modernity, but, on the contrary, a thoroughly modern and moreover extremely successful actor in modernity. At the same time, however, it is clear that this policy of insulation that developed prior to 1960 no longer holds the same force in today's advanced modernity in the West as it did in the past. This means that the Catholic Church has to find new ways of constructing itself as a major institution in modernity.

Finally, in the epilogue, I will look briefly at comparable developments in Judaism.

#### THE CHANGING CATHOLIC PERCEPTION OF MODERNITY

As an introductory approximation, let us look firstly at the Catholic perception of modernity and its evolution from the French Revolution onwards (for the first three stages, see McSweeney 1980, xiii–xv and 236–239; see also Hellemans 2001, 117–119).

Diagram 1. timetable of relations between RC Church and modernity

Period	RC view of modernity	Self-image of RC Church	RC attitude towards modernity
1789–1878	transitory disorder	victim of revolutionary agitation	rejection
1878–1958	a hostile order	counterpower	competition
1958–1968	partner	partner	cooperation
1968–today	irreligious context	embattled minority	countervoice

We can distinguish four periods: (1) from the French Revolution to 1878, epitomised by Pope Pius IX (1846–1878); (2) from 1878 to 1958, epitomised by Leo XIII (1878–1903); (3) the 1960s, epitomised by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965); (4) the post-1968 period.

These four periods correspond with four Catholic views of modernity: (1) modernity as a sinful interruption and a transitory disorder; (2)

modernity as an enduring, but hostile, secular order; (3) modernity as a benevolent partner; (4) modernity as an irreligious social context, hostile to the Catholic Church.

These views of modernity correlate with four self-images of the Church: (1) the Church as a victim of transitory revolutionary agitation; (2) the Church as a counterpower fighting a menacing enemy; (3) the Church as a partner with modernity; (4) the Church as an embattled minority group.

Finally, these perceptions are also linked to four attitudes consciously adopted by the Church: (1) rejection of modernity; (2) competition with modernity; (3) partnership with modernity; (4) constituting a counter-voice against an imposing but derailed modernity.

On the whole it is clear that the Catholic Church, with the exception of the optimistic early 1960s, has always approached modernity with distrust and hostility. The Church's basic attitude was antithesis, or opposition. A famous illustration was Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus Errorum*, a list of errors published in 1864, the last of which—regarded as the pinnacle of deviations—was that 'the Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization' (in Latin: '*Romanus Pontifex potest ac debet cum progressu, cum liberalismo et cum recenti civilitate sese reconciliari et componere*', Pius IX 1864, no. 80). The policy adopted by the Church was accordingly one of constructing a counterpower. This resulted in the establishment of a Catholic subsociety or countersociety—also called a pillar, (political) subculture, *Lager, Milieu, société-monde*, or compartment (see, out of the vast literature, Hellemans 1990 and Altermatt 2004, 49–75). In this endeavour, the Catholic Church tried to forge alliances with other enemies of liberalism and later socialism, at first primarily the aristocracy, but before long all other groups willing to march under the banner of Catholicism. This perception of Catholicism and religion in general as a pre-existing entity engaged in a fierce struggle with the newly arrived forces of modernity was not only predominant among Catholics, but also among their antagonists. Prior to 1960, anticlerical groups usually perceived religion as something of the past, doomed to disappear because it was a relic from premodern times. Antithesis and opposition between modernity and religion was the natural condition in the eyes of both camps: of anti-modernist Catholics and of the secular modernists.

### THE MODERNITY AND MODERNISATION OF CATHOLICISM

Since the 1980s and 1990s, developments in society and religion have occurred that have led me and others to attempt to overcome or at least qualify this antagonistic view. Given the enduring presence in the world of religion—and particularly of orthodox and even fundamentalist religion—after more than two centuries of modernity, it is no longer possible to hold that religion and modernity have nothing in common. Therefore, instead of simply juxtaposing religion and modernity, I would like to argue that a close interdependence exists between the two (see Hellemans 1997; 2004, 76–94; and 2007; see also Kaufmann 1979; Altermatt 1989; Gabriel 1992; Hervieu-Léger 1993; Diotallevi 1999; and Beyer 2006).

This new approach must necessarily abandon the conceptual notion of religion and modernity as two independent, external, and parallel entities. Modernity should be seen not as an agent or group of agents, not as an external adversary that can be defeated, but rather as the broad and inescapable context within which Catholicism has existed from the French Revolution onwards. This perspective implies that Catholicism is part and parcel of modernity, an evolving part of an equally evolving modernity. Just as the economy and politics have evolved from premodern to modern forms, so has religion. Thus religions in modernity must be considered as thoroughly modern phenomena.

This inclusive approach invites a close examination of the various ways of interdependence that exist between religion and modernity: how religions to some extent create modernity and how, inversely, religions creatively respond to the threats and opportunities generated in and by modernity; how they incessantly use modern means and ideas; how they go along with and against movements and developments within modernity. I will not here pursue the constitutive role of religion for modernity, because it has already been well established. It was a major theme in Max Weber's work at the beginning of the twentieth century. Against Marxist and other materialist theories, Weber contended that religion was one of the main authors of modernity. He showed in particular how the ascetic spirit of Protestantism proved particularly congenial to an entrepreneurial attitude of investment and to the rational pursuit of work and organisation and so fostered the advent of modern capitalism (Weber [1904] 1988). The impact of religion did not stop at the threshold of modernity, but continued unabated, a fact not easily disputed when considering the area of international politics since the fall of the Iron

Curtain (see, as an example, the controversial view of a ‘clash of civilisations’ by Huntington 1993). Rather than pursue this line of argumentation any further, I will focus here on the reverse side of the coin: the way in which religion has itself processed modernity. My basic contention is simple: through the constant activity of religious men and women and of religions within the framework of modern society, religions and the churches have themselves become modernised. This process has made the post-1800 religions very different from their premodern manifestations, notwithstanding the fact that they continued to refer to the past and were averse to modernity.

This applies also to the Catholic Church: it is an integral part of modernity, and at the same time it is critically disposed towards it. One might say that over the past two centuries, with the exception of the Vatican II period, the Catholic Church has been modernised while maintaining an anti-modernist stance. The Catholic Church was thus not only predominantly anti-modernist in attitude and policy, it was also deeply modernised. The denominator that, in my view, best describes the double and ambiguous performance of Catholicism in the modern world is that of anti-modernist modernisation: it means being objectively rooted in modernity whilst simultaneously subjectively and stubbornly resisting it (Hellemans 1997, 17–25).

#### RELIGIOUS PRACTICES: INTERDEPENDENCES ‘MADE IN MODERNITY’

Let us now plunge briefly into some abstract theoretical discourse. The argument I have just made—that we must switch from an antithetical to an inclusive view of religion and modernity—is consistent with the general evolution in theoretical thinking on religion during the last decades (Beyer 2003 gives a concise overview).

Traditionally, religions were regarded in the West as religious ideologies and as self-contained entities, founded by a holy person or by successive waves of charismatic religious virtuosi. Once established, these systems of thought—with corresponding attitudes, rituals, and organisations—were handed down through the ages. Christianity was thus presented as a set of dogmas, rooted in the life of Jesus, written down in the New Testament, and explicated by the Church and its theologians. Judaism was equally seen as a set of religious ideas, with the important addition here of sets of rules for daily conduct, extracted

from the history of the people of ancient Israel and its covenant with Yahweh.

Today, this static and idealistic conception of religion as a set of dogmas and norms has been exchanged for a praxeological view by the social sciences and religious studies. Religions are groupings of practices: of devotional, ritual, intellectual, and institutional practices. Evidently, ideas and ethical strivings are present in each practice, but they are part and expression of these religious practices and not separate ideas from which practices in turn are derived as from above.

This praxeological view on religion has important ramifications. Firstly, practices are always enacted in a present. The past has gone and the future ‘cannot begin’ (Luhmann 1976). The past is taken up in the present in a selective and interpreted form. The future is likewise anticipated from the present. Both interpretation of the past and anticipation of the future are elements within an action frame that is conditioned by the acting person and by contextual conditions. Religious practices are thus, like all other practices, always performed in a present. Religion in modernity is ‘made in modernity’.

Secondly, practices change relentlessly, and so do religions. Religions are regarded here as historical phenomena caught in continual processes of transformation and exhibiting many discontinuities, for example between premodern and modern forms of religion (Hellemans 2007).

Thirdly, religions can no longer be viewed as self-contained entities. Interdependence comes first. It is clear that practices are not autonomous but depend on the acting and experiencing person, on the surrounding context, on interaction with other persons and collectivities. Consequently it is not surprising that dependence, interdependence, interaction, syncretism, hybridity, and so on have become favourite topics in religious research.

Fourthly, if religions consist of historically changing and heterogeneous practices, it becomes problematic to group practices under one heading (Smith 1998, 269–284). It was long taken for granted that the overall label ‘religion’ (but also specific labels such as ‘Christianity’ or ‘Judaism’) implied that the ideas and activities brought together under it had much in common with each other. The question is whether this is actually the case and, if so, to what extent. I do not advocate abandoning completely the notion of ‘religion’ or the other conventional labels of particular religions (even the term ‘Hinduism’ has endured). But clearly we have to be careful and need always to keep in mind that

a wide divide exists between divergent and interdependent practices on the one hand and the homogenising act of labelling, which is focused on the religious dimension, on the other. Labelling is an inevitable part of life and indeed of scholarship, but it carries all the risks of being a ‘second order construct’, resulting in the classification of a range of widely diverging practices and ideas under a single heading (such as grouping, say, Knights Templar and ‘God is Dead’ theologians together as ‘Christians’).

#### CONSTRUCTING A CATHOLIC COUNTERSOCIETY WITHIN MODERNITY

Let us turn again to the substantial problem of the relationship of Catholicism and modernity, keeping this praxeological view of religion in mind. I contend that the religious modernisation approach is consistent with the praxeological view, because it attempts to show how practices inevitably take up ideas, forms, and contexts from modernity and, by doing so, construct modern Catholicism. Nevertheless, the new form of practices that resulted from this in the 19th century was not a liberal, modernist Catholicism, but conservative and insular. Let me first describe this insular—or ultramontane—Catholicism briefly and then examine the reasons for its triumph and success, which lasted until 1960.

‘Ultramontane’ is derived from the Latin *ultra montes*, meaning ‘beyond the mountains’, i.e. beyond the Alps. The movement originated in 17th and 18th century France and consisted of those Catholics who opposed a national French Catholic Church and looked instead to the pope ‘on the other side of the Alps’ as the real leader of all Catholics. The ultramontane movement grew stronger in the 19th century, and its ideology was finally adopted by the Vatican as official policy under Popes Gregory XVI (1831–1846) and Pius IX (1846–1878) (see Aubert 1978 for a general history up to the 1960s and Fleckenstein & Schmiedl 2005 for an analysis of ultramontanism proper).

Catholicism was thoroughly reconstructed in all respects through this ultramontane policy. As I have argued, this reconstruction amounted to a modernisation. Let us take the organisation of the Church as a case in point. The 18th century Church of the *ancien régime* was allied with the state and was a federal body. In the 19th century, the Church was turned into a highly centralized mass organisation, independent of the

state, oriented towards the pope and capable of integrating and mobilising its flock. In fact, the Catholic Church was the first non-state mass organisation of modernity, long before other nationalist and socialist mass organisations made headway after 1880. Catholics were instructed to a higher standard by better trained priests and nuns, their daily lives were regulated by religious obligations from dawn till dusk, they were organised in a host of religious associations, and they were mobilised—sometimes in unprecedented numbers—in processions and pilgrimages (e.g. mass pilgrimages to Rome, Lourdes, and Trier—for the last, see Schieder 1974). Under Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) and his successors, this mass organisational model was extended to more secular areas, and many large Catholic lay organisations were established (professional, educational, charitable, cultural, and recreational organisations, even trade unions and political parties). Internally this caused much friction, between bishops and prominent members of lay organisations for instance, but it also gave the Catholic Church unprecedented power and influence.

Another example of religious modernisation was the Catholic Church's missionary activity, which was extremely successful due to the fact that the Church allied itself—if critically—with the project of Western colonisation. Driven by a colonial, 'civilising' spirit and supported by its well-organised structure, its manpower, and its entrepreneurial spirit, the Church's missionary work in the non-Western world reached its apogee in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It made the Catholic Church the world's largest single religious community. Other aspects of 19th century and early 20th century Catholicism can similarly be interpreted as successful manifestations of religious modernisation. I refer to the rise of neo-scholasticism and neo-Gothic art and architecture, the propagation of Gregorian chant and Catholic literature, and the development of a social doctrine. In this way a formidable power was constructed, a countersociety that provided for its members 'from the cradle to the grave'. It competed with Protestantism, liberalism, and socialism—the latter was often also constructed as a countersociety—for the shaping of modern society, and it won many a battle (see for example the articulation of the educational and welfare systems in many European countries).

This evolution went contrary to the expectations of most secular intellectuals (Comte, Marx, and Freud, to name but a few) who thought that the great religions of the past would at best linger on for a while and eventually die out in modernity. Why did religion remain omnipres-

ent for such a long time in modernity? More particularly, how did conservative religion become so successful in the period before 1960, especially since it had adopted an insular form? Modern, conservative, insular religion was not only predominant within Catholicism, but also developed in Protestantism and Judaism. I see two sets of answers to these questions. Firstly, a theoretical answer, which involves discarding an incorrect theory of modernity, and secondly, an empirical answer that attempts to identify the most important factors that enabled religious vitality of a conservative nature to build up subcultures in modernity.

Firstly the theoretical reflection. According to pro-modernist thought, modernity started as a small modern sector that became stronger as modernisation progressed, concurrently reducing the conservative sector of society, which eventually dwindled into insignificance. We should abandon this ‘dual sector’ view of history, because it is inaccurate. Modernity was there as a whole from the start: the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity and the ongoing process of modernisation afterwards proceeded step by step in all directions. This is true not only for industry but also for agriculture, not only for the cities but also for the countryside, not only for secular thought but also for religion. It is wrong to reserve the epithet ‘modern’ solely for the first instances and to deny the profound changes prompted and shaped by modernity in the other instances. Or take functional differentiation—the differentiation of functionally specialised subsystems such as the economy, politics, the sciences, the arts and so. This process, regarded by many authors as the basic structural characteristic of modernity, was not only endured by religion as an external, secular threat. It was also furthered by religious developments and circles themselves—think of the opposition postulated between ‘unshakable’ religion and the modern world, the drive towards more ‘purely religious’ organisations, the establishment of a global religious system with many religions (Hellemans 2007, 99–142). Religion did not remain outside of modernity—it is hard even to imagine such an important sector remaining isolated from society. On the contrary, it was refashioned in response to modernity and it simultaneously became a major player within modern society.

As a consequence of this new vision on modernity and modernisation, it is also no longer possible to equate modernity and modernisation with liberalism and liberalisation—and secularisation. We should rather realise that modernity engenders both liberalism and conservatism as

conceptual twins. In the emerging modern society, conservatism originated not much later than liberalism, i.e. in the time following the French Revolution. They were constructed as twin concepts, the one eliciting the other. Liberalism and conservatism should be considered as a dual conceptual pair that represent two conflicting evaluations of the new society. Speaking of liberals and conservatives before modernity is an anachronism. Like liberalism, conservatism was thus not constructed until modernity. It constituted one of the two main banners under which to participate in the battle about the present and future shape of modernity. It should come as no surprise that the main religions, under threat from many forces and aspects of the new society, mostly joined the conservative ranks. The same tendency is apparent today in Islam. But this should not be regarded as a stepping outside of modernity, but rather as a way of taking up an ideological position within modernity.

Secondly, the empirical question. How did conservative religion manage to become such a major force in modernity, and why was the subcultural, insular form it assumed so successful? First of all, we must not forget that religion around 1800 was still a dominant presence in society and that it could draw upon an enormous stock of resources second in size only to those of the state. Secondly, many considered the conservative ‘fasten seatbelt’ response to be a legitimate choice, and even a ‘natural’ one, especially in view of the accelerating pace of unceasing and unsettling change and of the demands and actions of liberal and socialist—even revolutionary—movements. Most religious people, and the clergy foremost among them, were keen on cherishing traditions and felt threatened by these secularising forces. Nevertheless, a strong current existed that looked positively upon the prospects of a marriage between liberal religion and liberal modernity, particularly in Protestantism and Judaism. In addition, conservative critics of modernity had no trouble finding an audience on non-religious grounds, since modern society was by no means only beneficial and damaged many people’s interests. This is especially true for the old aristocratic elites, but other groups and strata—the countryside, small shop keepers, even bourgeoisie and labourers—all had reasons of their own to align themselves with the forces of religiously inspired conservatism.

Given the input of these huge resources by conservative religious groups and movements, why did it result in the construction of impressive countersocieties? A third factor is at play here: the existence of

extended new means and possibilities of insulation that became available in modernity. The new means of communication, culture, and education enabled the religions to socialise the middle and lower classes and the countryside to an extent inconceivable before modernity. Moreover, through increased organisation the rank and file became much more strongly attached to the clerical and lay elites. These new means admittedly did not have the same insulating impact on the liberal minded middle and higher classes. The heterogeneity and fissiparousness of liberalism, particularly left-wing liberalism, is well-known. Nonetheless, a movement endowed with a strong, authoritative organisation and with an ideology which placed the collective above the individual could use these modern means to foster an insulated subculture. Secular examples of this phenomenon were socialism, communism, and left-wing secret societies. Organisation and individual submission—now to a religious cause—were no less effective on the conservative, religious side. The Catholic Church especially reorganised itself in this way in most countries to form powerful countersocieties in 19th century modernity. The formation of strongly organised religious subcultures also existed in Protestantism, especially in the full panoply of sects and small churches. It also made headway in the circles of Orthodox Judaism. Modern totalitarianism—left-wing and right-wing, secular and religious, in state and society—is quintessentially a modern phenomenon. Thus, by utilising and moulding modernity, the religions in many Western countries succeeded in more or less retaining their positions in society, though in a completely new way, and in some cases, like Ireland and Poland, they even managed to strengthen them.

In many cases, an insular strategy of interdependence was used. Victories were never easily won and were not won at all in some countries—France and Lutheran Germany are examples. The overall result was neither clear victory nor open defeat, but it nevertheless constituted a lasting modern heritage.

I would like to stress once again that the establishment of these countersocieties—be they large or small—may not be conceived of in any way at all as a retreat from modernity. On the contrary, as the example of Catholicism shows clearly, such a countersociety provided the Catholic Church with a powerful position to engage with modernity: to struggle for control over modernity with competing powers, to manage and mould its flock, and simultaneously to offer it those fruits of modernity (such as education, travel, etc.) which were acceptable and/or could not be denied.

After 1960, the maintenance of a modern, conservative subsociety for large portions or even the bulk of the population was no longer possible. Let us take again the case of Catholicism. In the 1960s and afterwards, those impressive Catholic powerhouses that had fitted so well with modernity hitherto were dismantled—and so were their large socialist and Protestant counterparts (such as the Calvinist pillar in Holland). Advanced modernity, with its deepening of the process of individualisation and its secularising impetus in most Western countries, is different from the first modernity (1800–1960) in that it cannot be broken up into a few organised subsocieties. This initially invigorated the hopes of religious liberals to recast Catholicism and religion in general into a free religious quest of autonomous individuals together with followers of other religions and with secular seekers. But they were soon disappointed. From 1968 onwards—the symbolic year of the cultural revolution of the sixties and also the year of the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical letter that condemned anticonception—the Catholic Church returned to a conservative stance. Yet an overall return to Catholic countersocieties was blatantly impossible. The Church leadership's conservative stance had to be combined with a more tolerant attitude at the local level towards a wayward flock and the behaviour of peripheral Catholics, who now constituted the bulk of the following.

This does not mean that insular strategies have no future at all. Quite the opposite is the case, but they can no longer be unfolded on the same large scale as before 1960. They appeal only to small sections of the population: those that are looking for highly demanding religion and who are willing to sacrifice considerable amounts of time and energy for it. In Catholicism, many so-called ‘new movements’ have sprung up, such as Opus Dei, the Neocatechumenate, and Focolare. I expect that such small subcultures and sectarian groups have a promising future to look forward to in advanced modernity, as is also confirmed by the growth of evangelical and charismatic groups in the Protestant churches and of radical Orthodox groups in Judaism. However, the question is whether this ‘sectarian turn’ will help religion at large. In Catholicism, it is clear that a subcultural strategy for small groups will not suffice for the Church to retain its large general following. So the Catholic Church is now confronted with the crucial question, as yet unanswered (if it can be answered at all), of how to reach out to and, above all, how to bind a large audience that has become wayward and increasingly willing to switch to other interesting religious offers or to none at all.

It is a problem for all religions that cater to a following beyond the select circle of the strongly involved.

### CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have tried to show that conservative (orthodox) religion and insular forms of religion are both real and successful options in modernity and that they have often occurred in combination with each other. Let me specify this general conclusion in five theses.

Firstly, after 1789 the Catholic Church engaged itself successfully in a process of anti-modernist modernisation. It rejected many aspects of modernity and erected a Catholic countersociety. This course of events should be seen as a form of modernisation, as a way of taking position within modernity, of becoming involved in the struggle over the shape of modernity with other competitors.

Secondly, modernity was the imposing and inevitable context in which the Catholic Church—and other religions in the West—had to operate from the beginning. Even the erection of a countersociety took place within modernity.

Thirdly, isolation or insulation was thus only possible to a certain degree and should be regarded as a strategy of moulding interdependences in modernity.

Fourthly, conservatism and orthodoxy are not peripheral phenomena on the margin or outside of modern society, but constitute major ways of living in and being involved with modernity.

Fifthly, the integration of large sections of the population inside these organised bulwarks is no longer possible in the West after 1960. It is now practised with great success in non-Western countries (cf. Islamic societies and India). In the West, insular strategies are still viable options, but are now confined to the smaller stratum of persons who are willing to make a strong personal commitment (cf. ‘the sectarian turn’).

### EPILOGUE: (ORTHODOX) JUDAISM AND MODERNITY

Not being a scholar of Judaism, I hesitate to make strong statements about the modernisation of Judaism. Nonetheless I presume that the approach in terms of religious modernisation which I have advocated for the case of Catholicism can also clarify the evolution of other reli-

gions in modernity, especially in their conservative or orthodox forms. I was therefore pleased to learn that prominent Jewish scholars of Jewish Orthodoxy in nineteenth century Europe have conducted their research in this very vein. In the preface to his book *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance, and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity*, Adam Ferziger states: ‘My discussion is predicated on the notion that Orthodox Judaism did not simply replicate premodern Judaism. It developed, rather, as a diverse modern movement that constantly responded to a changing world’ (Ferziger 2005, ix—with thanks to Marcel Poorthuis for the reference). In the same way, Michael Silber analyses the emergence of ultra-Orthodox Judaism in nineteenth-century Hungary as an ‘invention of a tradition’. He writes: ‘[L]ike other anti-modern conservative movements, ultra-Orthodoxy itself is clearly a recent phenomenon. Belying the conventional wisdom of both its adherents and its opponents, it is in fact not an unchanged and unchanging remnant of premodern, traditional Jewish society, but as much a child of modernity and change as any of its “modern” rivals’ (Silber 1992, 23–24). A few pages later, he adds: ‘[T]he shift from a traditional society to an Orthodox one (“Orthodoxization”) was part and parcel of modernization, and as such, Orthodoxy must be viewed as a modern phenomenon’ (Silber 1992, 26n4). Similarly to what I have done for ultramontane Catholicism, Ferziger and Silber here portray Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Judaism as historically new and original constructions, steeped in modernity. Michael Meyer, in his article *Reflections on Jewish Modernization*, even uses the same concept of ‘religious modernisation’, although he deals more with the Reform movement and the underlying, broader religious dynamics than with Orthodoxy (Meyer 2001, 37–40). I am not acquainted with any comparable studies by Jewish scholars of the more recent evolution of radical Orthodox groups in Judaism. Nevertheless I am convinced that the religious modernisation approach can also be used—and probably has already been used—to analyse these contemporary radical religious forms. In general, as I have indicated, late modernity favours sect-like behaviour and groups to some extent, because it has become much easier than previously to cultivate deviant behaviour, to establish associations of all kinds, and to cater to adherents. Threatening conditions enhance this propensity towards radicalism even further. Feelings of insecurity among Jewish communities have existed from times immemorial and in particular since the Holocaust, and they remain strong today due to the survival struggle of the state of Israel and the confrontation with rampant secu-

larisation in the United States and Europe. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that some Jewish people and groups have turned to radical Orthodox forms of religion on account of these conditions. Again, these ‘orthodoxising’ tendencies do not, in my opinion, exemplify a retreat from modern society. They rather constitute radical ways of becoming implicated in modernity.

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GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE GOYIM?  
SAMUEL HIRSCH AND SAMUEL HOLDHEIM ON  
CHRISTIANITY

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INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the Noahide Commandments is undoubtedly the oldest and most prominent Jewish doctrine concerning non-Jews still maintained today (Novak 1983). More specific views on the status of Christianity (and/or Islam) were formulated in the course of the Middle Ages and modernity. These views were not abstract exercises in thought but prompted by experiences Jews had living as a minority amongst Christian or Muslim majorities. Jews and Christians or Jews and Muslims, as monotheists, were thought to be more closely related than members of other religious groups. Neither the nature of this monotheism nor the nature of this relationship, however, is self-evident, and over the course of centuries they have been and are still being negotiated.

Whereas Christians have traditionally regarded the relationship between Christianity and Judaism as one of supersession whereby that which comes later is better and replaces that which was earlier, Jews have often maintained a model of derivation. In this model Judaism represents the most original and pure form of monotheism; Christianity and Islam are derivative and hence watered down versions of Judaism. Judaism is intended for Jews, and the derivative monotheistic forms are intended for non-Jews who are not capable or not *yet* capable of accepting monotheism in its Mosaic, i.e. most pure and unadulterated form (so too Maimonides; see Novak 1989, 57–72). In other words, Christianity and/or Islam is good enough for the Goyim (more positively formulated by John Pawlikowski as ‘Judaism for the Gentiles’; Pawlikowski 2000, 25–48), the most they can deal with, serving to prepare the way for a universal Judaism in messianic times. What the repercussions of Christianity’s status as a derivative religion are for both Christians and the world in the present is not always clear. Are Christians better off than pagans who will also turn to monotheism at the end of time? Is

the world in the here and now in some way improved by pagans becoming Christians or Muslims?

The answers to these questions vary according to place and time. This paper will specifically and briefly address the attitudes of two prominent nineteenth-century German Jewish thinkers, Samuel Holdheim and Samuel Hirsch. Holdheim was a Talmudic prodigy who was to become one of the most radical reformers of Judaism in Germany. Hirsch, a devotee of Hegel, was famous for his systematic philosophy first formulated in *Die Religionsphilosophie der Juden* (Hirsch 1842). As will become evident, their attitudes toward non-Jewish society in general and Christianity in particular are inseparably linked to the notions non-Jews voiced about Jews in the public debates on Jewish citizenship taking place throughout Western Europe. Jews often felt the need to refute claims of Christianity's superiority. But Christian critique of Jews was not the only critique with which Jews had to contend. The Enlightenment ideal and philosophy, and subsequently Marxism, entailed criticism of religion in general and of both Judaism and Christianity in particular. This criticism of Judaism was not free of Christian prejudice and thus, even when criticizing Christianity, often maintained a view of Christianity as somehow higher on the ladder of true humanity. For Hegel, for example, religious consciousness and philosophic consciousness were divided not only in form but also in content. Religion contains the truth of absolute spirit only in the form of representation. Philosophy grasps this truth in the form of a concept, changing the contents of the religious consciousness fundamentally. Moreover, Hegel maintained the notion that evil was the necessary means to good. According to Hegel, man began in a state of nature and set himself in opposition to it—thereby sinning. This inescapable situation left man in a state of permanent enslavement. The philosophical negation of this situation meant freedom or virtue and was closely linked to the Christian doctrine of original sin overcome by the Incarnation. It was precisely this concept that Jewish thinkers including Hirsch perceived as alien to Judaism (see Liebeschütz 1967, 1–42 and Brumlik 2000, 196–249). Kant, emphasizing the ethical, distinguished between rational religion and law. In rational religion one chose to do good freely, while under the law one chose to do good out of fear or reward. Whereas Kant identified Christianity with true religion whereby ethical behaviour is a matter of free will, he regarded Judaism as a statutory religion of coercion (see Eisen 1998, 23–30). Aside from Kant and Hegel, one critic in particular had

significant impact on the thinking of Holdheim and Hirsch, and I will therefore digress briefly for a presentation of his ideas.

#### BRUNO BAUER'S *DIE JUDENFRAGE*

No less than two and a half thousand publications concerning the emancipation of the Jews appeared between 1815 and 1850 (Brenner 1996, 32f.). Bruno Bauer (1809–1882), the biblical scholar and neo-Hegelian whose radical historical critique of the New Testament and anti-monarchist political aspirations led to his dismissal from the University of Bonn in 1842, was among those who introduced the theories of biblical scholars on Judaism into the political debates. His work *Die Judenfrage* (1843) was undoubtedly one of the most influential publications on Jewish emancipation. In it Bauer argued against those (for example Christian Wilhelm von Dohm) who claimed that the Jews had become that which they were on account of the oppression under which they lived in the Christian world. The Jews were oppressed, he countered, because of their oriental nature. They clung to their nationality and resisted the movements and changes of history, ‘while the will of history is evolution, new forms, progress, change’ (Bauer [1843] 1958, 5). The question, according to Bauer, is therefore not whether the Jews should be granted citizenship but whether they, who do not know freedom and reason, are capable of accepting universal human rights and granting them to others. A community that is willing to practice arbitrary or even unsuitable rites and sees its salvation in the future or in heaven can’t participate wholeheartedly in the affairs of the state and the events of history (Bauer [1843] 1958, 47). The only remedy is for the Jew to give up his chimerical nationality, relinquish belief in servitude, and believe instead in freedom and humanity. The Jew must do nothing less than cease to be a Jew, for only then would his law not interfere with the duties towards the state and his fellow citizens. Bauer’s criticism, however, only starts with the Jews, by means of whom he demonstrates that the state itself is unjust, organized as it is upon privileges. Therefore not only is the Jew not free, but in fact no one is free. The Jew must stop being a Jew and Christians must relinquish privilege in order to be emancipated. They will then all live as human beings in a society which consists of human beings and is not based on privileges.

Karl Marx criticized Bauer for his understanding of the Jewish question on religious rather than social terms. In *Zur Judenfrage* (1844),

Marx exposed the Prussian State as an egocentric bourgeois civil society rather than the ideal society of the modern state, using Judaism and the Jewish question as a means to this end. According to Marx, the basis of the Jewish religion was practical need and egoism, and this is also the basis of bourgeois society. The spirit of practical need was essentially passive, so Judaism could not effect the creation of civil society by itself: self-interest was only perfected in the Christian world. The contradictions of the individual versus social needs and god (money) versus human beings are the contradictions of Judaism as well. These are now manifested in the world through the Christian perfection of Judaism in civil society. All features of abstract Jewish religion, i.e. the contempt of theory, arts, history, and man as an end in himself became concrete expressions of the bourgeois individual who is now a Jew in all but name. The answer to the Jewish question is thus the answer to the question of modern society: social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism, i.e. the abolition of Judaism (and therefore also of Christianity) is the emancipation of mankind from the contradictory combinations both Judaism and Christianity represent.

Clearly then, those Jews who wished to remain Jews and at the same time hoped to acquire an entrance ticket to society were in a quandary. They had to counter Christian prejudice, yet they were also in principle united with Christians in upholding the value of religion for morality and society at large against the proponents of the new humanism including Marxism. The consequences were far-reaching, for this process entailed a re-evaluation not only of Christianity but of Judaism as well. I will illustrate this in what follows, turning first to Samuel Holdheim.

#### SAMUEL HOLDHEIM AND THE TRULY RELIGIOUS

In answer to Bruno Bauer, it would have been simplest for Jews (and Christians) to embrace the humanistic ideal of the universality of morals and recognize, as Yaakov Shavit formulates it, ‘the immanence of human ethics that originates in the essence of the human being and is based on human reason’. For ‘did not the emergence of the new humanism and universal liberalism provide a better ground for understanding than Christianity, free from the long years of religious hatred and prejudice?’ (Shavit 1999, 172). Yet unlike Moses Mendelssohn, for example, who attributed knowledge of God to human reason rather than to revela-

tion (Mendelssohn 1783), Holdheim chose another path. An ethics originating in the essence of the human being could obviate religion or in any case leave its decline unlamented, which clearly was not Holdheim's objective. He therefore sought human ethics not in the essence of the human being but in the essence of *religion*, in the Christian and Jewish spirit which he held to be universal.

Samuel Holdheim (1806–1860), rabbi successively in Frankfurt an der Oder (appointed in 1836) and Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1840), was best known as religious reformer and spiritual leader of the *Genossenschaft für Reform im Judenthume* (1847). Although the Reform community was the most radical in Germany at the time of his appointment, Holdheim's most extreme works were composed during the Mecklenburg-Schwerin period. In *Ueber die Autonomie der Rabbinen und das Princip der jüdischen Ehegesetze* (Schwerin, 1843), Holdheim distinguishes between national, particularistic forms and pure religious (*rein-religiöse*) forms in Judaism. The rabbis, he claimed, had made a historical error when confusing purely national forms with the religious. By failing to make a distinction, they therefore maintained all sorts of laws pertaining to the state that were in fact no longer relevant. Moreover, they mistakenly hoped that the once autonomous state would be restored. However, restoration was clearly not God's intention: the period of the state and the temple was merely one passing phase in the history of Judaism. Therefore Jews could and should abandon their nationality and regard themselves as a family rather than as a people. They in turn would no longer be regarded as a nation within the nation, one of the most frequently expressed objections to Jewish emancipation, but as citizens.

However, not only Jews maintained national, particularistic forms; this was equally true of the state, where Christianity was implicitly and explicitly identified with the universal. Thus those demanding that the Jews relinquish their national identity, Holdheim astutely observed, did not adhere to a universal point of view but rather to the Christian faith and a Christian state. As Bauer had already pointed out, this specific national form with its religious garb is what was contrary to the universal. Conflicts thus arose when either Judaism or the Church were in their national, particularistic forms rather than in their pure, religious (*rein-religiöse*) forms (Holdheim 1843, 7; see Frishman 2004).

Despite his criticism of Christianity and the state, Holdheim was wholly optimistic about the condition of humanity in the 1840s. He found society's moral consciousness (i.e. the truly religious) to be ever

evolving, and his appreciation went so far as to give precedence to the common good over the freedom of the state's subjects, be they the Jewish minority or the Christian majority. As long as no force but reasonable considerations were involved, the choice should always be made in favour of the interests of the majority, he claimed. Thus civil duty took precedence over the Sabbath, and the Jewish civil servant should be expected to work on the Sabbath. Holdheim goes so far as to compare the civil servant with the priest who worked in the temple on the Sabbath. In order to support his analysis, he develops a theory regarding religious custom. Whereas moral law is absolute, categorical, and eternally valid, there is only relative validity as far as religious custom is concerned: customs pertaining to the nation are transitory and thus no longer valid; others are obligatory due to their eternal holiness and general validity. Yet even these latter are subordinate to state law and civil duty if they do not detract from the religion by being omitted (Holdheim 1843, 101–105). Although Holdheim was not the first to accord relative validity to religious customs, he is more radical than his contemporaries when regarding the Sabbath as a custom that can be omitted without detracting from the Jewish religion. This was equally true for the positions he held on circumcision and mixed marriage, downplaying the importance of the former (Holdheim 1844a) and approving the latter (Holdheim 1850; 1869).

#### HOLDHEIM ON THE UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR COVENANTS

Holdheim distinguishes two types of covenant: a universal covenant between God and humankind that is not contingent on human behaviour and a particular covenant between God and Abraham and later between God and Israel, both of which are related to and contingent upon obedience to the commandments. The covenant with Noah forms the basis of society by which men realize that they have all entered a covenant of love with God and must exercise virtue and justice. The rainbow which symbolizes this covenant is made up of light, the light of truth which was made present from the very beginning by divine providence. This light, however, became covered by the clouds of unbelief and superstition. Through the covenant with Abraham mankind entered a more intimate relationship with God and reached a higher stage of religious consciousness so that the rainbow was once more made visible (Holdheim 1844b, 1–12).

For Holdheim, the universal always takes precedence over the particular: the particular does not obviate the universal but is subsumed by it. The particular, then, is just one link in the great chain of humanity. The questions necessarily arising from this postulate and which Holdheim struggles to answer are: Why did God choose one people? Does God love this people more than others? When will the particular covenant be dissolved in favour once more of the universal? The Jews were singled out because of their pure faith and holy morality (*reine Glauben und heilige Sittlichkeit*) in a world full of unbelief and superstition (Holdheim 1844b, 34). At that time they were not only nearer but also dearer to God. They maintain this special relationship to God only in so far as they continue to bear the pure faith and glorify His name. This they must continue to do until the time of the Messiah, i.e. the time when pure faith, piety, virtue, and brotherly love will be the heritage of all mankind.

Returning to the thesis expressed in *Ueber die Autonomie der Rabbinen*, Holdheim once more explains that the Jews are no longer a nation. Nationhood was once necessary to preserve the purely religious, and nationhood necessitated a code of laws, customs, and ceremonies. Now that so many peoples have turned to the pure religion, statehood is superfluous and only those ceremonies and customs should be preserved that further morality. Jews are united with all other peoples and form no more than a family. As for their religion, it has undergone no development (see Frishman 2004), yet it is wrong to say that their faith today is the same as that of their forefathers. For while true religion never develops, the imperfect relationship of man to religion becomes ever more perfect. This is true for society as well: a large portion of humanity now participates in God's blessings through Israel's teachings (Holdheim 1844b, 43) but not through a new covenant.

In his sermons of 1844, Holdheim points out that God's teachings have spread through two great offshoots, yet without specifically mentioning Christianity. Elsewhere he does explicate that the task of Christianity was to spread the Jewish knowledge of God to the gentiles in a form more congenial to pagans, i.e. with a concrete representation of the divine, which placed it obviously on a lower level than Judaism. Christianity's success is an accident of history: had the Jews relinquished their national form at the time of the demise of the nation 1800 years earlier, Christianity would certainly not have been so successful (Bisschops 2007, 271). Christianity is not Holdheim's main concern. He must somehow affirm the necessity of history and Jewish fate for

Jewish faith despite its universal destiny. The universal message will never become universal without Jews and Judaism as its instrument. While the barriers between Jews and other peoples have been torn down, Judaism always was and will remain the *Menschheitsreligion*, the religion of humanity, despite the errors of the rabbis and others in the past.

#### SAMUEL HIRSCH AND *DIE HUMANITÄT ALS RELIGION*

Samuel Hirsch, the son of a cattle dealer, was born in Thalfang (Hunsrück) near Trier in 1815 and died in Chicago in 1889. Ordained as a rabbi by Samuel Holdheim, he served briefly as a rabbi in Dessau from 1839–1841 before his appointment as chief rabbi of Luxembourg (by King Willem II of the Netherlands, Grand Duke of Luxembourg) in 1843. It was in Luxembourg that he was a prominent member of the Freemasons' Lodge in a time when membership for Jews was far from common. It was also there that he published two of his most influential works, *Die Reform im Judenthum und dessen Beruf in der gegenwärtigen Welt* (Leipzig, 1844) and *Die Humanität als Religion, in Vorträgen gehalten in der Loge zu Luxemburg* (Trier, 1854). In what follows, I will focus on Hirsch's *Die Humanität als Religion* and examine Hirsch's rebuttal of the arguments of the Prussian Freemasons, Bauer, and Marx against Judaism. Although the three may seem to be strange bedfellows, the social arguments of Bauer and Marx depended on Christian theological and social assumptions about Jews and Judaism and were therefore intimately linked to the theological arguments of the Freemasons. The latter connected Freemasonry exclusively to Christianity, or to Christianity dressed as humanism, in the words of Hirsch, and excluded Jews from membership. Hirsch's defence of Judaism is not without criticism of the same, hence his appeal to historical development and reform, first in his reply to Bauer (Hirsch 1843) and later in his book on reform (Hirsch 1844). Yet he hopes that his own willingness to take Christian criticism of Judaism seriously will be reciprocated by Christians. He willingly lends them a hand by pointing to the source of Christian intolerance and to the true message of Christianity.

In his foreword to *Die Humanität als Religion*, Hirsch sets his agenda: he will set out to prove that humanity finds perfection in religion. He will also defend true tolerance—a result of religion at its best—against those who claim that tolerance is a result of indifference, possible only

if one forsakes one's religious convictions. This was one of the claims made by members of lodges identifying Freemasonry with Christianity. For those who were convinced that humanity finds perfection only in Christianity, Jews could not be admitted. While Prussian Freemasons conceded that Freemasonry required neither confession nor dogma, they identified *love* as the underpinnings of the Freemasons' work. But this love was derived from faith, from the Christian way of life. Therefore members of those lodges that admitted Jews were indifferent, and those Jews willing to join the lodge and swear on the Bible, including the New Testament, could be neither honourable Jews nor honourable Christians.

Exclusion of Jews from the Prussian lodges in the mid nineteenth century provoked Hirsch to deliver his lectures, yet he addresses first not those who insist on the connection between Freemasonry and Christianity, but those who would underestimate or would like to minimize religion's role in society. Philosophy or present-day civilization, Hirsch claims, is far from being irreligious. Quite the contrary: the deeper one understands it, the more one is led back to religion. For religion, in Feuerbach's words, is anthropology; it is the teaching of the innermost being of man and humanity. Relinquishing religion, therefore, means nothing less than relinquishing one's humanity (Hirsch 1854, Vorwort i). Religion was indeed at least partially denied a role by the humanistically oriented lodges, where a secularized form of religion was propagated (see Hoffman 2001). Thus Hirsch's lectures are a two-edged sword, critical of both the Christian and humanistic leanings in the lodges. But his criticism, as I have already indicated, is also undoubtedly aimed at both Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx, both of whom insisted that religion and humanity were incompatible and that the only way to achieve a human society was to emancipate the state from religion by relinquishing religion.

Religion in modernity, due to its diversity, has become tolerant, Hirsch claims. 'This tolerance', he writes, 'is not derived from indifference but from religion itself, from humanity, from true, practical love in operation. This is the religion of anthropology in which all that are cultured (*Gebildeten*) meet, despite their belonging to different churches and their adherence to different forms and expressions of religious life' (Hirsch 1854, Vorwort i–ii). Here Hirsch, like Holdheim, identifies values common and central to all religions in modernity. And here we see Hirsch, contra Bauer, defending religious development, denying the link between indifference and tolerance against the Prussian Freemasons,

and—once more contra Bauer—linking instead tolerance, religion, humanity, and love, which are related if not identical concepts. The distinction between Judaism and Christianity is one of dogma, Hirsch says, specifically original sin. But that which is common to all and which all churches preach is love. Love is the very heart of the system, be it Jewish or Christian. But perhaps, Hirsch suggests—countering the claims of both Christianity and Marx—love is most evident in Judaism, especially in present-day Jews, where love is not Jewish love but simply love.

### *Masonry and Christianity*

As a Freemason and a Jew, Hirsch wavers between the two in identifying the road to truth. In any case, true Masonry's principle is *not* realized in Christianity, because the dogma of original sin contradicts the Masonic notion of the perfect Mason whose works are perfect. Such works would not lose perfection instantaneously as the Christian doctrine suggests. Moreover, perfection is not a given; the first man and all those after him were to attain it themselves in freedom and work through the human heart and will, where truth may be found (Hirsch 1854, 1–13).

### *Truth is Relative*

That truth is to be found in the human heart suggests that truth is relative for Hirsch, who believes in progress. This being the case, tolerance becomes self-evident: there is no need to argue with someone who has a different opinion about the truth. Difference of opinion is due to difference in level of depth and understanding. Thus we should learn from him who has surpassed us or allow him whom we have surpassed to catch up (Hirsch 1854, 14–32).

### *God*

If religious knowledge or moral truth is naturally present in man and if religion's sole goal, according to Hirsch, is man's knowledge of himself, then for Hirsch, God's role must be minimal. The Scriptures too take on less authority for him in the course of time: he becomes increasingly convinced that they are books like all others. They are not the work of one editor but the product of thousands of years and were never intended for eternity; in short, they are human works. Yet Hirsch, like Holdheim,

cannot simply abandon that which has been preserved for millennia. Hirsch paradoxically experiences that Scripture, despite its human origins, directs its gaze toward the human heart and contains in a deep sense the religious side of human life. Times may have changed, but the human heart has not (Hirsch 1854, 78–119).

### *Labour as Man's Purpose*

Returning to a theme central to his *Die Religionsphilosophie der Juden*, Hirsch once again confirms that it is from the Bible that man's purpose becomes clear: he is to rule over the earth. And this he is to achieve through labour. Labour is man's destiny, his calling, and not the result of sin, as Christians presumes. This is why man was to work in the Garden of Eden prior to ever having eaten from the tree. Labour is meant to ennoble us and is an end in itself, man's purpose, and not simply a means.

From his initial identification of labour as the essence of Judaism and in fact of all religion, Hirsch constructs a theory of the ideal society based on labour, incorporating the notions of freedom (as emphasized by Hegel), equality, and brotherhood all essential to Marxism. His purpose is to deny that Judaism or religion is based on egoism and must necessarily produce an unjust society, as Marx had proposed. Humans, when wanting to live a human life, cannot live alone in nature but need to form a society. When humans seek simply to fulfil their own desires or urges, there will be no just society. When allowed to develop one's talents through work, when one knows that one's work depends on the work of others, when one realizes that developing one's talents is possible only when others are equally allowed to develop theirs, then the more one's efforts will succeed (Hirsch 1854, 33–54, 148–189).

As for freedom, Hirsch agrees with Bauer that there is no freedom of conscience if only one church is allotted privileges, or the followers of one religion are oppressed. Not even the dominant church enjoys freedom of conscience in such situations. True freedom exists only when freedom of speech is permitted, even if the thoughts expressed are considered contrary to the truth. The power of argumentation must suffice to convince others.

### *Symbols and Ritual*

Returning to the question of diversity, Hirsch directs himself to ritual. Like truth itself, Hirsch regards the material, temporal expressions of

truth as relative. Yet he too, like Holdheim, realizes that symbols and rituals are necessary if religion is to be an outer reality and not just an inner reality or thought. Ritual is the art form of religion and a general human need. Thus all rituals share a common purpose, yet their forms must be diverse as long as men are on diverse levels of culture (*Bildungstufe*). Nevertheless, they are to be respected as long as they do not contradict morality (*Sittlichkeit*).

Public ritual helps realize that humanity is a whole and every individual a worthy member of this whole. For the community, the moments when the need is felt to express the higher value of life through symbolic acts are the religious festivals and holidays. Judaism chose the most important historical moments of the people as ritual occasions. For Christianity, these occasions are the important moments in the life of Christ. For Freemasons, unlike Bauer on the one hand or Jews who would do away with ritual on the other, the need for rituals is obvious. Yet not all ritual is beneficial, as Hirsch already explained in his *Die Reform im Judenthum*. In the course of time, many of the symbolic acts have become incomprehensible and fail to express the underlying ideas. Adhering to such rituals is close to paganism, where rituals are carried out as divine necessities, as literal and unalterable service to God (Hirsch 1854, 120–147).

### *The Roots of Intolerance*

Bauer and Marx were quick to point out that Jews and Judaism wished to be tolerated while they in turn were far from tolerant. Holdheim, denying Jewish nationhood, explained that Jews still maintained the feelings of former fellow countrymen for each other. Now that the barriers between Jews and others were removed by the loss of their nationhood, Jews should cultivate the same feelings for the state and their fellow countrymen that they formerly felt for each other (Holdheim 1844b, 44). Holdheim attributes Judaism's intolerance to the rabbis' mistaken insistence on maintaining Jewish nationality. Hirsch avers that neither Judaism nor paganism is intolerant, at least not to outsiders. But he, like Holdheim, admits that things had gone wrong in Judaism. Whereas the message of Abraham and the prophets is that God hears all people and all are God's image, the Jews failed to live out this principle since the Second Temple period. Hirsch describes Ezra and the Pharisees in terms of his own post-1848 experience: they were *Gemüthsmenschen* and mystical romantics whose Restoration was noth-

ing less than a fantasized past and constructed tradition. Opposed to them were the Sadducees or cool, rational literalists for whom the old must be restored, but exactly as it was, without later increment or notions of tradition. Thus both the Pharisees and Sadducees, the romantics and orthodox, reverted to paganism, with all its formalities and outward ceremonies. Judaism, Hirsch concedes, sought truth in literalness for as long as two millennia and had thus operated outside of history, as Bauer had rightly claimed (Hirsch 1854, 212–222).

### *Jesus and Paul*

Judaism became intolerant, but this intolerance remained an internal affair, a Jewish affair. While all were free to imagine how God was the one and unique God, the symbols, having become the absolute command of God, were not to be questioned by those who were to observe them. Christianity, however, was far more intolerant, and this intolerance was due to Paul and not Jesus.

Jesus realized that things had gone wrong and wanted to show the Jews a new life according to Scripture by serving as an example of this life. Most Jews did not become true Christians, i.e. real followers of Jesus' way of life, even though his teaching as such was not new to them. In this sense they do not differ from most Christians who are also not true Christians in the sense that they imitate Christ.

Paul's teaching of original sin was new, and he rightly went to meet the pagans with this teaching. Paganism understood immediately when Paul said your life till now has been false. But for Jews his message was ambiguous: he attributed the attitude of the Pharisees and Sadducees, a temporary aberration, to Judaism in general. Whereas sin was understood by Jews as the failure to work and the pursuit of one's own desires, and as such it was a test of perseverance, Paul made sin into something universal and necessary. All, he claimed, really desire evil, and thus with Adam, sin entered the world for once and for all. It would seem then that Judaism offered as little as paganism, despite the law. For the Jews, equally under the curse of Adam, were unable to understand the law as the law of the heart. Here Hirsch disagrees violently with Paul: that there could be no salvation in the teaching of Judaism was unacceptable and incorrect. Like Holdheim, Hirsch asserts that the true teaching of Judaism is none other than the true teaching of the Church.

Thus the foundation is laid for Christianity: not salvation but only desire for pleasure may be found in man. Salvation is in Christ: not the human in Jesus is salvation but the superhuman. Christ's life is no longer within, and thus may not be found within by others. Faith can only come to man from outside, through an intermediary. Because the Church alone may determine whether this faith is correct or heretical, there is no salvation outside of the Church and there can be no tolerance for those who refuse it. This is why the religion of love is intolerant. As long as Christianity is something superhuman, as long as all must sin, salvation can only come from without, from a divine superhuman mercy.

Hirsch describes the Church and its teachings as false. Yet the Church has become undeniably great. The solution to this enigma is that while false for the Jews, Christianity is true for pagans: pagans live out pleasure and for them there is no salvation. They seek God not within themselves but in the visible world. Christianity provided them with an answer to the emptiness of their existence (Hirsch 1854, 223–246).

### *The Present*

For Hirsch, Christianity as an extensive religion served its purpose despite its distorted message. But there comes a moment, Hirsch optimistically concludes, when even the pagans have come of age. Yet the Church—to put it in my own words—refused to recognize that intolerant Christianity as it has been known was no longer good enough for the goyim. Hirsch, quite positive about the state of affairs in his day, concludes that paganism had been conquered and most people do not just pay lip service to the message embodied in Judaism. Duty and labour have become universally recognized as man's spiritual vantage, for the life of duty is not godless but should be declared the divine-human life.

Hirsch closes his book with several suggestions for Jews and Christians in order to help effectuate the religion of the future: Jews should not be literal but realize that ceremonies are only temporal symbols of eternal truth, to be replaced by ceremonies appropriate for the present stage of development without losing sight of the truth. The Church as an institution must accept the state's claims to its own holy law and not intervene in state matters, even when the state honours such men that the Church would not have declared worthy of love or honour. When

all's said and done, 'a good dutiful life is not abject; goodness is goodness and virtue is virtue' (Hirsch 1854, 247–248).

Thus for Hirsch the religion of love and tolerance is the religion of the future. Our time, he says, senses and feels daily more and more that its task is to make this a reality. This is the religion Paul expected once paganism was conquered, when all are alive in Christ, when death—life in pleasure—is done away with. Then the son will be made subordinate to God who made all things subject to him, and thus God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:24–28).

### CONCLUSION

It remains unclear what utopia Hirsch has in mind: a Judaism true to its principle, a Christianity close to Judaism, and a Freemasonry true to its own doctrines; or a religion beyond Judaism, Christianity, and Freemasonry, embodying the divine-human truth that they share. Perhaps these are in fact one and the same. Holdheim, although far from Hirsch's Hegelian and Marxist identification of religion with labour, comes close to Hirsch when recognizing religion as morality and, later in life, as love. Both thought for a while that society was quite close to realizing the messianic ideal: life and religion had become equated in civil society. Hirsch and Holdheim therefore subsumed ceremonies and even work on the Sabbath to service for the common good (see Frishman 2004). In his optimism Holdheim even went so far as to allow mixed marriage. Hirsch begrudgingly acknowledges Christianity's role in history, a role that has already been played out; Holdheim attributes Christianity's greatness to a historical error. Their disappointment with the turns European society takes leads them to similar conclusions: as long as the religion of love and tolerance has not been established, the Jewish mission remains unfulfilled and as such the Jew needs to remain a Jew, in the present but even in the messianic future (see Wiese 2007, 344–373 for a further comparison of Holdheim, Hirsch, and Einhorn). For Hirsch the Jew will exemplify that labour is the fulfilment of God's will, while for Holdheim the Jew is to illuminate God's universal covenant of love and justice with mankind. According to both, this will be only be accomplished by living out the universal through the particular.

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# SACRED DEATH FOR ORTHODOX JEWISH THOUGHT DURING THE HOLOCAUST: WITH A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY INTO CHRISTIAN PARALLELS

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The elements of sacred death during the Holocaust for ultra-Orthodox Judaism at the time invite comparison with classical, patristic Christianity.<sup>1</sup> While the primary Christian issue of Christ's passion and death, as well as the fact that the Christian could choose between renouncing his or her religion and martyrdom, remain mutually exclusive with Judaism, the secondary issues of archetype, suffering-love, abnegation of the will, transcending physical pain, liberating the pure soul from the body and vicarious suffering all bear resemblance. Parallels between rabbinic and patristic concepts of sacred death, as part of a common universe of discourse, have been identified (Boyarin 1999, 95–97; Lieu 1996, 78–81; van Henten 2004, 163–181). Did this 'community' remain through the ages? For wartime ultra-Orthodox thinkers, the term for sacred death, *mesirut nefesh al kiddush Hashem*, submission of the soul in sanctification of the Name, applied to specific individuals, classes of pious Jews, and Jewish victims collectively. The parallel term in Christianity has been 'martyr', meaning witness.<sup>2</sup>

## ORTHODOX JEWISH PERCEPTIONS

### *Scriptural Archetypes*

Archetypes have been invoked throughout Jewish history. For example, Isaac's virtual martyrdom at Ur Kasdim appeared in the midrash (e.g. *GenR*, *Parashah 38*, *Siman 13*). The *Akedah* was invoked in 4 Macc

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<sup>1</sup> The martyrdom of Christ Himself and its application to the Holocaust is a separate issue (Nahshoni (Razmivash) 1958, 32; Roskies 1984, 258–310; Amishai-Maisels 1993, 178–197; Greenberg 2002a; Berger, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> The origin and history of the term *mesirut nefesh al kiddush Hashem* has been studied by Gruenewald (1968, 476–484), Adler (1975, 23: 166–182), and Friedman (1904). The Christian term 'martyr' has been analyzed by Brox (1961, 113–231). I have, however, retained the term 'Ten Martyrs.'

7:14, *M. Taan* 2:4ff., and *Git* 57<sup>b</sup>). Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were included in 4 Macc 13:9, 16:20, and 18:11 (see Fischel 1947; van Henten 1997, 125–186; Agus 1988; Cohen, G.D. 1991). In the period of the Crusades, the *Akedah* was brought forward by Eliezer of Worms (1165–1230). Drawing from *PRE*, he wrote that when the knife reached Isaac's throat, the soul fled his body in fright. The soul returned, and when God commanded Abraham, 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him' (Gen 21:12), Isaac arose from the altar and recited, 'Blessed art Thou our God ... who revives the dead' (Eliezer MiWorms 1978).<sup>3</sup> In his *Chronicle*, Solomon bar Simson identified those killed in Mainz during the Crusades with the Ten Martyrs of the Tannaitic period. Like Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues, those Jews were slain for the unity of God's name and joined the righteous in the world to come (Solomon bar Simson 1996, 31) (on the Ten Martyrs, see Zeitlin 1947; Boustan 2005, 265–386; Finkelstein 1938; Herr 1967/68; Adler 1975, 21: 459–462; and Reeg 1985). Shemtov ben Yosef Shemtov cited the philosopher Hasdai Crescas (1340–1410) as saying that Abraham taught that anyone from his seed had to be ready to offer life in sanctification of God's name, and that this explained why Jews martyred themselves—to demonstrate that they were of the seed of Abraham and Isaac (Saperstein 1991) (on Jewish interpretations of the *Akedah*, see Adler 1975, 1: 108–117; Spiegel 1967; Levenson 1993; Milgrom 1988; Even Hen 2006; Konvitz 1947/48; and Levenzon 1950).

Ultra-Orthodox thinkers during the Holocaust followed suit. Understood within the metahistorical context of God's covenantal relationship with Israel (anchored in creation, revelation and redemption), ancient sacred deaths served both as archetype and living source for Jewish martyrdom over time (Greenberg 2006).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> R. Judah said, when the blade touched his neck, the soul of Isaac fled and departed, but when he heard His voice from between the two cherubim saying to Abraham, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad' [Gen 22:12], his soul returned to his body, and Abraham set him free, and Isaac stood upon his feet. And Isaac knew that in this manner the dead in the future will be quickened. He opened his mouth and said, 'Blessed art Thou O Lord, who quickeneth the dead' (Second benediction of the *Shemoneh Esrei*) (*PRE* chap. 31).

<sup>4</sup> Baumel and Schacter speak of the blend of archetype and ongoing source, observing that over the centuries, in an effort to maintain faith in God in the face of incredible suffering, Jewish victims viewed their experience as part of a continuum. Their respective trials were not *sui generis*. Indeed, the greater the tragedy and threat to God's covenantal bond, the greater the effort to absorb and subsume it into already established archetypes (Baumel and Schacter 1992, 109).

Viewing the *Akedah* as virtual sacrifice,<sup>5</sup> Kalonymous Kalman Shapira preached in the Warsaw ghetto (October 1940) that ‘the *Akedah* was not only a test of Isaac, but also the commencement of a form of worship that requires total self-sacrifice for God and for the Jewish people.... The *Akedah* was just the beginning, the expression of intent and desire, while the murder of a Jew is the conclusion of the act. Thus, the *Akedah* and all murders of Jews since are components of one event’ (Shapira 2000, 140). Mordekhai Shulman, a Head of the Slobodka, Lithuania ('Musar', moralistic school) yeshiva, who was stranded in America by the war, recalled how Abraham’s brother Haran hesitated choosing God over Nimrod’s idols at Ur Kasdim and was burned to death, while Abraham chose God and survived the fiery furnace (*GenR*, *Parashah* 38, *Siman* 13). Abraham’s act of *mesirut nefesh*, grounded in *devekut* (intense adherence to God), became instilled in the people of Israel for generations to come ('*mah horishah lanu ... lehashpia al banim ve'al benei banim ad sof hadorot*') and actualized when oppression struck (Grossman 1982/83, 639–641).

The *Akedah* was cited following the war, in 1946 and 1947. Ya’akov Lesin, a Slobodka yeshiva graduate who fled Lithuania in 1939 and taught at Rabbi Yizhak Elhanan Spector Yeshiva (RIETS) in New York, wrote that Abraham’s readiness to sacrifice Isaac left a deep impression on his people ('*hishir roshem amok*'). It was an everlasting spark, poised to burst into flame in the face of persecution. Then the *Shofar*, the horn of the sacrificed ram, would be heard, to prepare the Jew to emulate Abraham. This was so in the ancient world with Rabbi Akiva, and in the contemporary world as well (Lesin 1946/47). The legal scholar and poet Simḥah Elberg, who escaped Warsaw for Shanghai in 1939, identified the very essence of the Holocaust with the *Akedah*. The *Akedah* for him was a metaphysical reality which blended with the deepest character of Jewish existence—and even penetrated the categorical distinction between Hitler’s Treblinka and Abraham’s Mt. Moriah (Elberg 1946). The Head of the Merkaz Harav Kook Yeshiva in Jerusalem, Ya’akov Mosheh Ḥarlap, wrote that the soul of every victim burst the material finitude of the world to share in the infinite light of the messianic reality, making each one an *Akedah* (Greenberg 2002b). Benziyon Bruk, the Head of the Novagroduk (Musar) yeshiva in Jerusalem, spoke of

<sup>5</sup> Examples of the view that Isaac was killed (virtually or actually) include 4 Macc 17:24, *Mekhilta Derabi Shimon bar Yohai*, *Massekhta Desanya* 2:2; *PT Taan* 65<sup>a</sup>, *GenR*, *Parashah* 39, *Siman* 11 and *Parashah* 94, *Siman* 5; and *LevR*, *Parashah* 36, *Siman* 5.

the legacy of Abraham's silence. According to *Yalkut Shimoni (Tehillim, Remez 709)* although Abraham had much to say to God in response to the command to sacrifice his son, he remained silent. The survivors of the Holocaust, filled with memories of sacred death, should also remain silent about God's intentions with the Holocaust (Bruk 1946/47). Ḥayim Yisrael Zimerman, rabbi of the Sokolov (Kożk) Hasidic synagogue in Tel Aviv, wrote that Abraham's *mesirut nefesh*, overcoming his deepest human feeling to obey God's command and sacrifice the son for whom he longed and in whom he had so much hope (anyone else would have suffered a heart attack!), became an ongoing reality within Jewish history. Thus, Akiva entered the flames, dying with love for God (Zimerman 1947). Lastly, in the Ulm DP camp outside of Munich, Benziyon Firer identified the *mesirut nefesh* of the Holocaust as the continuation of the *Akedah*. *Mesirut nefesh* was Israel's sole defense of Torah against the hatred of the world ever since Sinai (Firer 1947; Firer 1948).

Ḥananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan 3) were also archetypes with lasting legacies. Yizḥak Ayyzik Sher, a Slobodka yeshiva Head who escaped Lithuania at the onset of the war and headed the new Slobodka yeshiva of Benei Berak, explained how they entered the fiery furnace filled with a trust in God (*bitahon*) which unveiled God's presence in history. They knew that their fate was up to God's will, they rejoiced in following it, and they sanctified God's name publicly—all in *bitahon*. They experienced divine help in response and were released. The three knew that all came from God, that their troubles had to be for the good, and that they should therefore rejoice even in their suffering, and so God's goodness manifest itself. Sher thought of the Holocaust as a fiery furnace which purified collective Israel, where absolute faith in God and His goodness mandated Israel's ultimately good end under God (Sher 1989/90, 1: 140–141).

The Ten Martyrs, especially Akiva and Ishmael, had similar roles. During the war Efrayim Sokolover, a graduate of the Slobodka yeshiva serving as rabbi in Ra'anana, said that *mesirut nefesh* was a secret power latent, uniquely, in the heart of every Jew ('*hakoah hana'aleh vehatimir hazeh hamushrash akh verak belev ha'yisraeli*'). The Ten Martyrs were the exemplars, and the hundreds of thousands of Jews murdered in the Holocaust were their generation's Ten Martyrs—each one an Akiva or Ishmael. The Jews of Poland, with their *Hasidim* and *Admorim*, yeshiva students and teachers of Torah, were one with Akiva, sharing his dedication to Torah unto death (Sokolover 1965/66, 255–256, 278). Sher brought Akiva's *bitahon* ('Whatever the All-Merciful does is for the

good.' *Ber* 60<sup>b</sup>) into the current catastrophe. Like Akiva, tens of thousands of Jews recited the *Shema*, declaring love for God even as God took the soul into death (*Ber* 61<sup>b</sup>), with *bitahon* that all was for the good (Sher 1967/68, 90–118, 216–222; Sher 1989/90, 1: 82–84, 140–141). The murder of Avraham Grodzensky in particular—he was burned to death in the Kovno ghetto hospital, 13 or 14 July 1944—was one with the sacred deaths of Ishmael and Akiva (Grodzensky had spoken himself of Akiva's joy at death, for now he actualized the words of the *Shema* (*PT Ber*, *Perek 9*, *Halakhah 5* and *Ber* 61<sup>b</sup>). With *bitahon*, Ishmael was silent even as the tormenters were about to violate the sacred place for *Tefillin* on his forehead, lest it be thought that he lost his faith. Akiva's *bitahon* moved him to declare love for God as he was tortured with red-hot iron forks. Grodzensky also resembled the young priests who cast their Temple keys upward as the Second Temple burned. A hand from heaven reached out to grab them and they jumped into the flames (*Taan* 29<sup>a</sup>; ARN, *Perek 4:45*) (Sher 1989/90, 2: 538–542. See also Yuval 2006, 146; and Risikoff 1939). Hillel Vitkind, who headed the Novagroduk (Musar) yeshiva in Tel Aviv, also tied the deaths of tens of thousands who publicly sanctified the Name in the Holocaust with the sacred deaths of the Ten Martyrs, in particular with that of Akiva, whose deep understanding of the *Shema*'s declaration to love God with all one's soul even as God took the soul stayed with him through death (Vitkind 1943/44; see also Fayn 1938, 38–44).

For these thinkers, the sacred deaths of the ancients constituted an ideal to be followed in the face of the current persecution. The ancient exemplars left a live legacy of potential sacred death, to be actualized in the face of persecution—unifying martyrdom of the present with martyrdom of the past. For some, the sacred death which was crystallized in the *Akedah* had metaphysical character and constituted a realm of being which included all instances of martyrdom over the ages. For wartime ultra-Orthodox thinkers, the sacred deaths of the Holocaust were not *sui generis*, but the actualization of a hidden power and the manifestation of transcending essence.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The deaths of Aaron's sons Nadav and Abihu are not cited here as archetypes, as the term *mesirut nefesh al kiddush Hashem* was not applied to them (e.g. Elazary 1946/47, 176–180).

*Physical Suffering and Love*

The theme of suffering with love, of the Jew's love for God and God's love for the Jew, was articulated by the Tannaim. God, it was believed, brought the suffering to purge the pious martyr's sin and secure him against the fires of hell. Both God and the sufferings themselves were loved because of this. The martyr's love enabled him to accept the torment as a manifestation of divine love, while the torment tested his love for God. By concentrating on God with love, pious martyrs of the Hadrianic persecutions were able to persevere (Büchlér 1967, 140–163; Urbach 1975, 407, 416–417; Sanders 1972/73; Baumeister 1980, 63–65).<sup>7</sup> Akiva's suffering expressed his love for God, and he died for God and with love for Him (*Mek. Massekhta Deshira, Beshallah*, 127). According to the *Mekhilta*, when one was tortured or killed for observing *mizvot* or studying Torah, one became God's beloved (*Mek. Massekhta Debahodesh, Yitro*, 227). The midrash spoke of 'chastisements of love' ('yesurim shel ahavah'), sufferings which came but did not hinder Torah study (*GenR, Parashah 92, Siman 1*). It associated a generation of persecution with loving God when Jews were slaughtered as sheep for God, pouring their blood for *Kiddush Hashem* (*CantR, Parashah 1, Siman 2* and *Parashah 2, Siman 7*). Those who were killed by Turnius Rufus were described as loving God more than the righteous of earlier generations (*Shir Hashirim Zuta* (Buber), *Parashah 1*) (Safrai 1978/79–1980/81).<sup>8</sup>

In the medieval period, philosopher Bahyah Ibn Pakudah tied increased suffering to increased love of God:

In the manner of Job, 'Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him' [Job 13:15], there was a pious man who used to get up at night and say, 'My God, You have made me hungry and naked, and You have put me in the darkness of night. But I swear by Your power, that were You to burn me

<sup>7</sup> Büchlér writes that Ḥaninah ben Teradyon recognized that his violent death and horrible sufferings were brought about by the divine judge. As God was just, they were due to human sins. At the sudden visitation, the teacher may not have been conscious of the transgression. But he did not hesitate to declare that God's punishing justice was fully deserved. The silent acceptance of suffering and explicit recognition of divine judgment emanated from the scholar's love of God. He was not anxious about his life on earth; he was indifferent to the fire consuming his body. Knowing that his violent death atoned for all his sins and would secure his soul from being sent to hell confirmed him in his calm endurance of the agonies of his slow death (Büchlér 1967, 205).

<sup>8</sup> According to Safrai, *Kiddush Hashem* in the instances of Hananiah-Mishael-Azariah (Dan 3:17–18), Eleazar, and Hannah and her seven children (2 and 4 Macc) was not tied to love (Safrai 1978/79–1980/81).

with fire, it would only add to my love for You and my attachment to You.' (Bahyah Ibn Pakudah 1973, 428; Mosheh ben Gershon 1875, para. 1–para.331))

These precedents resurfaced during the Holocaust. Suffering was included in the mutual love between God and man. God was to be loved through the suffering, because He brought the suffering out of love, for the people to return to Him (*teshuvah*). When human love penetrated through suffering unto death, death became sacred. In the Warsaw ghetto, Shapira accepted the pain of imprisonment with love. There was no relief. But one must never become angry. God knew more than man, and 'He is the heart of all the Jewish people, and the heart knows what is happening to the body and suffers with the whole body' (Shapira 2000, 160). In December 1938 in Kovno-Slobodka, citing Bahya Ibn Pakudah's principle of the harmony of the world as created by the one God, Abraham Grodzensky observed that *devekut* enabled perception of an inner, absolute unity between suffering and love (Bahyah Ibn Pakudah 1973, 173; Grodzensky 1962/63, 18<sup>a</sup>–19<sup>b</sup>, 121<sup>a</sup>–122<sup>b</sup>). In January–February 1940 he drew a triadic interconnection between divine love, human suffering, and *teshuvah*, where suffering was an expression of God's love, intended to induce *teshuvah*. Poland was being destroyed, the elite of European under unprecedented material and spiritual siege. The *teshuvah* had to be proportional to the tragedy (Grodzensky 1962/63, 214<sup>b</sup>). Sher said that Grodzensky suffered death with love, emulating Akiva who loved God through the torture and as God took his soul, intensifying his love, and assuring his students that 'All which the All-merciful does is for the good' (*Ber* 60<sup>b</sup>) (Sher 1989/90, 2: 538–542). According to his nephew Yehoshua Grodzensky, as the flames enveloped the hospital, Grodzensky declared that 'we have been taught to accept sufferings in love, and to bless evil as we bless the good' (Brown, forthcoming). Eliyahu Meir Bloch, a Telsiai (Musar) yeshiva Head who was stranded in America by the war, held that suffering was a product of divine judgment (*din*), rooted in God's covenantal love (*hesed*), which was intended to bring the soul away from sin and closer to God: 'For whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth' (Prov 3:12) (Bloch, E.M. 1971/72; and Bloch, E.M. 1941).

Sokolover and Ḥayim Elazary, a Slobodka Hevron (Musar) yeshiva graduate then in Ohio, took the relationship between divine love and human suffering further. Since 'chastisements come to Israel only for its own benefit, and solely out of God's love' (*Tanna Debe Eliyahu Zuta*, chap. 1), the harsher the suffering, the greater was the love of God which brought it about. Writing during the war, Sokolover held

that the more painful the suffering, the greater God's love—and that God remained present throughout the ordeal. He offered the metaphor of a tailor who cut beautiful cloth into pieces—not to destroy the cloth but to make a suit. God was having the body of Israel cut, limb from limb, shattering His children to bits—and even the bits disappeared. The tribulation made one fearful, insane, weak, and there were no words of consolation. But it was all for the sake of Israel's 'garment' of redemption (Sokolover 1965/66, 115–116). Elazary stressed the need to love God with all one's heart, even as God took the soul. The judgment of death should be accepted in joy—for it came from God. He pointed to Akiva, who loved God through the great suffering—a love greater than that of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who might have succumbed to Nebuchadnezzar's demands had they had to endure prolonged suffering (*Ket* 33<sup>a/b</sup>) (Elazary 1946/47, 331–336).

### *Abnegating the Willful Self*

The theme of abnegating the will before God at sacred death was probed by the Mitteler Rebbe of Lubavitch, Dov Ber Schneersohn (1773–1827). He delineated three levels. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were prepared to submit their souls to God in sanctification of His name. The intention to sacrifice the self was there, but they were not actually (or virtually) killed. Their souls were annulled (by their declaration), but not their bodies (Dan 3:17–18). Isaac's self-abnegation ('bitul et atsmo') reached a higher level, for there was also virtual death of the body. His hands were bound for sacrifice and he was placed upon the woodpile. He was so frightened of imminent death that all life left him, except for a tiny spark to revive him after he would be taken down from the altar. That his life virtually ended was reflected in Abraham's resignation—and anticipation of revival:

When the sword reached his neck, the soul of Isaac left him. When the voice came forth, 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him' [Gen 22:12], Isaac's soul returned to his body. Abraham released him [from the bonds] and Isaac stood up. Abraham knew that the dead would be revived in this way, and he said, 'Blessed art Thou ... who revives the dead.' (*Yalkut Shimoni, Parashah Vayera, Perek 22, Remez* 101)

The highest level of self-abnegation was reached by Akiva, whose body was actually burned. The physical dimension to the soul's submission (*mesirut nefesh*) brought comprehensive *bitul*. What, then, remained?

Akiva experienced permanent *devekut*, where autonomy disappeared and his soul's divine potential (*yehidah*) was actualized (Schneersohn 1864, 69–93; Loewenthal 1988, 468–478).

These precedents found their way into the Holocaust era. For wartime thinkers, sacred death meant self-transcendence. As the self was removed or abnegated, the soul, emptied of ego, entered the divine presence. For Telsiai yeshivah Head Avraham Yizhak Bloch in 1939—he was murdered outside the Rainiai labor camp in summer 1941—sacred death joined *bitahon* and self-annulment ('*bitul atsmo*', '*lehashlikh et atsmo legamrei tahot hanhagat Hashem yitbarakh*'; '*hatsadikim yakhniyu veyashpilu et atsmam*'). There was an *a priori* point of reality where the goodness of the individual (subjective) and the goodness of God (objective) were one. *Bitahon*, the absolute trust in God's goodness, channeled this one goodness into historical experience. As divine and human goodness had one root, the human assertion of goodness, through *bitahon*, uncovered divine goodness (itself the source of human goodness). In other words, because the universe was objectively good, acting out of *bitahon* assured a good empirical result. But what was there to do when darkness was so deep that no *bitahon* could be expressed? Bloch spoke of a leap out of darkness, with a transcending, absolute *bitahon* that the good universe remained—beyond all perception. When the leap occurred at death, death became sacred. It became possible when the worldly ego was annulled. By abandoning the profane universe to the point of transcending the self related to it, by surrendering the will, it was possible to reach God and blend into divine goodness (Bloch, A. Y. forthcoming; Greenberg 2004). Elazary also spoke of self-annulment. Akiva's daily *Shema*-recitation, loving God even as God took the soul, prepared him for the moment of death. When it approached, the *Shema* created a love for God which went beyond the individual personality. To submit the soul in sanctification of the great name ('*lim-sor et nafsho al kedushat shemo hagadol*') meant surrendering the autonomous, willful self in an act of transcendental love for God. Sacred death meant annulling the will for the will of the creator ('*bitel et retsono mipnei ratson bora'o*') (Elazary 1946/47, 77–78).

### *Transcending Physical Suffering*

Meir of Rothenberg (Maharam, 1215–1295) was quoted as saying that once an individual resolved in his mind to submit his soul in sanctification of the Name, no matter the form of his murder, he felt nothing. He

referred to a tradition where a person who was wounded by another felt no pain. An ordinary person could not stop from crying out, if even the pinky finger was burned. But holy ones did not cry out at all ('*ve'anu ro'im kedoshim she'einam tso'akim klum*') (Meir of Rothenberg 1608, para. 517). His student Samson ben Žadok (d. 1312) specified stoning, burning, burial alive, hanging, and said that for Maharam, those who submitted themselves to be burned and killed in sanctification of the name ('*mosrim atsmam liserefah ulehareigah al kiddush Hashem yit-barakh*') cried out neither '*Oy*' nor '*Avoy*'. By keeping the unique Name in mind, from the onset of the torture, one would surely endure the trial without pain ('*vegam omrim ha'olam kevan shemazkir shem hameyuhad tehilah muvtah hu sheya'amod benisayon velo yikhav lo*') (Samson ben Žadok 1557, para. 415).<sup>9</sup> In the fifteenth century the Spanish kabbalist Avraham ben Eliezer Halevi held that even as the martyr's body was hacked to pieces, no pain was felt. Love overwhelmed the pain and new life from God flowed into the martyr's soul. The righteous martyr's love for God was such that even if he were to be killed for loving Him, he would not feel the death. His love was as strong as death (Cant 8:6). Whether buried alive or burned in a furnace, this was as nothing when compared to his love—a love which burned within him as a flaming torch (Cant 8:6). With the mighty flame of love for God within, the soul never suffered from some little fire (*Megillat Amraphel*) (Scholem 1930/31, 152–153; Fishbane 1994, 56). Later, Schneersohn would say that because Akiva's worldly self was annulled, he felt no pain. With the 'one' of the *Shema*, his soul left him, and he did not feel the iron combs—from the moment he began to prolong the 'one' until his soul, enclosed in the 'one', left him (Schneersohn 1864, 111). At this point, the animal and vital aspects of his soul were dissolved. All partitions between Akiva's soul and God were removed, leaving only his divine soul (*yehidah*), the soul as a pure expression of God (Loewenthal 1988).

These precedents were echoed during the catastrophe. Wartime writers attributed the ability to transcend physical pain in sacred death to a *devekut* of such powerful concentration on God as to be drawn into the concentration itself. Those who died a sacred death left the material

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<sup>9</sup> As proof, Meir of Rothenberg (and Samson ben Žadok) cited the description in the *Hekhalot* literature of Hananiah ben Teradyon's six-month rule in Rome, his many executions, and then his being burned alive (Schäfer 1987).

world, transformed into a heavenly, spiritualized condition where physical pain dissipated of itself.

Slobodka (Musar) school thinkers expressed the view that loving and reaching God in sacred death was of such spiritual intensity as to neutralize physical feeling. Efrayim Oshry, a Slobodka yeshiva graduate who attended Grodzensky's Kovno ghetto *Sihot* (moralistic discourses), reported that for Grodzensky, someone determined to sanctify God's name at death would experience such deep *devekut* as to be overwhelmed by the divine presence (*Shekhinah*). Then, not even the worst physical pain would affect him (Oshry 1946). Sokolover wrote that Hananiah ben Teradyon, Ishmael ben Elisha and Simeon ben Gamaliel were able to discuss religious concepts even as they were burned because of the intensity of their *devekut*. Akiva's students, who asked, 'Is this necessary?' (*Ber* 61<sup>b</sup>), were trying to enter his soul, which was a portion of God ('*hanefesh shehi helek elki mima'al'*), and share the secret of his endurance. Akiva conversed with them as if they were in a *beit midrash*. For Sokolover, the Jew of Torah and *mizvot* had such a strong, unbreakable tie to God (*devekut*), that when suffering unto death came, flesh and blood were transformed by *devekut* into spiritual, heavenly material ('*ḥomer ruhani shemimi*') and pain disappeared. The soul (of God, in *devekut*) absorbed the physical as it ascended from earthiness, and the body became emptied of power. This happened with the Ten Martyrs and was happening again during the Holocaust, and it explained how entire Jewish communities could go to death, dancing and singing. For Sokolover, in other words, public sanctification of the Name was a *mizvah* which tapped into the inner, unbreakable tie to God, releasing a spirituality of such potency that the martyr could rejoice as he was being led to slaughter and burning (Sokolover 1965/66, 114–115, 276, 280–281). In America, Shulman explained that Abraham's *devekut* was such that when Nimrod cast him into the fire, he became transformed into a spiritual being. All physical pain subsided. He was immune to the fire, because it was material and he was now of spirit. His brother Haran, who was not, succumbed. Thousands of Jews, over the centuries and into the present, were also able to submit the soul in sanctification of God's name and have their spiritual identity overcome the physical realm of suffering (Grossman 1982/83, 639–641).

In 1946 in Shanghai, Simḥah Elberg wrote that inner spirituality could reach a point where pain was no longer sensed. Thus, a mother who endured the gas chamber in Treblinka did not suffer the tortures of *Gehinnom*, for now she resided in a heavenly atmosphere and the

sufferings subsided ('*hot zi gelebt in an anderer himlischer atmasfer, vos hot ire laydn farzist*') (Elberg 1946).

### *The Soul's Liberation from the Body*

Meir Ibn Gabbai (1480–1540) spoke of removing the physical separation between the soul and God—the body—at sacred death. Akiva submitted himself in sanctification of the Name out of love. As his soul left him with the ‘one’, he experienced pure unity. Once the screen separating him from God was removed, he entered God’s presence, encountering Him face to face with true *devekut* (‘*lehidabek bo dibuk ne’eman*’). Once the body, which prevented *devekut*, was set aside, the spirit touched God and the two became a single entity (Meir Ibn Gabbai 1576/77, *Perek 36, Helek Sitrei Hatorah*, col. 2; Fishbane 1994, 81). In the nineteenth century, Yehudah Aryeh Layb MiGur identified *mesirut nefesh* with the removal of materiality separating the soul from God. This enabled the soul to reveal the inner holiness given by God to every Jew (Yehudah Aryeh Layb MiGur 1989/90, para. 638 and para. 652).

These motifs made their way into the Holocaust. For ultra-Orthodox thinkers, sacred death meant liberating the soul from a body polluted by the residue of the soul’s sin, from the finite enclosure of the infinite soul, or from the disposable byproduct of a life of Torah, for the soul to ascend to God. In America, Ya’akov Lesin wrote that by dividing itself off from the body, the soul removed itself from the material receptacle of sin. Just as even the smallest mechanical failure disabled an entire piece of machinery, the tiniest Halakhic infraction could degrade a person’s whole body. The imperfected soul descended into the body, and both turned turbid. Physical suffering purified the lowered soul, removed the imperfection, and reconditioned it for *devekut*. Thus, for Lesin, the body served as an indispensable instrument for restoring the soul to its full potential for purity. Suffering came because of sin (‘If you see a person subjected to suffering, the person should reflect upon his conduct.’ *Ber* 5<sup>a</sup>). God, who controlled history, brought it about in order to resurrect the soul. He acted out of love, and the sufferings were of love (‘*yesurim shel ahavah*’). Suffering unto death purified the soul absolutely and restored it totally for *devekut*—cleansing it from its turbid past (Lesin 1951/52, 209–215). Eliyahu Meir Bloch spoke of the soul’s shattering the body. Normally, God opened a narrow path through the physical, in an act of grace (*hesed*), enabling the soul to emerge from the body and reach towards Him. Great suffering (Bloch wrote

this in 1945, when he heard that his family in Lithuania had been killed) meant that God added power (*gevurah*) to His *hesed*. Now He shattered the body—which was a shard (*kelippah*), left from the cosmic shattering of the vessel around God at creation (*shevirat hakelim*)—to liberate the spark (the soul) within (the sources for the Lurianic terminology are uncertain). By dashing the ‘enemy’ to pieces (‘Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.’ Exod 15:6), He enabled the soul to ascend and coalesce with His illuminated presence (*Shekhinah*) (Bloch, E. M., 1971/72, 1: 121–127).

In the Land of Israel during the war, Vitkind related that students of the Novagrodsk (Musar) Beit Yosef yeshivas were devoting themselves to Torah study, body and soul, even as they faced being burned alive. They were able to withstand the continual suffering, which was harder than dying quickly (*Ket* 33<sup>a/b</sup>), because they conditioned themselves over the years to submit the soul in sanctification of the Name and His Torah (‘*mesirut nefesh al kiddush Hashem vetroato*’).<sup>10</sup> They were as one with Jews of the great persecution in Mishnaic times, who were tortured with red-hot iron discs, or needles under their nails, until they died (*CantR*, *Parashah* 2, *Siman* 2). As the people of Jacob prevailed then, the students’ enduring commitment assured that their souls would prevail through death now. In principle, Torah and death were mutually exclusive, but if Torah study did lead to death, the soul (spiritual) would separate from the body (material) to enjoy the world to come. In that sense, ‘The words of the Torah can endure, only with him who kills himself for it’ (*Shab* 83<sup>b</sup>) (Vitkind 1943/44, 130–132). Sokolover took Lesin’s theme of the liberation of pure soul from body to the extreme. The torture of the body unto death in the European catastrophe purified Israel’s collective soul. It could be compared to a surgeon with a terribly ill child, who happened to be his son. The surgeon had to amputate the child’s legs and, as the disease spread, the hands and other sections of

<sup>10</sup> For Kalonymous Kalman Shapira:

It may well be true that there are things more terrifying than death, may the Merciful One protect us, as the Talmud (*Ket* 33<sup>a/b</sup>) points out regarding torture: ‘If they had tortured Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah they would have worshiped the idol.’ It is also true, however, that torture is only worse while it endures, but before or after the suffering. Which person would not rather suffer the pain than face certain death? Once the pain has passed, the person is himself again and his sins are atoned for. This is why king David praised the Holy Blessed One (Ps 118:18) saying, ‘God has chastened me exceedingly, but He did not let me die.’ (Shapira 2000, 196).

the body as well. Only the soul remained ('*sherak nishmato bekirbo*'), suffering unto death. Why did God (the surgeon and father) not let the child (the people of Israel) die, and let it suffer endlessly instead? Because Israel's soul was bound to God forever in *devekut*. It survived forever—while everything had to be done as well for that survival. Israel's body was diseased, presumably for Sokolover by sin, and God had it suffer unto death to keep the soul pure and liberate it from the body and maintain its (inevitable and eternal) tie to Him (Sokolover 1965/66, 114). In Jerusalem, Ya'akov Mosheh Harlap said that the victim's shattered body liberated the soul. As the body descended into the oblivion of hopelessly darkened history, the soul, a spark of light, the '*neshamah mi'olam ha'tohu*' (the soul which yearned to break the bonds of finitude) blended into the light of the Messiah son of Joseph—the intermediary between history and the universal redemption of the Messiah son of David (Greenberg 2002b).

### *Vicarious Atonement*

The theme of vicarious atonement was articulated with Hannah and her seven sons. Having conquered the tyrant by their endurance, they caused the downfall of tyranny against their nation and the purification of their homeland (4 Macc 1:11). They begged for God's mercy and for Him to be satisfied with their punishment on the nation's behalf, to let their blood serve as its purification, their life as its ransom (4 Macc 6:27–29). They exchanged their life for the nation's sins, and propitiatory offering of their death enabled divine rescue (4 Macc 17:19–22) (Fischel 1947, 372–373; DeSilva 2006, 2–63). According to the *Mekhilta*, the patriarchs and prophets offered their lives on Israel's behalf—citing Moses (Exod 32:32; Num 1:15) and David (2 Sam 24:17) (*Mek. Massekhta Depisha ad Exod 12:1*).<sup>11</sup>

The concept appeared during the Holocaust. The suffering servant of Isa 53 was invoked, albeit infrequently—perhaps because Christianity had adopted it. At the onset of the war, Yeshayahu Volfsberg and Shlomo Zalman Shragai in Jerusalem suggested that Israel's suffering in Europe atoned (as distinct from assumed) for the sins of the world. Citing David Kimhi (*ad Ezek 18:20*), that the son should not suffer the iniquity of the father, or one person or people for another, they stressed

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<sup>11</sup> According to Zeitlin, the *Tannaim* opposed the idea that a sinless man should atone for the sin committed by another (Zeitlin 1947). Lohse provides examples of vicarious atonement among Amoraim (Lohse 1963, 72–87).

that Isa 53 did not mean that Israel assumed the sins of others. Rather, Israel's suffering in Europe atoned for those sins (Volfsberg 1939; Shragai 1939). In Petaḥ Tikvah, the Chief Rabbi Reuven Katz, who studied in the Slobodka yeshiva, understood the deaths of Jews in Europe as an atonement for the sins of all of Israel. Before the war, he had written that *mesirut nefesh*, originating with the *Akedah*, provided Israel with a secret power to defend Torah: 'If Israel hadn't the hidden power to sacrifice itself on the altar of Torah and *mizvah*, it would have assimilated long ago' ('ilmale hayah le'yisrael hakoah hatamir hazeh lehakriv et atsmo al mizbeah hatorah vechamizvah, ki az kevar mizeman hayah nitmah bein hagoyim mibeli sheyisha'er mimenu kal sarid vepalit') (Katz 1953/54, 1: 65). During the war, he identified the destruction of European Jews, who were holy and pure, as a burnt offering ('*Olah*', see e.g. Lev 1:3–17) which sanctified God and Land. The innocent blood of the sacrificial victims (*korbanot*) atoned for the sins of collective Israel. The atonement was desired by God ('*kaparah retsuyah*'), and the ashes elicited God's mercy and would bring fulfillment of His promise to the patriarchs about inheriting the Land. He stressed:

‘And the blood shall be forgiven them’ [Deut 21:8]. Not that the atonement is separate from the blood. Not that the atonement is for the sake of the blood. The blood is actually the atonement of Israel. The blood of these sanctified ones, heroes, has brought freedom and polity (*medinah*) to Israel. For it was a desirable service, one which reconciled the nation’s trespass (*avon*) (Katz 1953/54, 2: 77).<sup>12</sup>

#### A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY INTO CHRISTIAN PARALLELS

David Flusser has identified connections between the concept of *Kidush Hashem* in Second Temple sources and the New Testament (Flusser 1967/68); Boyarin, Lieu, and van Henten have pointed to common ground between the rabbinic sages and the Church Fathers; and Cohen has done so for the medieval period (Cohen, J. 2004, 13–30). Did the common ground remain into the present? Even to the extent that ultra-Orthodox Jewish motifs during the Holocaust were shared with Christianity? Given its classical role for Christianity and the fact that the

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<sup>12</sup> Citing Isa 53, the London Reform rabbi Ignaz Maybaum wrote that God employed *mizvot* during the biblical times to instruct the world against sin. When this failed He used Jesus' crucifixion, and when this too failed He brought the Holocaust—a bloodless *Akedah* would have been ineffective after the crucifixion (Maybaum 1965). Eliezer Berkovits brought Isa 53 forward in 1979 (Berkovits 1979, 124ff.).

reality of martyrdom (as distinct from its influence on theology) was largely restricted to this time, one may begin with the patristic period. How did the Church Fathers and the martyrs of that era view sacred death? Despite the centrality of Christ's passion, which was exclusive to Christianity, were their conceptions of archetype, suffering with love, separation of soul from body, transcending physical pain, and vicarious suffering the same as those of ultra-Orthodox Jewish thought (with its earlier Jewish precedents) of the catastrophe? Was a common approach to sacred death instilled so deeply into Jewish and Christian consciousness? On the basis of the textual sources, I would conclude initially that despite the similarities, the structure around the central reality of Christ's passion precluded any potential identification.

### *Archetypes*

Like the Jewish thinkers, the Church Fathers drew upon the *Akedah*, suffering servant, Hananiah–Mishael–Azariah, Eleazar, and Hannah and her seven sons as archetypes. But the archetypes were blended into and subsumed by Christ. Nor did they leave a legacy of sacred death within collective Christianity, as was so for collective Judaism.

The *Akedah* was an important theme for the early Church (Davis and Chilton 1978; Davis 1982; Stroumsa 2004; Nahshoni (Razmivash) 1977/78, 1:79; Vermes 1961, 134–227; Lerch 1950; Segal 1987, 109–130). Melito of Sardis (d. 199) for example, unified Isaac with Jesus on the cross: ‘If you wish to see the mystery of the Lord, look at Isaac, who is similarly bound.... It is He [Christ] that was in Isaac bound.’ Specifically, as Isaac carried firewood for his sacrifice, Jesus carried the wood of the cross. Like Isaac, Jesus was led up to be slain by the father. But Jesus was superior to Isaac: Isaac did not suffer or die, as did Christ—the ram (or lamb) who was actually sacrificed. He was caught like the ram in a tree (the cross), and while the slain ram ransomed Isaac, the slain Christ saved humanity (Hall 1979 [Fragments 9 and 10], 33, 75–76; Wilken 1976; Winslow 1982, 765–776). Irenaeus (d. 202) and Origen (d. 253) focused on Abraham’s role. Irenaeus understood Abraham’s obedience as a prelude to God’s sacrifice of Jesus: Abraham willingly conceded his only begotten and beloved son as a sacrifice, ‘so that God might be well pleased on behalf of all his seed, and yield His own, only begotten son as a sacrifice for our redemption’ (*Adversus Haereses* IV:5; see Rom 8:32) (Chilton 1982). Origen held that Abraham was prepared to sacrifice Isaac because he knew that God was no

liar. God promised him progeny, which meant that if Abraham was ordered to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac would be resurrected. Indeed, Abraham knew that Isaac's binding and escape prefigured Jesus' rising from his actual sacrificial death (Origen 1862). The Church of Smyrna identified Polycarp (martyred 155) with the ram—and therefore with Christ. He was not nailed to the stake but tied to it, with his hands behind his back, 'like an exceptional ram taken from a great flock for sacrifice, prepared as a whole burnt offering that is acceptable to God' (Ehrman 2003, 1: 387). Isaiah's suffering servant was also brought forward (Isa 52:13–53:12). Melito of Sardis observed that both the suffering servant and Jesus caused astonishment among men and remained silent (Hall 1979, 75–76). Origen identified Jesus with him. Jesus was 'cut off out of the land of the living for this transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due.' His wounds healed those who believed in Him, and He disarmed those who enclosed them. He 'had no form or comeliness, that we should look at Him, nor beauty that we should delight in Him.' His beauty was of the soul, not of the flesh—which touched only the empty imagination. Jesus bore the disease and pain of those who believed in Him. His suffering was not on the (essential) level of His glory or divine Logos, where He remained free and in control, but on the (non-essential) level of the body, as in Gethsemane, where He remained helpless (Markschies 1996, 229–233; see also Lohse 1963, 220–225; Wolff 1950, 123–142).

Origen invoked Eleazar and Hannah and her seven sons. He exhorted Christians to emulate Eleazar. In the face of torture and death, Eleazar declared, 'I am ending sufferings in my body, but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear Him' (2 Macc 6:30–31). The seven sons were exemplars of 'robust martyrdom.' They 'not only endured their own tortures but demonstrated how strong their religion was by watching their brothers' tortures.' Hannah exemplified how religion and holiness could overcome the fire of a mother's love. Together, they served as inducements to complete their baptism of water with a baptism of blood that not only brought them into purity but also reciprocated the love Christ showed them by His death (*Exhortation*, chap. 23 and chap. 28; Greer 1971, 56–57, 59–60). Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 391) and Chrysostom (d. 407) internalized the Maccabean martyrdom by redefining the archetype as one of spiritual struggle against the passions (the 'daily Antiochus')—a struggle made possible by Christ (Rouwhorst 2005, 84–87). Cyprian (martyred 258) cited Daniel and the Maccabees as inspirations for dying and rising through Christ. The strength of faith

manifested and proved itself, both in the certainty that God could deliver from death, and in having no fear of death. When Daniel was pressured to adore the idol Bel, worshipped by the people and the king, he spoke forth, full of faith, and championed God's honor: 'I worship nothing save the Lord my God who founded heaven and earth' (Dan 14:5). The seven sons of Hannah who endured terrible tortures were blessed martyrs, as was Hannah, who encouraged them and then died with them: 'Do they not testify and demonstrate to us what is mighty valor and faith? Do they not stir us by their sufferings to seek the triumphs of martyrdom?' (*Letter to the King of Thibaris*, Clarke 1984, 3: 63–64).

### *Suffering with Love*

For the Church Fathers, suffering and love were present together in the blood poured by Christ, and the martyr shared in them. Whereas in Judaism the suffering was a divine instrument used to bring the Jew to *teshuvah*, Christian suffering was an end in itself, a purification which identified the martyr with God.

In anticipation of suffering unto death, Ignatius (martyred 107) spoke of abandoning all his love for material, earthly life, for the spiritual and imperishable love of Christ which was present in His blood, and death. His love for worldly things was being crucified (Gal 6:14), replaced by living waters within him (John 4:10, 14) which beckoned, 'Come to Father.' He no longer took pleasure in food that perished, in this-worldly pleasures. Instead he desired the bread of God, which was the flesh of Jesus Christ, and for drink he desired Christ's blood, which was imperishable love (*Letter to the Romans* 7:23, Ehrman 2003, 1: 279; see also Baumeister 1980, 280–281).

Speaking of Polycarp, the Church of Smyrna coupled the martyr's endurance with love, as he journeyed from the flesh to the spirit. The nobility and perseverance of the martyr, the love for Christ, were astonishing. He endured even as the 'skin was ripped to shreds by whips, revealing the very anatomy of their flesh, down to the inner veins and arteries, while bystanders felt pity and wailed.' This was possible, because 'under torture the martyrs of Christ had journeyed away from the flesh, or rather, that the Lord was standing by, speaking to them' (*Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* 2:2, Ehrman 2003, 1: 369). Origen also synthesized endured suffering with love, in the journey from the earthly. Through great love for God, the martyr was able to break the worldly bonds of love for the body and for life, and fashion wings which bore

the living and actual word of God (*Exhortation*, chap. 27, Greer 1971, 59). As described by von Campenhausen, Origen looked upon the martyr as one who went freely and joyfully to his death, driven by love for the God with whom he longed to unite. Martyrdom tested whether the love for God transcended human weakness, and whether one could divide the image of the higher spiritual essence of Christ apart from one's earthly bonds (von Campenhausen 1936, 129–131).

Cyprian tied God's love to tribulations and testing. He cited Paul, who gloried in tribulations, 'knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us....' (Rom 5:2–5). The tribulations were a test by God, 'to know whether ye do love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul' (Deut 13:3; *Ad Fortunatum* 6:9; Hummel 1945, 132). The ideas that suffering tested love, and that great love for God drove an ascent which transcended physical pain, were also present in Jewish catastrophic thought. But in patristic thought, the love of God belonged to Christ's presence in the martyr, while in Jewish thought, God's love manifest itself in the suffering He brought for the sake of *teshuva*.

### *Abnegating the Will*

For Church Fathers, when martyrdom took place, Christ's presence displaced the martyr's will. As Christ entered into man, the worldly self was transcended and the soul became of Christ. In sacred death for Jewish thought, God did not enter man. The soul, transcending human will, ascended into God's presence.

Karl Holl writes that the Christian martyrs assumed Christ's spirit and coalesced with Him into a single personality. They struggled and conquered as one (Holl 1928, 68–102; see also Butterweck 1995, 173–174). Origen spoke of exchanging the soul for the presence of Christ: 'If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his soul will lose it; and whoever loses his soul for My sake will save it' (Matt 16:24–25). He cited Paul: 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me' (Gal 2:20) and then exhorted: 'Now let it be seen whether we have taken up our crosses and followed Jesus; this happens if Christ

lives in us' (*Exhortation* chap. 12, Greer 1971, 49–50). The Christian martyr's soul yearned for unity with Christ. Instilled with Christ, it now resided in a spiritual realm. Love of God with all the soul meant a union with God, liberated from the ephemeral body.

Cyprian spoke of the self's displacement by Christ, such that the glory and confession of suffering belonged to Christ. The human being was infirm and weak, and should pray so as not to be led into temptation, 'lest anyone should with pride and arrogance assume anything to himself, lest anyone should claim by his own, the glory and his confession in suffering' (*Di Dominia Oratione* 26, Hummel 1945, 92).

### *Transcending Physical Suffering*

For the Church Fathers, as for Jewish thinkers considering the Holocaust, the martyr was able to concentrate so intensely on spiritual reality as to be grasped by it and become oblivious to physical pain; physical suffering dissolved in the wake of all-inclusive spirituality. The physical pain, an act of sympathy with the passion of Christ, was sought after as an end in itself. For Ignatius, the pain was even a pleasure. The blood of the passion was sought after, and glorified when Polycarp was stabbed: 'a dove came forth, along with such a quantity of blood that it extinguished the fire' (*Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* 16, Ehrman 2003, 1: 389–390). In Jewish thought, physical pain tested love for God, and Akiva's was praised because it was prolonged in comparison to that of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. But it was not sought after.

For Ignatius, Christ's suffering constituted salvation and he sought identity with it. Indeed, as long as he did not suffer and die, he felt incomplete. He begged to be 'the bread for the wild beasts,' for through them he could 'attain to God.' He saw himself as 'the wheat of God' and by being 'ground by the teeth of the wild beasts' he would become 'the pure bread of Christ.' He wished that the animals would 'leave no part of my body behind.' For when the world no longer saw his body, he would truly be a disciple of Christ. Ignatius would take 'full pleasure' in what the wild beasts would do to him, for the torment would bring him to Christ: 'Fire and cross and packs of wild beasts, cuttings and being torn apart, the scattering of bones, the mangling of limbs, the grinding of the whole body, the evil torments of the devil—let them come upon me, only that I may attain to Jesus Christ' (*Letter to the Romans* 4:1–2; 5:2–3, Ehrman 2003, 1: 275–276; see also Baumeister

1980, 280–282, 304; Brox 1961, 215–222; Butterweck 1995, 30–32; and von Campenhausen 1936, 69–72).

For the Church of Smyrna, the martyr, ‘clinging to the gracious gift of Christ, ...despised the torments of the world’ (*Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* 2:3). He was so concentrated on the world to come, whose good things ‘no ear has heard nor eye seen, which have never entered into the human heart’ that ‘the fire of their inhuman torturers was cold to them’ (*Martyrdom* 2:3). Polycarp, the Church reported, taunted the torturer to ‘bring on what you wish’ (*Martyrdom* 11:2), while he was filled with joy (*Martyrdom* 12:3). About to be burned, he blessed Christ ‘for making me worthy of this day and hour that I may receive a share among the number of martyrs in the cup of your Christ’ (*Martyrdom* 14:2), and it appeared as if the materiality of his flesh became transformed into something loftier. The fire, which looked like ‘a boat’s sail filled with the wind,’ formed a wall around his body. At its center, he was ‘not like burning flesh but like baking bread or like gold and silver being refined in a furnace.’ They observed ‘a particularly sweet aroma; like wafting incense or some other precious perfume’ (*Martyrdom* 15:2, Ehrman 2003, 1: 369, 383, 387, 389; see also Baumeister 1980, 304; and Surkau 1938, 126–134).

### *Liberating Soul from Body*

Ignatius yearned for his soul to leave his body, to be ‘poured out as a libation to God while there is still an altar at hand’ (*Letter to the Romans* 2:2). Following ‘But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world’ (Gal 5:24), and ‘They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts’ (Gal 6:14), he wrote of a longing which crucified his love for the world (*Letter to the Romans* 7:2). As Jesus died to the world crucified and Paul died to the world from within, Ignatius sought to abandon his tie to the material world and end his imprisonment in the lower world for freedom in the spiritual realm. All traces of his body would be gone (*Letter to the Romans* 4:2), and he would become a true disciple of Christ (Baumeister 1980, 280–281; Ehrman 2003, 1: 273, 275). Origen wrote that God was loved with such longing for fellowship by the martyr that He drew the soul away, separating soul from everything earthly and material: ‘Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body’ (Phil

3:21); ‘Who shall deliver me from the body of death?’ (Rom 7:24) (*Exhortation* chap. 3, Greer 1971, 42–43; Butterweck 1995, 173–174).

As in Jewish thought, the spirit could escape the body. The idea that as sacred death began, it was possible to converse on a level beyond the body appeared in both Judaism (with students) and in Christianity (with Christ). But in patristic thought there was an antithesis between soul and body, and the body by its very nature was offensive to the spirit. Jewish thought did not have this dualism. The suffering of the body was a means of purifying the soul of its imperfection, and communion with God in *devekut* transcended the body. But the physical body was not, by its very nature, antithetical to spirituality.

### *Vicarious Atonement*

Ignatius longed to suffer and die, share Christ’s passion, and thereby serve as an atonement-sacrifice for himself and others. He spoke of his death as an ‘exchange’ for Polycarp (*Letter to Polycarp* 2:3, Ehrman 2003, 1: 313). The animals who tore him apart and devoured him were instruments of his sacrifice, which atoned for the community—just as Jesus’ sacrificial death: ‘The eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered on behalf of our sins and which the Father raised in His kindness’ (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 7:1, Ehrman 2003, 1: 303). He wrote to the Trallians: ‘My own spirit is sacrificed for you, not only now but also when I attain to God’ (*Letter to the Trallians* 13:3, Ehrman 2003, 1: 269); and to the Ephesians, ‘I am your lowly scapegoat; I give myself as a sacrificial offering for you’ (*Letter to the Ephesians* 8:1, Ehrman 2003, 1: 227; Lohse 1963, 203–216; Butterweck 1995, 29–30; Surkau 1938, 126–134; von Campenhausen 1936, 67–74, 95–97). Polycarp begged God to accept him ‘as a sacrifice that is rich and acceptable,’ and his sacrifice brought an end to persecution: ‘The blessed Polycarp, who put an end to the persecution by, as it were, setting a seal on it through his death as a martyr’ (*Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* 14:2, Ehrman 2003, 1: 367, 387). Origen coupled the atoning power of Christ’s death with that of the martyr: ‘Perhaps just as we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus ... so some will be redeemed by the precious blood of the martyrs’ (*Exhortation* chap. 50, Greer 1971, 78–79).

## CONCLUDING NOTE

To the extent indicated by these examples, there were structural and substantive differences between classical Christian concepts of martyrdom and Jewish conceptions of sacred death during the Holocaust—conceptions which were aligned with earlier Jewish traditions. While archetypes left legacies within the collective people of Israel for the generations in Jewish thought, in patristic thought these archetypes were absorbed into Jesus, who became a universal archetype for the individual martyr. In Judaism, God brought suffering in an act of love, to induce *teshuvah*, and He shared Israel's suffering and remained present for it. For the Christian, God was suffering, and suffering (as purification) was an end in itself. While for Judaism the self was abnegated and the soul ascended into *devekut* to God, for the Church Fathers, Christ entered the soul and the self was abnegated. The soul and Christ were now one, the soul absorbed in Christ, and together they suffered, struggled, and conquered. In Judaism, physical pain tested one's love for God, and the Jew who died a sacred death loved God for purifying him for the world to come. Suffering was also transcended, as spirituality intensified to the point of becoming all-consuming. Likewise in the Church, the martyr's love was being tested by suffering. But here, suffering was actively sought after, because it unified the martyr with Christ of the passion. As to vicarious suffering: in Jewish thought, there was atonement in the Holocaust for others, for both non-Jews and for all of Israel; in Christian thought, the atonement included the assumption of the sins of others. Christian martyrdom was rooted in, and revolved around the atoning passion of Christ. This central reality permeated its various aspects, precluding substantive identification between the sacred death of the Christian martyr and that of the Jewish victim of the Holocaust.

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## PART FOUR

### RITUAL AND THEOLOGY IN THE MODERN, POST-MODERN AND NEW AGES



## FROM MONOLOGUES TO POSSIBLE DIALOGUE

Judaism's Attitude towards Christianity According to the Philosophy  
of R. Yéhouda Léon Askénazi (Manitou)<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Rabbi Yéhouda Léon Askénazi (familiarly known as Manitou, 1922–1996), born in Oran (Algeria), was renowned as an original thinker and attracted large audiences in Algeria, France, and Israel. His unique Kabalistic and philosophical outlook contributed decisively to the formation of religious Zionism and served as a source of inspiration for mass immigration of French-speaking Jews to Israel. His numerous followers were educated according to the central theme of his Engenderment Theory, declaring that the original Hebrew identity was replaced by Jewish identity in the diaspora and then became the Israeli identity that is none other than a national manifestation of the original Hebrew identity.

The philosophy of R. Askénazi<sup>2</sup> exhibits an overtly historicocentric approach, touching on the universal-human, national, and individual historic ethos alike. ‘Engenderment Theory’ (*Mishnat Hatoladot*, see Charvit 2002, 105–108), the leitmotif of his outlook, sketches a cultural portrait of all identities comprising the human race, focusing on the family of nations and particularly on the family of Abraham, from which originated not only the identity of Israel but also its rival identities of Edom and Ishmael, i.e. Christian and Muslim cultures. Islam and Christianity occupy a prominent place in R. Askénazi’s philosophy because of their competition with Judaism as a religion and the struggle of cultural identities for primacy. Askénazi’s approach to history consists of a ‘typological’ use of biblical characters, applying them on actual groups and conflicts.

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<sup>1</sup> This research was facilitated by a grant from IHEL Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> For his life story, see: Charvit 2001, 78–83; Charvit 2002, 105–108.

Islam and Christianity occupy a prominent place in R. Askénazi's philosophy because of the competition they pose for Judaism as a religion and the Jewish People as a nation: among the seventy nations, the Christians and Muslims did not cease struggling against Israel for primacy. Most world nations recognized the authority of Israel to be 'the High Priest of Mankind',<sup>3</sup> but the incitement emanating from Ishmael, Esau, and Aram interfered with Israel's bearing leadership of the sanctity of the human race.<sup>4</sup>

R. Askénazi considered interfaith dialogue essential and significant, as it reinforces common monotheistic features, i.e. belief in one God and in revelation. He maintained that monotheism is based on the assumption that Jewish history may not be separated from general human history. He conducted a thorough examination of reciprocal relations among religions, concentrating on the effects of interaction and the Jewish People's sense of responsibility and mission towards humanity. In July 1990, R. Askénazi was invited to represent the Jewish faith on the establishment of the *Temple de l'Universel* in Paris, founded by the head of the Sufi order. Representatives of all world religions attended: Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Christians, Muslims, and Jews. He composed this prayer:

Our Father, Existence of all existence, Creator of the universe, Master of the world, Builder of our homes on the land in which Thy Presence was revealed in the past, Thy children have built this Universal Temple in fulfillment of the commandment 'And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them' [Exodus 25:8]. Heaven and earth are filled with Thy voice, yet from the beginning, the echo of Thy glory has distanced itself to accord time and purpose to existence. Return! May Thy absence cease! May it be Thy will that our unity augment Thy truth, as the Prophet Isaiah declared: 'for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples' [Isaiah 56:7]. (Askénazi 2005, 608–609)

<sup>3</sup> as R. Elie Benamozeg of Livorno noted (Benamozeg 1961).

<sup>4</sup> emphasis mine; R. Askénazi indicates that the author of the *Torah Temimah*, Rabbi Baruch Halevi Epstein, in explaining the verse 'And he said: The Lord came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the myriads holy ...' [Deuteronomy 33:2], notes that Aramaic, Latin and Arabic competed with the Holy Tongue as the vehicle bearing the sanctity of prophecy: 'Perhaps he so reasoned because the word *veata* [and He came] is essentially Aramaic rather than Hebrew. On this foundation, the *Sifri* posited that when God revealed Himself to give the Torah to Israel, His revelation took place in not one but four languages: "And he said: The Lord came from Sinai" (Hebrew), "and rose from Seir unto them" (Latin), "He shined forth from Mount Paran" (Arabic), and "He came from the myriads holy" (Aramaic).' (lecture on the weekly Torah reading *Balak* [Numbers 22:2–25:9]).

This study examines the reciprocal relations that Christianity maintained with Israel during periods of Jewish Exile and Redemption alike, as reflected in R. Askénazi's historiosophic approach. R. Askénazi clarifies repeatedly that the conflict that was so clear and consistent throughout the years of exile may well be solved and settled some time in the future. R. Askénazi, as an educator and intellectual involved in the Israeli ethos, sought to explain the essence of the tension, rivalry, and hostility between the State of Israel and Jewish People and Europe and the United States, seeking to uncover their cultural and theological roots. He claimed that political struggles, arguments, delegitimization of Israel, conflicts, and ambivalent diplomacy all reflect the basic and fundamental views of those respective cultures.

#### CHRONICLES: CHRISTIANITY AND THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

##### *Founding Myths*

My teacher Jacob Gordin told us something that surprised me greatly at the time. Eventually, however, I began to realize how right he was: The rivalry between Ishmael and Israel is more intense than the one between Christianity and Judaism, as Christian anti-Semitism prevailed in the Jewish Diaspora, whereas Muslim hatred accompanied the return of Israel to Zion—a far more serious development. (Manitou 2003)

These remarks open R. Askénazi's lecture entitled 'The Drama of Exile: The Edomite and Ishmaelite Exiles'. He suggests that Gordin's claim originates in the book *Shaarei Ora*, whose author, Spanish Kabalist R. Yosef Gikatilla (1248–1325, a disciple of R. Avraham Abulafia) maintains that the conflict with Ishmael is incorporated within the Edomite exile.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This theory conforms with the Maharal's claim that Ishmael is not included among the Four Kingdoms (Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Edom) (*Nezah Israel* 21, 108; *Ner Mizva*, 18). 'According to the Talmud, Tractate *Avoda Zara* 2b, when the Fourth Kingdom faces final judgment, two voices will be heard—that of Edom/Rome ("We introduced many markets, many bathhouses, much silver and gold") and that of Persia/Islam ("We built many bridges, we conquered many cities, we fought many wars"). Ishmael's universalism accords it character appropriate to the Four Kingdoms. Islam perceives itself as a fundamental restoration of the world's religions from the time of Abraham to Muhammad, the Seal of Prophecy' (L.Y. Askénazi, lecture); 'The thaw in relations between the Jews and Islam was enabled by Christian theologians, as Islam's anti-Jewish stance ultimately originates in Christianity' (Askénazi 2005, 602).

‘Jacob remains Jacob; Esau remains Esau. A Jew remains a Jew despite all camouflage, and a heathen remains a heathen despite all Christian catechisms.’ (Askénazi 1999, 435). R. Askénazi unequivocally adopts the traditional Jewish view that Christianity is *idolatry*<sup>6</sup> for all intents and purposes. In fact, the theological problem of Christianity is fundamentally a dual issue concerning the divinity of Jesus and his identification with the Messiah, that is, the embodiment of the Trinity and messianic fulfillment. In practical terms, however, the rivalry between Christianity and Judaism essentially centers on the former’s claim to represent the ‘true Israel’ (*Verus Israel*).<sup>7</sup> Christianity’s denial of Israel and its historical validity since the destruction of the Second Temple and the birth of early Christianity is a reflection of its biased reading of the New Testament, an interpretation that underscores the founding myths of the Christian *credo*.

One key myth concerns Jesus’s family tree. The Gospel according to Matthew (1:17) declares Jesus to be a scion of the House of David, emphasizing that there were fourteen generations between Abraham and David, another fourteen from David until the Babylonian Captivity and another fourteen from then until the time of Jesus. In R. Askénazi’s interpretation:

There are three fourteen-generation periods from Abraham until the formative myth of Christian consciousness. This division of time into fourteen-generation segments originates in the Midrash: Throughout history, Israel measures time according to the phases of the moon. The fourteenth day is the day of the full moon. The Jewish Midrash is thus indeed the source of the verse in Matthew. (Askénazi 2000, 18)

The first group of fourteen generations notes that Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat ‘Judah and his brethren’:

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<sup>6</sup> From a Halachic point of view, despite the influence of pagan elements (e.g. belief in the Trinity, that conflicts with faith in the unity of God, as well as the abundance of statues, icons and crucifixes), Christianity is not considered the same as ancient idol worship. Even the Talmud displays initial signs of moderation when discussing whether Christianity is an idolatrous religion, leading religious authorities of the Middle Ages (*Responsa of Rabbenu Gershom*, 21; Rashbam [R. Shmuel Ben-Meir], citing Rashi, quoted by R. Yaakov Ben-Asher in the *Tur*, Section 148) and the early Modern Era (R. Yosef Karo, *Shulhan Arukh*, Section 12) to posit that Christianity is essentially not idolatry, as Christians are observing the customs of their ancestors. In other words, Christian rites are no more than customs handed down from one generation to another, none of whose practitioners are well-versed in the nuances of ancient idolatry (Halevi, 1989, 65–66; Halevi, 1983, 239–241).

<sup>7</sup> ‘Babylonia, Persia, and Greece never purported to replace Israel; only Edom presumed to be Israel’ (Manitou 2003); see Isaac 1959.

The biblical expression ‘Joseph and his brethren’ would have been expected, but Matthew replaces it with ‘Judah and his brethren’. The reading of this key sentence deciphers the issue under consideration. In the Talmud and the Midrash, the phrase ‘Judah and his brethren’ embodies Judaism itself, meaning that the chief dynasty originating among the ancient Hebrews consists of Judah and his brethren. (*ibid.*; see I Chr 2:3–4)

The second fourteen-generation group proceeds from King Solomon to Zerubbabel of the Babylonian exiles, and the third concludes with one Elazar ‘who begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ’ (Matthew 1:15–16) (*ibid.*). R. Askénazi maintains that this chronology consolidated the myth of conflict between Judah and Joseph. In the Bible and the annals of the Hebrew clan, Joseph and Judah indeed confront one another and continue to do so throughout Jewish history.

Unlike Judaism’s formative historical identity, Christianity’s formative myth calls for identity through belief:

We are Joseph on the one hand or Judah on the other, but as identities. Reality, however, originates in myth, leading people to believe in ‘Joseph’ or ‘Judah’ as values and even to deify them. The persona of the Christ—God Himself in the Christian mind—is not only a scion of the House of David but is in essence the son of Joseph, his father, his earthly progenitor. And he who plays the role of the antagonist to Joseph bears the name Judah, Judas Iscariot. This is the myth of the ‘Josephist’ identity of Israel that conflicts with Jewish history and its loyalty to the ‘Judaist’ model ‘according to Judah’. Judah is indeed portrayed as a traitor to ‘Joseph’s way’. The author of this Gospel thus makes his intention clear. Several Evangelists, notably Paul, introduce Christians to the End of Days ‘when they will find out who is who’, fearing that those days are already nigh. (Askénazi 2000, 19)<sup>8</sup>

### *Discourse between Christianity and Judaism*

Over the two millennia of exile, Christianity and Judaism could not maintain any kind of dialogue, not only because Christianity did not want any such dialogue from the outset—as it strove for denial of Judaism, viewing ‘Israel of the flesh’ as a purposeless entity—but also because no such dialogue could take place. According to Manitou, Judaism and Christianity resembled parallel lines that extend to infinity

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<sup>8</sup> A revealing linguistic curiosity: the French word for peephole is *juda*.

without meeting, as each maintained its spiritual awareness on a different level: Judaism in the historical, real world and Christianity in the sphere of faith and attitude:

Dialogue at the attitude level has no meaning. This is not the place for opinions, but rather for reading the Book [the Bible] and designating the realities associated with that reading. The problem should not be limited to focus on philosophical issues that ostensibly differ in said religions. Perhaps instead of discussing it would be better to think? On the one hand, historical reality: the Hebrew nation and its history as formulated in the Bible—the ‘Old Testament’ to Christians—through prophetic revelation vs. the founding myth as a matter of faith and not of identity or existence. Obviously, there is a history of faiths, but the Hebrews have no place therein; rather, they belong to the history of mankind. Understandably, there is a Christian history, but Christians as such identify with the phenomenon of faith and not with existential phenomena. A son, even when he rebels against his father, remains a son. But when a servant abandons his master, he ceases to be a servant. When a Christian ceases believing in the Passion of Jesus, he is no longer a Christian. He remains what he always was—a French Jew who has lost his Jewish component and thus reverts to being French—or English, German, Russian, etc. With these nations, Israel, as a nation, is likely to maintain actual reciprocal relations in the historical sphere, in which Jewish identity is not faith-based but rather of an existential-historical nature. The Bible is not a Jewish novel and we are not characters therein. We are not images on stained glass cathedral windows. The contemporary Christian world is discovering that the Jews represent an existential-historical ethos; they are a nation, a society and not characters in a religious novel. (Askénazi 2000, 20)

#### *From Theological to Existential Hatred*

Christianity tended to uproot the Jewish People spiritually, perceiving the Old Testament as a kind of prelude to the New, to be interpreted exclusively according to the Christian faith, emphasizing the ‘prophecies’ of the coming of Jesus and shifting the object of Divine promises from Israel to the Church. Differentiation between celestial and terrestrial Jerusalem, between ‘the true Israel’ and ‘Israel of the flesh’ aroused unequivocal hatred for the ‘superfluous’ Jewish People, as manifested in biased legislation, expulsion, humiliation, fatal persecution, forced conversions, blood libels, and so on (Isaac 1962; 1959, 349–554). The most serious accusation among all those leveled against the Jews (a stiff-necked, accursed people, doomed to exile because they failed to accept the divinity and messiahship of Jesus; blasphemers; usurers, exploiters) was deicide. Its consequences were fatal, giving rise to unprecedented bloodshed and the deaths of hundreds of thousands or

even millions of innocent people (Maccoby 1987; Cohen 1985; Klausner 1954, 1940). Every Good Friday, the prayers recited for the ‘perfidious Jews’ only inflamed anti-Jewish sentiments. R. Askénaazi believed that the two-thousand-year-old Christian anti-Jewish position yielded ambiguous results, paving the way to the Holocaust, as the cross paved the way to the swastika, while the resulting shock inspired the Church to state firmly: ‘Never again.’

When the Christian saw the Nazi carrying out what the Church preached but what he never dared to carry out, it gave rise to profound shock at first. Subsequently, a religious-spiritual decision was made: It will not happen again (...) There is no doubt that the Gospels, the writings that shape Christianity, take an anti-Jewish stand and seek replacement of the ‘fallen’ and ‘rejected’ Israel (...) Our theologies are highly polarized, but there are points of interface regarding ethics. The opposite is true of Islam, with which we possess theological interfaces but stand in diametric opposition regarding ethics. (Askénaazi 2005, 602)

#### FROM JEWISH IDENTITY IN CHRISTIAN LANDS TO HEBREW IDENTITY ON THE RETURN TO ZION: THE CORRELATION BETWEEN IDENTITY AND CULTURE<sup>9</sup>

When exile in Christian and Islamic lands came to an end and the components of Hebrew identity—that could only be revealed under such ‘challenging’ conditions—became clear, it again became possible to return to Zion and rebuild a pure and refined Hebrew identity. According to the biblical narrative, Ishmael quarrels with Isaac over the Promised Land, the Land of Israel. Contemporary history displays this more clearly; Ishmael does not deny that the Jews are Israel. That conflict is unique to the Christians. In other words, the quarrel between Israel and the Ishmaelites did not rise heavenward but rather remained on earth, whereas Esau and Jacob are competing for substantive identity—this competition does concern heaven:

In Jerusalem, various disputes determined the nature of the Jews’ argument with Islam and with Christianity—Ashkenazim in their struggle with the Christians and, on an entirely different level, Sephardim in their contest with the Islamic nations. This is the origin and deeply-rooted source of

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<sup>9</sup> I have already addressed this issue in my article ‘Identity and History’ (Charvit 2002, 115–117), but I would like to include certain additional aspects concerning Christian and Islamic cultures.

the difference between the two extremes in the core and spiritual structure of the two tribes. In any event, I would like to clarify that Jacob can only celebrate his victory over Ishmael to the extent that he is truly the son of Isaac. Isaac does assume responsibility for Esau; after all, he is his father. In fact, it is only in Sephardic-Kabbalistic tradition that Judaism is able to declare its victory over Christian heresy. (Askénazi 1971, 89)

Moreover, Jewish identity in Christian and Islamic countries, respectively, took shape differentially because the challenges differed: Sephardim who remain loyal to themselves achieve more clarity in organizing thought and ritual itself because they encountered no fundamental opposition to their identity. However paradoxical it may seem, the *converso* phenomenon is more typical of the Ashkenazi world, as it involves a Jewish soul cast in a landscape of Christian opposition, whether religious or secular:

The life of the Ashkenazi Jew is more ‘tragic’ in the Greek sense of the term... Indeed, Jewish suffering is common to both [Sephardim and Ashkenazim], but the Ashkenazi variety bears a gloomier hue... Throughout the development of Hebrew culture by Ashkenazim and Sephardim, the true theology remained with the latter. It was as if the Ashkenazi world related to theology as a forbidden zone temporarily allocated to the Christian faith, whereas no such ban existed in a Muslim environment. Effectively, all of us, Ashkenazim and Sephardim alike, understand what we believe in only by virtue of the Sephardic theologians of the Golden Age: Maimonides, Ibn Gvirol, and particularly Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, author of the *Kuzari*... Yehuda Halevi charted the course to be followed subsequently by the Maharal of Prague and—in our own time—by Rabbi A. I. Kook of Jerusalem, ‘High Priest’ of the revitalized land of the Jews. (Askénazi, 1971, 89–90)

Differences in ritual and mentality, thus, originate in basic relations with Ishmael on the one hand and with Esau on the other. Jacob’s prayer before Esau is not identical to that of Isaac before Ishmael because the specific problems they had to solve do not face the same direction. The name Ishmael (Hebrew: God will hear) bears a feature according to which Islam knows how to pray. A Sephardic Jew feels comfortable with Ishmael’s prayers but not with the prayer of the Christians; the Sephardic synagogue is built differently from the Ashkenazi one because of the desire not to resemble a Christian church (Manitou 2003); R. Askénazi clarifies this through word play (based on the concluding words of Exodus 24:7: ‘All that the Lord hath spoken will we do and listen’ (*Naasse ve-Nishma*)): While Esau perceives of himself as complete (the Hebrew word for ‘done’ is an anagram of his name), Ashke-

nazic Jews say ‘We will do,’ whereas Ishmael feels unmediated proximity to God and Sephardic Jews say ‘We will listen.’

**‘AND IT CAME TO PASS AT THE END OF DAYS’—THE MONOTHEISTIC FAITHS AT THE END OF THE EXILE OF ISRAEL**

*The Essence of Conflict Resolution*

Based on an analysis of contemporary events, R. Askénazi believed that all signs attest to the eventual termination of the historic dispute among Israel, Ishmael, and Edom, as the Creator, through Israel, has already bestowed the plan for its resolution upon mankind. Similarly, the human race is likely to realize its common ‘Abrahamic features’, that rise on the foundations of the former conflict. Judaism is the root of the positivistic religions, i.e. those based on revelation. Its outlook cannot be rooted in a ‘founder of the religion’ but rather in the essence of the Creator’s revelation, that discloses the basic truths of the world, of mankind, and of its history. The unmediated divine guidance that the Jews call Torah does not come from just any divinity but rather originates with the Creator of the universe Himself, and therefore only biblical prophecy can attest to the immanent truth therein and the consequent historical truth:

This is the way that Jewish tradition understood its monotheism. The same God who created the universe is the judge of its history, who reveals himself before Israel to disclose the ethical laws of all humanity. This ethical code was not intended to hinder human beings from achieving their historical goals but rather to assist in attaining them. The ethical conception applies to history as a whole and most of all to human history that strives for the ultimate purpose—a quest that characterizes the spiritual world of the Hebrew mind. (Askénazi 1999, 487–488)

Moreover, on the Return to Zion, an authentic Hebrew identity will emerge; the identity of Israel and all imitations thereof will pale forthwith. Christianity will then have to concede the title of ‘the true Israel’, having assumed certain metaphysical aspects of Hebrew identity, as did Islam, emulating the mother religion that they largely sought to supplant. It is incumbent upon the Jewish spiritual leadership to inform its Christian and Muslim counterparts of the full meaning of Hebrew identity and the nature of the people who embody it. At a ‘This is Your Life’ celebration in his honor at Binyenei Ha’Ooma in Jerusalem in 1992, R. Askénazi was asked by moderator Emanuel Halperin to explain

his participation in interfaith conferences. Jokingly, he responded that he did so as an act of ‘Christian charity’, noting that he believes the Jews are particularly obligated to explain the mystery of Israel’s identity in the Era of Redemption to the Christians. ‘We Jews are bidden to help Christians find their positive place because their frustration is excessive and the consequences thereof are fraught with danger.’

*Christianity Discovers the ‘True Israel’*

Christianity contends that the Jews cannot understand their own Torah and require Christian explication and interpretation for its comprehension. By contrast, R. Askénazi felt that perhaps the time had come for the Jews to explain the Gospels to the Christians, emphasizing that we are not talking about ‘the same religion, the same identity or even the same world’ (Askénazi 2000, 19; 2005, 579–586):

There is a basic misunderstanding. Contemporary Christians and Jews present themselves as if they were living in the Generation of Dissociation [the Second Temple Era]—rendering dialogue impossible but so essential. This dissociation turned into a conflict that transcended time, although while the ‘Jewish People’ remain the Jewish People, the Christians are no longer ‘Jesus and his disciples’.<sup>10</sup> They are no longer the people responsible for the dissociation and conflict. For us, today’s Jews, Christians are not false witnesses. They simply are not witnesses at all. They do not represent anything that we did not understand or that we rejected as alien to our mission. Similarly, Christianity is not responsible for the formulation of its faith. Christians inherited it from their sages (...) Had they been Jews, the authentic heirs to the covenant, they would be considered idolaters who bear a message of apostasy (...) They would be like any other Jew who violates the covenant (...) We should distinguish between center and periphery, within and outside the covenant—the *sui generis* center and the *sui generis* covenant ... and all who so desire shall cling to the covenant. (Askénazi 1999, 426)

R. Askénazi claimed that revelation of Israel (Manitou 2003) began after the Holocaust, manifested in gradual recognition that the Jews are indeed the People of Israel. The rebirth of Israel and the return to Zion prove that the Christians are not Israel. Therefore, he maintained, it

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Christianity was founded by Jews. Ancient Christianity spoke Hebrew and became Christianity when Rome converted and became Edom. Islam is the Arabs, who were influenced by rabbis and priests and Muhammad wanted to restore Islam to Abrahamic monotheism in a manner similar to [that of] Lutheranism; Islam could be Ishmael’s answer to the religion of Abraham. Not so Christianity, that became Rome believing itself to be Israel’ (Manitou 2003).

would be appropriate for Christians to understand that their evangelical message may well be that of the Torah of Israel, as passed on to other nations. As its focus is Jerusalem, the function of Christianity is to constitute ‘the Diaspora of Israel’.<sup>11</sup> Many of R. Askénazi’s students converted to Judaism as a result of having studied with him, although he refused to convert some of them, insisting that they ‘not betray their mothers’ womb’ and remain Christians who belong to the ‘Diaspora of Israel’. So he instructed R. Marc-Raphaël Guedj, Chief Rabbi of Geneva, regarding Gentiles who aligned themselves with Judaism; so he responded to Cameroon President Paul Biya who was deeply impressed by his studies; and so he instructed his student Jean Vassal, who wrote a book in this spirit for which R. Askénazi wrote the introduction (Vassal 1993).

When Israel went into exile, it appealed to the non-Jewish diaspora. On its return to Zion, the nations of the world may continue to serve in this capacity, rallying in a kind of unity with Israel at the center.<sup>12</sup> This concept is highly central to R. Askénazi’s philosophy:

I state definitively, based on many years of experience, that Christians may maintain their self-respect and the autonomy of their faith on condition that they purge it of the mythic version of the Passion. (Askénazi 2000, 20)

Moreover, even before the Holocaust, many rabbis detected early signs of reformulation of relations between Christians and Jews, especially through the movement for return to biblical roots that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. The establishment of the Hebrew nation in Israel will only hasten the process of rehabilitation of Judaism:

Since then, the Christian mind has faced two additional questions. On the one hand, through the Holocaust, it depicts the Jewish People in the image of the ‘suffering Messiah’ (...) as in the days of the Inquisition. On the other hand, however, the birth of the State of Israel shows Christianity that Jewish identity has again become Hebrew, according a contemporary dimension to the history of the Jewish People two millennia later.

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<sup>11</sup> Vassal is buried in the Protestant Cemetery on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, with no coffin and no cross; he also asked that his burial be conducted without Christian prayers. R. Askénazi’s approach resembles the Noahism of R. Elie Benamozeg of Livorno (1823–1900). See: Benamozeg 1961; Agmon 1971; collection of articles in *Peamim* 74 (Winter 1998) [Hebrew], 97–30; Harel 1993, 27–36; Guetta 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Vassal 1993 (Introduction by R. Askénazi); Askénazi 2005, 587–588.

All this is likely to lead to an ostensible ‘discovery’: Perhaps the Jews are indeed the nation of Israel! Many honest Christians still do not dare respond to this intuition, as the Church lacks the positivist theology of Judaism. The question may be answered and extended: If the Jews are the nation of Israel, who are the Christians? (...) The reality of two Israels in competition with one another in their aspiration for universal peace is clearly a conflictual reality that neither Christians nor Jews can allow to exist (...) We are confronting an issue of brothers seeking fraternity, just as the left hand and right hand are not congruent but can grasp one another. We will not limit ourselves with noting the questions that trouble us but rather together, Christians and Jews, are behooved to proceed and rediscover the roots of our traditions and identify the principle that separates us and simultaneously links us: The mystery that is Israel. It appears that beyond rapprochement between the Vatican and the State of Israel, the time has come for an ideological encounter.<sup>13</sup>

R. Askénazi claimed that settlement of the theological conflict with Christianity was facilitated by several contemporary events largely concerning the Catholic Church<sup>14</sup>—the church most alienated theologically from the Jewish People and perceived as the most overt embodiment of Edom: The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) under Pope John XXIII in 1962; Pope Paul VI’s visit to Israel in 1964; the Six-Day War in 1967 and the spontaneous support for Israel demonstrated by many Christians, Catholics and Protestants alike; Pope John Paul II’s visit to a synagogue in Rome and his meeting with Chief Rabbi of Rome Elio Toaff; Israeli Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau’s meeting with Pope John Paul II in 1993; establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the State of Israel in 1993; and the publication of Pope John Paul II’s book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* in 1994 (Askénazi 1999, 475–476). He examined the theological dimension of each event closely and concluded that a substantive theological change is taking place in the Catholic Church despite the internal contradictions evident, at times, in the Holy See’s position.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Vassal 1993, 9–10; ‘The time has come, especially for the Catholic Church, to understand once and for all that it cannot function simultaneously as the Diaspora of ancient Israel and the rival of contemporary Israel’ (Askénazi 1999, 441).

<sup>14</sup> R. Askénazi, naturally, relates to the Catholic Church in France in particular and in Western Europe in general. He was closely acquainted with it and maintained ongoing relations with it. See also: Pierrard 1977, 207–252.

<sup>15</sup> For example, when Pope John Paul II visited Chief Rabbi of Rome Elio Toaff, R. Askénazi commented: ‘I related to this meeting on a Messianic scale.’ At the same time, the construction of a Carmelite monastery at the Auschwitz site and the canonization of Jewish convert to Christianity Edith Stein, who was put to death at Auschwitz, infuriated him (Askénazi 2005, 579–586).

Pope Paul VI's visit to Israel led R. Askénazi to discern a change in attitude towards the Jews. He noted that this change is recorded in a context of an even more significant change in Christian mentality:<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, this journey to Israel is certainly positive in our eyes (...) It is doubtful whether the Jewish question was decisive in his choice to travel to Israel, as above all, he sought to visit the site of Christian roots and to meet with the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, regarding matters that do concern us, the Pope's meeting with the leader of our nation [President Zalman Shazar] constitutes recognition, albeit *de facto* and not *de jure*, of some dimension of our people (...) This fact, together with changes in mentality among Christians, impels us to hope for the inception of clear, unequivocal dialogue between Judaism and Christianity. (Askénazi 1999, 495)

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) in 1962, headed by Pope John XXIII, occupies an important place for R. Askénazi. He perceives this pope as one who has instituted substantive change,<sup>17</sup> noting that the occasion bears three messages: a desire for world peace (*pacem in terris*), emphasis on existential rather than messianic theology (addressing modern questions), and revision of the Roman Rite Good Friday Prayer for the 'perfidious Jews' (Askénazi 1999, 497–498). R. Askénazi perceives all these developments as a kind of theological and practical soul-searching conducted by the Catholic Church through the ages: The Christian West, responsible for so many wars throughout history, that dissociated itself from questions of humanity and entrenched itself in questions of faith and ultimately bears responsibility for anti-Jewish incitement, quintessentially embodied in the prayer for the 'perfidious Jews' who are charged with deicide, incitement that paved the way for the Holocaust—that same Christian West now stops and examines itself.<sup>18</sup> According to R. Askénazi, soul-searching is a substantive message that is likely to bring about authentic reconciliation between Israel and Christianity:

<sup>16</sup> 'For example, I perceive a change in vocabulary, a slender change indeed, but fraught with meaning, such as no longer God the Son but rather Son of God ... If the vocabulary changes, this is proof of a deeper change, not only in attitudes towards reciprocal relations between Jews and Christians but also in attitude towards the various denominations within Christianity' (Askénazi 1999, 494).

<sup>17</sup> R. Askénazi often noted that Edmond Fleg, Jules Isaac, and André Chouraqui strove energetically for outreach between Jews and the Vatican and accomplished so much in achieving reassessment of Catholicism's attitude towards the Jews at that Council.

<sup>18</sup> Although anti-Semitism was declaratively rejected and the prayer for the Jews revised, the charge of deicide was not retracted (Minerbi 1986; Minerbi 2004, 21–33).

The Bible of the Jews and the Christians is the same Bible (...) Any differences in our theologies and interpretations do not originate in the Bible. Something far more fundamental separates us (...) It is not the Jewish and Christian Bibles that oppose one another but rather the Talmudist and the Evangelist, who turn their backs on one another and never communicate. If this dialogue were to open one day, it would be the day that the Christians recognize and respect the Jews as creatures worthy of love of living things and especially the day the Christians recognize the honor of Judaism, whose seal is truth. (Askénazi 1999, 450)

After the Six-Day War, R. Askénazi became aware of the touching reactions of ‘known and unknown Catholics and Protestants’ (Askénazi 1999, 438–441). He believed that these reactions were not only humanistic—when the State of Israel was in danger of annihilation—but primarily philosophical, wherein ‘the Jews, that is, Israel, in the form of the State of Israel, embody the identity of the biblical Israel’, with all it implies.

Establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Israel (1993) was considered an event that transcends the Vatican’s interests regarding Christian holy places in Israel:

The event is highly significant from a theological point of view: This is the first time in two thousand years that the Catholic Church recognizes that the Jews are Israel. The Catholic Church is forgoing the pretext that it is ‘the New Israel’. The idea was that the Jewish People violated its covenant with God and consequently was exiled to the four corners of the earth. It was a deicidal nation, an expression that has been rejected since Vatican II. The Church purported to be the New Israel, but mutual recognition brings the rivalry between identities to an end. (Askénazi 1999, 497; Chouraqui 1992)

Generally speaking, R. Yéhouda Léon Askénazi identifies an overt trend, with all its attendant fluctuations, in which the emergence of an Israeli society that speaks the Holy Tongue and has recharted Hebrew identity ‘in the Land of the Hebrews’ is accompanied by the Christian Church’s gradual recognition of Israel as those who bear the authentic identity of the biblical Israel and consequently those who will bring the desired universal peace to mankind. If the Christians persist in their identity as ‘Israel of the Diaspora’, their self-respect and spiritual purpose are not likely to suffer, and harmony may well prevail among all mankind:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> R. Askénazi added additional understanding of a political character. This remark even points to the return of Israel to its original identity: ‘At the conclusion of the King-

We are not far from the day on which the Christian religions, reconciled with one another, will perceive themselves palpably as the Diaspora of Jerusalem. This will be the sole positive sign of the end of quondam anti-Semitism. At the same time, their ecumenism will persist. The result will be particular excellence among the Jews in the Land of Israel, derived from their study of the Torah and Prophets. The communities of Israel in the ancient Jewish Diaspora will then have to decide to improve the final ecumenism of believers in the Bible in their own way, at the conclusion of the Exile. Many Jews and even many Christians already know that the ever-sanctified womb of the Jewish People is situated in Jerusalem, somewhere on Mount Zion, the conduit of their prayers. (Askénazi 1999, 420)

And stated even more intensely:

The long duration of a two-thousand-year parting, the horrors of the Holocaust and the shock of the Christian soul and admission of responsibility for anti-Semitism, the fact of the Ingathering of Exiles, recognition of the State of Israel by most world nations—cannot leave the believing person indifferent. And I know many Christians who attest that they have interpreted the incidents as follows: This is Divine Providence at work. Let us help it succeed, with humility and prayer. (Askénazi 2005, 597)

#### CONCLUSION: JEWISH HUMANISM IN HARMONY WITH UNIVERSAL HUMANISM

R. Askénazi accorded considerable attention to the need for settling Judaism's two thousand year-old dispute with Christianity and the manner in which it is to be accomplished. Perhaps this is the reason that his obvious determination exceeds that of the philosophers who preceded him, as well as contemporary intellectuals who dealt with this issue extensively, such as Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Lévinas, who maintain an ambivalent attitude towards Christianity.

For many years, Rosenzweig conducted intimate dialogue with Christianity and with Christian thinkers. The comparison between Christianity and Judaism is the background for all his philosophy. It is unlikely that he sought resolution of the conflict between the two religions, as he believed there was an immanent gap between Judaism and Christian-

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dom of Israel, monarchy passed to the Gentile nations. This transition took place as of Esther, the days of the Return to Zion. We have witnessed the end of the monarchic form of government throughout the world. It has become a regime which if not despicable is only symbolic. Perhaps this is the sign for a return to the Kingdom of Israel in the messianic sense ("the King Messiah")' (Manitou 2003).

ity regarding the Messianic ideal (Neher 1979, 21–23, 235–252; 1976, 212ff.).

Lévinas was also ambivalent towards Christianity. On the one hand, he expressed gratitude to the Christians who saved his family during the Holocaust, that he calls ‘The Passion of Israel’, with good reason. Nevertheless, he was strongly opposed to the personification of God in Christian theology, considering it utter foolishness. Similarly, he believed that one cannot ignore Christianity’s long-term hatred of Judaism. To a certain extent, he does seek possible dialogue, although not without reservation regarding those who sought to do so by blurring boundaries, such as Edmond Fleg, for example. Lévinas maintains: ‘It is not enough to call Jesus “Yeshua” or “Rabbi” to bring him closer to us. We are free of hatred, yet he showed us no amity. He remains distant and alienated. We no longer identify our own verses on his lips.’ Lévinas believed that despite our harsh history, the Hebrew Bible remains the broad and solid common denominator between Judaism and Christianity. Moreover, he claimed that if the Septuagint embodied the Jewish People’s appeal to the world’s nations until Emancipation, then in the Modern, Post-Emancipation era—in which individualism is nurtured and secularism removes the sting of religiosity—the Jewish People must translate the Oral Law into philosophical language for these other nations (Lévinas 1984, 151; Lévinas 1996, 148–150).<sup>20</sup>

R. Askénazi’s philosophy is manifestly historicentric and humanistic, even if anchored in the basic assumption that the Jews were chosen as the theological and moral leaders of all mankind: the family of earth that was created in God’s image must settle all conflicts originating in each culture’s aspiration to assume a position of primacy and leadership. R. Askénazi explained that throughout history, as Christianity and later Islam struggled to assume the mantle of the true religion, they plagiarized elements from the mother religion, Judaism. Each culture bore the standard of the value it lacked and applied itself to its development: Christianity nominally strove for grace and love—the religion of love—and Islam for justice: ‘Muhammad’s Law is by the sword.’ At the End of Days, when the Exile of Israel is ended, each culture must return these ‘stolen goods’ and return to its authentic self. Moral cooperation is indeed feasible under Heaven in the eyes of the Creator of mankind:

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<sup>20</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Paul Elbhar for his enlightening remarks on this topic.

If Christianity will only learn to be the Diaspora of Israel,<sup>21</sup> it will resolve its own identity crisis. (Askénazi 2005, 589–594)

At the same time, each culture must refrain from devoting itself to the development of one exclusive value, as such efforts would be doomed to failure; instead, each must allow Israel to return to the principle of moral unity (Askénazi 1999, 150):

What Israeli-Hebrew identity strives for is success of the Divine Plan and all the values it embodies. This is the principle of unity. It did not succeed in instituting any kind of humanism. Each humanistic school launched a sole value—and this is its resounding failure ... Hebrew identity must accompany all moral revolutions and it must know when to dissociate itself from them and carry out the independent Hebrew revolution that entails dissemination of unity among all values ... Unity of moral values should be accorded priority. Selection of one value that reigns supreme and at times even vitiates other values is one of the long-standing characteristics of idolatry that is manifested today as ideology. Through the unity of Creation, man reaches unity of his values and moral virtues. Moral unity is what we call *kedusha* (holiness) in Hebrew. (Askénazi 1999, 109–125; Koginski 1998, 257–258)

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<sup>21</sup> Besides Christians like Jean Vassal, one may identify such a trend within the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, that has representations throughout the world, including the Far East. Its adherents ascend to Jerusalem on Sukkot in keeping with the prophecies of Zechariah.

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## FAITH AND THE COURAGE TO BE: HESCHEL AND TILLICH

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To be or not to be, that is the most difficult question of all, and we must answer it every moment of our lives. It is the question that the Christian philosopher Paul Tillich (Starzeddel, Brandenburg, 1886—Chicago 1965) addresses in his books, and it is one of the central questions in the thought of the man of faith Abraham Joshua Heschel. (Warsaw 1907—New York 1972).

It was Heschel's contention that the discourse of philosophers and men of faith allows us to glimpse the inner world of the creator. As I have pointed out elsewhere, a philosopher's writings are windows that allow us entry into the inner workings of the author's mind (Even-Chen 1999, 10). It is, therefore, interesting to discover that the writings of Heschel and of Tillich have much in common. The two thinkers had many shared experiences in terms of the scholarly sources upon which they drew, the questions that they addressed, and the theologies that they created.

In this paper, I wish to address the original existential experience with which human beings must contend, because it is upon the confrontation with that existential experience that Heschel builds his approach. Tillich pointed to that existential anxiety that we must confront in order to go on with our lives. The decision to continue to be requires that we give meaning to our lives. Tillich struggled with the various attempts to give significance and purpose to human life as expressed in the history of human thought. Ultimately, he points to the one way that he believes that objective can be achieved. Heschel does not present a general examination, but rather presents his own existential anxiety and his own struggle. Heschel's existential anxiety is expressed in his poetry and in his books.

In addition, I hope to clarify how these two thinkers influenced one another. This mutual influence is apparent even in theological areas central to their thought. To this end, I will examine a few of the primary issues addressed by the two scholars.

Tillich and Heschel worked in very close proximity. Tillich taught at Union Theological Seminary, which is directly across the street from the Jewish Theological Seminary, where Heschel taught. Of course, this mere geographical proximity is insufficient to explain the conceptual affinity between the two men. In describing his interfaith work, Heschel notes that he had the privilege of serving as a visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary and that he often had the opportunity to speak with Christian scholars (Heschel [1967] 1996, 391–392). Additionally, one of Heschel’s students, Harold Kasimow, told me that it was not uncommon for students studying with Heschel to cross the street to attend Tillich’s lectures. I might add that Heschel’s friendship with Reinhold Niebuhr was also rooted in that same period. It was Niebuhr who was responsible for bringing Tillich from Germany to teach at Union Theological Seminary. It requires no stretch of the imagination to assume that theology, including Tillich’s approach to it, were among the subjects of Niebuhr’s many discussions with Heschel. These biographical details may serve to support our perception of the conceptual proximity that we find in the thinking of Tillich and Heschel.

According to Shinn, Tillich dedicated his life to explaining Christian theology in the light of modern thought (Shinn 1969, 57). The same might be said of Heschel in regard to Jewish theology. For Tillich and Heschel, existentialist philosophy seeks to explain the meaning of human existence; man, his problems, and his aspirations stand at its center. In Tillich and Heschel’s search for meaning, we find an attempt to give spiritual significance to the questions raised by human existence—to find religious meaning in the good and the evil chapters of human history. Both Tillich and Heschel fled Nazi Germany. The terrible historical experience of Nazism is in the background of their thought. Tillich and Heschel speak from the perspective of men who fled Nazi horror.

#### NO RELIGION IS AN ISLAND: DISCOURSE AND INFLUENCE

The famous ‘No Religion is an Island’ address—which would become known as one of Heschel’s most important articles—was delivered at Union Theological Seminary on 10 November 1965. Heschel was the first Jewish visiting professor at that Christian institution, and this was his inaugural lecture. It was an expression of the fruitful relationship that Heschel enjoyed with the Union faculty (Kaplan 2007, 281).

One of Tillich's works that no doubt caught Heschel's attention in particular was *Faith and the Courage To Be*. Indeed, it would not have been surprising had Heschel given this title to one of his own works, inasmuch as the phrase comprises the ideas of faith and prophetic commitment that are foundational to Heschel's worldview. Of course, in reading Heschel it becomes clear that the unique meaning he gives to the concept makes his approach different from that of Tillich.

Both thinkers worked at a time when doubt challenged the foundations of faith. Both sought to point the way to a faith that could contend with the danger of loss of faith not by eliminating doubt, but rather through a faith that grows in the human spirit despite doubt. In this paper, I will try to show the shared ideas as well as the differences in the spiritual struggle of these two thinkers. In his book, Tillich presents different approaches for contending with existential anxiety. I will attempt to describe the primary approaches that are important to understanding Heschel's existential religious experience.

Of course, Heschel was well acquainted with Tillich's thought, and in his article 'No Religion is an Island', he quotes Tillich as saying that interfaith discourses 'have created a community of conversation which has changed both sides of the dialogue' (Heschel [1966] 1996, 247).

Interfaith dialogue influences the participants. Heschel explains that no religion is an island, and the theology that develops in one religion directly or indirectly affects the other. I would like to highlight the creative influence that resulted from the interfaith dialogue between Paul Tillich and Abraham Joshua Heschel. I will focus upon Tillich's creative influence upon Heschel.

Heschel was very active in the field of interfaith dialogue. Theologically, Heschel based this activity upon a spiritual-mystical understanding: 'Perhaps it is the will of God that in this eon there should be diversity in our forms of devotion and commitment to Him. In this eon diversity is the will of God' (Heschel [1966] 1996, 244). For Heschel, a variety of approaches to serving God reflects the Divine will, and interfaith dialogue is what God desires. The question I wish to address is whether these meetings influenced Heschel's theology. We should note that the term 'influence' can be understood in a number of ways. It is not my intention to claim that Heschel adopted Christian philosophical concepts, but I would argue that the interfaith dialogue did lead Heschel to sharpen and clarify certain elements of his theological view. Sometimes this resulted from focussing upon parallel problems of faith in the Christian theology of his interlocutor, while at other times

it stemmed from Heschel's opposition to concepts and beliefs that his Christian counterparts suggested as solutions to shared problems of faith. Interfaith dialogue can lead to mutual enrichment, but only when the participants maintain their unique identities. Heschel argues that in interfaith dialogue, 'Both *communication* and *separation* are necessary. We must preserve our individuality as well as foster care for one another, reverence, understanding, cooperation' (Heschel [1966] 1996, 241).

#### COMMUNICATION AND SEPARATION

We should first point out that the theological objectives of Heschel and Tillich contradict one another. Heschel makes a comment that is clearly critical of one of Tillich's best-known ideas. According to Heschel:

We must not try to read chapters in the Bible dealing with the event at Sinai as if they were texts in systematic theology. (Heschel [1955] 1988, 185)

Heschel makes this comment in a chapter treating of the Mystery of Revelation. According to Heschel, the Torah's purpose is not to 'explain' what took place at Sinai, and certainly not to present what Tillich terms a 'systematic theology'. The Torah tries to 'celebrate' the 'mystery'. The sense of mystery is central to Heschel's thought.

As opposed to that, influenced by the theological thinking of Rudolf Bultmann, one of the primary purposes of Tillich's theology is the demythologizing of Christian faith. Tillich sought to portray Christian faith in a way that suits the thinking of modern man. Later, he would suggest working toward the 'deliteralization' of the language of faith. In other words, he sought a means for understanding the mythic language of faith as a symbolic language of faith. This approach is substantially different from that of Heschel.

Nevertheless, the theories of consciousness of the two scholars are fundamental to their philosophies. The similarity in the terms that Heschel and Tillich employ in describing their theories of consciousness is striking, as is the difference. Tillich argues that the depth of reason is that level of consciousness that precedes reason and informs us of the existence of a transcendent force. In other words, man is intuitively aware of a force that transcends it (Tillich 1951, 79). This theory of consciousness emphasizes the infinite distance between man and God.

As opposed to this, when Heschel chooses the term 'depth theology' to refer to his theory of consciousness, he seeks to emphasize God's

proximity to man. When man succeeds in uncovering that level of consciousness that Heschel calls preconceptual thinking, he may arrive at those insights that lead to a sense of God's presence in the world (Heschel [1955] 1988, 131–151). In other words, Tillich emphasizes the transcendent nature of God, whereas Heschel focuses upon God's immanence.

Communication and separation are also expressed in the similarity we find in the terminology that the two men use in developing and expressing their views. This is clear from the terminology they employ, and a few examples will serve to demonstrate this.

### ULTIMATE CONCERN

One of the central ideas in Tillich's thought is the concept of 'ultimate concern.' For Tillich, this concept bears existential spiritual significance: Our ultimate concern is that which determinates our being or not-being (Tillich 1951, 14).

When Tillich speaks of ultimate concern, he is confronting the subject of death, as he argues that matters of ultimate concern are those that treat of our being or not-being. Tillich's choice of words is most interesting in that he argues that one of the criteria for evaluating a theology is to what extent the theology is capable of responding to this important problem that is so basic to human existence. Tillich also points out the substantive difference between the philosopher and the theologian. Philosophy attempts to uncover 'the structure of being', whereas theology treats of 'the meaning of being' (Tillich 1951, 22).

Tillich also maintains that 'theology is necessarily existential' (Tillich 1951, 25). This implies that a theology that is not existential is bad theology. Such assertions no doubt met with opposition. Tillich would reply, as we shall see further on, that every generation interprets its Christian symbols, because every generation attempts to discover its own unique existential interpretation. Tillich's critics would certainly reply that such views lead to relativism, inasmuch as the 'good existential theology' of one generation may well be bad theology for another generation.

Tillich offers a phenomenological definition of God. In other words, he presents a description of God as He is revealed in the human religious experience, without considering the question of God's existence or non-existence. According to Tillich: 'God *is* man's ultimate concern'

(Tillich 1951, 211). Buber is critical of the conception, because ‘man’s relation to God is wider than ultimate concern’ (Idinopoulos 1971, 205). Heschel, too, is strongly critical of the portrayal of God as ‘man’s ultimate concern’. According to Heschel:

If God is defined as a name for that which ‘concerns man ultimately,’ then He is but a symbol of man’s concern, the objectification of a subjective state of mind. But as such God will be little more than a projection of our imagination. (Heschel [1955] 1988, 127)

We should also note this important comment by Merkle:

In an obvious, though unnoted response to Tillich, Heschel claims that ‘prophetic religion may be defined, not as what man does with his ultimate concern, but rather what man does with God’s concern.’ (Merkle 1985, 183)

This comment provides an example of how Heschel adopts Tillich’s terminology, while not uncritically giving it a substantively different meaning. Whereas Tillich’s definition of faith reflects an existential view that places man’s personal struggle with his problems and aspirations at its center, Heschel focuses upon the spiritual experience of the prophets that centers upon the prophet’s identification with the divine pathos. The prophet empathizes with God’s rage and pain in facing a reality of values in a state of chaos.

#### DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE AND DIVINE IMMANENCE

Sanders points out the relationship between Heschel’s thought and that of Tillich, and even of Karl Barth:

Whereas Karl Barth called God the Wholly Other, Heschel called him the One Who is involved, near and concerned. And whereas Paul Tillich called God man’s Ultimate Concern, Heschel called him the Ultimately Concerned. (Sanders 1973, 61–62)

Sanders wrote this many years after Heschel had already published *Man is Not Alone* (1951) and *God in Search of Man* (1955). Sanders’s observation is clearly accurate. Heschel and Tillich are linked not only by their fields of study but also by the terminology that they employ in expressing their views. From the above quote, we see the clear parallel between the terms used by the two Christian theologians, Tillich and Barth, but what is also clear is that Heschel adopts the same terminology in order to show the fundamental difference of his unique approach

to the divine. We can reasonably assume that, for the purpose of his English writings, Heschel adopted the theological lexicon of the two Christian scholars. That lexicon, and the need to adapt it to his own use, enabled Heschel to develop his concepts with greater precision.

We should note that the different use of the term ‘ultimate concern’ also reflects a different view of the nature of the religious experience. The religious experience addressed by Tillich is a private, personal experience of the believer. The spiritual prophetic experience that Heschel describes is one that does not allow the prophet to be involved with his own spiritual problems. The prophet’s total identification with the divine pathos causes the prophet to observe the world from a divine perspective. As a result, the prophetic experience obliges the prophet, *a priori*, to confront the problems of humanity.

We should, however, emphasize that when Heschel speaks of God as ultimately concerned about the human condition, he is not introducing a new concept to his thought. The concept of divine pathos—the idea that God wholly identifies with the fate of His children—plays a central role in his book *The Prophets*, which he wrote as his doctoral dissertation at the University of Berlin. For Heschel, the God of the prophets has feelings. He suffers with His children in their times of hardship and rejoices with them in the joys of their existence. Thus, using Tillich’s terminology allows Heschel to clarify his approach to divine pathos.

In Heschel’s book *Man is Not Alone*, which was published contemporaneously with Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*, he emphasizes that ‘Divine concern means His taking interest in the fate of man’ (Heschel [1951] 1984, 144). As Sanders notes, there can be little doubt that this definition is a reply to Tillich. We should also note that Heschel believed that his view was rooted in the approach of the Sages, who described God’s identification with the fate of His children in midrashic texts relating to the joint exile of Israel and of the *Shekhina*—the Divine Presence. Such relationships between man and God can be found throughout Heschel’s writings.

I believe that the practical prophetic conclusion that Heschel reaches is of particular interest: ‘*To be* is *to stand* for, to stand for a divine concern’ (Heschel [1951] 1984, 145). With this statement, Heschel explains the significance of the prophetic struggle to repair the world. The prophets stand for the world. Their struggle is divine because through it they become partners in God’s identification and involvement with the fate of humanity.

As opposed to Heschel, Tillich seeks to emphasize that only through the experience of personal faith in which God's ultimate transcendence is revealed to the individual can a person be completely freed of existential anxiety. He argues that it will always be possible to cast doubt upon theories—mystical and otherwise—in which man is called upon to give meaning to God through the use of limited human language. Only Christian faith, with its central symbol of the crucifixion, can free man of his doubts and fear:

It is the Church under the Cross which alone can do this, the Church which preaches the Crucified who cried to God who remained his God after the God of confidence had left him in the darkness of doubt and meaninglessness. (Tillich 1952, 188)

The power of Christian faith derives from absolute belief in God even though man cannot understand Him. The symbol of Jesus on the cross, turning to God—‘*Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?*’, that is, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27:46)—is, for Tillich, the most important symbol of Christian faith because it symbolizes the absolute transcendence of God. Tillich does not claim that Jesus was freed of his physical suffering because of his faith. Jesus was freed of the views that anthropomorphize divinity. The symbol of the crucifixion forcefully represents Tillich’s conception of the absolute transcendence of God.

As opposed to this, Heschel devotes a central place to the description of the relationship between God and man. He does this in his desire to emphasize that God, as a father who worries about the fate of his children, constantly observes all that occurs in our world. In speaking of these differences in theological approach, Merkle argues that for Heschel God is ‘the supreme Subject’ (Merkle 1985, n249–n250); in other words, God continuously watches His children.

#### SYMBOLISM: THE DANGER OF SYMBOLISM

Both Tillich and Heschel discuss symbolism. Symbols play a central role in Tillich’s theology. Heschel is sharply critical of what he considers an exaggerated and theologically dangerous use of symbols.

Tillich argues that the limits of human comprehension make it impossible to employ concepts to describe or understand God and Christian faith. For Tillich, the language of faith is the language of symbols. Tillich argues that we must be religiously aware that God transcends His

name (Tillich 1957, 44–45). In this, Tillich reiterates the view he expresses in his other works, as well, when he speaks of ‘God above God’ (Tillich 1952, 86). This concept emphasizes God’s transcendent nature, while permitting Tillich to make a particularly dangerous theological statement: ‘The fundamental symbol of our ultimate concern is God’ (Tillich 1957, 45). Of divinity itself we can say nothing, and anything that we might say about divinity can only be symbolic.

As we shall see, Heschel would be harshly critical of such a statement, because the idea that all we know of God is symbols can undermine faith. Symbols, as Tillich points out, are human language. It would be hard to argue that symbols have any absolute value, inasmuch as symbolic language—like any human language—is dependent upon the cultural context and environment of the speakers. Tillich addresses this objection, countering that the claim that the language of symbols might undermine faith reflects a lack of appreciation of the power of symbols. The power of symbols is greater than that of any non-symbolic language (Tillich 1952, 45). This claim is rooted in the power of the spiritual experience that symbols can provoke. The certainty of faith arises from the power of the believer’s experience. That is the unique strength and weakness of Tillich’s approach. Only one who has undergone the experience will be convinced.

In considering Tillich’s approach, Randall proposes that Tillich believed that, from the beginning, Christian faith expressed itself through the use of symbols. Christian theology must reinterpret those original constitutive symbols anew in every generation. Tillich himself interprets the symbols of Christianity in accordance with the Christian existentialism that he propounded (Randall 1969, 25–31).

Here, too, Heschel disagrees with Tillich; however, his opposition to granting a central, religious role to symbolism has a long history. While still in Germany, Heschel, like many other Jews, had the opportunity to hear and acquaint himself with Martin Buber’s views on this subject. Indeed, Heschel’s counterpart in the debate upon the place of symbols in Judaism was Martin Buber. In his book on Heschel, Kaplan surveys the points of contention between Heschel and Buber in a chapter entitled ‘Sacred Versus Symbolic Religion’. This title sums up the debate between the two thinkers in a single phrase (Kaplan 1996, 75–89). At the core of the debate stood a difference of opinion as to the role of symbols for the prophets. According to Kaplan, Heschel viewed Buber’s approach as a reduction of prophetic theology to a kind of ‘philosophical anthropology’, due to the symbolic value that Buber

attached to the actions and conceptions of the prophets. To this debate between Heschel and Buber, we must add Heschel's debate with Tillich. For Heschel, the symbolism of both these men undermined the concept of God and all that it entailed.

The three philosophers knew one another. Their acquaintance began in prewar Germany and continued after the Second World War. Friedman refers to this in several places in his book on Martin Buber's life and work. Of particular interest in the context of this study is Friedman's comparison between the thought of Tillich and that of Buber:

[U]nlike Tillich, he had no doctrine of a primal ground (*Urgrund*) to offer.  
'I must only witness for that meeting in which all meetings with others are grounded, and you cannot meet the Absolute' (Friedman 1988, 265).

Here, Buber clearly declares that his approach allows no possibility of any direct meeting with the divinity. Behind this approach stands a change that occurred in Buber's conception of divinity. As Mendes-Flohr described it, Buber tended toward mystical explanations in his attempt to describe and understand the relationship between God and man. Initially, Buber took the view that man must strive toward personal spiritual transcendence in order to free the soul from the profane below. Mendes-Flohr observes that 'the fraternity born of common struggle' in the First World War was one of the factors that motivated Buber to emphasize the centrality of dialogue. That experience would later be translated into his conception of the 'I-Thou' relationship (Mendes-Flohr 1989, 91).

In an interview conducted at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Heschel was asked: 'Did he [Buber] hold that revelation was a kind of vague exchange?' Heschel replied:

No, not an exchange. Rather, he believed it is a vague encounter. That is untenable. A Jew cannot live by such a conception of revelation. Buber does not do justice to the claims of the prophets. (Heschel [1967] 1996, 385)

Heschel's response clearly expresses his rejection of Buber's conception of the divine. Buber's conception of the relationship between God and man, as expressed in the book *I-and-Thou*, is very problematic to Heschel's way of thinking, because in Buber's philosophy of dialogue there is no direct discourse between man and God. According to Buber, whenever the 'I' fully realizes significant discourse with the 'Thou', there is also a discourse with the 'Eternal Thou'. According to this

approach, man can find the Eternal Thou (God) through establishing a complete I-Thou relationship.

It might be argued that this is not an accurate depiction, inasmuch as Buber's views do not reflect actions that take place in accordance with the confines of human time and logic. The experience has no before or after. Nevertheless, the experience of revelation and of meeting the Eternal Thou is contingent upon revealing the Human Thou.

Moreover, in the fifth of the eight famous lectures that Buber delivered at Franz Rosenzweig's Lehrhaus (Frankfurt 1922), he presented the principles of the 'dialogical' philosophy. As Rebecca Horowitz has noted, those principles would serve as the basis for Buber's book *I and Thou* (Horwitz 1988, 219–220).

Buber asks: 'Are Thou-Relations only isolated moments?' I believe that Buber's response to this question reveals the weakness in his conception of the divine, inasmuch as he asserts the conclusion that God is the absolute Thou as the solution to a substantive problem in his philosophy. According to Buber, if we assume that the I-Thou relations are indeed isolated moments, that is, they are the relationship that comes into being between the 'I' and the 'Thou' at a particular moment, then: 'the relations are necessarily moments of life that come and go. Lightning flashes in the sky of life that disappear, among which there is no continuity.' But such a world would be one of interpersonal relations characterized by estrangement and exploitation (I-it). In order to overcome this conclusion, Buber asserts:

God is the absolute Thou, which by its nature can no longer become It. When we address as Thou not any limitable thing that by its nature must become an object but the unconditional—Being itself—then the continuity of the Thou-world is opened up. (Horwitz 1988, 83)

The assumption of God's existence is necessary in order to make the continuity of the 'Thou-world' possible. Buber presents this conclusion as deriving from the 'human being's sense of Thou.' Whether we know it or not, we need discourse with others human beings. The assumption of the existence of God=Absolute Thou is 'the guarantee of the construction of a world from the Thou' (Buber 1922, 84). A year later, in his book *I-Thou* (1923), Novak explains:

God's allness cannot be lost but only not-experienced by human consciousness because that human consciousness has removed itself away from the reality of thou-ness 'into the It-world and It-speech.' (Novak 2005, 95)

This distinction notwithstanding, the relationship between man and God is conditional upon the establishing of the ‘I–Thou’ relationship between two human beings, or expressed in other terms, upon the revelation of three partners: I, Thou, and the Eternal Thou. Such a tripartite revelation can occur only when the two human partners succeed in establishing an I–Thou relationship between themselves. There is not, as yet, any possibility for direct communication between the individual and his God.

Such an approach was incompatible with Heschel’s demand for a full, direct relationship between man and God. It is no mere coincidence that Heschel composed a poem entitled *I and You*. In this poem, Heschel’s religious yearning for a direct relationship with God is evident:

#### I and You

Transmissions flow from your heart to mine,  
Trading, twining my pains with yours.  
Am I not—you? Are you not—I?

My nerves are clustered with Yours.  
Your dreams have met with mine.  
Are we not one in the bodies of millions?

Often I glimpse Myself in everyone’s form,  
Hear My own speech—a distant, quiet voice—in people’s weeping,  
As if under millions of masks My face would lie hidden.

I live in Me and in You.  
Through your lips goes a word from Me to Me,  
From your eyes drips a tear—its source in Me.

When a need pains You, alarm me!  
When You miss a human being, tear open my door!  
You live in Yourself, You live in me.

(Heschel [1933] 2004, 31)

This poem deserves a more in-depth analysis than what I can provide here. For the purposes of this paper, I would merely like to point out the force of Heschel’s desire for a direct relationship with God. Heschel wrote this poem in his youth, but the longing for an immediate connection with God remained with him throughout his life and finds expression in various ways in his writings. These writings reflect Heschel’s thought and the ways in which he interpreted Judaism. This personal

interpretation of Judaism led to Heschel's adulation by many and to fierce criticism by others.

It is possible to criticize Heschel's approach as expressed in his poetry and in his later writing as suffering from an anthropomorphic tendency that describes the divinity in human terms and ascribes to God emotions that are not substantively different from human ones. I imagine that Heschel's response to such criticism would be that in doing so he is not introducing anything new, and that an examination of the Bible, midrash and early and late mystical writings would show that attempts to ignore the living relationship between God and man falsify the original meaning of some of the central works of Jewish belief. According to Heschel: 'He is not the Unknown; He is the Father; the God of Abraham...' (Heschel [1955] 1988, 164).

In his book *Man's Quest for God*, Heschel treats primarily of two subjects. The first subject—to which Heschel devotes most of the book—is that of prayer. The second subject—which Heschel addresses at the end of the book—is symbolism. By juxtaposing his discussion of symbolism with his discussion of prayer, Heschel provides the reader with an explanation of his harsh criticism of symbolism, and its attendant spiritual dangers are made clear.

In all of his writings, Heschel tries to point out the spiritual nearness between man and God. This nearness is particularly strong during prayer. This stands in contradistinction to the vast distance that, according to Heschel, separates man from God in a theology premised upon symbols. In my opinion, this criticism appears to be directed against Tillich as well. In trying to emphasize God's absolute transcendence, Tillich presents his idea of 'God above God', and thus undermines the possibility of creating a direct relationship between man and God. There is no doubt in my mind that Heschel considered Tillich's approach to be dangerous, not only because in it man has no direct contact with God, but also because the divinity that man encounters is nothing but a symbolic creation of the human imagination. Heschel casts theological doubt upon the viability of a religion that develops from symbols:

Is it conceivable that a religious person would, once he has realized the fictional nature of symbolism, be willing to accept a substitute for God? (Heschel 1954, 130)

For Heschel, this direct relationship with God is not merely possible, it is real and necessary to the religion of Israel. As Kaplan notes, Heschel was also critical of the mysticism of The Book of Zohar. The Book of

Zohar develops a symbolism that seeks to describe the divine universe and its powers (Kaplan 1996, 75). For Heschel, the Kabbalistic ‘Tree of the Sefirot’ between God Himself (the *Ein Sof*) and man residing in the lower world represents a deviation from biblical faith. For Heschel, the direct relationship between the prophet and God is Jewish faith in its purest form.

#### ANXIETY AND THE COURAGE TO BE

Both authors, adopting an existential approach, devote a central place to confronting the fear induced by the encounter with a reality that threatens physical and spiritual existence. In his book *Faith and the Courage To Be*, Tillich examines the existential state of humanity and points out the real existential anxiety with which human beings must contend. According to Tillich: ‘Existential anxiety has an ontological character and cannot be removed but must be taken into the courage to be’ (Tillich 1952, 77).

Tillich’s existential philosophy seeks to contend with that existential anxiety that we cannot remove. This real fear derives from our awareness of the terrible possibility of the utter obliteration of our existence. Tillich describes this as the tension and anxiety between two existential states: being and not-being.

A person may delude himself and try to blur or erase this fear, but he will never succeed. Existential anxiety will always reside in the deepest recesses of the soul. When Tillich defines existential anxiety as ontological, he means to emphasize that existence itself instils fear. This fear is fundamental because we are born into a menacing world in which there are many forces that threaten our existence. A person does not merely react to the threats presented by nature. A person thinks and is aware of the need to confront the existential anxiety of the past, the present, and the future. Existential anxiety necessarily arises in every human confrontation with reality. It is in this confrontation that man’s inherent substantive freedom is revealed (Tillich 1952, 82). At the center of Tillich’s approach stands a subject that is much discussed in existentialist philosophy—individual selfhood. This selfhood is threatened, and the individual fears its loss. ‘The courage to be’ is a person’s decision to be himself despite the threats (Tillich 1952, 86).

Tillich argues that it is time that theological discourse rid itself of its unease at the use of the term ‘self’, because a theology that wishes

to ignore confronting the individual's deepest fears will not succeed in meeting humanity's most fundamental need. Tillich further emphasizes that: 'Ontological self-affirmation precedes all differences of metaphysical, ethical, or religious definition of the self' (Tillich 1952, 87).

Tillich clarifies and emphasizes that from the ontological-existential perspective, the self-affirmation 'to be' logically precedes the methods by which a person chooses to realize the will to be. I believe that this is a very courageous statement, because here Tillich establishes religious self-definition as a possibility rather than as a decision that every Christian must realize. The individual standing at the center must decide how to realize his selfhood. Tillich characterizes this decision as 'the courage to be as oneself' (Tillich 1952, 87).

In his books, we also find Heschel contending with existential anxiety. Heschel emphasizes the terrible sense of loneliness that human beings must confront. To examine Heschel's writings is to examine Heschel's soul, because he presents a philosophy that develops from the deeply religious encounters that he experienced at different points in his life. In an article that will soon be published, I track the different significance that Heschel gives to the concepts of God's omnipotence and presence at different stages in his life. In the article, I try to show the decisive influence that events in Heschel's life had upon his theological view. On the one hand, the Holocaust causes Heschel to stress that God is not present in the world, because mankind has banished Him. On the other hand, Heschel perceived God's presence in the world in Israel's victory in the Six Day War and the reunification of Jerusalem.

In Heschel's writings we find a deep fear of loneliness. In an autobiographical passage, Heschel recounts the thoughts that arose in his mind as he walked the streets of Berlin. Heschel left his family behind in Poland in order to study at Berlin University, and in the course of his walk in Berlin, Heschel makes a personal accounting. He tell us:

We have in common a terrible loneliness. Day after day a question goes up desperately in our minds: Are we alone in the wilderness of the self, alone in this silent universe, of which we are a part, and in which we feel at the same time like strangers? (Heschel [1955] 1988, 101)

Heschel believes that man can find no relief from the terrible loneliness by turning only to the self, because Heschel conceives of the human soul as a battlefield between opposing forces. The human soul is motivated by desires and needs. Therefore, it requires spiritual transcendence

in order to hear the divine voice. In describing the mystical experience, which he no doubt personally experienced, Heschel claims:

We cannot think any more as if He were there and we here. He is both there and here. He is not a being, but being in and beyond all beings. (Heschel [1951] 1984, 78)

In this experience, Heschel describes a profound change in human consciousness. The divine light breaks upon human consciousness like lightning and allows one to participate in the divine understanding. It is in this sense that Heschel claims that the prophet attains a level of observation of reality from a divine perspective. The religious experience changes his apprehension of reality, and he becomes a party to the divine point of view (Heschel 1962, xvi). The prophets endeavoured to teach the people of Israel to think in categories of holiness, to make them see the world from the divine perspective, through the eyes of God's partner in establishing a kingdom that realizes the divine will.

According to Heschel, Judaism calls upon man to listen to his conscience as well as to the divine call. This is a merger of the two sources of morality, internal and external, and rejects a dichotomous distinction. The Kantian division that distinguishes between an inner source of morality that characterizes autonomous morality, and an external source of morality that characterizes a heteronomous morality is foreign to the spirit of Judaism. The source of this distinction is in theological problems that developed in Christianity. In Judaism, as understood by Heschel, such a distinction is not possible, because at the core of the Jewish religious prophetic experience is the response to the divine call. At the moment of the existential meeting with God, man realizes what was stated in Ethics of the Fathers in the name of Rabban Gamaliel: 'He used to say: Do His will as it was thy will, that He may do thy will as it was His will' (Aboth 2:4). In other words, man's will attains the level of identification with the divine will. Therefore, the distinction between an external and an internal source of morality is obliterated, because there is a single will that is shared by man and God.

#### THE COURAGE TO BE A PART

Tillich claims that one of the primary methods for coping with existential anxiety is membership in a group, because when a person sees

himself as a member of a group, ‘the self affirms itself as a participant in the power of a group...’ (Tillich 1952, 89).

The existential anxiety of the lone individual is tremendous. Membership in a group, a nation, a religious congregation gives the individual security. It is no longer the power of an individual but the power of the group. Of course, this method of coping comes at a price. This is not the courage to be as oneself but rather the courage to be as a part. Membership in a group demands that the individual relinquish—at least in part—the realization of his private desires and ambitions. Tillich points to communism as an example of a model in which the individual copes with existential anxiety through membership in a group (Tillich 1952, 99). This is an extreme example, but it serves to elucidate Tillich’s desire to emphasize that an individual who defines himself as a member of a group alleviates the existential anxiety but sacrifices his individual selfhood. The individual in this case defines himself, his identity, and his aspirations in accordance with the group. Tillich adds a comment that clarifies the attraction of membership in a group. The dread of death loses its power because the individual can view himself as part of a collective that transcends death. The individual may die, but the individual believes and is convinced that the collective to which he belongs will continue to exist (Tillich 1952, 100).

In Heschel’s philosophy we find an attempt to integrate an individualistic existential view with religion that is substantively nationalistic. Heschel argues:

Judaism is not a prophetic religion but a people’s religion. Prophets were found among other nations as well. Unique was the entrance of holiness into the life of all Israel and the fact of prophecy being translated into concrete *history* rather than remaining a private experience of individuals. (Heschel 1955, 245)

One might argue that there is considerable tension between this nationalistic definition of Judaism and Heschel’s understanding of the religious experience itself, inasmuch as the religious experience is described as being a personal one. But for Heschel, the ultimate personal religious experience is the prophetic experience. Heschel argues that through the prophetic experience, the prophet is capable of seeing the world from the divine perspective. Heschel seeks to harmonize self-actualization and national realization. Heschel also takes care to define the relationship between man and God as one of partnership.

### CONCLUSION

Heschel and Tillich present contradictory views of the nature and status of divinity. While one tries to show its transcendent nature, the other seeks to portray God's immanence. One believes that the divine cannot be expressed in human terms and that symbolic language is required. The other describes the divine in human language and claims to describe the inner workings of God's emotional world. One attempts to describe the personal character of the individual's religious experience, while the other emphasizes the communal, national character of religious experience.

In examining these real differences and the substantive examples of communication and separation between Heschel and Tillich, we have seen that the two existential philosophers employed strikingly similar language to emphasize strikingly different conclusions.

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## ‘A SYMBOLIC BRIDGE BETWEEN FAITHS’: HOLY GROUND FOR LIQUID RITUAL

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### INTRODUCTION

#### *The Tor Tre Teste Jubilee Church in Rome*

As the new millennium approached, an ambitious project which is of interest in several respects was initiated in Rome. Under the slogan ‘50 Chiese per Roma 2000’ (50 Churches for Rome 2000), the Bishop of Rome, with the Italian conference of bishops and the Vatican in the background, wanted to realize fifty new, ‘modern’ churches in the extensive suburbs of the Eternal City (De Jonge 2002, sub 7.2, 204–206; Spens 1997, 208–219; *La Chiesa del 2000* 1997; Ennis 2004, although very critical; Bigliardi). Behind this prestigious project lay not only the attempt to catch up with the needs of church infrastructure in the Roman suburbs, but also a general (but sometimes more pointedly designated as missionary) programme of evangelization and inculturation. By constructing new ritual spaces, the Roman Catholic Church sought to establish its presence in the post-, high- or late-modern culture. Within the project there was one spearhead with a specifically assigned, concrete location. One church would be the Jubilee Millennium Church. A triangular plot far out on the eastern edge of the city was chosen as the locus for this project, in a neighbourhood that was called Tor Tre Teste (see ill. 1–6).

As so often happens in Italy, the fifty-church project ran aground on great financial and planning obstacles. Ultimately only a fraction of the fifty churches were in fact built. The spearhead of Tor Tre Teste also became a protracted story, with many squabbles, delays, debates, oversights, technical problems, financial holes and overruns, etc. But despite all of this, a church did arise on the site. It is not within the scope of this article to examine the whole of this extensive story, but rather I will focus on the design in a general sense, and the discussion regarding it.

The first, primarily Italian call for proposals in 1993, via a competition (the normal procedure for projects of this sort), ended in chaos and failure. There were too many participants (over 200) and designs (534), too many of which were from young, inexperienced architects, and after mature reflection it was realized that the criteria had not been clearly stated and the invitation programme of requirements had been too complex.

After this, in 1995 six top international architects were invited to each submit a design. The winner would be selected from these. They were big names from trend-setting architectural firms: Tadao Ando, Günter Behnisch, Santiago Calatrava, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, and Richard Meier. In compiling this list, an explicit connection was sought with the state of the art of modern architecture. The Roman Catholic Church was to play a guiding role in the long-running discussions in Italy about church architecture for the future. (The Italian bishops had been particularly active on this point since the 1970s.) In contrast to the previous failed call for submissions, this time the invitation programme of requirements was extremely short and clear, less than one page of typing paper (cf. *La Chiesa del 2000* 1997, 70 [Italian], 71 [English]). The Jubilee Year was cited as the impetus; a welcoming church was to be constructed to mark this event—a welcome directed to Rome as a pilgrimage destination, and to the neighbourhood, which would be upgraded through the presence of this church, which would further be a part of the ‘new evangelisation’. To cite from the programme: ‘What is being asked of the architect, then, is to design a space that says “place of welcome, place of convocation, a churchly place”. This is the only significance requested, in the conviction that the architect can express it in his making architecture.’ In closing, there was a request for beauty, contemporary beauty: ‘[I]t is asked of the architect, but in an undertone in the awareness that daring words are being pronounced, that in his making architecture he makes the effort to express the up-to-dateness of the beautiful, to use an expression dear to H. Gadamer.’

When the result was announced in March 1996, it was the design by the Jewish-American architect Richard Meier that won the competition. The designs were presented in an exhibition, at press conferences, and in many publications.

When the winner was announced, a fierce debate about the winning design burst out, not only in Italy, but internationally (from a file of more than eighty (internet) publications, I mention only: Simongini

1996; Muolo 1996; Fontanarosa 1996; Louie 1996; van der Putten 1998; Riding 2003; Ennis 2004). The criticism focused on various aspects. These included the cost of the project (ultimately more than 25 million dollars for a relatively small parochial church in a small outer suburb, seating 300 to 350 people), setbacks because of construction delays (five years from the cornerstone laying in 1998 to its consecration in the autumn of 2003 as the *Chiesa parrocchiale Dives in Misericordia, a ricordo dell'anno giubileare 2000*), and all sorts of practical aspects such as the heating system, lighting, acoustics, furnishings, and the way it fit into the neighbourhood. But there was constantly a more general criticism being voiced. Many strongly opposed the design because it would not specifically be a church building. It would be a more general sacral space, which did not do justice to its Roman Catholic religious identity. Terms like 'iconoclastic' and also 'syncretistic' were repeatedly tossed about. It was also suggested that it would be a sort of 'inter-religious' building. One of the contributing factors here was that initially the building had no cross, internally or externally, and was also not provided with any devotional statues or images such as Stations of the Cross. From inside and outside it was an open, almost blank white space. In this regard, there were continual references to the fact that the architect was not a Christian, but a Jew. It was also labelled 'the Vatican's modernist moment' (Riding 2003), or in a critical reference to *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, the book on liturgy by the present pope, 'a vacuum in the Spirit' (Ennis 2004). Still others saw it, as we said, as a monument to syncretism, or as a heathen cultic site for the worship of the sun and the forces of nature, rather than a church. In the final analysis, the whole controversy has to be seen against the background of the discussions and debate about religious identity markers in public space that was flaring up in many places in Western culture. The absence of a spire with a cross was seen as a concession to cultural and religious plurality.

I have collected a thick file and bibliography of reactions in theological and pastoral sources, and also in architectural journals. It should, however, be noted that—in contrast to, for instance, The Netherlands—in Italy church architecture is a topical issue in the culture at large, sparking off discussion and debate in a number of sources (*Architettura e spazio sacro* 1992; *Liturgia è bello* 2001; *Luoghi sacri* 1990; Sanson 2002).

Moreover, Meier's Tor Tre Teste church landed in the midst of the still ongoing Roman Catholic debate about the direction of church and

liturgy. Voices from what is termed the Counter-Movement, which advocates a ‘Reform of the Reform’ (which is to say, a reform of the liturgical renewal following Vatican II), let their voices be heard too (Post 2004; Rosponi and Rossi 1999; Rosponi 2006). Liturgical space, space for Christian ritual, should again seek links with the rich sacral tradition; a church must again be a traditional, sacral, mystic space. Phrases like ‘reconquering sacred space’ were openly bandied about. And indeed, what Meier had delivered was not in all respects a traditional ritual space, but an open space in which light was the central value.

I find it an interesting fact that the diocese, the commissioning client and ecclesiastical authority in this debate, continued to support the design and the architect unconditionally through these arguments.

The architect himself answered back regularly. He willingly explained his design in articles and interviews. I can briefly indicate some of the main lines of this elucidation, explanation, and reasoning (interview in ArchNewsNow 2003; Riding 2003; Bigliardi 2003; Casserà 2004). The keywords are openness, transparency, light, sacrality, beauty, freedom, and movement. The formal symbolism of the three sails and the ship is secondary.

On the question of how it felt to be the first Jewish architect to design a Roman Catholic Church, Meier answered, ‘I feel extremely proud. It is very clear that the Catholic Church chose my design based on its merits, not because of a need to make a statement in regard to their relationship to Jews throughout history. Three of the architects in the competition were Jews. They were chosen to compete because they were among the top architects of our time. However, I think it is important that there is communication and mutual admiration and respect between members of all faiths. As the architect of this church, some might say that I am, to some degree, a symbolic bridge between faiths.’ (ArchNewsNow 2003). (There is, incidentally, some question of whether he was in fact the first Jewish architect to design a Roman Catholic church, but Italians are and remain chauvinistic, self-confident, and proud, and Meier was happy to accept the plaudit.)

These few words, then, about the design and debate. I have visited the church many times (in 2006 and 2007), been present at many celebrations there, and seen how the Italians from the neighbourhood sat side by side in their parish church with a diverse international company of what I will just call visitors—people who came only because of the

fame of the building. They meditated, celebrated their own rituals. Many were deeply impressed by the building, by the play of light and space.

### *Scheme and Plan*

For me, there are a number of fundamental elements involving the place of religion and ritual in modern Western society which come together in this church, literally ‘taking place’ there. These are elements that seem to me relevant for the theme of this collection. They place our discussion and reflection about religious interaction, about inter- and multi-religiosity in a different—and to my mind, more fundamental—perspective. I would like to further explore and present the contours of that perspective here. Although I always insist on proceeding from empirical, ritual acts, ritual practice, and the qualities and dynamics that we can trace there, in this contribution I will set aside this ritual-descriptive and analytic approach and focus primarily on the theoretical perspective of religious and ritual studies.

## THE REPERTOIRES

### *A Typology*

Looking at the current ritual repertoires in modern Western culture, we often encounter a tripartite or quadripartite division. If we follow Gerard Lukken (Lukken 2005, part III, chap. 4, 297–306), he sees rituals in the modern setting fanning out successively over, first, a traditional-institutional ecclesiastical, religious, denominational track (for instance, Christian, Jewish, Islamic); second, a general-religious track that draws partly from the first, religious track, but also has other sources of inspiration; third, a secular-profane track; and fourth, there is added here a multi-, or perhaps more particularly, an interreligious track. I have also worked with this typology myself, but must admit that I have increasing difficulty with it. This difficulty involves all sorts of points. First, there is the static separation of tracks that is inherent to typologies. Further there is the question of the designation of the three or four tracks, and their potential for differentiating among phenomena. What, precisely, is general-religious? Is profane-secular not a category that is in a more general sense the opposite of religious? And further, there is the issue of the position of the fourth category: does it belong there? Is multi- or

interreligious ritual, whatever it may be, not something of another order?

### *Multi-/interreligious Ritual*

Via this last category we enter an interesting and complex terrain (*Interreligieuze vieringen* 2005; Jespers 2005; Valkenberg 2005). It appears to be difficult to cite concrete examples of multi-/interreligious ritual, and the rituals that are put forward provoke debate—or at least discussion—about the use of these labels. To a large degree, multi- or interreligious ritual seems to be a construct of religious and ritual experts, hardly common practice based on ritual acts in which religious traditions encounter one another. There is a lot of material about these celebrations, at a considerable distance from the actual religious acts, about how they could and should take place, and little material coming out of concrete ritual case studies. The following typology is by now rather common here: first, monoreligious celebrations (a dominant religious tradition receives guests and takes their presence into account); second, multireligious gatherings (here the model of the prayer meetings for peace at Assisi are often cited); and third, interreligious celebrations where the parties celebrate together, i.e. collectively, with input from everyone. Most of the literature that I know of is more or less normative in character, presenting the third, interreligious model as the ideal, noting the potential snags with regard to ritual of this sort, and making recommendations about its design. In a general sense, the whole range of the typology is occasional ritual, tied to special events and circumstances, connected with larger or smaller observances and/or situations. The impetus for the ritual is situationally linked with specific places, such as schools, the army or health care facilities, and/or connected with an event, such as a disaster, accident, or attack—or with happier events such as the anniversary of a neighbourhood or association. There can further be such transitional moments on the axis of life such as birth, marriage, funerals, and anniversaries. Its presence at general events such as mass gatherings for peace or against racism, poverty, discrimination, illness (AIDS), injustice, etc. further establishes its occasional character. Some connect this multi-/interreligious repertoire with the potential to be open and welcoming, for which they use terms such as ‘initial/initiating’, or ‘agora celebrations’. But then we instead enter a more liturgical-pastoral, diaconal, missionary, or inculturalisation course.

*Syncretism*

It is interesting to find the word ‘syncretism’ being introduced into this context (Jespers 2005, 233; Valkenberg 2005, 282). One should be wary of this. In its general sense, syncretism means the casual mixing of elements from different religions. I am struck by how the label ‘syncretism’ continues to be thrown around over ritual practices and ideals, really primarily as a general term, and is seldom given a concrete definition. What, precisely, do people mean by this word? A couple of remarks are in order here (cf. EncRel 2005; TheolRealEnc 2000).

First, I would want to understand this term in an open manner, descriptively, used merely to draw attention to specific phenomena, and not immediately in a judgmental way, evaluating them. It denotes the mingling of elements from various religious and ritual traditions, their coming together, or being brought together. There are all sorts of modalities for this. It can involve existing lines assimilated in this way, or the creation of entirely new ritual traditions. Familiar examples from the history of religion include the Hellenistic mystery religions—or better, cults—of the late classical world. It is good, at this point, to realize that for many outsiders to the faith, Christianity was initially seen as a similar Eastern cultus, not unlike those of Mithras, Cybele, Attis, Sabazius, Isis, and many others (TheolRealEnc 2000; EncRel 2005; Vermaseren 1981, although not up to date any more).

Second, in this connection it is good to realize that, in a general ritual-descriptive and ritual-formal sense, every ritual and every ritual tradition is a fabric of elements. All ritual is ‘Lego ritual’; every ritual is a collage. The sneer that contemporary ritual is bricolage and syncretistic also applies to every ritual. Even the much vaunted *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the Roman liturgy, or that of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, has always been a patchwork. The great liturgical scholar Robert Taft rightly observed that in essence the study of liturgy was the study of ritual units: where did they come from; when were they brought together? (Taft 1994) It is with good reason that Ronald Grimes works with what he calls ‘parts lists’ in his book on contemporary rites of passage (Grimes 2000, 106f.).

Further, it must not be forgotten that there are many religious traditions that exist by the grace of so-called syncretism. The Baha’i faith, modern (that is, Western) Sufism, the Rosicrucians, Freemasons and many larger and smaller modern devotions that were once lumped

together under the collective term ‘New Age’ all provide contemporary examples.

Lastly, there are also authors who are more concrete about the dangers of syncretism. For instance, Ronald Grimes (who for the rest avoids the word in this connection) repeatedly notes the danger of transporting ritual/religious elements from one cultural setting to another without critical reflection. He particularly emphasizes the important role of context, of cultural settings, for ritual acts (Grimes 2000, 111–116). What is involved are shifts that affect the meaning of rites and symbols, changes of context. But at the same time, in his work Grimes shows how emerging rituals and the constant processes of ‘reinventing ritual’ and ‘ritualizing’ also have to do with precisely these changes in context (Swinkels and Post 2003).

### *Horizon of Understanding, Coding*

At this point we catch sight of an important aspect of rituality. Rituals and symbols exist by the grace of a horizon of understanding, a cultural code. That is why it is so dangerous to take rituals over from another culture unthinkingly. If that is done, you disrupt their cultural coding. Previously that code would have been transmitted as a matter of course in a culture or subculture, often in the ritual play itself. Now this minimal horizon of understanding is frequently lacking, or it is minutely divided up among a series of small and often transitory sub- and group cultures. This poses a problem for ritual acts, particularly when large and diverse groups are involved. Interreligious rites are a striking example of this, but to an ever greater extent, much internal religious ritual likewise wrestles with the inevitability of a fundamentally divided code and horizon of understanding. Presently there are a number of strategies employed to try to deal with this.

Splitting up target groups into small profile communities is one familiar strategy. Looking more to ritual itself, solutions are sought in providing more information, through commentaries, explanations and advice, thus hoping to pass on the code. From the Christian side we see all sorts of catechetical routes. It is often simply said that participation in traditional ritual is decreasing because people in any case no longer know anything about that ritual, about what angels are, what Easter and Pentecost stand for.

Frequently ritual leaders opt for explanations during the ritual itself; providing a commentary on it like the reporter at a sports match, they

seek to elucidate the acts as they are being performed. This is a step that is fatal to the power of ritual performance, but one which is intruding more and more into ritual.

Or increasingly a conscious choice may be made—though more often it is an unconscious choice—for adaptations in the ritual. The repertoire is simplified or ‘elementarized’ until it reflects generally understood basic symbolic outlines. Ritual acts are sustained by the archetypal symbols of light, water, earth, and fire.

With this we reach what is for me a watershed that has not so much to do with the search for suitable interreligious ritual as with a more fundamental dynamic. This dynamic transcends the typologies of repertoires we have looked at and touches every interaction of religion and rituality. It involves the general tendency in our culture to organize ritual on the basic-sacral ritual-symbolic order. As a result, a repertoire that transcends religious ritual traditions is increasingly emerging within our culture. Likewise, the stimulus for this does not lie in the search for places that are suitable as platforms for interreligious encounters.

#### RITUAL RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS: THE RELIGIOUS AND STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

This tendency toward what I would call basic-sacral ritual is more fundamentally the result of the position of religion in our culture. By now that has, in a theoretical sense, become a central theme in contemporary religious and ritual studies. I regard a fascinating recent book, *The Location of Religion* (2005), by Kim Knott, the religious studies scholar from Leeds, as a striking example of this. Knott’s book, which stands on the interface of religious and ritual studies, can be read as a plea for a particular approach to religion. Her argument is constructed with reference to a series of authors: sometimes older literature such as Lefebvre (1974/1991) and Jonathan Z. Smith (1978; 1987; although without mentioning the strong criticism by Grimes 1999), but also newer literature such as the tradition of the new cognitive science of religion and Hervieu-Léger (2000). Thus the book also has an important function as a synthesis.

##### *Approaches to Religion*

In pairs of two, Knott distinguishes six approaches to religion (Knott 2005, 77–85). I will not paraphrase them all, but only focus on the last.

The sixth approach she identified is *located religion*. This is religion as situated acts, as located practice, and here Knott is primarily interested in ‘contested fields’, places and situations where the shoe pinches, where there is debate and conflict over the boundary between the secular and religious. I see here especially a plea for a rooted, situated approach to religion, one that is particularly expressed in ritual acts and also concrete connections with place. It is not by chance that, in addition to relying on Lefebvre, Knott strongly relies on Smith, who sees place as the definitive category for ritual acts.

Here religion is approached situationally, rather than substantively; in the words of Smith, ‘something or someone is made sacred by ritual [...]; divine and human, sacred and profane are transitive categories; they serve as maps and labels, not substances; they are distinctions of office, indices of differences’ (Smith 1987, 105).

In addition to this localized approach rooted in cultural practices (thus an approach that is inductive rather than deductive) this perspective can also—and this is its importance for the theme of this collection/book—take fully into account the interactions, interferences and shifts in religion in our Western culture.

*Institutional/denominational/traditional Religion—Basic Sacrality:  
In Search of a Typology*

Taking Knott’s sixth approach into account, I will now take another step, namely toward further characterizing religion for the sake of analysis, working from her approach to it as *located religion*. Drawing on a wide range of literature (Hervieu-Léger, Hanegraaff, Anttonen: cf. Knott 2005, 87–93; 215–228; see also: Evans 2003, Grimes, and my Tilburg research group), a tentative ‘typology of the religious and/or sacral domain’, a taxonomy, can now be set out, with the intention of identifying some of its salient dynamics. Note that this taxonomy is intended to draw attention to certain aspects in the domain, not to define it through a sort of alternative typology of the general concept of ‘religion’, but to function as a set of analytic and indicative instruments for situating it within this general designation.

Following Matthew Evans’s conceptual typology of ‘the sacred’, in a general sense the sacral can be understood as ‘things set apart’ (Evans 2003). That can then be charted on a matrix of four types: the ‘personal sacred’ and ‘civil sacred’ (both types connected with the ‘natural’ dimension), and the ‘religious sacred’ and ‘spiritual sacred’ (both

involving ‘the supernatural’). I will focus my further remarks on this latter domain, which I previously tentatively termed the religious and/or sacral domain.

For me now, what is primarily important in the taxonomy is not so much the precise characterization of the religious and/or sacral dimension as the distinction that emerges with the use of a typology that permits us to identify the differences here. There is the category of religion as an institutional domain linked to tradition (with, as part of the picture: tradition, authorities, religious/ritual experts, collectivity, etc.), which Evans terms ‘the religious sacred’. There is also the category of broader sacrality, the domain of spirituality, the religious, the basic sacral (with, as part of the picture here: the individual, freedom, etc.). That is what Evans labels as ‘the spiritual sacred’.

With Hervieu-Léger, ‘religion’, or better ‘institutional/traditional religion’, as linked to *a chain of memory*, can be characterized as the ‘production, management and distribution of particular forms of believing which draws its legitimacy from reference to a tradition’ (Hervieu-Léger 2000, 101; Knott 2005, 87) or, via institutional collective cultural anamnesis, in line with Jan Assmann (2000/2006).

Alongside that, there is the sacral, or better, the ‘basic sacral’: ‘Sacred refers to the experience of encountering a force and presence that is stronger than self.’ (Hervieu-Léger 2000, 106; Knott 2005, 87). At the beginning of the project of modernity, the two became divorced from one another. But the sacral did not disappear as religion became deinstitutionalized. Or, in still another—but parallel—characterization by Hanegraaff (which does have its problematic aspects): ‘spirituality is any human practice which maintains contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning by way of the individual manifestation of symbolic systems. Religion is any symbolic system which influences human action by providing possibilities for ritually maintaining contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning.’ (Hanegraaff 1999, 147; Knott 2005, 219). Thus institutional/traditional religion cannot be conceived without spirituality, while spirituality can exist without tradition-linked religion.

This, to my mind, sheds light on a certain line with regard to categories or typology. However much their definitions of ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’ may ultimately differ, a whole range of authors arrive at the general typology just mentioned. They are brought together in the book by Knott cited above; I have added Evans’s typology as well.

I would here add two more characterizations that are connected directly with the taxonomy. One involves the working definition of sacrality and religion which we presently employ in a project group at Tilburg. The other is a definition by Grimes that also explicitly includes and involves the concept of ritual.

In our Tilburg research group, the question of basic sacrality and religion (in the sense of traditional religion) became topical particularly in a project regarding rituals in the home. In her dissertation project, Goedroen Juchtmans<sup>1</sup> is presently working fruitfully with the typology of the basic sacral and traditional religious. The ‘basic sacral’ is linked here with (a) an experience of a higher, deeper, or concentrating power transcending one’s self, which encompasses one’s whole life, or with (b) values that create a meaningful context for life or for that which is of ultimate importance in life. One can speak of ‘religion’ if this experience, or that which is of ultimate importance, lies within the context of one or more religious traditions and the reference to the preternatural takes on specific features (for instance, it is named God, Christ, Krishna, etc.). Thus ‘religion’ is connected with a specific religious tradition.

It will also be worthwhile in this connection to briefly quote a definition of ritual given by Ronald Grimes. In his book on modern *rites de passage* he presents a definition of ritual, spirituality, and religion in terms of their connections with one another: ‘By ritual I mean sequences of ordinary action rendered special by virtue of their condensation, elevation, or stylization. By spirituality I intend practiced attentiveness aimed at nurturing a sense of the interdependence of all beings sacred and all things ordinary. And by religion I mean spirituality sustained as a tradition or organized into an institution.’ (Grimes 2000, 70ff.).

To my mind, what is important here is an open, broad view on what I just designated as the ‘religious domain’, with religion linked to a specific chain of memory, and an open, basic sacrality, viewed by many as vague and fluid (sometimes also termed ‘spirituality’, the word that is also to be found in Grimes). The types can be found in forms of *located religion*, chiefly ritual practices and ritual places. The strength of Grimes’s definition is that it also directly introduces the ritual dimension. Moreover, it clearly declares that we are dealing with a fluid typology. Rather than separating things and playing them off against one another, they are presented in connection to and in tension with one another. Religion and sacrality/spirituality are not synonymous, nor are

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<sup>1</sup> Working title: ‘Ritual and Liturgy in the Home’, to be completed in 2008.

they wholly unconnected with each other. Nor is the social played off against the individual, or the profane against the sacred. For the rest, it would be interesting to introduce here the sharp critique that Grimes has of Smith on the relationship between ritual and place. I will however leave that aside and merely refer to this debate (Grimes 1999).

The typology that we wish to evoke here is thus *liquid*: there are no fixed positions. But there are differences and distinctions in ritual repertoires. These are to be discovered through the categories of institutional/traditional religion and basic sacrality that we have mentioned. Here the typology I previously provided, following Lukken, is relativized. Positions now flow into one another. The dimension of basic sacrality is directly connected with the basic symbolic order that supports every religion and ritual practice. That is, for instance, the background of the extensive project surrounding sacramentality by the Durham theologian David Brown, who in essence connects Christian sacramentality with the basic level of referential, transcendental experience that he understands under the loaded term *enchantment*. It is striking that in this he also arrives at the dominance of place as locus for this basic sacral experience (cf. his book *God and the Enchantment of Place*: Brown 2004/2006; Post 2006a, chap. 8, 120–124; Post 2006b). What is interesting with Brown—and also quite confusing—is that he discusses the basic sacral domain using a terminology of sacrament/sacramentality derived from classic and traditional (Christian) religion.

### *Liquid Ritual*

Basic-sacral ritual is increasingly important in today’s culture, characterized both by religious and ritual plurality, but also by the constant simplification of religious ritual repertoires, reducing them to their most elementary state (Christians celebrate only Christmas and several *rites de passage*, Moslems only Ramadan, Jews limit themselves to several occasions of home/family ritual). We could thus almost speak of this as an ‘interreligious’ importance. That import touches the religious and ritual traditions themselves, namely in the search for ways to get back in touch with the ritual order in high-, late- or post-modern (recently also post-secular) Western society, and in the search for a suitable repertoire that is connected with that ritual order. There is a great need for various repertoires in which that ritual-symbolic code can be learned, repertoires which were previously—particularly before the ‘long

1960s'—directly linked with religious institutional routes. These involve rituals that are suitable for various situations, people, and groups. The keywords here are multiplicity, multiformity, flexibility, and openness. Although the word 'liquid' has a very definite connotation in the wake of Zygmunt Bauman's 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000) and Pete Ward's strongly ecclesiastical programmatic 'liquid church' (Ward 2002), I would want to use that term here primarily to draw attention to what is taking place, thereby connecting with the analysis that in the current late- or post-modern order, old, entrenched roles are breaking open, institutions crumbling, and boundaries blurring. (Bauman prefers to take the family as his model, but one could just as well take (institutional) religion.) In that perspective, there is certainly an open situation, without idealizing it as 'free at last'. For rituals, for example, it involves the fluid boundaries between profane-secular, basic-sacred and religious (for instance, Christian-ecclesiastical) repertoires, or better, the appropriation of repertoires. This liquid situation challenges us to seek new ways, new forms of liquid ritual. These open, liquid rituals also affect the more fixed repertoires linked with specific religions. The consequence is that rituals connected with tradition will also become embedded in a wider ritual praxis again, so that they are no longer seen as a *kulturelle Verhaltensanomalie* (Haunerland 2005, 78).

### *Reclaiming Ritual Experience*

Here the connections between religious and basic sacred ritual experience, and their dynamic, come into the picture, and more precisely in the sense of an initiation process, or in the words of David Brown, who was mentioned above, the process of 'reclaiming human experience' (I would say: ritual experience) (Brown, 2004). There is considerable demand for initiation into the sacral order of ritual and symbol. In the case of new rituals this involves a symbolic or sacral initiation, on the basis of which persons can find (or can again find) a foundation for celebration, interpretation, marking significant events and making sense of life. There are more than enough signals that such a primary, basic initiation is necessary. For example, I find the sign that one encounters everywhere in the great cathedrals and monumental churches across Europe, and which I have also seen in synagogues in Dresden and Berlin, speaks volumes. The sign is based on the familiar round traffic sign with a red circle and crossbar: Forbidden to eat, skate, use mobile telephones, listen to radios, play football, enter improperly clothed, etc.

Its presence is a signal that it is no longer second nature for people to understand these rules of conduct, that they no longer share the symbolic code for a sacred place (Scharfe 2004, 245).

This illuminates the essential path of symbolic-ritual or basic-sacred initiation: becoming familiar (or regaining familiarity) with the enchanting, referential world, with the evocative interplay of immanence and transcendence, catching sight of images of sacred presence. Throughout the ages this initiation has been connected with that broad field of ritual repertoires that we, from the standpoint of religious institutions, often term ‘peripheral’, or paraliturgical or pararitual. These have likewise for ages been the domains where we come closest to the human experience of sacrality.

These domains are also central to Brown’s project, which we cited above, which in addition to words and language also involves persons (as role models, heroes, idols, saints), icons, statues, iconography, film, TV, food, eating, drinking, meals, the material world (objects and things, material culture), the body, physical expression, touching, performance, theatre, play, sport, drama, music, sound, or silence. Spatiality is a privileged locus, in a literal sense: Holy Ground, architecture and landscape, nature, trees, woods, water and sea, mountains and valleys, gardens, and parks.

These are the realms of symbolic and ritual experience, the basis of all ritual acts, and thus also of their religious variants. These can be or can become places and repertoires of interreligious ritual, in the most basic sense of the word. The core of what I mean here by general initiation is giving place to ‘natural’ religious experience as the experience of sacrality, or as Brown prefers to term it, sacramentality. Brown’s point of departure is the interplay of transcendence and immanence, or the concept of sacrality. This involves places where there is ‘a direct expression of experience, of the enchantment that comes from perceiving particular ways of God relating to human beings and their world’ (Brown 2004, 24; for his concept of sacrament, see section 1, *Sacrament and Enchantment*: 5–36).

#### CONCLUSION: THE MEIER CHURCH AGAIN

In conclusion, returning to the Tor Tre Teste church again, we can further situate Meier’s project, or further illustrate our thesis. His design fits seamlessly into the dynamic of religiosity and rituality which I have

sketched here. Through basic sacral elements, he has achieved an open hermeneutic space, Holy Ground that is suitable for the fluid processes of appropriation. The full range of religion and sacrality is literally given a place in it. Sunday after Sunday, architecture lovers, cultural tourists, and local Roman parishioners sit side by side. That was the intention of the architect and of his client. There is literally more at stake here than just a roof over some heads, the umpteenth parish church in Rome.

Meier wanted to transcend the boundaries of religions in this project, while at the same time serving a specific religious tradition by working at that basic-sacral level. At a press conference before the opening, he said (cf. Riding 2003): ‘Regardless of one’s religion, I think most of us acknowledge that there are things in this world outside of our realm. When I think of a place or worship, I think of a place where one can sit and be reminded of all the things that are important outside our individual lives.’ He also said, ‘The central ideas for creating a sacred space have to do with truth and authenticity, a search for clarity, peace, transparency, a yearning for spirituality; the architect has to think of the original material of architecture, space and light.’ Near the entrance to the church Meier also had his view perpetuated in bronze letters: ‘This structure is a testament to the monumental work of men in the service of spiritual aspirations’, signed ‘Richard Meier, architect’. (see ill. 5)

These statements fit perfectly with the discourse on liquid and located religion and ritual. His observation that he is perhaps a bridge between religious traditions is arresting perspective; we must perhaps see this statement primarily in the sense that there is a shared basis.

In the case of the Tor Tre Teste church, this perspective of ‘Holy Ground for Liquid Ritual’ also wonderfully runs parallel with the fact that this church was originally conceived as a pilgrimage site. With Bauman, this illuminates the connections between fluid search and fixed place. Bauman repeatedly uses the metaphor of the pilgrim for modern man, who is a restless seeker for identity. The pilgrim always has a goal: ‘[D]estination, the set purpose of life’s pilgrimage, gives form to the formless, makes a whole out of the fragmentary, lends continuity to the episodic.’ (Bauman 1996, 22).

That the custodians of this church do not have full confidence in the integrating potential which is expressed in the sacral ritual order in Meier’s design is revealed by the fact that here too we find, right next to the Meier statement in bronze letters, that sign as we enter: *Forbidden*

to use mobile telephones, forbidden to film or photograph during services, forbidden to enter in inappropriate clothing... (see ill. 6)

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## KABBALAH ON THE INTERNET: TRANSCENDING DENOMINATIONAL BOUNDARIES IN CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES

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### THE INTERNET AS BATTLEFIELD OF IDEOLOGIES

Serious scholars tend to frown upon the use of the internet for research on historical texts. Indeed the available sources are quite often outdated, whereas the selection of sources follows its own rules. However, understanding the internet as a kind of instant library, be it of poor quality, hardly exhausts its significance. The internet documents an expanding universe of ideologies and opinions, groups, and identities that cannot be found elsewhere. In the field of Judaic studies, the most significant research in this respect has been done in the field of anti-Semitism. The issue of contemporary anti-Semitism in all its ramifications can hardly be studied by using an academic library. It may take years before the first publications on such topics find their way into the shelves, and obviously these anti-Semitic diatribes are not limited to documents available in libraries! The immense variety of social, cultural, and political layers that until recently was segmented according to geographical, linguistic, social and cultural barriers, share nowadays one and the same universe, maybe for the first time in history. Of course the internet itself contains its own barriers and the availability of all information is an illusion, but still the internet remains an outstanding medium to document contemporary ideologies.

The internet is a vast growing international network. It is limitless in its potentials and available for almost everyone in the Western world, for a majority in the developing countries, and for a growing minority in the Southern hemisphere. The internet is also about social interaction such as dating, community, and sex. Sabine Kalinock describes cyberspace as ‘a mirror and catalyst of social change’ (Kalinock 2006).

The virtual (online) and ‘physical’ (offline) world are more and more intermingled, and the virtual one is attaining more and more importance (Horrigan and Rainie 2006; Benschop 2005). Along with ‘trivial sub-

jects' such as sex and hobbies, and topics surrounding politics and environment, the number of sites concerning 'religion' and 'ethics' is growing rapidly (Hoover 2004; Larsen 2001). The internet is used more and more as a kind of a virtual battlefield for 'fighting' out controversies, political, personal and religious.

Sociologists distinguish several features of the internet:

First of all there are hardly boundaries in terms of distance or time.

A second element is the reliability of the information on the internet. Every story—true or not—can be published, whereas retracting the story is very hard if not impossible.

Accessibility is the third distinctive characteristic. Although many people in the so-called 'Third World' have no access to the internet, it is safe to say 'they do not *yet* have access.' It will be only a matter of years before not just the Western world is 'penetrated' by the internet, but rather the whole world, with a minimum of technical knowledge and modest financial means.

The fourth distinctive attribute is the individual characteristic of the internet. On the internet, everyone can express his or her individual opinion. The internet is not just for the experts, but for everyone. The internet user (the 'surfer') himself or herself can determine which information he or she wants to read and believe.

Anonymity is the fifth characteristic. The internet users are 'living' in a virtual world in which the 'offline' social context is absent. People feel more comfortable to express their individual opinions. Because physical contact is not necessary, people can take on a new and different identity.

This brings us to the sixth and last sociologically distinctive aspect of the internet: the absolute absence of a moral or social code or 'mores'. There is no 'driver's licence' which has to be obtained and no 'code of conduct' which has to be obeyed. This increases the phenomenon of crossing borders. It is not always clear under which (or whose) authority texts and pictures appear (Benschop 2005, Radden-Antweiler 2006).

In this paper, we want to undertake an analysis of the image formation of Kabbalah on the internet. By searching for transformations of the concept of Kabbalah, we hope to discover in what way this concept transcends traditional religious and cultural barriers to form new identities that can perhaps no longer be understood along traditional denominational lines. The existence of Christian Kabbalah as early as the late Middle Ages is proof of an earlier crossing over from Judaism to Christianity. It even remains to be seen whether kabbalistic Jewish concepts

are themselves tributary to early Christian and Gnostic ideas, such as divine triadic structures, the dualism between the visible and the invisible, and numerical symbolisms (Idel 2002, 241–5). The internet, however, will display a much more intense crossing-over from Kabbalah to Christian, anti-Christian, New Age, neo-pagan, and even neo-fascist movements. Our aim is not to verify whether these transformations have retained a kernel of the true Kabbalah. For the sake of methodology, we abandon the idea of a ‘genuine kernel’, whether or not retained through all kinds of transformations, in favor of an exploration of the bewildering variety of ‘Kabbalahs’. For example, claims of a historical existence of a secret lore during several millennia are of interest to us, not as historical claims, but as manifestations of a present day ideology, whether it be historically justified or not.

Three main categories will permit us to classify the field:

1. What is the ideological background of the site? Jewish, Christian, general, political, spiritual? [SENDER]
2. What is the intended audience? Jewish, Christian, general, political, spiritual? [AUDIENCE]
3. Which attitude does the site display to the concept of Kabbalah understood as tradition? Is it a fixed history available to everyone, or is it a hidden or even suppressed chain of secret transmitters? And if so, in what way does this site claim to have access to that hidden wisdom? [MESSAGE]

The second category may seem to reiterate the first, but in reality it offers valuable insight into the pretensions of the site to reach out to audiences with backgrounds different from one’s own.

#### *The Technical Procedure*

Searching the internet implies the use of one of the major internet searching databases. Looking at the top-level search engines available on the World Wide Web (WWW), two websites emerge: Google and Live (Microsoft).

When searched on ‘Kabbalah’, Google returns about 3.7 million hits; while Live returns more than 35 million hits. For comparison: Altavista, another major engine, returns more than 3.4 million hits. The significant difference in hits between Google and Live can be easily explained: Live counts separately every page which contains a certain keyword in

any given website, while Google counts all these pages of one site as one hit.

The internet is a very flexible and dynamic environment. Information is added, changed, and deleted every day, and so are the indexes of the search engines. The results presented in this paper are based on a test run on the 24th of October 2006. It is possible, even presumable, that the results will differ when the search is done now. But on the average, it is safe to say that the majority of top hits will only differ in their respective ranking, not in actual hits.

Other searches were run, but had far fewer results. ‘Kabbala’ (without ‘h’ at the end) reached approximately 1.2 million hits on Google, 5.6 million on Live, and 0.8 on Altavista. Other variations in spelling such as ‘Kabala’, ‘Cabala’, ‘Cabbalah’ or ‘Qabala’ returned even fewer.

The next step we made was to combine the highest twenty hits on ‘Kabbalah’ on Google and Live. We found out that both searches differed by less than ten percent.

The evidence presented here consists of the top ten of Kabbalah hits on Google and Live combined, supplemented here and there by evidence from other websites from the top twenty for reasons of inner coherence. The sequence presented is dictated by the criterion of quantity, which means that the highest ranking has been treated first.

#### ANALYZING KABBALAH WEBSITES

*The International Kabbalah Centre*

[www.kabbalah.com](http://www.kabbalah.com)

SENDER: The Kabbalah Centre is a spiritual and educational organization dedicated to bringing the wisdom of Kabbalah to the world. The Centre itself has existed for more than eighty years, but its spiritual lineage is said to extend even further—to Rabbi Isaac Luria, in the 16th century, and through Rabbi Luria to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, who revealed the principal text of Kabbalah, the Zohar, more than 2000 years ago. However, the real beginning lies even further back: 4000 years, when secret wisdom was revealed to Abraham.

The Kabbalah Centre was founded in Jerusalem in 1922 by Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, one of the greatest kabbalists of the 20th century. When Rabbi Ashlag left this world, leadership of The Centre was taken on by Rabbi Yehuda Tzvi Brandwein. Before his passing, Rabbi Brandwein designated Rabbi Berg to continue the lineage of Kabbalah as Director

of The Kabbalah Centre. And today, some thirty years later, Rabbi Berg directs The Centre together with his wife, Karen, and their son Michael. Some dozens of centers exist all over the world. In a mystical vein, the audience is persuaded of the Rabbi's spiritual authority:

My teacher, Rabbi Brandwein, took me into his private study. He said he had something important to say to me, and that he wanted me to pay close attention. He closed his eyes for a moment to focus his thoughts, which he often did when he was concentrating. He said, 'I've been waiting for someone to appear who would explain Kabbalah completely and perfectly—so perfectly that every-one would at last be brought back to spirituality. And I have decided that this person is you.' Rabbi Brandwein held my gaze steadily. I could not turn away.

**AUDIENCE:** Kabbalah is light, Kabbalah is not religion! Apparently, the site assumes a basic aversion to religion and wants to convince the audience of the relevance of Kabbalah for everybody: 'does gravity affect only Christians? Do the laws for electric energy function only for Hindus or atheists? Of course not!' Kabbalah is not confined to Judaism. Kabbalah is fit for all people from all religions. 'Everybody is entitled to happiness and a fulfilling and productive life free of chaos.' This phrasing displays a conscious effort to reach out to modern American citizens by promising them a productive life free of chaos. Kabbalah does not endanger social success, but enhances it, the message seems to imply. There is no reference at all to a certain religious discipline or community that the audience should conform to.

Abraham, Moses, Plato, Muhammad, Jesus, Newton, and Freud were among the students of Kabbalah, the site claims. Still, there are no substantial references to other religions besides Judaism; the festivals and holidays thought to be of significance to the audience are invariably Jewish.

**MESSAGE:** Although it does not precisely state the origin of Kabbalah, it claims an age of 4000 years, which brings us probably to Abraham. The site adopts a scientific vocabulary by stating that Kabbalah is the basic technology of life and that all science is connected to magic. Although there are many scholarly studies of Kabbalah, The Centre understands this wisdom not as an academic discipline but as a way of creating a better life. Through The Kabbalah Centre, the practical tools and spiritual teachings of Kabbalah are accessible to everyone for personal change and transformation. This is the foundation of everything we do.

The Kabbalah shop offers a wide variety of paraphernalia: the famous red string worn by Madonna to avert the evil eye, calendars, books, audiovisual material, and so on.

*The Bnei Baruch World Center for Kabbalah Studies*

[www.kabbalah.info](http://www.kabbalah.info)

**SENDER:** The account of this organization may surprise the uninitiated reader, as its origin traces back to the same rabbi, Yehuda Ashlag, whom we met at the Berg family mentioned above (*The International Kabbalah Center*). Apparently, both organizations compete to have the highest ranking on the internet. However, here Rabbi Michael Laitman, Ph.D. is the spiritual heir. He was ‘the disciple and personal assistant to Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, the son of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (author of *The Sulam* commentary on *The Zohar*) and follows in the footsteps of his mentor in leading the group toward its mission.’

**AUDIENCE:** Again mankind as a whole is the audience aimed at, out of the conviction that humanity has lost its spiritual orientation. ‘Bnei Baruch is a non-profit organization that is spreading the wisdom of Kabbalah to accelerate the spirituality of humankind.’ The scientific aura surrounding Laitman must guarantee a profound interaction between Kabbalah and modernity. ‘Laitman’s scientific method provides individuals of all faiths, religions and cultures with the precise tools necessary for embarking on a captivating path of self-discovery and spiritual ascent. With the focus being primarily on inner processes that individuals undergo at their own pace, Bnei Baruch welcomes people of all ages and lifestyles to engage in this rewarding process.’

**MESSAGE:** In recent years, a massive worldwide search for the answers to life’s questions has been underway. Society has lost its ability to see reality for what it is, and in its place superficial and often misleading concepts have appeared. Bnei Baruch reaches out to all those who are seeking awareness beyond the standard—people who are seeking to understand what our true purpose for being here is. Bnei Baruch offers practical guidance and a reliable method for understanding the world’s phenomena. The authentic teaching method, devised by Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, not only helps overcome the trials and tribulations of everyday life, but also initiates a process in which individuals extend themselves beyond the standard borders and limitations of today’s world. In the

words of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, ‘This method is a practical way to attain the upper world, the source of our existence, while still living in this world. A Kabbalist is a researcher who studies his nature using this proven, time-tested and accurate method. Through this method, one attains perfection and control over one’s life. In this way, we realize our true purpose in life. Just as a person cannot function properly in this world without having knowledge of it, so also the soul cannot function properly in the upper world without knowledge of it. The wisdom of Kabbalah provides you with this knowledge.’

By interspersing kabbalistic wisdom with psychological questions such as ‘Why do I feel bad?’ and ‘What are my desires et cetera?’, the movement wants to convey the idea of a spiritual path rather than a fixed denominational discipline or historically identifiable movement. Still, in spite of the broad outlook, the sources quoted are exclusively Jewish without any reference to another religion. Laitman is strongly anti-Islamic and prophesies the spread of Nazism and anti-Semitism with the aid of kabbalistic sources, notably the writings of Rabbi Ashlag.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Wikipedia*

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kabbalah/](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kabbalah/)

This entry ‘Kabbalah’ in the most renowned internet encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, can be modified by every user who wants to. Hence sender and audience are intertwined. The reliability of Wikipedia has been hotly debated in recent years. Wikipedia is susceptible to flaws and faults, but it is capable of repairing every entry in practically zero time, which cannot be said of printed encyclopaedias. Wikipedia promotes a neutral point of view for all its articles. Still, the entry consists of different layers, some of them from Orthodox Jewish and even Chassidic perspective, whereas others betray a scholarly outlook.

Wikipedia wants to inform the general public about Kabbalah as a Jewish discipline. Its beginnings are connected to Adam and Abraham (*Sefer Yezirah*), but this is explained by a preference for pseudepigrapha already known from apocalyptic literature. Assyrian and even Indian origins are discussed. The negative attitude of Kabbalah towards non-Jews is said to be rejected by modern Jews: ‘[I]t possibly persists in

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the related site, especially designed for women and Kabbalah: [www.kabbalahforwomen.com/antisemitism/index.html](http://www.kabbalahforwomen.com/antisemitism/index.html).

only the most recondite and anti-modernist corners of the Jewish world.'

Lower in ranking but with a similar outlook is the site The Ten Sefirot of the Kabbalah: [www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/Sefirot/Sefirot.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/Sefirot/Sefirot.html). This site has been made by the Jewish scholar Eliezer Segal from the University of Calgary in Alberta (Canada). He discusses the ten *sefirot* that intervene between the infinite, unknowable God (*Ein Sof*) and our created world, the Primordial Man (*Adam Kadmon*), biblical figures and names of God, and other symbols and images associated with divine power. His encyclopaedic perspective and academic approach aim to provide information to a general audience. Hence there is no hint of secrets that can only be divulged to an inner circle.

*The American–Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE)*

[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/about/index.shtml](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/about/index.shtml)

This site offers a comparable encyclopaedic, neutral approach, although the welcome with quotations from George Bush and Ariel Sharon is surprising. However, this is how the AICI recommends itself. The AICI was established in 1993 as a non-profit, non-partisan organization to strengthen the U.S.–Israel relationship by emphasizing the fundamentals of the alliance—the values our nations share. As part of their activities, the AICI runs a virtual library with information on all aspects of Judaism, both political and religious. The attitude towards the wisdom of the Kabbalah is rather detached, applying a description ‘from the outside’. Hence there are no essential ideological points of contact with the overall aim of this organization.

*Kabbalah FAQ*

[www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/](http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/)

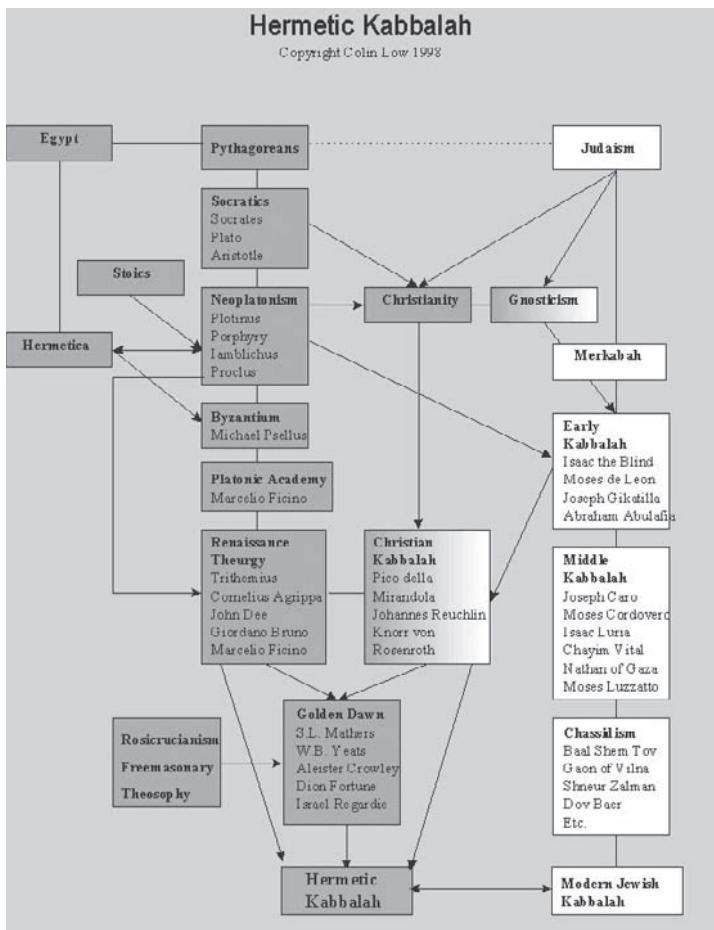
SENDER: This web page contains a more or less coherent list of topics—papers, FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), etc.—about Kabbalah. Although the title suggests a scholarly encyclopaedic approach, it turns out that most articles are written by the owner of [digital-brilliance.com](http://www.digital-brilliance.com), Colin Low, whose approach is very different from the Jewish senders above. The title of his main Kabbalah page is ‘Colin’s Hermetic Kabbalah Page’. Of all the articles under this domain, the FAQ section ([www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/faq.htm](http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/faq.htm)) has by far the highest hits on the Google and the Live searches. Note that the copyright reads

‘1993–1996’ which could indicate that this site has not been updated (apart from some minor modifications in spelling, etc.) in the last ten years! Mr. Colin provides links to Kabbalah books on Amazon.com, including a mixture of scholarly works by Scholem, Green, Tishby, and Idel with pious texts provided by adherents of specific kabbalistic or Chassidic groups. Mr. Colin openly avows that he receives a percentage of the sales and in addition recommends his own writings in Hermetic Kabbalah.

AUDIENCE: the intended audience might be classified as general and not belonging to a specific religious movement or church, but very keen on matters of spirituality and esoterism. While Colin pretends to give a neutral description of Kabbalah, his enthusiasm leads him astray so to speak. Colin understands Kabbalah both as a fixed tradition and as a still developing chain of esoteric knowledge. The tradition he links to Judaism, while the chain is linked with the Hermetic (Christian!) use of Kabbalah. He provides a chart which offers valuable information about his perception of ‘Kabbalah’ (*see next page*).

MESSAGE: The FAQ reads ‘This Kabbalah FAQ was prepared for the Usenet/Internet newsgroup “alt.magick”. It is intended to provide a brief introduction to Kabbalah, and pointers to additional sources of information.’ Collin makes a sharp distinction between ‘Judaic’ and ‘Hermetic’ Kabbalah. He summarizes: ‘Kabbalah is a mystical and magical tradition which originated nearly two thousand years ago and has been practiced continuously during that time. It has been practiced by Jew and non-Jew alike for about five hundred years. On the Jewish side it has been an integral and influential part of Judaism. On the Hermetic side it has created a rich mystical and magical tradition with its own validity, a tradition which has survived despite the prejudice generated through existing within a strongly Christian culture.’ This ‘conclusion’ seems to equal the outline of his page: first a general outline about (the Jewish) origin, history, and contents followed by a larger section about the hermetic, non-Jewish use of Kabbalah.

The message comes down to the following: the Jewish Kabbalah is a late phenomenon, the authentic Kabbalah being much older. Kabbalah managed to survive, not thanks to the Christian churches but in spite of the Christian churches. Whereas institutional Christianity saw Kabbalah as a threat, courageous thinkers preserved this hidden wisdom in



small circles and made it accessible in our time to a select audience to which Colin himself definitely belongs.

A certain Don Karr provides bibliographical surveys and paintings that show a little man with Jewish physiognomy but surrounded by kabbalistic signs borrowed from both Jewish and Christian sources (the alef and tau, combined with the alpha and omega). Egyptian and Gnostic symbolism connects the three upper *sefirot* with the goddesses Sophia, Isis, and Maat.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> On closer scrutiny, this picture gallery is part of the esoteric electronic journal *Eso-terica*, devoted to scholarly studies on esoterics and to esoterists themselves. This peer

Apparently, the kabbalistic doctrine is merged here with a New Age doctrine of a secret wisdom that permeates both Judaism (Kabbalah) and Christianity (Christian Kabbalah, Hermeticism) but precedes both in polytheism. This secret lore also features outside and before both religions, in Orphism and Pythagoreanism and in Egyptian and Chaldaean lore. In their secret lore, Judaism and Christianity still betray their pre-monotheistic origins, suppressed by institutional religion. The teaching of the *sefirot*, the *Shekhina* and the female side of God; the Christian cult of the Virgin Mary, are all transformations of this pre-monotheistic wisdom of cults of goddesses and deities. The Trinity—the three upper *sefirot*—are a transformation of a triad of gods.

This New Age perspective of the connection of Kabbalah with extra- and pre-monotheistic religions also explains how interest in Kabbalah can feature in highly anti-Semitic sites such as Stormfront and new National Socialist movements.<sup>3</sup> Some spokesmen on these sites consider the Kabbalah as the wisdom hidden in Judaism but from earlier, pre-Jewish provenance and identify the kabbalistic message with the Runes. However, other extreme rightwing spokesmen such as David Duke (who maintains friendly ties with David Irving, a revisionist of the Shoah), maintain the identification of Kabbalah with Judaism. They continue the older anti-Semitic approach of August Rohling and others and point to the supposed hatred of gentiles in Kabbalah as the rationale for the political situation of the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> Apparently, New Age runs the risk of merging with anti-Semitism.

The counter-attack ‘Eco-antisemitism, Eco-paganism and Hebrew-biblical Eco-logics’<sup>5</sup> by Yitzhak I. Hayutman, a cybernetician connected with the so-called Academy of Jerusalem, takes the opposite stand by arguing that only Christianity is to blame for the ecological crisis and that only kabbalistic Judaism can provide the solution.

### *The Inner Dimension*

[www.inner.org](http://www.inner.org)

SENDER: This website is titled ‘The Inner Dimension. Authentic Jewish Mysticism based on the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh’. Rabbi Ginsburgh is our generation’s most respected authority on Jewish Mysti-

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reviewed journal (edited inter alia by the Dutch scholar Wouter Hanegraaff) is connected to Michigan State University.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.answp.com/forum/index.php>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.davidduke.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.thehope.org/ecologic.htm>

cism, the site states. As often happens, his stature as a mystic is enhanced by emphasizing his previous secular learning in mathematics and philosophy, music, psychology, and science, although no publications in these fields are reported. The site claims that Rabbi Ginsburgh ‘is acknowledged by both the religious and academic communities as an outstanding scholar, integrating science and mystical tradition as has not been seen in Judaism for many generations. His work is not only integrative in its nature, but is also seminal, providing serious students of Torah (in all its areas, esoteric as well as exoteric) with tools and ideas that will be relevant for centuries to come. Hundreds of spiritual leaders view him as their mentor and teacher and his impact on Torah scholarship and Jewish spirituality increases from day to day.’

Ginsburgh was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1944 and—according to the website—lives in Kfar Chabad, belonging to the Lubavitch movement, which is missionary especially to secular Jews.

AUDIENCE: The Inner Dimension is a part of the Gal Einai Institute in the United States. *Gal einai* means ‘open my eyes’, and its goal is to open the world’s eyes to Divine consciousness, spreading G-d’s good light to every household, classroom, and community on earth. The central goal of the Gal Einai Institute is ‘to encourage the study of the Torah, particularly from the perspective of its inner dimension, as revealed in the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidut. The Torah is G-d’s greatest gift to humanity, *and is relevant to all people, both Jews and non-Jews* [emphasis added]. Studying the Torah, committing to it, and applying its teachings in your everyday life will change your life as an individual.’

Although the intended audience embraces both Jews and non-Jews, it seems that non-Jews are supposed to adapt themselves to a Jewish way of life, although a formal conversion is not mandatory. There is no reference whatsoever to other religions or esoteric knowledge contained in other cultures.

The role of non-Jews should be to adapt themselves to the Noahide commandments and to identify with the Jewish people. ‘Clearly, in order for non-Jews to study Kabbalah—which, after all, is an intrinsic expression of Jewish faith—they have to identify with receiving this wisdom through the channel of the Torah and the Jewish People, and commit themselves to worship the One God of Israel and live in accor-

dance with the seven commandments given by Him to Noah for all peoples.<sup>6</sup>

The missionary outlook of this kabbalistic movement is to draw non-Jews to the Noahide commandments.<sup>7</sup> Whether these commandments are considered to be compatible with adherence to Christianity or to other religions, the site does not state.

MESSAGE: About the purpose of the Inner Dimension: ‘The Inner Dimension website was created and is maintained with the express purpose of making Rabbi Ginsburgh’s teachings available on the internet, especially to those who are unable to attend his classes.’ Ginsburgh’s vast learning in secular scholarship must guarantee the relevance of this kabbalistic teaching for mankind. A tinge of fundamentalism might be detectable where the site states the total harmony between science and Torah. Still there is not a single reference to academic scholarship on Jewish mysticism; only books written by adherents of this movement are recommended.

Publications by Ginsburgh include a book with a kabbalistic program for Israeli politics: *Rectifying the State of Israel: A Political Platform Based on Kabbalah*. It is a sure indication of the involvement of ultra-orthodoxy with politics, via kabbalistic speculations. Apparently the time that ultra-orthodoxy kept aloof from daily politics is behind us.

Attending the courses of Rabbi Ginsburgh is recommended as a much better way of learning than via the website alone.

#### *Judaism 101*

[www.jewfaq.org/kabbalah.htm](http://www.jewfaq.org/kabbalah.htm)

SENDER: Aish HaTorah is a world leader in creative Jewish educational programs and leadership training, dedicated to answering the vital question ‘Why be Jewish?’

- Aish HaTorah operates 26 full-time branches on five continents
- 100,000 people attend Aish programs annually
- Aish.com receives over 2,000,000 visits each month, with 180,000 unique e-mail subscribers

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<sup>6</sup> See the related website [www.kabbalaonline.org](http://www.kabbalaonline.org), which mentions the possibility of ‘kosher Kabbalah’ for non-Jews, but carefully avoids mentioning Christianity by name.

<sup>7</sup> In marked contrast, [www.truekabbala.org](http://www.truekabbala.org), devoted to the teachings of Rabbi Nahman of Brazlav, addresses Jews only and demands from them a rupture with their former social environment. One must be Jewish, must undertake fasts, cut oneself from pitiful social surroundings and be prepared to *mesirat nefesh* (sacrifice). One is even obliged to specify the sort of hat, the standards of *kashrut*, and the frequency of praying.

- 50,000 hours of Torah tapes and MP3s are listened to each year
- 4,500 people attend Aish learning programs in Israel every year
- 200 people have graduated from their rabbinic ordination program

**AUDIENCE:** This site is much more severe on Christian approaches to Kabbalah. It discourages reading of any Christian book on Kabbalah and reaches out to Jewish students only. It explicitly polemicizes with Christian concepts which are considered to be totally foreign to Judaism. When expounding basic beliefs of Judaism, the site states:

The word ‘moshiach’ does not mean ‘savior.’ The notion of an innocent, divine or semi-divine being who will sacrifice himself to save us from the consequences of our own sins is a purely Christian concept that has no basis in Jewish thought. Unfortunately, this Christian concept has become so deeply ingrained in the English word ‘messiah’ that this English word can no longer be used to refer to the Jewish concept. The word ‘moshiach’ will be used throughout this page.

Implicitly, the site considers Kabbalah to be for Jews only.

**MESSAGE:** The aim is to teach Kabbalah unadulterated by both foreign (Christian) influence and commercial exploitation. ‘Kabbalah was popular among Christian intellectuals during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, who reinterpreted its doctrines to fit into their Christian dogma. In more recent times, many have wrenched kabbalistic symbolism out of context for use in tarot card readings and other forms of divination and magic that were never a part of the original Jewish teachings,’ Aish HaTorah complains, to continue: ‘Today, many well-known celebrities have popularized a new age pop-psychology distortion of Kabbalah (I have heard it derisively referred to as “crap-balalah”). It borrows the language of Kabbalah and the forms of Jewish folk superstitions, but at its heart it has more in common with the writings of Deepak Chopra than with any authentic Jewish source.’<sup>8</sup>

The site recommends reading Gershom Scholem, who inaugurated the scholarly study of mysticism, and Aryeh Kaplan for a more personal approach. The site specifically warns against Christian missionaries by linking to the site Jews for Judaism (an organization in Baltimore consciously opposing the Jews for Jesus movement) and recommends read-

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<sup>8</sup> Deepak Chopra (New Delhi, 1947) is an Indian writer of books on spirituality and healing, inspired by the Vedanta. Presently he lives in the United States.

ing *The Jewish Response to Missionaries* by Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz. The interest in Kabbalah is just one of the features of this movement aiming to offer to a Jewish audience guidance for the whole of Jewish life, including politics, cooking, education and sexuality.

The next website shows how complicated things can become, as it opposes Kabbalah and New Age but advocates that true Judaism can be found only in Jesus.

*Messianic Testimony*

[www.tmttestimony.org.uk](http://www.tmttestimony.org.uk)

**SENDER:** This Protestant Christian movement wants to reach out to Jewish communities. It regards the state of Israel as constantly threatened by its enemies, especially by the media in Europe. This situation calls for a wholesale solidarity:

The level of hatred against Israel and the Jewish people has reached frightening proportions not just in the Middle East, but here [in Europe] as well. The main reason for this is that the media have adopted a double standard when it comes to reporting events in Israel. Israelis apparently have the right to be killed by Palestinian terrorism, but not to defend themselves against it,

the site argues in the year 2002. The site is also strongly anti-Catholic and anti-Islamic:

A coming together of Rome and Islam should not really surprise us since both came out of the corruption of Christianity and both fulfil the definition of the Antichrist. Both became ferocious persecutors of true Christians. It is also significant that Roman Catholicism became the dominant religion of the western half of the Roman Empire and Islam the dominant religion of the eastern half.

The attitude towards Kabbalah is what interests us in particular.

**AUDIENCE:** The site reaches out to Jewish communities all over the world but takes issue especially with Jewish thinkers, rabbis, and writers in Israel who identify with Kabbalah.

**MESSAGE:** It regards Jesus as the true fulfillment of Judaism but blames Kabbalah for leading the Jews astray:<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> All this forms a marked contrast with Christian Cabballists from the 16th century on, who identified the three upper *sefirot* with the Trinity and recognized in the Tetragrammaton the name of Jesus (Reuchlin).

All of this shows that Kabbalah is not derived from the God of the Bible, but is a Jewish recycling of the New Age spirit which is permeating all religions and helping to create the end time delusion which will lead to the final world apostasy and acceptance of Antichrist as the Messiah. Apart from the above Kabbalah teaches such New Age concepts as the idea that 'All is One', i.e. there is an inter-connectedness of all things and God is present in all created objects. The purpose of the spiritual quest is to discover the divine sparks within us and attain mystical union with the 'One.' This can take place as a result of a number of incarnations and Kabbalah agrees with Hinduism in teaching re-incarnation.

The site blames even Orthodox Judaism in Israel for leading Jews astray from the path of Judaism:

The spirit operating in Israel with the spread of Kabbalah is one which is comfortable with the quest for spirituality through Eastern religions and New Age mysticism. Kabbalah scholar Moshe Schatz, who is ultra-Orthodox, says that 'Kabbalah seeks to show the unity underlying all of reality—physical and spiritual. I can tell you for sure that some of the gurus in India are teaching very high Kabbalah. Kabbalah teaches us not to reject anything. We can integrate the insights not only of science but of Buddhism, Hinduism, all human knowledge.'

The site considers the tendency among adherents of Kabbalah to accept other religions as parts of the truth or as branches of the tree, as a serious threat to Biblical revelation:

The only way we can approach Him is through repentance and the sacrifice He has appointed (Lev 16:17, Isa 1). Our problem has nothing to do with lost sparks or feminine principles of God, but is caused by sin which separates us from a Holy God.

Still one may wonder why this site emphasizes this Biblical perspective on sin so strongly. The reason is that according to this site, only Jesus is capable of liberating mankind from the sinful state of being alienated from God, and we have only one life to acknowledge that. 'This debt has been paid once and for all by the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) whom God sent to be the sacrifice for sins through His death and resurrection (Isa 53, Dan 9:26, 1 Cor 15:3–5).'

What especially annoys the site about the Jewish side is the charge that Christianity is alien to Judaism, whereas syncretistic Kabbalah is embraced as the secret lore of Judaism:

In Israel today the Rabbis teach that the message of Yeshua as Messiah, which is grounded in the Hebrew scriptures, is a 'foreign' intrusion and that it should be opposed and suppressed. And yet they are happy to

embrace spiritual forces which tap into the occult and are almost identical in their manifestations to the religions of the east.

This biblically oriented missionary movement from a Protestant background promotes on the one hand a well-known perspective of converting the Jews, but on the other hand points to an interesting anomaly within Judaism itself: Christianity is regarded as an alien element, and any attempt to see similarities is regarded as a dangerous transgression of boundaries. The Kabbalah, however, is widely accepted in Judaism, whereas from biblical perspective, it appears as a syncretistic phenomenon with all kinds of parallels in Gnostic and polytheistic doctrines and as an infringement upon the unity of God.<sup>10</sup>

### *Kabbalah and Mysticism*

[www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/k/kabbalah.html](http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/k/kabbalah.html)

SENDER: The extended title of this page is ‘An article on this system of thought which was originally included in Jewish theosophy, philosophy, science, magic and mysticism.’ It is part of The Mystica ([www.themystica.com/mystica/](http://www.themystica.com/mystica/)): ‘an on-line encyclopedia of the occult, mysticism, magic, paranormal and more.’ Its topics reach from magical enchantments to divination, extra-sensory perception, Druidism, voodoo, Stonehenge, and theosophy. The site provides a link to Colin’s site (see: Kabbalah FAQ, above).

AUDIENCE: The intended audience might be classified as general and not belonging to a specific religious movement or church.

MESSAGE: It states: ‘The Kabbalah is a system of thought which was originally included in Jewish theosophy, philosophy, science, magic, and mysticism. “Kabbalah” is Hebrew for “that which is received” and refers to a secret oral tradition of teaching which extends from teacher to pupil.’ This introduction is a summary of the main content. The site points to the similarity with Gnosticism and argues that both were alive during the life of Christ. In addition to that, both Gnosticism and Kabbalah hold that there is no such thing as sin, but only ignorance as

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<sup>10</sup> For a Jewish critique upon Kabbalah, especially as advocated by Ashlag / Berg, see Dr. Jonathan Garb, ‘The Power and the Glory: A Critique of “New Age” Kabbalah’, (<http://www.zeek.net/604garb/>).

opposed to the true knowledge, the gnosis. ‘To know God is to be God.’

One name which jumps to the eye is Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), whom we met already in the chart presented by Colin Low. Aleister Crowley was born in 1875 as Edward Alexander Crowley. His reputation was many-sided: a chess master, mountain climber, poet, painter, astrologer, drug experimenter, and social critic. Crowley was also an influential member in several occult organizations, including the Golden Dawn, the Argenteum Astrum, and Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) and belonged—like Madame Blavatsky and Eliphas Levi—to a larger group of intellectuals which tried to combine aspects of Kabbalah, mysticism, Buddhism, yoga, theosophy, alchemy, and Christianity into one system. Crowley and others used representations of evil such as Beelzebub and Lucifer to rebel against the bourgeois society ('Satanism'). The word 'occult', originally indicating what was hidden, received a demonic ring. The origin of Satanism can be traced back to anticlerical opposition to the Roman Catholic Church but continued to exist after the opposition to the Church lost its force.

Curiously, Crowley adopted kabbalistic ideas in combination with a strong anti-Semitism. He accepted the anti-Semitic accusations of ritual murder committed by Jews as genuine (cf. his reaction to the Beilis case in 1911). Apparently, Crowley's interest in demonology led him to appreciate the demonization of Jews as well, in a combination of aversion with primitive reverence.<sup>11</sup>

The intended public of this site is not specifically religious but consists of those who are looking for spiritual growth and are interested in secret, hidden knowledge. ‘The Kabbalistic idea that God contains all ideas and their contradictions definitely forms the bases for the magical laws of polarity and synthesis.’ The ideological background is explicitly esoteric but does not bother too much about a precise knowledge of Judaism and of esoterism in history.

#### *The Kheper: transformation-evolution-metamorphosis*

[www.kheper.net/topics](http://www.kheper.net/topics)

SENDER: This huge site containing over 1500 pages of information and essays encompasses several hundred topics from aboriginal spirituality to the ethereal body, Yogachara Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism. The

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<sup>11</sup> See Aleister Crowley: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleister\\_Crowley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleister_Crowley).

entry ‘Kabbalah’ contains excerpts from Scholem and Idel, but also a comparison between the *Sefer Yezira* and the *I Ching*, apparently to demonstrate the eventual unity of all wisdom.

AUDIENCE: ‘Happy Solstice/Hanukkah/Christmas/Newtonmas/New Year, and may 2007 go really well for you!!!!’ this site exclaims to the visitor, hereby indicating the range of public it aims at. The principal inspiration of this site comes from the learned professor Evgeni Tortchinnov, whose scholarly work deals inter alia with Chinese literature.

MESSAGE: In a rather sweeping statement, this website aims at a new scientific and esoteric evolutionary paradigm concerning the nature of existence and its infinite metamorphoses, and the transformation of the Earth and the planetary consciousness to a post-singularity state of Supramental (Infinite Truth-Consciousness) divinisation.

*Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: the Occult Connection*

[www.gnosis.org/jskabb1.htm](http://www.gnosis.org/jskabb1.htm)

SENDER: the Ecclesia Gnostica, existing in America since 1959 and located in Los Angeles, draws attention to all phenomena related to Gnosticism.

AUDIENCE: The Ecclesia Gnostica tries to interest the reader in Gnosticism, not only as a spiritual phenomenon, but also as a living religious community, including a clergy and principles of the Gnostic faith.

MESSAGE: The influential Mormon religion is claimed to be highly influenced by gnostic and hermetic teachings absorbed by Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism. The work *Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: The Occult Connection* by Lance S. Owens was published in 1994 (Owens 1994). The paper received considerable attention, and in 1995 the Mormon History Association recognized *Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: The Occult Connection* with its annual award for the best article in Mormon studies.

*Oala the Soothsayer*

[members.xtel.at/kabbalah/](http://members.xtel.at/kabbalah/)

This site reaches out to all kinds of religions and cults and creates kabbalistic word combinations on the very word of Kabbalah:

Was bedeutet eigentlich Kabbalah?

KABBALAH

KAB = KÖRPER, DER ZUM GEIST WIRD

BA = GEIST, DER ZUM KÖRPER WIRD

LAH = LIEBE, DIE SICH ÖFFNET UND SCHÖPFERISCH WIRD

Pythagoras von Samos (580 vor Chr.)

SENDER: The German language site contains telephone numbers of several soothsayers.

AUDIENCE: The intended audience consists of clients who wish to have their partner back and are prepared to pay for that.

MESSAGE: The soothsayers offer guidance with the aid of tarot cards, horoscope, interpretation of dreams, and so on. As quoted above in German, the word *Kabbalah* is interpreted as *kab*, a body becoming spirit, *ba*, spirit becoming a body, and *lah*, love that opens itself to a creative process.

*The Mystical Kabbalah* [www.crossroad.to/quotes/occult/kabbalah.htm](http://www.crossroad.to/quotes/occult/kabbalah.htm)

SENDER: Initially this site's sender is quite difficult to trace, with its illustrations of all kinds of kabbalistic and hermetic symbolism and its quotations not only from Zohar, Jacob Boehme, the Mormon religion and Gnosticism, but also from Freud, Hegel, and Derrida. However, upon closer scrutiny, the source of all this is Protestant fundamentalism. A clue is given in the following 'analysis': the Middle Ages were a time of great religious syncretism whose mixtures included many pagan ideas, images, and practices that had accumulated over time, sometimes blended with orthodox Christian doctrines. Anglo-Catholicism is very open to such mixtures, and it definitely moved away from the Word-centered, Calvinistic aspects of the Church of England into the realms of imagination, visions, the irrational, and the elevation of the arts.

Apparently, the sender rejects all kinds of Christianity except for a certain Calvinistic direction. The Kjos Ministries identify themselves further on as reborn Christians and seem to be a fundamentalist organization.

AUDIENCE: Christians who are unaware of the great dangers lurking in all corners of the earth.

MESSAGE: Although delving into the occult and kabbalistic and hermetic symbolism, its ultimate goal is to warn the visitor about the pernicious influence of Kabbalah upon Christianity. Rabbi Berg and Rabbi Cooper emphasize occult knowledge and promise self-redemption, while Christianity claims that God spoke to Moses in a normal fashion and offers redemption through Jesus.

The site is linked to ‘warnings’ that reveal some more concrete goals of this site: it warns against the fantasy literature of C. S. Lewis, the author of the successful series of *Narnia* stories, although this writer also wrote dozens of books which are highly respected in evangelical circles. Together with his friend, the writer Tolkien, and some other writers, C. S. Lewis formed the group the Inklings. This group spread pernicious literature, the site claims. Tolkien, himself famous for his trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*, speculated dangerously about reincarnation and the occult. Lesser-known writers such as the fantasy author George McDonald, who wrote the novel *Lilith*, should also be avoided. This is all part of a large enterprise of this site to refute all sorts of kabbalistic doctrines such as the Rosicrucians, Freemasonry, Hegelianism, and the Illuminati. These currents are themselves part of still greater conspiracies against God and His Bible.

#### CONCLUSIONS: THE DOUBLE SOCIAL PARADOX OF KABBALAH SITES

In the first instance, our analysis of Kabbalah sites on the internet seems to confirm a well-known distinction between Judaism and postmodern New Age: the sites with a Jewish sender, although in principle reaching out to mankind as a whole, offer Jewish sources only, whereas the New Age sites prefer to transcend denominational boundaries by connecting Jewish and Christian sources with their supposed pre-Christian and extra-Jewish parallels.<sup>12</sup> True as this may be, the paradox of particularity and universality has become more complicated within the context of the internet. The esoteric structure of the message of the Jewish sites stems from closed religious groups that generally have a Hasidic background in which the oral teachings of the master play a pivotal role. These groups try to reduce the interaction with the world at large to a

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<sup>12</sup> The similarity between Kabbalah and New Age may be less striking than is usually thought (contra Huss, 2007).

minimum. Even within Judaism, they constitute their own universe with their own truth and their own customs that sharply distinguish the adherents from their environment (see Meijer 1986 and 1992). Whereas mystical leadership within Hasidism has been a recent development within Judaism itself (Dan 1997, 425; Etkes 1997, 461), and during its existence confined to the inner Hasidic circle, during the last decade it has been transformed into the main representation of Judaism to the non-Jewish world on the internet. However, by entering the global universe of the internet, this esoteric structure of the ‘inner circle’ becomes an incentive for universal appeal. It is this claim to hidden wisdom—which can be obtained by ‘cleaving’ to a privileged sage (cf. Idel 2002, 394) connected to a sacred past by family ties or by a chain of master and pupil (Etkes 1997, 165–7)—that attracts thousands of enthusiastic responses. The universal accessibility of the internet merges with the notion of the inner circle and transforms it into a universal, but concurrently hidden, message. Obviously, the Berg Foundation benefits most from this paradox of particularistic universality. Still, the Baruch World Center also intends that the Kabbalah should be for the use and benefit of ‘all mankind’. The followers of Rav Nahman of Brazlav even require secularized Jews to make a formal rupture with their environment, demand strict ascetic practices, and do not reach out to non-Jews at all, thus creating within Judaism their own ‘true community’ with sole access to the hidden truth. Nonetheless they spread this message on the internet and enhance the attraction of this site as an esoteric message, available without the social constraints of a closed group. These Jewish groups share the idea that their expression of the kabbalistic message of harmony between science and spirituality is the solution for disoriented man, and thus try to reach out to modernity. None of those groups, however, engages other religions in a genuine dialogue. Even the Jewish sites that only intend to collect the ‘lost souls of Jews’ alienated from their roots, as sparks within an alien world, cannot avoid the confrontation between their message and the world at large. These sites show no conscious effort to incorporate other religions and cultures—this in marked distinction to the New Age sites—because this would merely diminish their esoteric appeal.

The sites with Protestant senders reach out to a universal audience as well, but do so by threatening catastrophes on a world scale that can be averted only by rejecting all kinds of hidden wisdom, be it Jewish, Catholic, or pagan. Instead they advocate a pure Christianity that is readily available, supposedly devoid of foreign influences although

paradoxically well adapted to American ideals. Their view of sacred truth does not consist in an unbroken chain with a venerated past, but in a direct link to the Bible, hereby bypassing all Churches with a tradition-oriented authority, whether Roman Catholic or Orthodox, as well as all Judaisms with an esoteric post-biblical doctrine.<sup>13</sup> In a way, they too fall in the trap of reacting against esoteric wisdom and conspiracies but spreading it by doing so. There are no firmer believers in the efficacy of Kabbalah, magic, demons, and conspiracy than these fundamentalists!

The New Age sites display a similar paradox between universality and particularism by claiming esoteric wisdom to be found in all religions and cultures, but hidden from ordinary believers. Their religiosity is not so much marked by an affinity for one specific religion, be it gnosis or Kabbalah, but by the constant need to transcend and transgress existing religious borders. As such, they can incorporate even the most isolated kabbalistic group and the most recondite Christian mystics, provided their hidden wisdom coincides with extra-Jewish and pre-Christian currents. Whereas the Christian Kabbalah developed by Reuchlin and Agricola serves to emphasise Christian convictions such as the divinity of Christ and the Trinity, the New Age adaptation of it underscores the hidden truth as extra- and pre-Christian. The desire to be pre- and extra-Jewish sometimes brings New Age close to anti-Semitic movements and neo-pagan cults. Although these New Age senders cultivate hidden wisdom, fraternity, and secret knowledge, both their outreach and their ‘material’ pretend to be global.

In conclusion, the internet both enhances and destroys the notion of esoteric knowledge and of initiation into a privileged group.

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<sup>13</sup> In a way, the Jewish rejection of Christianity as alien to Judaism does raise serious questions as to the legitimacy of Kabbalah within Judaism. Cf. Jewish criticism of the Lubavitch movement as ‘too Christian’ (Berger 2001).

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## ‘AN INDISSOLUBLE BOND BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL’

Historical Fact or Theological Conviction?

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### A NEW PROTESTANT CHURCH ORDER

At the end of the 20th century, the two major Reformed churches in the Netherlands changed those parts of their Church Orders which formulated the relation of the Church to the Jewish people. In 1951 the Netherlands Reformed Church (*Hervormde Kerk*) had already ceased speaking of ‘mission to the Jews’, describing the task of the church as ‘dialogue with Israel’. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken*), as late as 1991, still spoke of the ‘task of the Church to confess to the Jews, inside and outside Israel, that Jesus is the Christ’. However, when the two main Reformed Churches and the small Lutheran Church united and formed the Protestant Church in the Netherlands in 2004, a new Church Order was accepted. The first article of this Church Order, the preamble, states that the Protestant Church in the Netherlands ‘is reaching out for the coming of the Kingdom of God, sharing in the expectation that is given to Israel’. And article I.9 on the relation between Church and Israel reads as follows:

The Church is called to express its indissoluble bond with the People of Israel. As a Christ-confessing community of faith, the Church is seeking a dialogue with Israel concerning the understanding of the Holy Scripture, in particular on the subject of the coming of the Kingdom of God (Kerkorde 2003, 9–10).

The churches of the Reformed and Lutheran traditions, which recognized each other by the Leuenberg Agreement, reached a consensus on the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people. At their fourth General Assembly in Vienna in 1994, new guidelines were accepted containing the following basic statements: ‘There is an inseparable connection between the election of the Church and that of Israel, between the “old” and “new” covenant’ and ‘For Christians and the

Church, their relationship to Israel is inseparably bound up with the foundation of their faith.'

Similar words appear in other ecclesiastical statements that describe the relation between the Church and the Jewish people. In the ground-breaking Roman Catholic declaration *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council (1965), this type of language is clear in the first sentence: The Synod 'recalls the spiritual bond linking the people of the new covenant with Abraham's stock'. And it continues, referring to 'the great spiritual patrimony common to Christian and Jews' (Fisher and Klenicki 1990, 27–28). In expressing the relation, or 'bond', between the Church and the Jewish people, Reformed and Lutheran statements of faith describing this bond have a clear preference for words like 'indissoluble' or 'irrevocable' or 'inseparable'. It sounds as if these churches, against all the evidence of the past, against all historical facts, want to convince themselves with strong wording that there is a very special, indeed unique, bond between the Church and the Jewish people. Christian anti-Judaism is not forgotten or left behind but is regarded more as an incident in the past than as essential Christian teaching. Historical reality shows the opposite of an inseparable bond, but churches seek to establish a new beginning of the relationship that—in their view—revives the original situation of the first century. In this article the following questions are dealt with: Is the so-called 'indissoluble bond' a historical reality or is it only a theological conviction? Would it not be more honest to speak of a 'definitely broken relationship' than of an 'indissoluble bond'? What are the prospects for the Jewish–Christian dialogue in general and in the Netherlands in particular? Is it realistic to expect much more interaction?

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

How did the change of mind occur, so that expressions like 'common patrimony' and 'indissoluble bond' became the preferred wording in official documents? First, it must be stressed that this new approach is geographically limited to the United States and Western Europe and has almost no effect in other parts of the world. Historical events like the Shoah and the establishment of the State of Israel must be seen as the background of the start of a different way of thinking in the churches. After the Second World War, the model of dialogue slowly gained ground in the relation of Christians and Jews, but for decades it was

only supported by a few far-sighted thinkers and activists. It took thirty to forty years before this approach became part and parcel of Christian thinking and practice, which compared with other changes in church history is a rather fast process. In the last twenty-five years of the 20th century, there existed among Christians in Western Europe and the United States an enormous interest in Jewish–Christian dialogue. In trying to trace the historical context of this interest, the year 1967 must be mentioned. In June of that year, the Six Days War broke out in the Middle East. Against the expectations of many, Israel not only resisted the Arab armies but captured Jerusalem and the West Bank. In the same period it became more and more clear to the public mind what the Nazis had tried to bring about with their plans for the ‘final solution’ (*Endlösung*). The fear of a new Shoah caused a deep trauma amongst Jews around the world. The Eichmann trial in 1961 in Jerusalem had functioned in Israel as a catalyst, releasing long-suppressed stories of survivors of the concentration camps. Eventually, the scale and horror of the Nazi crimes also penetrated the hearts and minds of Christians.

The remarkable interest amongst Christians in Judaism and Israel was, on the one hand, brought about by feelings of guilt because of the realization of the persistent anti-Judaism in the very heart of Christian tradition, which had to be regarded as co-responsible for the outgrowth of racist anti-Semitism. On the other hand, there was a peculiar admiration, especially after 1967, for the achievements of the young State of Israel. Many Christians saw this State as ‘God’s own miracle’ in our time. Jewish authors like David Flusser, Shalom Ben Chorin and Pinchas Lapide flooded the market with their writings, that sustained the Christian need to discover the so-called ‘Jewish roots’ of Christianity. Many Christians welcomed with great enthusiasm the thesis of Flusser that ‘Christianity and Judaism were in fact one faith’, and overlooked for convenience sake the whole context of his argument, in which he criticized Christian anti-Judaism and called Christianity a ‘cheaper Judaism’ (Flusser 1984, 269). In this period the Christian solidarity project Nes Ammim in Galilee, founded in 1960 and mainly inhabited by Dutch Protestants, reached the peak of almost two hundred inhabitants. The ideology of Nes Ammim to abstain on principle from mission to the Jews meant a tremendous challenge to the old positions of the Dutch Protestant churches in this matter (Schoon and Kremers 1978). In this period many churches issued official statements condemning their anti-Judaic past. They rejected the substitution theory that taught that the Church had replaced the Jewish people in the covenant of God.

In the Netherlands the Consultative Body of Christians and Jews (abbreviation in Dutch: OJEC) was established in 1981, an organization in which the three major churches (both Catholic and Protestant), some smaller Protestant churches, and all Jewish religious communities, both Orthodox and Reform, were officially represented. The new body became a member of the International Council of Christians and Jews. In the statutes it was explicitly mentioned that the participants would work together without missionary intentions. In the 1980s many burning questions were put before churches and political authorities by OJEC and were debated in the media, the newspapers, and by the church bodies involved. The most important issues were: the controversy about a Carmelite convent in the former concentration camp Auschwitz, a test case in the courts against the anti-Semitic wording in missionary pamphlets of an evangelical couple, the discussion with the major churches to erase from their Church Orders all references to mission to the Jews, and political discussions with the Dutch Council of Churches concerning the recognition of the PLO (Schoon 1992). In 2006 OJEC celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, but in the meantime interest in Jewish–Christian dialogue has greatly diminished.

The euphoria after the Israeli victory in 1967 faded away in the seventies and disappeared totally after the Israeli invasion in Lebanon in 1982. The first and the second Palestinian intifada had a very negative impact upon the interest in Jewish–Christian dialogue. Every time the State of Israel feels threatened and defends itself fiercely, Christian enthusiasm for Israel becomes less, and Jews in the Netherlands are attacked because of the policies of the State of Israel. After September 11, 2001, there was an enormous growth in the interest for interreligious dialogue in general, and dialogue with Muslims in particular. Older church members are still affected in their attitudes by the Shoah, while younger people are much more influenced by the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Only the right and evangelical wings of the Protestant churches remain convinced by everything that Israel is doing, that God's miracle is still going full swing.

#### INDISSOLUBLE BOND?

At the beginning of the 21st century, the word ‘ambivalence’ is still a clear characterization of Christian attitudes towards Jews and Israel. In their identity, Christians experience both kinship with Judaism and

estrangement from it. In different historical and political contexts, Christian feelings switch between anti-Judaism and philo-Judaism. In 1991, after years of discussion in the local churches, the formulation of the ‘indissoluble bond with the People of Israel’ was almost unanimously accepted in the Synod of the Reformed Churches. This expression was taken over in the new Church Order of the United Protestant Church in 2004. This type of language is totally different from earlier descriptions of the Jewish people as ‘the people rejected forever’ or ‘the people that crucified its own Messiah’. In the last decades of the 20th century there was a strong tendency to emphasize the similarities and to suppress the differences. It was expected that the discovery of the ‘roots’ of the Church in Judaism would open the eyes of all Christians for the great heritage of faith they received from Israel. This would lead Christians and Jews to join forces in a common struggle for peace and righteousness in our world and to face together the great challenges of our days (Mussner 1979, 88–175, 379–387).

At the beginning of the 21st century, there is no longer much ground for this type of euphoric language. Must we conclude that what happened in the last decades of the twentieth century, in the rediscovery of Judaism by churches and Christians, was nothing more than a short-lived upswing that has faded away? Or can we speak of a real and abiding change that has found its way, not just into official declarations, but also into the hearts and minds of church members? Only the future will tell. At the moment there is not only decline but there is also consolidation. Much has changed for the better. There is room for study and dialogue between Christians and Jews, on the institutional level of churches, synagogues, and religious organizations, but also at high schools and universities. But critical questions must be expressed clearly. Is there reason to speak of a sincere sympathy for Jews and Judaism in the churches, or is this new interest only caused by the present identity crisis of Western Christendom? Is the aim of the study of Judaism not primarily to strengthen and enrich Christian identity? Does not the search for the ‘Jewish roots’ of Christian faith mainly find its impetus in the uncertainty of many Christians concerning their own identity? Although this background for the Christian interest in dialogue is psychologically understandable, it is as yet an unstable basis for a real encounter and dialogue. Christians stated their harmonizing views far too readily, maintaining that Jews and Christians live in the same Covenant, read one and the same Bible, and await the same Messiah (Oesterreicher 1970; Kremers 1973).

The text of the Church Order (accepted in 2004) of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is criticized and accused of ‘harmonizing language’. But that is a superficial observation. The wording of the Church Order tries to steer clear of the rocks of anti-Judaism and philo-Judaism. On the one hand there is the confessional expression of an ‘indissoluble bond’ between the Church and the people of Israel, because of the origins of the Church in first century Judaism(s) and because of the common heritage of the Hebrew Bible. But on the other hand there is no concealment or denial of the big differences between Church and Israel. After the initial declaration concerning the ‘indissoluble bond’, the Church Order continues to state: ‘As a Christ-confessing community of faith, the Church is seeking a dialogue with Israel concerning the understanding of the Holy Scripture, in particular on the subject of the coming of the Kingdom of God.’ In seeking dialogue, the Church recognizes the great differences in the understanding of the Bible and in the view of the Kingdom of God.

The expression ‘indissoluble bond’ has raised particular questions amongst Jews in the Netherlands. The most critical question is perhaps: Is it ethically acceptable as a Church to formulate unilaterally an ‘indissoluble bond’, without the consent of the other partner, i.e. the Jewish people? More than once in recent years, the positive expression ‘indissoluble bond’ has caused mixed feelings on the Jewish side of the dialogue encounter. It is understandable that Jews expect concrete signs of Christian solidarity with the Land and the State of Israel on the basis of this confessional declaration. But in the wording of their confessional language, the authors of the Church Order had explicitly chosen for the concept ‘People of Israel’ and not for the concepts of ‘Land of Israel’ and/or ‘State of Israel’, although it was often stressed that Land and State were inclusively indicated in the concept of the ‘People of Israel’. Time and again debates flare up, among different groups of Christians, and among Jews and Christians, on the following questions: What should be the political consequences of the formulated ‘bond’ between Church and Jewish people for the position of (Western) Churches and Christians regarding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict? What should be the content and what the limits of the confessed solidarity? Could the State of Israel, on the basis of this declaration, expect unconditional support for its policies and actions from the side of the churches? And

how should Western churches react to the mixed feelings and actual protests on the part of Palestinian Christians in the Middle East?<sup>1</sup>

On November 16, 2007, and April 10, 2008, the Synod of the Protestant Church discussed these dilemmas for many hours in an emotional debate, in order to specify its theological and political standpoints and to formulate guidelines for its projects in Israel and the Palestinian territories. The outcome was that the wording of the ‘indissoluble bond between the Church and the People of Israel’ in the Church Order was unanimously reconfirmed. Another result was that a resolution was accepted to give more attention to the justified plea of the Palestinians for statehood and to strengthen the ecumenical fellowship with Palestinian Churches and Christians.

#### AGENDA FOR RESEARCH

Questions and discussions like those mentioned above should stimulate study and research in the coming years, preferably in cooperation of Jewish and Christian scholars. Christians face the challenge of overcoming the status quo of the love–hate relationship and changing it into a two-way, respectful relationship. What items should be placed on the agenda of research and dialogue in the coming years? To get more clarity on the implications of the professed ‘indissoluble bond’ formulated by the Dutch Protestant Church, I would like to propose at least four urgent themes: The Parting of the Ways, Covenant(s), Mission and the Question of Truth, and the State of Israel. Study of these themes could illustrate both the affinity between Jews and Christians and their estrangement. Jews will approach the themes mainly from a historical angle, Christians will adopt a more theological approach.

##### *The Parting of the Ways*

In particular, studies by Jewish scholars have thrown new light on what is generally called ‘the Parting of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism’ in the first century. This term is rather vague and confusing. The parting of the ways in the first century was by no means total, and only in retrospect can one speak about ‘Christianity’ and ‘Judaism’ in this period. There were all kinds of overlapping movements that included

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<sup>1</sup> See for Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem: <http://www.sabeel.org/>

Jews and so-called ‘Judeo-Christians’. Many different Judaisms existed in the first century, and there were all kinds of different factions in the Jewish ‘Jesus movement’ and the groups of Gentiles who adopted the new messianic faith. Daniel Boyarin proposes not to use the term ‘Parting of the Ways’: he prefers to speak about ‘a variety of ongoing conversations’ between Jews on the one side, and between groups of Jesus-believers, both Jews and Gentiles, on the other side. He especially likes the concept of ‘overlapping stories’ (Boyarin 1999, 1–12, 93–126; Boyarin 2003). In 2003, a volume was published with the provocative title *The Ways that Never Parted* (Becker and Reed 2003). A lot of interaction existed between Jews and ‘Christians’ in the first centuries (Becking and Rouwhorst 2006). There were Pharisees who recognized Jesus as Messiah, and Gentile ‘Christian’ believers who kept the *kashrut* commandments, and all kind of variants in between. Many groups were more or less ‘Jewish’ and more or less ‘Christian’, very different from the ideal types of rabbinic Judaism and Orthodox or Apostolic Christianity that were described—and more or less also designated as such—by Rabbis and Church Fathers in their writings of the second to the fifth century. Only in the Early Middle Ages could one speak of a definite parting of the ways between Jews and Christians and the establishment of a clear distinction between the Jewish and Christian tradition.

It should be clear that the mother–daughter metaphor, used in the later part of the 20th century to describe the origin of Christianity as ‘daughter’ of the ‘mother’ Judaism, does not do justice to the historical reality of the first centuries. This popular metaphor was a protest against the dominant, centuries-old image of the Church as ‘mother’ who had definitely replaced the disobedient Jewish people and was the legitimate heir of the Scriptures of Israel. Would it perhaps be better to drop all kinds of metaphors that are related to family and kinship? The Jewish scholar Allan Segal has proposed an alternative metaphor: The ‘mother’ Israel had two sons, twins, like mother Rebecca in the story of Genesis. The two sons were Rabbinic Judaism and Orthodox Christianity (Segal 1986). Like Jacob and Esau, Jews and Christians struggled for the right to be the first-born son. Although this metaphor seems to resemble more the historical reality of the first centuries, it is imprecise like every metaphor and image. Family metaphors suggest an organic development in the origins of the two ‘religions’, which does not describe historical reality. In antiquity there was not such a phenomenon as ‘religion’, as this concept was only defined in modern times. Perhaps it is better to speak of ‘embedded religion’, a phenomenon embedded in polity, cul-

ture, ethnicity, and kinship (Stegemann 2003). Because metaphors influence and sometimes even create the reality that they are pointing to, they are not innocent. They have as a symbol an enormous impact on the historical consciousness of a group of people and on the experience of their identity. The challenge must be taken up anew in careful research and ongoing dialogue to study the complex parting of the ways between Jews and Christians in the first centuries, without inhibitions by prejudices, the urge of harmonization, or the need to strengthen one's own identity. One must realize that historical research can lead in the present to threatening questions for the members of both faith communities. What should, for example, be the consequences on the Protestant side of these new insights for the professed 'indissoluble bond'? The newer scholarly insights also mean a threat to Jewish identity, as could be illustrated by a quotation from the English Reform rabbi Tony Bayfield, who asks himself in astonishment: 'Is that the implication of the sibling metaphor? Is that the implication of the parting of the ways? Are Jews required, in return for a renunciation of supercessionism, to regard themselves no longer as God's first love, but rather as the numerically far less successful child of God's first love—and not even one of the two, but just as one of the three children of Abraham?' (Bayfield 2000, 125).

### *Covenant(s)*

The Dutch word for 'bond' (*verbondenheid*) sounds similar to the word for 'covenant' (*verbond*). The language of the Church Order could, therefore, be understood as an allusion to the conviction that Church and Israel are partners in the same covenant. The Dutch Protestant Church has a Calvinist background, and especially in churches of the Reformed (Calvinist) tradition, 'covenant' has always been an important theological concept. The word itself derives from the Bible and has been reinterpreted many times in Judaism and Christianity, mainly with opposing views. Most exegetes hold the view that the Hebrew word *berith* should be translated not by 'covenant' but by 'obligation'. *Berith* expresses the sovereign power of God, who imposes his will on his vassal Israel: God promises in a solemn oath to fulfil his word to his people Israel, who have only to be faithful and to obey. Early in its history, the Church regarded the 'old covenant of Israel' as definitely abrogated; the text on the 'new covenant' in Jeremiah 31 was explained as pointing to fulfilment in Christ. Meanwhile, there was a growing

emphasis in rabbinic Judaism on the mutuality of the covenant relationship between God and His People.

For the Reformer Calvin, the salvation revealed in the New Testament is the same salvation as in the Old, only in a new phase and a fuller light. He writes on dispensations of the one and eternal covenant, of which the basis is always the same, namely Jesus Christ. Calvin's high esteem for the Old Testament permeates the later Calvinist tradition, where it is often regarded as the 'proper Bible'. The term covenant plays a less prominent role in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox tradition than in Protestantism. It is much debated in the Jewish–Christian dialogue whether the concept of covenant, in its one-covenant version or in its two-covenant version, could function as a bridge between the two traditions. In the last decades of the 20th century, numerous official ecclesiastical statements declared that the covenant of God with His People was never abrogated. Covenant theology often assisted in the renewal of relations between the Church and the Jewish people. The famous declaration *Nostra Aetate* (1965) of Vatican II follows the concept of the two covenants: 'The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the People with whom God in his inexpressible mercy deigned to establish the ancient covenant.' (Korn and Pawlikowski 2005). Like the Dutch Protestant Church, the German Protestant Church of Rhineland, in its declaration of 1980 *Towards a Renewal of the Relationship between Christians and Jews*, follows the one covenant perspective in its declaration: 'We believe the permanent election of the Jewish People as the People of God and realize that through Jesus Christ the Church is taken into the covenant of God with His People.' (Schoon 1998, 225–250; Ahlers 2004). In several Jewish publications as well, the concept of covenant was evaluated in the last decade as a central concept in the Bible and a useful word in the dialogue with other religions (Ochs and Borowitz 2000; Greenberg 2000, 49–101; Signer 2000). More interesting than the Christian dogmatic debate on the theories of the one-covenant and the double covenant, in which discussion all the above-mentioned phenomena of interaction, harmonization, and separation can be distinguished, the conclusion may be that 'covenant' has proven to be a useful concept in the dialogue between Jews and Christians. The challenge for Christians will be to prove that it is possible to speak about a special 'bond' with the Jewish people and to relate to the biblical concept of 'covenant', without falling (again) into the trap of

triumphalism and without trying to define what the role of the other should be in the covenant.

### *The Question of Truth*

One of the most sensitive issues in the relation between Jews and Christian is the so-called Christian mission to the Jews. One cannot imagine a more striking illustration of the estrangement between Jews and Christians than the well-organized Christian attempts to separate Jews from their people, convert them to the Christian faith, and make them members of a Christian Church. Jews regard this as deeply offensive and absolutely reprehensible. But some Christians view it as their most important task to convince Jews of the truth that Jesus is the only way to God and the only means of salvation. For them this Question of Truth is the most important issue on the table of the dialogue. In the 18th century, the pioneers of the organizations for mission to the Jews were somehow forerunners in their love for the Jewish people, resisting the ever present Christian anti-Semitism in church and theology. By the turn of the 20th century, the defenders of mission to the Jews in the mainline churches were fighting a rearguard action against the majority opinion that regards Judaism as a living religion and therefore wishes to abolish all forms of mission to the Jews. But in large parts of the growing evangelical movement, the mission to the Jews is still seen as a high priority. In a declaration of the evangelical Lausanne Movement it was stated that the discrimination and suffering that has been inflicted on the Jews in the name of Jesus Christ is deplored. But at the same time it is emphasized: 'If the bygone history is used to make the church keep silent in its witness to the Jewish People, we must protest; it would be an act of grave discrimination to withhold the Gospel from the Jewish People.'<sup>2</sup> For Jews, there is nothing that casts so much doubt on the officially expressed readiness by Christians to encounter living Judaism than the activities of mission to the Jews. From a Jewish point of view, this mission is the ultimate expression of a relationship with Christianity that is definitely broken, because it does not leave Jews room to choose their own destiny.

The debate has not yet ended. The Dutch Reformed theologian A. van de Beek wrote recently: 'Mission to the Jews belongs to the very essence of the Christian faith' and 'Christians cannot accept that Jews

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<sup>2</sup> 'Lausanne Letter on Jewish Evangelism', *Current Dialogue* Dec. 1986, 33–35

will be saved by the works of the law, because this makes the cross of Jesus powerless' (Van de Beek 2002, 177, 213). In Catholic publications as well, the tension is sometimes felt between, on the one hand, the new view that Judaism is a living religion of salvation and, on the other hand, the conviction that the Church has to proclaim universal salvation in Christ (Henrix 2004, 83–220). In particular the viewpoints of the late Cardinal Lustiger of Paris, who did not hide his Jewish descent, have aroused thorough theological discussion (Lustiger 2002). In agreement with his position, some Catholic theologians have defended the view that Jesus Christ must be regarded as the 'destiny' of salvation history (Menke 2005). Jesus as Messiah must be enunciated as hope for Israel. Many Jewish partners will regard this conviction as a subtle attempt to maintain the Christian claim on the ultimate truth.

### *The State of Israel*

Christian attitudes towards the modern State of Israel vary greatly. They range from support for the Greater Israel Movement to the conviction that the State of Israel is racist and should disappear as soon as possible. Appalling events in Israel and the Palestinian Territories can suddenly change deep-felt love into hatred, or hatred into love. Philo-Semitism and anti-Semitism can alternate quickly. The different Christian views and attitudes show both affinity and estrangement toward Jews in general and the State of Israel in particular. It may be helpful to distinguish a number of models in conceptions of Jews and Judaism held by Christians. The models cannot always be separated but must certainly be distinguished. The most important models are the following, indicated with keywords:

#### *Replacement*

This model dominated in Church history. It asserts that after Jesus Christ, the Church has taken the place of the people of Israel. The task of Israel was only to bring the Messiah, and after fulfilling that mission, its task in salvation history was finished. In this model the New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant, baptism replaces circumcision, and the Gospel replaces the Law. Often the dispensation of 'Ancient Israel' is seen as earthly, the dispensation of the Church as spiritual. In this model the State of Israel has, in theory, no special theological or religious significance for Christians. In practice this frequently means,

however, anti-Judaism in sermons and religious teaching, and anti-Zionist reactions against the State of Israel.

### *Typology*

In this view, Israel in the Old Testament is regarded as *typos*, pointing to the fulfilment in the New Testament. This can, but does not necessarily, imply replacement of Israel. It means for example in Calvinism that the ‘shadows’ of the Old Covenant are now seen as clearly lifted in the light of Christ. The present people of Israel are viewed as still living ‘in shadows’. A triumphalist theology is the consequence. In this view only a mass conversion to Christ can bring about a solution of the conflict in the Middle East.

### *Illustration*

In this model, the Jews are regarded as an illustration of an especially sinful people. As an obstinate people in the Old Testament and as an unbelieving people in the New Testament, the Jews show how disobedient all people are. Their behaviour is paradigmatic and contagious. In Christian sermons the Jews became from the very beginning—and are still today—the illustration model *par excellence*. In their own State, the Jews illustrate as paradigm the sinfulness of humankind.

### *Eschatology*

In this model the conviction is expressed that the eschatological and apocalyptic texts in the Bible are being fulfilled in our lifetime, before our very eyes. Many evangelical Christians look particularly upon the unification of Jerusalem in 1967 as the beginning of the End Time. They see the events involving the Jews and the State of Israel as the setting of the stage for the Second Coming of Jesus. They hope to hasten his coming by unconditionally supporting the State of Israel. In their view there is no real place for Palestinians in the Promised Land.

### *Israel as ‘notion’*

Some Christians like to deal with the biblical concept of ‘Israel’ as a critical notion both toward the present-day Church and to the modern Jewish people and State. For them the direct self-identification of the Jewish people and the Jewish State with the name ‘Israel’ is objectionable. Biblical Israel is in their view not a ‘nation’ but a ‘notion’, which in our days becomes especially visible among the poor and oppressed in the world. In this view the Jews are often idealized as a wandering

people, who have to live in exile. The Jews are chosen, as long as they are the suffering people. For those Christians, the Palestinians have today replaced the Jews and deserve the title ‘Israel’ or ‘People of God’ because of their suffering.

#### *Experiment*

In this view the Jews are regarded as God’s particular chosen people and the State of Israel as a kind of ‘experimental garden’, where exemplary justice must be done by its inhabitants. They are called upon to live up to the biblical commandments of peace and justice, as an example for the whole world. Those Christians tend to judge the State of Israel by higher standards than all other peoples and states in the world.

#### *A sign of God’s faithfulness*

In the second half of the 20th century, confessional statements of some Protestant churches, especially in Germany and the Netherlands, have called the return of the Jews to the Land and State of Israel ‘a sign of God’s faithfulness toward his Covenant People’. These declarations stress that God’s election of the Jewish people is irrevocable. These positions—in the Netherlands as early as 1959, in Germany in 1980—have come nowadays under strong criticism, but they should be regarded as the theological background of the wording of the ‘indissoluble bond with the People of Israel’ in the Protestant Church Order.

### DISENTANGLEMENT

How do Jews react to the stream of declarations from the Christian side in the last decades of the twentieth century? Do they rejoice in the newly declared ‘unique bond’, as formulated by Christians, or are they still reluctant and suspicious, on the basis of their experiences with Christianity in many centuries? Can Jews agree with the concept of an ‘indissoluble bond’ between the Christian Church and the people of Israel? Could such a particular ‘bond’ with the Church or partnership in the covenant of God be acceptable to Jewish thinking? For most Jews this is certainly unacceptable and unthinkable. They realize that the love–hate relationship from the side of the Christians is not only something of the past. They are still confronted with attitudes both of anti-Semi-

tism and philo-Semitism from Christians. Sometimes there is also a kind of anti-Semitism in the new garb of anti-Zionism.

In recent years there were a number of statements, not only by Jews but also by Christians, that warn about too much harmonization and a too vigorous embrace. I will mention two striking examples, from the Jewish and from the Christian side of the dialogue spectrum, that demand more respect for the ‘other’ in Jewish–Christian dialogue. In the year 2000, more than 200 rabbis and Jewish scholars signed ‘A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity’, called *Dabru Emet* (Speak the Truth), published in two important newspapers in the United States, in which they recognized the profound change that had taken place within Christianity vis-à-vis Judaism, and in which they described what Jews and Christians had in common religiously. The American-Jewish Bible scholar Jon Levenson warned, in a critical reaction to this statement, against too strong an embrace between Jews and Christians and too naïve a harmonization between Judaism and Christianity, by which the enormous theological differences were neglected (Levenson 2004). He criticized historically and theologically the suppositions of the *Dabru Emet* document, which included statements that ‘Jews and Christians worship the same God’, that ‘Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of the Torah’, and that ‘Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish People upon the Land of Israel.’ Levenson called such statements counterproductive. He advocated a dialogue in which differences are not overlooked but clearly expressed. He firmly rejected a kind of dialogue that resembles a negotiation table where two parties are deliberating and forcing each other to compromise for a common cause.

A publication by the British Orthodox chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, deals with the much wider scope of globalization, the market economy, the imperative of education, poverty, and environmental sustainability. But a main thread running through his impressive book is his strong plea to make room for the otherness of the other (Sacks 2003). The context of his message is not primarily interreligious dialogue, like the statement *Dabru Emet*, but the al-Qaeda terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. The subtitle of his book is *How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, referring to the book by Samuel Huntingdon (Huntingdon 1996). Sacks is convinced that a paradigm shift in thinking and behaviour is needed in our world to avert the dangers of religious fanaticism and of coercive universalism. According to Sacks, God the Creator is teaching humanity to make

space for the dignity of difference: ‘God may at times be found in the human other, the one not like us’ (Sacks 2003, 53).

Two authoritative voices on the Christian side of the dialogue scene come from German theologians, the Protestant New Testament scholar Peter von der Osten-Sacken and the Roman Catholic systematic theologian Michael Welker. At a symposium in 2003 on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the study program in Israel for German theologians (*Studium in Israel*), they both warned of the danger of annexation (*Vereinnahmung*) of Jews and Judaism in the context of dialogue and interreligious study. Von der Osten-Sacken, who wrote many pioneering studies in the field of Christian–Jewish dialogue, points to the need of disentanglement (*Entflechtung*), so that the other can keep his otherness (Von der Osten-Sacken 2004). Michael Welker wants to abstain from models of the relation between Christians and Jews that define the Jewish other only from a Christian perspective and in this manner annex Judaism for the purpose of Christian identity. He himself defends the model of two different ways, one for Jews and one for Christians, that could be understood as complementary. Both perspectives—the Jewish and the Christian—should not be harmonized and brought together in one concept, but can be made to bear fruit in their being different, for the witness of God in our world (Welker 2004).

## CONCLUSION

It is difficult to make predictions about the future of the relations between the Church and the Jewish people. It cannot be foreseen, for example, whether the change in Christian theological thinking that started because of the shock of the Shoah will be continued in the twenty-first century, when the living memories of the Shoah will slowly fade and become part of history. Are the Protestant declarations on Jews and Judaism, issued in the last decades, only to be seen as a reaction to the Shoah, or do they actually signify a fundamental change in theological outlook? Will expressions like ‘indissoluble bond’ and ‘inseparable connection’ be tenable in the twenty-first century to describe the relation of the Church towards the Jewish people? Only the future can tell whether Church and theology after Auschwitz will be capable of overcoming the old ambivalence towards Jews and Judaism. The question cannot yet be answered whether Christians will learn to live with

the duality of kinship and distinction in their relationship to the Jewish people. They have to find their way between the Scylla of harmonization and the Charybdis of indifference. The twenty-first century will reveal whether Judaism will be respected by Christians as a living tradition, and whether the theological significance of the existence of the Jewish people will be recognized. This needs a real paradigm shift in church and theology. In my opinion the confession of an ‘indissoluble bond’ of the Church with the people of Israel is an important theological beginning. It is the expression of a Christian theological conviction, on the basis of the origins of the Church within the people of Israel in the first centuries, on the basis of the common Scripture, and on the basis of sharing the expectation, given to Israel, of the Kingdom of God. This confession means a challenge for dialogue, research, and action. What steps must be taken in the coming years to realize these goals? As a conclusion, a few points can be mentioned.

#### *The fruitfulness of difference*

Christians should recognize that the fact that Judaism and Christianity are different is an enrichment and not a threat. Recognition of the ‘fruitfulness of difference’ will create space for an open and authentic dialogue (Poorthuis and Middleton 1997). Attempts to harmonize reduce the room for encounter and are an obstacle to a real dialogue. Dialogue will end up in failure if Judaism is only studied as a means to a Christian aim and is used as a ‘solution’ for Christian identity problems.

#### *Reciprocity*

There has to be growth in reciprocity in the dialogue between Jews and Christians if it is to be a viable option for the future. The statement *Dabru Emet* mentioned above is—despite critical remarks—a sign of a growing Jewish preparedness for real dialogue. In the fields of research and study there is already frequent cooperation. Reciprocity in dialogue can only be reached if the asymmetry of the dialogue is accepted. Christians tend to emphasize the symmetry, while Jews give more attention to the asymmetry. But even when Christians wholeheartedly accept the asymmetry, they are unable theologically to give up the relationship. A quotation of the German theologian Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt clarifies this Christian position: ‘Also when Israel maintains the right to keep distance, we have the obligation of relationship’ (Marquardt 1994,

164).<sup>3</sup> Jews and Christians will always put efforts into a theology of the other, more explicitly into ‘a Christian theology of the Jewish People and Judaism’ and into a ‘Jewish theology of the Church and Christianity’. But a relationship, and certainly an ‘indissoluble bond’, can never be imposed upon the dialogue partner. To quote Emanuel Levinas: ‘The other is not reducible to myself’ (Levinas 1969, 85–95). The other makes his appeal to me, and I am called to responsibility. Jews have the moral right to expect in dialogue a Christianity that will never again constitute a threat to them.

### *Interreligious Dialogue*

In the coming years, part of the Jewish–Christian dialogue must be dedicated to the ‘trialogue’ between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and even to the wider, multifaceted interreligious dialogue. The practice of these different dialogues needs further theoretical work into both a theology of the Jewish–Christian dialogue and a *theologia religionum*. From the heart of their own identity, Christians cannot give up the particularity of the Jewish–Christian dialogue and have it merged into a greater ‘universal’ dialogue. The image of different concentric circles could make this clearer. For Christians the inner circle is confined to the Jewish–Christian dialogue because of the origins and the history of Christianity. The second wider circle points to the dialogue of the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Beyond this, other wider circles encompass the dialogues with other religions and world views. The achievements of the Jewish–Christian dialogue should stimulate the whole spectrum of interreligious dialogue.

### *Dialogue of the Heart*

In the Jewish–Christian encounter more room should be made—next to the dialogue of reason—for the dialogue of the heart (Küster 2003, 9–10). Many people in our time are in search of a meaningful spirituality. Cheap harmonizations, like the Kabbalistic views adopted by Madonna, should be avoided. Study of the differences and points of contact of the mystical traditions, and in particular a comparison of the spiritual experiences in Judaism and Christianity, could open up a promising field of research (Van den Berg and Süss 2006). The question

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<sup>3</sup> In German: ‘Mag Israel das Recht der Distanz behaupten, uns gehört die Pflicht der Beziehung’.

should be answered whether it is possible to participate in intercommunal spiritual worship and experiences without giving up one's loyalty to one's own religion.

### *The Other as Mystery*

Without respect for the mystery of the other and for the other as mystery, every dialogue will turn out to be a failure. Zealotry to convert the other and the urge for harmonization should be changed into acceptance of the otherness of the other. The declared 'indissoluble bond' is not a fact either in history or in the present. It is a theological conviction that should inspire Christians to strive for its realization in practice. It could turn out to be a dangerous conviction for Jews, when Christians want to change the Jews into their own image. To express it once more in line with the thinking of Emanuel Levinas: By the epiphany of the other our life will be upset. The other brings confusion to the I because of his subjectivity and makes an appeal to my obligation to responsibility (Fryer 2000).

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## THE ANOMALY OF JEWISH ETHNICITY AS A CONSIDERATION IN CONTEMPORARY INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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The primary interest of this paper is the formulation of philosophical categories in which the relations obtaining between Judaism and Christianity may be discussed in the contemporary world, while giving the historical issues laying at the root of such a discussion their due from a particularly Jewish perspective. The fundamental question preceding the formulation of relations between Judaism and Christianity in the contemporary period concerns the matter of a preconceived paradigm: Are we to be searching for a paradigm of a single spiritual universe, albeit with different perspectives and emphases, or should the paradigm be that of difference and distinction between groups, albeit a difference or distinction that takes into account various spiritual connections?

The fundamental presupposition underlying the following discussion is that the comparison of religious, historical, and even philosophical texts ought not to be considered a sufficient basis in and of themselves for the enunciation of a paradigm of interreligious relations between Judaism and Christianity. This is because such comparisons, which until now have in fact dominated the scholarly discussion of interreligious relations, invariably presume that the relations being discussed are symmetrical, in the sense that they are relations of groups best defined as world religions. But by definition, this presumption fails to take into account a central component of Jewish existence which necessarily makes its relation to Christianity asymmetrical. It fails to take into account that Judaism is not only a religion; that Jews are not only a religious group; and that Jewish texts are not necessarily to be considered, in the first instance, texts that are primarily of religious significance. Rather, Judaism, in addition to all else, contains both the religious and secular elements of the culture of a clearly identified ethnic group whose religious and non-religious texts reflect a particular ethnic identity.

An important contribution toward the formulation of a paradigm of contemporary Jewish–Christian relations that takes into account the particularities of Jewish existence has already been made by Victor Kal in his essay ‘The Holy People among the Philosophers’ (Kal 2006). This essay clearly demonstrates the extent to which the universalistic tendencies and secular character of modern philosophical discourse provided the fundamental terms for discussion concerning Christian–Jewish relations in the modern period. Kal showed that the categories of thought that served until recently as background for the primary strategies of Jewish existence in the modern period are taken from modern European philosophy, even though in the context of European philosophy they served as the vehicle for anti-Semitism (Kal 2006, 351). He demonstrated, in this context, that the secular and universal tendencies of modern European philosophy include not only the emancipationist ideology demanding the assimilation of Jews into European culture but also strategies calling for the building of a Jewish–European symbiosis and finally Zionism (Kal 2006, 356). The most important contribution made by Kal to the present discussion, however, is to be found in his consideration of the strategy proposed by the famous early 20th century German Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig. According to Kal, ‘Rosenzweig is unique among the philosophers in that he is the only one who has built a philosophical model such that the Jewish people and the peoples of the world both retained their specific roles on the world stage’ (Kal 2006, 359).

Franz Rosenzweig’s understanding of Jewish–Christian relations will figure prominently in the present paper as well. However, rather than view Rosenzweig’s paradigm of Jewish–Christian relations as one which may be used in order to reorientate the problem of Jewish–Christian relations in the contemporary period without subsuming the particular qualities of Jewish existence to the supposedly universal and secular qualities of modern Western intellectual culture, I shall suggest that it be rejected in favor of one that is more rooted in the historical actualities of Jewish existence which distinguish it from that of Western society in general.

In this context I would like to begin by surveying the manner in which major modern Jewish thinkers dealt with the question of relations between Judaism and Christianity in light of the tension obtaining between universalism and commonality, on the one hand, and the particular aspects of Jewish ethnicity vis-à-vis the Christian Culture of the West, on the other. With each of these thinkers, I shall point out not

only the use made of the supposedly universal discourse of Western philosophy but also the ‘distance’ remaining between the Western philosophical discourse of modernity and the actual demands placed before philosophical thought by the historical character of Jewish existence as the existence of a people with a particular ethnic character which precedes both the religious and philosophical discourse of the modern period. In this manner, I hope, at the end of the paper, to be able to make a clear and concise comment as to the importance of taking into account the anomalous character of Jewish ethnicity vis-à-vis the universal character of interreligious dialogue in the present day.

#### RELIGIOUS UNIVERSALISM AND THE QUESTION OF JEWISH HISTORICITY IN MENDELSSOHN’S JERUSALEM

The first thinker who needs to be considered in this respect is Moses Mendelssohn. His model for dealing with the tension between Jewish particularity and the cosmopolitan goals of modernity presumed the cosmopolitan vision of the Enlightenment, in which the ideals of human reason and the demands of revealed religion are one and the same. As such, the philosophical categories employed in those aspects of Mendelssohn’s writing which relate to the desired relationship between Judaism and Christianity were indeed of a universal orientation, and were meant, as a practical matter, to be implemented in the context of a shared civil society which does not discriminate between religious groups on the basis of historical origin. Of course, it is no mere coincidence that Victor Kal also began his discussion of the problem of Jewish particularism in light of the universalistic tendencies of modern philosophy by way of reference to Mendelssohn (Kal 2006, 350–351). Mendelssohn was the first to deal with the tension obtaining between Western universalism and Jewish particularism in the early modern period. I would like to show, however, that Mendelssohn’s significance in the discussion concerning Judaism’s place in the modern world goes beyond the matter of philosophical categorization, in which—according to Kal’s presentation—Mendelssohn appears as being of one mind with Kant with regard to the value of universalism and only differs with him with respect to his belief that philosophical universalism does not contradict the legitimacy of the particularities of Jewish existence. More specifically, I would like to show that Mendelssohn’s positive attitude toward the continuation of Jewish existence stems from his acknowl-

edgement of Judaism as a particular form of social and historical phenomenon bearing its own needs to which modern philosophical thought must now accommodate itself.

The presumed universal character of revealed religion is expressed in the first half of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*, where he maintains that the modern state should require for its own benefit that religious institutions be free of all coercion (Mendelssohn 1969, 36–37, 46–48). Mendelssohn maintains that this is necessary in order to educate society as to the proper goals and behavior of human beings in light of religious truth (Mendelssohn 1969, 34). There is, of course, no distinction here between religious and philosophical truth. Both presume that an infinitely wise God reveals the ideals of human existence together with the laws of nature through human reason. The point is that in order for the members of society to be educated as good citizens, they must have knowledge of that truth as a value in and of itself. The state is required to grant religious institutions freedom from state coercion precisely because the coercive character of state activity is antithetical to the ideal nature of divine truth (Mendelssohn 1969, 46). Here, however, it is important to note that not only does Mendelssohn refrain from making a distinction between religious and philosophical truth in the first section of the book, which deals with the value of religious education vis-à-vis the needs of the modern civil state, he also makes no distinction between the truths taught by Judaism and Christianity. Even in the second half of the book, it should be noted, he continues with this ostensibly universalistic approach as he presents himself as a rather moderate deist, by claiming that all true religions partake of the same divine truth expressed through the eternal revelation of reason (Mendelssohn 1969, 64–69). But here we nonetheless find that there is a limit to his universalistic approach which apparently results from his own philosophical reflection upon the actuality of Jewish existence as a historical and social phenomenon.

This limit appears when he explains why the institutions of the Jewish religion ought to be considered worthy of recognition alongside those of Christianity as the institutions of a religion based on universal reason. True, he maintains, the ultimate religious truth according to which citizens of the state must be educated is known through universal reason. But, he adds, the ultimate religious truth is always refracted through the historical truths of the various religious traditions in their specific religio-cultural heritages (Mendelssohn 1969, 68–71). In this context, the Jews are obligated not only by the universal truth of reason,

but also by the revelation of practical commandments at Sinai and the resultant religious constitution known as the Torah. According to Mendelssohn, the state itself ought to be interested in granting religious freedom to the Jewish community, insofar as it is beneficial for the state that Jewish religious institutions educate the Jews concerning the ideal truth upon which good citizenship depends. However, the need for such religious education on the part of Jewish institutions reveals that he presupposes the particular social and historical factuality of Jewish existence as a factor which needs to be considered when determining the best means of educating all mankind concerning the universal truth.

In short, the particular historical character of the Jewish people—or in Mendelssohn's own words, the particular 'historical' truths (Mendelssohn 1969, 64) held by Jewish tradition—require that a particular form of Jewish education supplied by specifically Jewish institutions provide for the achievement of education of Jews toward the universal truth of modern society, in order for Jews to be able to fulfill their role as good citizens in the modern civil state.

In this manner Mendelssohn was able to give validity to the unique character of Judaism as a 'revelation of law' which particularly obligates the Jewish community, but that in no way contradicts the 'universal' revelation of reason which he supposes is common to both Judaism and Christianity. What is important for the continuation of our discussion is to know that while Mendelssohn lived in a time in which the cosmopolitan vision of the Enlightenment left little room for the particularities of various ethnic traditions, as a Jew committed to both the universal betterment of humankind as well as to the particularities of religious obligation stemming from his ethnic upbringing, he paved the way for the manner of dealing with the tension obtaining between universalism and particularism in the Jewish experience of modernity for decades to come. The model thus presented indeed presumes the universal character of religious and philosophical truth in a way that was acceptable to the cosmopolitan attitudes of his time. But at the same time it reflects the concrete needs of the Jewish community as a social organization whose obligations and loyalties are a matter of historical phenomena which are part and parcel of universal philosophical reflection and yet precede it.

Indeed, it is not enough, in my opinion, to note (as did Kal) that Mendelssohn, as opposed to Kant, saw no problem in maintaining the viability of the particular faith orientation of traditional Judaism within the historical-philosophical context of modernity (Kal 2006, 350). Lim-

iting Mendelssohn's contribution to the development of strategies for modern Jewish existence, in this manner, is equivalent to saying that he preserved the right for Jews to be different, but provided for that right by denying the historicity of Jewish existence and by viewing the notion of Jewish existence merely as a category to be used in the construction of a modern philosophical narrative. It would be more precise to say that Mendelssohn's model of Jewish existence in the modern period did not involve so much a vision of the assimilation of Jews and Judaism into a universalistic European (or Christian) civilization as it did the integration of the essential elements of modern humanism into the already existing Jewish sphere of existence, which is at once religious and social. This description is actually borne out as one reflects upon the fact that much of his activity as a modern Jewish intellectual was entirely outside the realm of universal philosophical discourse and was rather directed at the modernization of Judaism as a historical religion and culture through the publication of modern Hebrew literature and his modernistic interpretation of the Bible in Hebrew.

In this respect, one may conclude that Mendelssohn's philosophical endeavor, in which he viewed himself as a member of the European Enlightenment, and his work in the area of Jewish culture were connected and yet kept apart as pertaining to two different spheres of cultural activity. As a result, it may be said, he clearly recognized the import of Jewish ethnicity as a particular cultural and historical phenomenon but did not create a corresponding philosophical category that would require those with whom he shared the purportedly universal discourse of the Enlightenment to confront the claims of Judaism and Jewish existence as a value in and of themselves.

#### ABRAHAM GEIGER AND ZECHARIAH FRANKEL ON THE FATE OF JEWISH ETHNICITY IN A CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION

The above-mentioned 'distance' between historical realities and philosophical reflection comes to the fore in debates concerning the tension between the universalistic and particularistic tendencies of Jewish existence in the time of emancipation. Rabbis Abraham Geiger and Zechariah Frankel fiercely debated, for example, the extent to which the demands placed on Jewish religiosity from the surrounding non-Jewish society should be taken into account while trying to make Judaism compatible with the norms of modern society and culture. Geiger was

one of the major leaders and spokesmen for the new reform Judaism in mid-19th century Germany, while Frankel was founder of ‘Positive-Historical’ Judaism, the central European precursor to the later American conservative movement. Geiger adopted the philosophical conception of a universal humanity as the major criterion for reform (Seltzer 1980, 590–597), while Frankel understood the universal conception of mankind to be still only a secondary consideration when considering the question of Jewish continuity (Seltzer 1980, 605–606). The ‘distance’ between the philosophical conception of a universal humanity and the particularities of Jewish historicity as the criterion for change is particularly significant here because of the transformation in European society that had already occurred.

While many Jews in the period of the Enlightenment may have well understood emancipation to be the means through which the cosmopolitan vision of a future universal humanity would be implemented vis-à-vis the Jews, in the period of emancipation itself, European society was no longer conceived as a meeting place between individuals—each of whom was held to represent the same universal humanity—but rather as the realm of particular national societies and cultures. As a result, expectations placed upon modern Jewry were no longer those of assimilating into a universally human society but rather of integration and assimilation into the national social fabric of the surrounding populations. In this context, such a thinker as Rabbi Abraham Geiger led the way to the reform of the Jewish religion by removing all those aspects of Jewish tradition which appeared to be tied to the particularities of Jewish ethnicity, while Frankel accepted only a more moderate form of reform Judaism, in which only those aspects of European culture which did not deny the uniqueness of Jewish ethnicity would be accepted.

Geiger believed that recalling Zion as the ancient homeland of the Jewish people and the messianic dreams of a future return to the Land of Israel inhibited the desired ethnic or national fusion with the surrounding peoples. He therefore proposed erasing such themes from the Jewish prayer books. In addition, in the conference convened for the reform-leaning rabbis in the early 1840s, whose aim it was to establish the principles upon which a new reformed Judaism may stand, he fiercely debated Zechariah Frankel on the question whether Hebrew ought to remain the language of Jewish prayer and ritual. While he stopped short, at this time, of obligating the adoption of German as the language of Jewish ritual, the position held by the conference, which he authored, was that the replacement of Hebrew by German is war-

ranted and should be implemented at some later date (Ullmann 1845, 34–36). On this issue, Frankel withdrew from the conference and explained that he saw the trend away from Hebrew and toward German as the language of Jewish ritual as part of the more general trend toward national and ethnic assimilation. As against the conception of the Jewish community as a ‘religious congregation’ held by early reform Judaism, Frankel coined the term mentioned above: ‘Positive-Historical Judaism’. That is, he envisioned a Judaism whose character is subject to a historical evolution that is partially restrained by sancta hallowed by the people in the past (Ullmann 1845, 86–90). In short, Geiger’s version of reform Judaism took the cosmopolitan values of universal ethics to be the criterion for what is and what is not essential to the religion of the prophets, while Frankel’s positive-historical Judaism continued to see the Jewish religion as the religion of a distinct ethnic and historical community.

One may propose, as did the great philosopher of Jewish existence (and historian of the Israelite faith in the time of the Bible) Ezekeal Kaufmann, that in its insistence upon remaining Jewish—albeit in the limited context of a non-ethnic ‘faith community’—early reform Judaism still reflected something of its preceding ethnic character (Kaufmann 1930, 195–196). Nonetheless, in terms of its own self-understanding, Judaism, like Christianity, was, according to Reform, now to be part and parcel of a broader European national social fabric. This new self-understanding was also expressed in a quasi-messianic vision of the end of days, in which the religious and ethical perfection of humanity will have already made the distinction between the various monotheistic religions superfluous (Kaufmann 1930, 71–72).

#### JUDAISM VIS-À-VIS CHRISTIANITY AND THE WEST IN THE THOUGHT OF HERMANN COHEN AND FRANZ ROSENZWEIG

Perhaps the most interesting discussions concerning the tension between the universal trajectory of modernity and Jewish historical particularity, however, are to be found at the beginning of the 20th century, in the thought of Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig. For Cohen and Rosenzweig, the emphasis is still on the role played by Judaism in European civilization. But here, there is already a return to various aspects of Jewish ethnicity thought to have been done away with by 19th century Reform Judaism. Surprisingly, even Cohen, who was par-

ticularly close to the reform movement of his time, noted in his later writings the ethnic and historical aspects of Jewish existence as necessary for the fulfillment of its moral mission (Cohen 1972, 359, 363). It is proposed, both by Cohen and Rosenzweig, that the Jewish contribution to the improvement of modern civil society is made possible because the Jewish community constitutes a distinct ethnic group within civil society. One should recall that Cohen and Rosenzweig wrote at a time when emancipation should have been completed, and yet a new nationally oriented form of anti-Semitism was on the rise. Cohen still believed in ethical idealism and therefore saw even the particularities of Jewish religiosity as having to be manifest in the social dynamic shared with the rest of society. And yet, it is only because their religion has been preserved within the ethnic and family-related Jewish community that the monotheistic message of Judaism can actually become a part of the surrounding social ethos (Cohen 1916, 644; 1972, 267–268, 363). In other words, Cohen believed that a certain form of Jewish ethnicity, required for religious reasons, could and should remain in the overall German–Jewish symbiosis which he envisioned (Cohen 1923, 20–39). As opposed to all those who preceded him in considering Judaism's place in the modern world, Cohen therefore succeeded in actually creating a philosophical category to denote the particular character of Jewish existence as necessary for thinking about the future of Western civilization. For this he coined the term *Nationalität*, which in his usage corresponds to the English term *nationality*, as opposed to the politically bound term *nation* (Cohen 1923, 42; 1972, 362).

The fact that Cohen, a committed philosophical idealist, finds it necessary to include consideration of the historical fact of Jewish ethnicity in his formulation of the Jewish contribution to the establishment of a universal humanity is particularly significant when compared to the view held by Franz Rosenzweig. Rosenzweig considered himself to be a disciple of Cohen, though his own philosophical system was extremely antagonistic to philosophical idealism and was of a more existential orientation. On the one hand, Rosenzweig emphasized the particular religio-ethnic character of Jewish existence even more than Cohen. But on the other hand, he considered the ethnic character of Jewish religiosity to be a vital contribution to human civilization precisely because, in opposition to Cohen, he supposed Jewish ethnicity to be an ahistorical phenomenon. To be precise, Rosenzweig considered Judaism to be an ‘ahistorical faith’ community (Rosenzweig 1971, 328–334; Turner 2006, 59–68).

What does it mean for the Jewish community to be considered an ‘ahistorical’ faith community? Like Cohen, Rosenzweig was in favor of Jewish participation in all area of Christian civilization (other than religion) as individuals. But he did not believe, as Cohen did, that Judaism and Christianity shared a common ethical mission. In his consideration of the Jewish community as an ‘ahistorical’ faith community, he in fact reached the post-emancipationist conclusion that while Jews have become Western in every way, the fact of their being of different ethnicity remains not as the carrier of its unique religious stance but rather as a result of it. True, Rosenzweig was still universally minded enough to view Judaism and Christianity as working toward the same goal in a shared spiritual universe. That universe, though, can only be denoted in the existential relationship with God, which is necessarily constituted differently in Judaism and Christianity. In Christian theology, the relation to God is noted through the expectation of the coming redemption, that is, through expectation of a redemption which stands beyond time and beyond history in the far-off end of days, while Judaism, according to Rosenzweig, already experiences the post-historical redemption of humanity in the immediate present (Rosenzweig 1979, 132–133). This experience, for him, is part and parcel of the religio-ethnic unity which forever distinguishes between Judaism and Christianity and forever forces the Jew into the role of eternal stranger when seen from the perspective of Western historical consciousness.

To be an ‘ahistorical’ faith community, according to Rosenzweig, means to live a community life filled with religious ritual that constantly reconsecrates the various facets of its every day experience in light of an all encompassing conception of eternity. Christianity, he believed, was meant to transform the historical process into a path leading to the always future redemption. In this sense, Christianity alone bears responsibility for the fate of humanity through historical development, whereas Judaism, because of its ‘ahistorical’ character, bears no responsibility for historical endeavor and could only exhibit, in the present, what that redemption may look like for others in the future.

While Cohen’s position, therefore, may be seen as a culmination of the process in which Jewish religious thought adopted the cosmopolitan vision of modernity, and yet because of the failures of emancipation was forced to acknowledge the ethnic character of Jewish existence, Rosenzweig maintains that emancipation actually has achieved a situation in which all aspects of Jewish existence have already become Christianized, except for the religious. In fact, he called for a return to

the religious perspective of an ethnically defined faith community whose existential orientation, language, and ritual remained peripheral to the general trends of Christian religiosity. More specifically, he believed that the domination of Christian forms of religiosity in European civilization left no room for a positive contribution on the part of Judaism to the religious fulfillment of human civilization, unless that be as an 'ahistorical' symbol of the religious goals to which Christianity strives, but can not achieve in and of itself.

#### CONCLUSION: THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH ETHNICITY IN JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

What all these show is that from the Jewish point of view, it is impossible to maintain an interfaith dialogue without taking into account the problematic tension between Western universalism and Jewish particularism. From the beginning, Christianity saw itself as a universal religion which transcended all ethnic identity and in fact built a worldwide civilization. Judaism, on the other hand, has never succeeded in developing a world view which did not reflect, in one way or another, its immediate ethnic sensibilities, perspectives, and modes of interpretation. It never succeeded in developing a world view not based on the possibility of its realization in a manner that transcends the European phase of its existence. For this reason, the question of historical factuality is essential to the formulation of philosophical categories through which Jewish-Christian relations may be described and analyzed. To whatever extent Judaism became part and parcel of Western civilization, it was always cognizant of the fact that it draws on a religious heritage that precedes its involvement in the West and whose destiny lay beyond it. It never succeeded in building a world view that did not reflect its experience as living on the periphery of a larger host civilization to which it belonged and to which it contributed, in many ways, but to which it also did not and could not belong in many others.

We have seen above that such general terms as universalism, particularism, humanity, and faith supply the categories for the philosophical discussion of Jewish-Christian relations in the present day. Christianity, however, was always able to use these terms with regard to a world civilization which it had established. Judaism could not. The introduction of historical factuality as a category of philosophical discourse is therefore necessary in order to insure that the terms of discussion do

not force Judaism into a mode of existence which is from the start a product of Christian civilization.

When considering the paradigm through which Jewish–Christian relations may be looked at in the present, it should be recalled that Judaism shares the anomalous relation described above not only with regard to Christian civilization, but also, in different ways, with the Moslem world. It seems to me that throughout the ages, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have developed their sense of self as a result of dialogue that is at times intellectually attuned and at times filled with animosity, but nonetheless as a dialogue between distinct religious, ethnic, and cultural attitudes. These historical differences are part and parcel of their theological differences as well. They have greatly influenced the manner in which the notion of God functions in the various ethnic and cultural realities. In order to fully grasp the theological differences obtaining between religions, it is therefore necessary to place the theological concepts in their respective national, ethnic, and historical contexts. As a result, I believe, the modern and postmodern paradigm of a single spiritual universe will not do; the model should rather continue to be that of a dialogue between different religious and historical subjects.

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PART FIVE

ART



## JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN IMAGING OF THE ‘HOUSE OF GOD’: A FOURTH CENTURY REFLECTION OF RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL POLEMICS

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An architectonic image of a temple-like façade (an aedicule) appears in many Jewish and Early Christian works of art. Stemming obviously from the Greek/Roman milieu, this schematic image assumes new significance for the Jews as well as the Christians. In Jewish art it seems to reflect the eschatological hope for the restoration of the Temple that was destroyed. In Early Christian art it might symbolize the cultic transformation of the pagan Roman temple to a Christian new ‘House of God’ and the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy regarding the ruined Jewish Temple. Thus it may have served as a pictorial expression of the Christian victory over both paganism and Judaism.

In this paper we examine the graphic image of the ‘temple-like edifice’ in fourth-century art and some of its earlier sources in an attempt to understand its special iconography in reference to the historical, theological, and political events of the period.

### THE SYMBOLIC ‘HOUSE OF GOD’ IMAGE IN JEWISH ART

In order to appreciate the symbolic meaning of this abbreviated form of a ‘Roman-like temple’, we have to review its initial appearance in Jewish art. It was first seen in the second century (132–135 CE), when Bar Kochba minted an exceptional number of coins as part of the rebellion against the Romans. The center of some of these coins (figure 1) depicts an imposing tetrastyle structure with architectural motifs typical of the pagan temples of the time. Between the two central columns, where Roman coins generally showed the statue of a god, Bar Kochba inserted a rectangular pattern made up of dotted lines.

This schematic pattern representing a Roman-like temple was interpreted differently by the various scholars. It was explained as the show-bread table (Barag 1994, 272–276), as a rough geometric drawing

designed to symbolize the Temple (Meshorer 2001, 143–145), and as a Hellenistic construct in which the Temple represents the political sovereignty of the past, reminding the people of the centrality of Jerusalem and inspiring their hope in its restoration as the capital of an independent Jewish state with the rebuilt Temple at its heart (Narkiss 1968, 11–20).

The central design of the coin was also identified as a side view of the Pentateuchal Tabernacle's Ark of the Covenant: the rectangular section representing the body of the Ark; the overarching top, the cherubim with their wings shielding the Ark-cover; and the two dots (the ends of the poles attached to the sides of the Ark that protrude beyond the screen) as the sole external evidence for the presence of the Ark in the Holy of Holies. According to Revel-Neher (1984), the Ark and the Ark-cover signify the eternal covenant between the nation and its God, indicating the Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*) residing in the Tabernacle and creating a concept of profound eschatological significance—redemption, hope, continuity, and eternity.

A comparable architectonic schema appears in the synagogue of Dura-Europos in Syria, which was built in the second quarter of the third century CE and destroyed along with the entire city in 256 (figure 2). On the western wall of the synagogue, the side facing Jerusalem, above the Torah niche, is an image that is almost identical to the one found on the Bar Kochba tetradrachms—a mural showing a façade of a tetrastyle temple crowned by a molded architrave. In its center are two closed doors framed by columns crowned with a semicircular pediment. To the left of the painting is a menorah together with a *lulav* and an *ethrog*—all large in scale in comparison with the Temple structure.

Related images alluding to the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem also appear in stone reliefs and in mosaic floors of many synagogues. The earliest version of a mosaic representation of Jerusalem's Ark/Temple is the one found on the southern panel of the synagogue of Severos (Stratum IIa) in Hammath Tiberias. The mosaic has been dated to the beginning of the fourth century (Dothan 1983). Its Ark/Temple's image was described as ‘an *oikos* type of shrine consisting of two slender columns surmounted by a triangular pediment or a gabled roof. The columns stand on high cubic plinths, shown in attempted perspective beside the steps leading to the Ark’ (Dothan 1983, 34–37). On either side of the Ark/Temple architectonic structure are a menorah and other ritual objects including a *lulav*, an *ethrog*, a *shofar*, and a censer.

Burial art of the fourth century also employed a similar Roman temple façade as a symbolic representation of the Temple. Such symbols appear in engravings and drawings that adorn the burial caves in Bet Shearim in Israel (figure 3) and in the Jewish catacombs in Rome (figure 4). For example, at the entrance to a burial cave in Bet Shearim (Catacomb 4, hall A, room VII) there is a relief that obviously alludes to the Temple: a chest with double doors, two pairs of columns, a lintel, a shell, and seven steps leading up to it, all within an architectonic structure. The arcosolium in the Via Torlonia catacomb in Rome presents similar motifs. Two menorahs flank an architectural representation of a temple façade.

Among the other examples of the use of the Ark/Tabernacle/Temple schema in funerary art are the ‘gold-glass bases’ that were found in the catacombs in Rome (figure 5). These circular disks, two layers of glass with an incised gold leaf between them, are considered somewhat of an enigma (Whitehouse 1996, 4–12; Rutgers 1995, 22; Dalton 1901, 204). Found inserted into the mortar that sealed the loculi (the rectangular burial niches) in the catacombs, they are thought to be part of a vessel like a bowl or a cup that belonged to the deceased buried there. Among the 500 or so gold-glass bases, mostly associated with pagans and Christians, fourteen were identified as Jewish (Schuler 1966, 48–61), and some of them display the schema of the architectonic structure of an Ark/Temple along with other motifs associated with the Temple worship.

#### THE SYMBOLIC ‘HOUSE OF GOD’ IMAGE IN CHRISTIAN ART

The discovery of the Roman catacombs with their murals and the gold-glass bases opened a window onto the burial customs of the early Christian communities (from the beginning of the second century until the first half of the fifth). Marble sarcophagi (of which many are preserved in Rome) show scenes pertaining to episodes from the Old and New Testaments. Sarcophagi such as the one from the Lateran Museum, the ‘Dogmatic’ sarcophagus from 320–330 (figure 6), the ‘Two Brothers’ sarcophagus from around 330–350 (figure 7), and others have sculptured reliefs that picture biblical scenes and miracles performed by Jesus. The ultimate miracle portrayed on all these sarcophagi shows Jesus with a wand resurrecting the dead Lazarus standing in a tomb pictured as a Roman temple façade (figure 8). This visual image, which uses a Roman sepulcher shrine to describe Lazarus’ tomb, is contrary to the textual

description found in John 11:38–44, where the tomb of Lazarus in Bethany is a cave:

Then Jesus, the anger again welling up within him, arrived at the tomb. It was a simple cave in the hillside with a slab of stone laid against it. Jesus said, ‘Remove the stone.’ The sister of the dead man, Martha, said: ‘Master, by this time there is a stench; he has been dead four days!’... They removed the stone. Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and prayed... Then he shouted ‘Lazarus come out!’ And he came out, a cadaver wrapped from head to toe and with a kerchief over his face.

The deviation from the textual detail of the story showing the tomb as a Roman temple façade and not as a cave is typical only of fourth-century Christian funerary art, such as seen in the sarcophagi or in catacomb murals. In a visual representation of the story of the Raising of Lazarus in the Rossano Gospels (fol. 1r), which is an early sixth-century Byzantine illuminated manuscript, the tomb is a cave (figure 9), the artist having depicted the story as accurately as possible in keeping with the Gospel of John. Contrary to the symbolic representation of the story in the sarcophagi, here Jesus is shown surrounded by many apostles and townspeople as he stands before the open cave. In the entrance to the cave we see the body of Lazarus wrapped like a mummy with a servant standing next to him covering his nose in a very realistic rendering of the phrase, ‘Master, by this time there is a stench; he has been dead four days!'

In a book devoted to the resurrection of Lazarus in Christian funerary monuments in Rome, Jan Stanislaw Partyka (1993) discusses the depiction of Lazarus' tomb throughout the fourth century. In his opinion the tomb/temple image is not a realistic representation, but rather a symbolic description expressing a strong anti-pagan message. The book reviews the different types of temple structures used for Lazarus' tomb in the sarcophagi and in the catacombs, noting that some of the illustrations show stairs leading up to the tomb/temple opening, whereas others do not. Most openings of the tomb/temple are rectangular as in pagan sanctuaries, and Partyka notes that in place of the pagan priest and an image of an idol in front of the temple, Jesus is standing next to the tomb pointing to the opening with his rod. Thomas Mathews (1993, 54–91, esp. 61) also deals with the motif of Christ's rod and suggests that Jesus' appearance with a wand in the scene of the Raising of Lazarus (as well as elsewhere) shows him as a magician whose actions bring about ‘affirmations of faith in Christ’s saving grace equally valid in life or in death.’

Partyka notes that Lazarus is always shown in a standing position inside the tomb/temple façade, emphasizing his resurrection and not his death. Moreover, he writes that it is possible that Jesus holding a rod in his hand as he resurrects Lazarus reflects back to Moses hitting the rock instead of speaking to it (Num 20:7–11). The examples he uses to support this idea were taken from murals in the Roman catacombs, where the juxtaposition of the three scenes—Moses leading the Israelites across the Red Sea, Moses hitting the rock with his rod, and Jesus stretching his rod out toward Lazarus—underscore the Christian emphasis on the connection between baptism and resurrection (Partyka 1993, 129).

The murals of the fourth-century Roman catacombs that Partyka refers to are all from Via Latina. Examining them further may provide insight into the special meaning of the particular image of the raising of Lazarus in Early Christian art. The scene is found in Cubiculum O, the last burial chamber added to the Via Latina catacomb, which was built in an architectural form identical to the earlier Cubiculum C, and the artist replicated the paintings of the earlier chamber. In both burial rooms the crossing of the Red Sea is found on the right (figure 10–11), while on the left is a scene of a large crowd led by a figure gesturing with his staff toward a temple on the right (figure 12–13). The only difference between the two is that the opening of the temple structure in Cubiculum O has the image of Lazarus, (see figure 13) whereas there is no image at the opening of the tomb/temple in Cubiculum C (see figure 12). The column of fire that accompanied the Israelites in the desert and Moses receiving a scroll on Mount Sinai appear above this scene in both chambers (see figure 12–13).

The iconographical meaning of these murals has been the subject of lengthy scholarly debate. William Tronzo, in opposition to other researchers (including Josi, Ferrua, Grabar, Schubert, and others) is of the opinion that the picture in Cubiculum C (see figure 12) could not be about Lazarus’ resurrection, as the Lazarus image within the architectural structure is missing, as are other details from the story (Tronzo, 1986). He claims that the artist copying the model of Cubiculum C onto Cubiculum O mistook the picture of the temple to be the raising of Lazarus and added the mummified image. Following the writings of Origen, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Ambrose, Tronzo maintains that the image of Moses crossing the Red Sea on the right (see figure 10) parallels what, in his opinion, is a depiction of Joshua, Moses’ successor, leading the Israelites to the Promised Land in the picture on the

left (see figure 12). This notion is in keeping with Christian typology, which views the crossing of the Red Sea as a kind of baptism. According to Tronzo, the artist of Cubiculum C deliberately used the Temple symbol, deeply rooted in Jewish art, as the spiritual locus of Jewish aspiration of the messianic promise, to indicate the passing of the Old Testament's leadership from Moses' mission of law to the Joshua/Jesus mission of grace.

Tronzo believes that the Cubiculum O artist failed to understand the typological and spiritual meaning of the architectonic schema of the Temple as a representation of the Promised Land and regarded it as Lazarus' tomb. He copied the painting from Cubiculum C without being able to explain the relationship between the smaller upper image of Moses, the pillar of fire, and the Torah scroll and the raising of Lazarus (Tronzo 1986, 66–67). Unlike Tronzo, Schubert is not of the opinion that the artist of Cubiculum O did not understand the connection between the scenes of Sinai and the Temple. Rather, his assumption is that the Via Latina's artists reinterpreted the biblical scenes such as the crossing of the Red Sea (in both Cubiculum C and O) to take on the Christian symbolism of baptism and that they added the Lazarus figure in Cubiculum O to emphasize the resurrection effected through baptism (Schubert 1992, 197–198).

The frequent use of the motif of the raising of Lazarus in the fourth-century sarcophagi seems to indicate that, contrary to Tronzo's view, resurrection is the principal subject of both cubicula. It is true that the tomb/temple in Cubiculum C does not explicitly show the Lazarus image, but that image is also missing in the 'Two Brothers' sarcophagus (see figure 7). It is known that the visual images on the friezes of early sarcophagi were intended as shorthand pictographs to be read rapidly and to bring to mind a multitude of meaningful stories and events from the Old and New Testaments (Kitzinger 1976, 25). The images in fourth-century sarcophagus and catacomb art were already familiar ones, easily recognized even when some of the details were missing. A picture of a man pointing toward the opening of a Roman temple façade would immediately be identified as a representation of the Lazarus story, even without the mummified figure. Thus, it is not surprising that the Cubiculum O artist understood the illustration in Cubiculum C to be that of Lazarus.

The details in the art of both cubicula point to the artists' desire to stress the end of the Jewish old covenant and the supersession of the Christian new one. In the illustration on the left of the cubicula, Jesus

is approaching the tomb/temple followed by a large crowd, which is in keeping with the New Testament story in John 11:45–46: ‘Then many of the Jews, who came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.’ The picture emphasizes the fact that the Jews themselves were impressed by the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus.

Jesus holding a rod on the sarcophagi and in the catacombs does not follow the textual description, where it is written that Jesus spoke as he resurrected Lazarus. This detail may refer to Moses, who was told to speak to the rock but defiantly struck it instead. Jesus, on the other hand, held the staff of leadership in his hand but performed his miracle by speaking to the dead Lazarus.

In our view, the visual presentation of Lazarus’ tomb as a Roman temple façade, which is not in keeping with the written text, was designed to reinforce the supremacy of Jesus over Moses, and thus of Christianity over Judaism. We must now examine the Christian significance of Bethany, the site of Lazarus’ resurrection, as a substitute for Jerusalem and its Temple.

#### FOURTH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE JEWISH TEMPLE

During the fourth century, the Church’s attitude toward Jerusalem and the Temple changed dramatically, and the earthly Jerusalem became a focus in the historical events that were shaping Christian theology. The gradually increasing centrality of Jerusalem and the Temple was apparent on several levels. Prior to the fourth century, Aelia Capitolina was a small and politically unimportant city, inhabited by veterans of the Roman army. In Christian perspective as well, the local church was small and weak. Christianity spread through the urban centers of the provinces; Caesarea was the major center in Palestine with a metropolitan episcopacy to whom the Jerusalem bishop was subordinate (Rubin 1982, 76–106). Thus, ‘in the city where Christianity burst out into the world only a weak flow remained’ (Wilkinson 1978, 176).

Moreover, the Christians viewed Aelia Capitolina as a pagan city that embodied the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy: ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down’ (Mark 13:2). The gentile Church of the second and

third centuries wanted the Jewish past to be forgotten, not leaving ‘one stone upon another’, so it did not create an alternative Christian city.

Christian pilgrims were showed the remains of the city while standing on Mount Olivet, from where they viewed the Temple Mount in ruins, and the recent Christian past, including Jesus and the apostles, was not part of their apprehension of the city (Hunt 1982, 3–5). The pagan character of Aelia Capitolina precluded the Christians from living inside the city, so they settled just outside, on either Mount Zion or Mount Olivet, which became the central religious sites. Christian Jerusalem was spiritualized as an allegory in the heavenly realm (Kühnel 1987, 73–81). Origen, for example, elaborated on the identification between the true Jerusalem and the Church: ‘What can be the city of the great king, the true Jerusalem, other than the Church constructed of living bricks, where holy priesthood offers spiritual offerings to God?’ (Origen, *Commentary on John* 13.83).

The Christianization of the city by Constantine in the fourth century—underscored by the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—resulted in a complete transformation of the city’s status. Gradually, the See of Jerusalem supplanted the See of Caesarea, and in 325 the Council of Nicaea honored Aelia Capitolina in its seventh canon (Chadwick 1960, 174). Pilgrimage grew to major proportions, radically changing the life of the city. The multicultural population that streamed in from the provinces transformed it into a metropolis with facilities to meet all of the pilgrims’ needs (Tsafrir 1999, 133–150). The physical Jerusalem became the center of Christian consciousness and grew rapidly as massive construction initiated and supervised by Constantine filled the city with churches and monasteries. By the end of the fourth century, Jerusalem was proclaimed the Mother of all Churches.

The city’s new dynamism turned it into a central Christian, Jewish, and pagan ‘battlefield’. A second-century prohibition against Jews entering the city was reinforced—through the influence of the local Church leaders—and Jews were only allowed to come to mourn its destruction on the Hebrew date of the 9th of Av (Irshai 1995, 129–178). On the other hand, Emperor Julian (361–363 CE), called the Apostate by the Christians because he restored the pagan religion, aspired to rebuild the Jewish Temple in an attempt to disprove Jesus’ prophecy ‘that not one stone upon another will be left of the Temple’ and to erase the Christian character of the renewed Jerusalem.

The Christian fear that their physical but vulnerable Jerusalem would be replaced by a Jewish Jerusalem is clearly discernible in a lecture by

Cyril of Jerusalem (*The Catechetical Lectures* 15), in which he described the signs of Jesus’ Second Coming (the *Parousia*) in his days. Cyril claimed that one of the signs of the Second Coming would be the arrival of the Antichrist, who would present himself as God and sit in His house. He would build the Jewish Temple, as a messiah, at a time when no stone in the Temple was left upon another as a result of decay or of the demolition of older structures, so that the stones could be used to build anew. Presumably, the Jerusalem Cyril knew and took pride in was built from these same stones, and from then on, Jesus’ prophecy was to be seen as being fulfilled in the construction of the new city. Thus, Cyril shifted the polemic with the Jews from the destruction of the historical Jerusalem to the eschatological near future (Irshai 1999, 204–220).

Cyril’s perception of the vitality of Jerusalem in his day bears witness to the life-giving power of Jesus’ message—that the city filled with Christian faith in the present stands in contrast to the unfaithful Jewish Jerusalem of the past. The Jews who do not believe in Jesus’ power over life are described by Cyril using the words of the prophet Jeremiah, as he says: ‘He saw your destruction, he beheld your downfall, he bewailed Jerusalem which then was. For that which now is, shall not be lamented for. For that Jerusalem crucified Christ, but that which now is worships Him ... For he correctly signifies that the grace of life shall no longer dwell in Israel, but amongst the heathen’ (*Cath.* 13.7, Cross 1951). The rebuilt Jerusalem represented the Christian grace of life.

The New Jerusalem had thus become a complete alternative to the old one, and in such a constellation the importance of a physical earthly temple resurfaced. The concept is articulated by Eusebius, who described Constantine’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre as a symbol of the New Jerusalem in contrast to Jerusalem of old:

New Jerusalem was built at the very Testimony to the Saviour, facing the famous Jerusalem of old, which after the bloody murder of the Lord had been overthrown in utter devastation, and paid the penalty of its wicked inhabitants. Opposite this then the Emperor erected the victory of the Saviour over death with rich abundant munificence, this being perhaps that fresh New Jerusalem proclaimed in prophetic oracles. (*Life of Constantine* III 33.2–3, Cameron and Hall, 1999)

Eusebius uses a binary set of contrasts: Old Jerusalem and New Jerusalem; death and life; and above all, Temple and Church (Wilken 1992, 93ff.).

### THE TEMPLE ON MOUNT OLIVET: A PRIOR ALTERNATIVE

Eusebius was the first to claim that the New Christian Jerusalem was built to replace the earlier Jewish Jerusalem, as the Church replaced the Temple. Accordingly, as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre demonstrated the victory of life over death, the Jewish Temple was vanquished by death. However, Walker (1990, 199–223) in describing Eusebius' attitude toward Jerusalem before the building of the Holy Sepulchre showed that this particular Church father earlier proposed another alternative to the Temple—Mount Olivet, which stands directly east of Jerusalem, high above it, close to and yet distinctively separate from the city below. Prior to 325, Eusebius despised Jerusalem and envisaged Mount Olivet in theological opposition to it.

In a long discussion of Zechariah's prophecy 'His feet shall stand that day on the Mount of Olivet' (Zech 14:4), Eusebius in his *Evangelical Demonstration* elaborated on the new Christian temple, symbolized by Mount Olivet, as opposed to the old Jewish sanctuary. The fruit of the olive tree is an allegory for the Church and for the souls of the believers, upon which the word of Christ stands (Eus. *Dem. Ev.* 6.18–23, 288d).

Accordingly, the verse 'But I am like a fresh olive tree in the House of God' (Ps 52:8) refers to Mount Olivet in contrast to the old, decadent earthly Jerusalem. In Eusebius' description, the mount is explicitly portrayed as a temple and a house of God, which He established after abandoning Jerusalem. The words of Ezekiel are used to support this view: 'And the glory of the God of Israel rose above them and the glory of God rose from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain opposite the city' (Ezek 11:23). Eusebius understands Ezekiel to say that the *Shekhinah* now rests on Mount Olivet.

Eusebius repeatedly contrasts the two places of worship: the old Jerusalem and Mount Olivet. His description of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the first years of the fourth century makes the same point: 'This verse is fulfilled still today, when all Christian believers from all countries come together, not like in old times because of Jerusalem's splendor and not to worship in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, but they lodge there because of Jerusalem's defeat and destruction in accordance to the prophecy, *and in order to worship on Mount Olivet against Jerusalem*, where the splendor of God departed after leaving the former city.' Mount Olivet, like Mount Zion, was established as a center of

Christian worship and pilgrimage long before Constantine conferred that status on Jerusalem.

But where exactly on Mount Olivet is this temple located? And where is the biblical reference to authenticate this claim? Eusebius, in the same paragraph, focuses on the cave in which Jesus taught the mysteries to his disciples and from which he ascended to heaven. The loci of revelation and ascension are to be considered the sites most closely identified with Eusebius’ ‘New Temple’. According to local traditions that were known to Eusebius but were contrary to the canonical texts, a cave and the peak nearby were thought to be the authentic sites. The main source for this conclusion is the apocryphal *Acts of John*, where John the apostle meets his Lord in the cave. Apart from this identification, the connection with the sites of revelation and ascension is probably the reconstruction of Eusebius himself (Walker 1990, 206–210).

Two churches were built on Mount Olivet during the fourth century to commemorate the events—the Eleona and the Church of Ascension. Indeed, the most important tradition associated with Mount Olivet is the ascension, as it was the essential Christian attribute of the mountain. Moreover, the crest of the mountain will be the site of the *Parousia*.

However, Bethany, on the eastern slope of Mount Olivet, bears the same symbolism, being specifically mentioned as the site of revelation and ascension by Luke, the only New Testament source to specify the location of both of these events: ‘Then He led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands He blessed them. While He was blessing them, He withdrew from them and was carried up into the heaven’ (Luke 24:50). In Acts, Luke states, ‘Later they returned to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet (which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away)’ (Acts 1:12). Both Lucan texts place the axis of the entire story on Jesus’ two-part journey. According to Luke (19:28–38), Jesus entered Jerusalem from Bethany glorified by all and ascended back to the heavens through Bethany, promising a second revelation (Walker 1990, 80). Only in later texts does the site of ascension climb to the mountain’s summit. Apparently, local traditions, which may have been influenced by earlier Jewish traditions, placed God’s presence, mentioned in Ezekiel, on the mount’s summit. Furthermore, more than any other place in the vicinity of Jerusalem, Mount Olivet is the most appropriate candidate for an *axis mundi*.

However, earlier sources, other than Luke, refer back to Bethany. The fact that Jesus saw Bethany as his home and preferred to sleep there and not in Jerusalem confirms that Jerusalem had been deserted. The

decision to lodge in Bethany made this village his ‘home’, as Origen reiterates in many places. According to Origen’s understanding of Ezekiel’s prophecy, the idea that God’s glory abandoned the Temple and allowed it to be destroyed is the foundation for the Bethany scene:

Afterwards He left that Jerusalem and remained outside the city. Because of that the city fell and no stone upon stone was left, but it was destroyed and totally ruined. He went to Bethany—the House of Obedience—the Church. There he stayed and rested, since He could not lay his head anywhere in Jerusalem, as long as the priests and scribes were in it. Only when he rested in Bethany, the House of Obedience; after establishing the *first Church*, in which Christ could find rest, only then he went to the city which He had left and remained outside it. (Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew* 16.26)

The abandonment of Jerusalem was understood to mean that it was no longer the place of God’s House. The place where Jesus rested became the New Temple, in Bethany.

The Gospels mention Bethany as the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, who welcomed Jesus. In Bethany, Jesus gathered many disciples, who marched with Him to Jerusalem. However, from an early stage, Bethany was identified primarily as the locus of Lazarus’ resurrection, as is manifest in Eusebius’ *Onomastikon* (n289) and in the description of the traveler from Bordeaux (*Itinerarium Burdigalense* 10), both written around 430 CE. This miracle was the reason for Jesus’ fame and was the cause of the priests plotting against him (John 11:54, 12:9–11). Hearing about the resurrection, many Jews came to Bethany to accept Jesus’ kingship and to follow him. Therefore, the name Bethany is translated by early Church Fathers as ‘the House of Obedience’, as in the paragraph from Origen quoted above. Moreover, the donkey Jesus found to ride on serves Jerome as an allegory for the people’s submission to Jesus, which took place in Bethany. ‘Bethany is a village, where today the Lazarium is found... The untamed foal was brought there, to Bethany, which is to be interpreted as the House of the Obedient. It was untamed; it was brought to Obedience so Christ could ride on him’ (Jerome, *Tractate on Mark* in: CCSL 78, 484–487).

We suggest that the resurrection of Lazarus in Bethany, which led to obedience and veneration of Jesus by Jews, expresses an early Christian concept of the Temple that was embodied in the first Church and that the first presentation of the Temple in Christian art relates to this scene.

Other Temple motifs are associated with Bethany as well. Origen claims that priestly sanctity, associated with obedience, is symbolized by the proximity of Bethany to Bethphage, which was a village inhabited exclusively by priests. He also claims that the fifteen-stadia distance from Jerusalem to Bethany symbolically corresponds to the fifteen stairs leading to the Temple court (Origen, *Fragments on the Gospel according to John*, fr. 80).

A direct link between Lazarus' resurrection and the Temple is demonstrated in several fifth- and sixth-century texts, and although they are from a later period, they shed light on the full significance of the Temple theme in the Lazarus context.

Holy Week, which precedes Easter Sunday, was inaugurated by the Jerusalem Church on Lazarus Saturday, the Saturday before Palm Sunday. As we know from Egeria's description (*Itinerarium Egeriae* 29) the dramatic annual re-enactment of Christ's last week commemorates the two events that took place in Bethany, namely the resurrection of Lazarus and Christ's subsequent return to Bethany on the eve of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem greeted by a crowd waving palm branches. In the Eastern Church, Palm Sunday is called Lazarus Sunday, linking the two components. Moreover, as we shall see, the palm branches symbolize the possibility of overcoming death. It is therefore reasonable to see this liturgy, which Egeria locates in the Lazarium, as commemorating both the entry into Jerusalem and Lazarus' resurrection (*contra Maraval*, 1982, 270).

The re-enactment of Christ in Bethany on Holy Week is mentioned in a sermon entitled 'On Lazarus and Palm Branches', attributed to Hesychius, presbyter of Jerusalem in the first half of the fifth century, who often spoke there on that occasion. M. Aubineau, editor of the text, questions this attribution, but nonetheless sees this sermon as part of the liturgy of Palm Sunday, possibly reflecting the local Jerusalem liturgy (Aubineau 1978, 724–738).

The preacher exhorts the audience to simulate the events that took place in Bethany. Thereby, the participants in the celebration bind themselves to Christ, who raises them, together with Lazarus, from the corpses of their evil deeds and welcomes them to feast together with Him in Bethany—the House of Obedience. Together they proceed to their spiritual Jerusalem, praising God and singing '*Hosanna!* Blessed be He who comes in the name of the Lord.' After elaborating on the allegorical meaning of the palm branches, the author describes the

entrance into the spiritual Temple purified by Jesus, comparing the old Temple to the new one:

Thus He will expel from us all the merchants and buyers and instead of a den of robbers He will make us, like the old Temple, into a *holy sanctuary, in which Christ shall dwell and walk*. He will give light to the blind amongst us, hearing to the deaf and walking to the lame. He will raise the dead corpses together with Lazarus—for *in the place where Life resides, there is resurrection*—so together with Lazarus and the populace and the holy angels we will cry, ‘*Hosanna!* Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ (Aubineau 1978, 776)

The symbolism used in this text fuses the two locations into one. Raising Lazarus from the dead, which is glorified profusely in the sermon, and the victory over death together embody the essence of the true Temple. The difference between the Lazarium, the new spiritual Temple, and the old Jerusalem Temple is blurred. The participants are given life through identifying with Lazarus, and the Temple is defined as the locus of resurrection. We thus see that the same binary set of contrasts mentioned by Eusebius in connection with the Church of the Resurrection is utilized in this sermon, giving the full meaning of the Lazarus story: New Jerusalem versus Old Jerusalem, life through Jesus versus death, Church versus Temple.

Another sermon of interest is a sixth-century sermon of Pseudo-Chrysostom, which should be attributed, according to Geerard, to Leontius of Byzantium, who was active in the vicinity of Jerusalem in the first half of that century (Geerard 1974, 2:582). This sermon, entitled ‘On Mary, Martha, and Lazarus’, is devoted to condemning the murderous Jewish Synagoga in contrast to the life-giving Church. Jesus’ future arrival is staged explicitly in Bethany and is revealed in the resurrection of Lazarus. Here again, the new Temple filled with God’s presence has been relocated to the new site in Bethany. Both the Jewish Synagoga and Jerusalem are tainted with murderous blood, whereas the presence of Jesus in Bethany brings peace and blessing:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing prophets and stoning the apostles sent to her. How long will you kill and not repent? [...] And what does the Gospel say? ‘Six days before Easter Christ came to Bethany.’ The Lord who came to Bethany, He himself is present there. Why, truly, the present house there is named Bethany, since Bethany is ‘the House of Peace’ (*oikos eirēnēs*), and the present house of the Lord is a house of peace. Towards this house we, the inhabitants, every day cry to the house owner ‘Glory in God above, peace on the land, and blessing among people.’ He who comes to Bethany, He himself also arrives. And he arrives not in order

not to be present, but as He is, both present and arriving. This Arrival of the Lord was foretold by the prophet (Isa 40:10). ‘Behold, the Lord God comes with might’ [...] How ‘with might’? Despoiling Hades, giving Lazarus a taste of resurrection [...] Who is mightier than He who says ‘Lazarus, come out!’ Behold, the Lord God comes with might, He comes so not to leave. (*MPG* 61.703)

Pseudo-Chrysostom declares here that the present House of the Lord in Bethany stands as an alternative to the one in Jerusalem. The Temple in Jerusalem was abandoned by the Lord, but now in Bethany it is a house of peace and of the Lord. Moreover, not only will the Lord arrive at the end of time, in the coming *Parousia*, but he is always present in His House, as He once was in the Temple.

The two texts attributed to Hesychius and Pseudo-Chrysostom were prepared years after Jerusalem and Mount Olivet were united theologically and liturgically into ‘metropolitan’ Jerusalem, as is clear from the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem (Walker 1990, 311–346). Nevertheless, the theological importance attributed to Bethany and the Lazarium may well have dated to earlier parts of the fourth century, as evident from the early liturgy. Thus, Bethany had assumed the Temple symbolism before Constantine constructed the Holy Sepulchre as the Church of the Resurrection.

The suggestion that the Temple image was utilized in Christian thought in connection with Bethany prior to the erection of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre may explain the surprising fact that it is only in the sixth century that we find ampullae with the image of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre presented as the schema of the Temple (Kühnel 1986/7, 147–168; 1987, 89). The Temple image associated with Bethany during the fourth century, as seen in the depiction of the Lazarus scene, was only gradually co-opted by Jerusalem and by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Much time passed before this image, now representing Jesus’ resurrection, was to become a proof of the Christianization of Jerusalem (Kühnel 2004, 49–66).

#### JEWISH REACTIONS TO CHRISTIAN TEMPLE REPRESENTATIONS

The theological significance of the House of God, as we discussed above, is reflected in the Christian iconography of the Temple image found in fourth-century artistic representations of Lazarus’ resurrection. We also suggest that the Christian veneration of Bethany as the House of Peace to which the presence of God moved from Jerusalem found

its Jewish iconographic response in the visual motifs on a unique fourth-century gold-glass base now at the Vatican City Museo Sacro (see figure 14). A further glimpse into some of the significant themes in the commemoration of Lazarus' resurrection and their possible Jewish counterpoints reveals a deeper iconographical meaning of this gold-glass fragment.

The events in Bethany and the liturgy that developed around them created symbols that were fused together. The House of God is the site of resurrection, and in the same locale the people glorify Jesus and cry for rebirth, waving palm branches and calling '*Hosanna*'. In this context, the palms that were used by the Jews in the first century as a sign of victory (see I Macc 13:51) and salvation to accompany Jesus into Jerusalem are loaded with the significance of victory over death (Goodenough 1953, 7:118). The close connection between the resurrection of Lazarus in Bethany and the palm symbol used in the liturgy is evident in the sermons by Pseudo-Hesychius and Pseudo-Chrysostom discussed earlier.

After proving Jesus' superiority over Moses and Elijah in his ability to overcome death in the resurrection of Lazarus, Pseudo-Chrysostom concludes his sermon with the following words:

Who is the caller [of Lazarus from the dead]? Who has domination? Who moulds crumbled soil? Who awakens the corpse as if from sleep? Who breaks iron gates? Who calls 'Lazarus, come out!'? The voice is human but the force is God's force [...] Let us accompany Lazarus, let us soon carry him up, lest the caller will arrive while he [Lazarus] is being delayed. The corpses started to shake and move. Let us suffer one thing, he says, and not ruin everything. Thus Lazarus leaped out from the bosom praising our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way we shall acknowledge the word: Let us pick up palm leaves and go out to meet the Lord, and we shall call and say '*Hosanna*, Blessed is He who comes in the Name of God.'

Similarly, Pseudo-Hesychius calls his congregation to join Lazarus: He, Christ, will raise them together with Lazarus from the corpses of their deeds. In the House of Obedience (Bethany), moving away from the prison of forgetfulness and bodily sensation, they will call '*Hosanna*' (par. 12). In another paragraph (10.4) Pseudo-Hesychius explicitly describes the palm leaves as a symbol of the spiritual. Whoever took part in these festivals surely connected the palm procession with the experience of rebirth.

The same combination of elements—eschatology, resurrection, the Temple, and the *Sukkoth* palm branch ritual (the *lulav*)—is found in the

then contemporary Jewish sources, and there it can be understood as an alternative to the Christian setting. Some scholars have noted that texts from fourth- and fifth-century Talmudic literature, such as the midrashic compilation *Leviticus Rabba*, introduce new features into the *Sukkoth* festival, unknown from earlier texts (Rubenstein 1996). In this series of homilies, dedicated to the *lulav*, the parallels to the Christian discourse and their polemical character are quite clear: in the following rabbinic text, the *lulav* represents God’s promise to rebuild the real Temple, to bring the true Messiah, and to punish Esau, alluding to Christianity:

R. Berekiah in the name of R. Levi said: For the merit of the performance of the commandment, *You shall take on the first day* [the four species], [says God], I shall reveal Myself first to you, I shall inflict punishment for you upon the ‘first’, namely, the wicked Esau [...] I shall build for you the ‘first’, namely the Temple [...] and shall bring you the ‘first’, namely, the king Messiah. (LevR 30.16, 713)

The practice of parading with the *lulav* singing *Hosanna* and praising God with the *Hallel* is also assigned eschatological importance: ‘*And you shall take on the first day*. This, said R. Abin, applies to the *Hallel*, which contains references to the days of the Messiah’ (LevR 30.5). Moreover, the final victory over the nations is proclaimed by palm branches:

The matter may be illustrated by a parable. It is like the case of two people who come to a judge, and regarding whom we do not know who has been victorious. But if one of them comes with a palm branch [called by its Greek name *baia*] in his hand we know that he is the victor. So it is with Israel and the nations of the world. The latter come and bring accusations before the Holy One, blessed be He, on New Year and we do not know which has won. But by reason of the fact that Israel go forth from the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, bearing their palm branches and their citrons in their hands we know that it is Israel who are victorious. (LevR 30.2, 694)

However, it is not only eschatological victory that is found in this fifth-century rabbinic homily, but the explicit hope for resurrection and rebirth as demonstrated in the following text:

*Let this be written for the generation to come* (Ps 102:19) applies to the present generations which are in imminent danger of death; *And a people that shall be created shall praise the Lord* applies to them because the Holy One, blessed be He, will at some future time create them afresh (*ברירה חדשה*). What then have we to do? To take the *lulav* and *ethrog* and praise the Holy One, blessed be He. (LevR 30.3, 698)

These features of the festival incorporated into the liturgy of that period support the interpretation of the Museo Sacro's fourth-century gold-glass base (see figure 14). This glass fragment was found in 1882 in the catacombs of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus in Rome and was dated to the third quarter of the fourth century. Ironically, one of the wall paintings in this same catacomb illustrates the resurrection of Lazarus, with Jesus standing and pointing his rod toward a Roman temple façade. An illustration that was made of the glass fragment shortly after its discovery reveals its unique set of symbols and its Jewish origins. Unlike other Jewish gold-glass bases (see figure 5), whose artistic motifs are implements inside the Tabernacle/Temple, this one shows the exterior architectonic structures of the three sites of the Jewish 'House of God': the wilderness Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, and King Herod's Temple. This Museo Sacro's gold-glass base was analyzed by Archer St. Clair, who summarized the different interpretations given to it by various scholars (De Rossi, Gressmann, Beyer, Lietzman, Cohn-Wiener, Sukenik, Goodenough, Kraeling, and Revel-Neher) and offered an overall interpretation that integrates its various elements (St. Clair 1985). The Roman temple façade with four pillars, a gabled roof, and steps leading up to it in the center of the plate was identified as the Hellenistic-style Temple built by King Herod in Jerusalem. The two free-standing pillars, one on each side of the Temple, represent the pillars of Yachin and Boaz of King Solomon's Temple (1 Kgs 7:21). The colonnade of pillars and curtains around its visible sides is the Pentateuchal Tabernacle's outer court. The two small semicircular booths with conical roofs and a palm tree behind each (that were most probably on both sides of the base) represent the *Sukkoth* booths. In front of the architectonic structure of the Tabernacle/Temple are two gold amphorae, a menorah, a *lulav*, and an *ethrog* (Revel-Neher 1984, 102–108).

St. Clair's conclusion is that all the implements around the central gabled tetrastyle structure depict a specific event, namely the commemoration of *Sukkoth*, the Feast of Tabernacles, and especially the ceremonies of the libations of water and wine described in the Mishnah as part of that feast (Suk 5.1–3). Among the various symbols, she explains the lit menorah at the bottom of the gold-glass base as being the 'perpetual light of the world to come', that would be ushered in by the Messiah. Thus the plate, according to St. Clair, has a clear eschatological meaning. To St. Clair's analysis we should add the following feature, which is not fully expounded on in her interpretation.

Next to the image of the House of God on the Vatican Jewish gold-glass base are the Greek words *OIKOC IPH/NH]C* (House of Peace). This term obviously refers to the Temple within the *Sukkoth* context. In the Bible, in the Talmudic literature, and in Hebrew liturgy we find no equivalent of the phrase ‘House of Peace’. St. Clair refers to Isaiah 32:18 ‘My people shall dwell in peaceful habitation (*נוֹה שָׁלוֹם*)’ to clarify the use of the phrase ‘House of Peace’, but this verse does not deal with the Temple. On the other hand, the Temple is referred to as *Sukkath Shalom*, ‘the Tabernacle of Peace’, as the homiletic development of the verse in Psalms 76:3 that ties together שְׁלָמָן שְׁלָמִים and the סוכָה: ‘In Shalem will be his *sukka* and dwelling place in Zion.’ This is liturgically developed in the last blessing in the evening *Shema*, ‘and spread over us your Tabernacle of Peace.’ In the Palestinian Talmud, R. Abun (first half of the fourth century) states that the Temple should always be the focus and direction of prayer (pBer 4.5, 8c), a point stressed with multiple variations in the *Sukkoth piyyutim* (Rubenstein 1993). In Christian exegesis of the Festival of Tabernacles, we find the word *oikos* used as a common expression for a house (Danielou 1957, 269ff.). When we consider all of these references, we can understand the Hebrew term *Sukkath Shalom* as equivalent to the House of Peace, meaning the Temple and the Tabernacle.

Thus, the eschatological elements relating to the Feast of Tabernacles found in the liturgy, the Talmudic sources, and on the gold-glass base are not the result of an accumulation of earlier Jewish symbols, as implied in St. Clair’s article. Rather, they weave together a web of meaning that corresponds to the Christian set of symbols. Palm branches, resurrection, and Temple are set side by side in the construction of the House of Peace in both religions. Under this rubric, the Jewish gold-glass base shows the elements of the Feast of Tabernacles in an affirmation that the Temple in Jerusalem was and is the locus of Jewish eschatology.

The phrase ‘House of Peace’ in the sermon of Pseudo-Chrysostom that we discussed earlier points to Bethany as the site of the *Parousia* and emphasizes that only this place, where He was resurrected, is Christ’s home (note the palm branches). By contrast, the Jewish gold-glass base, using the expression ‘House of Peace’ and the same symbols, stresses that the Temple and Jerusalem are the center of Jewish existence and hope.

The schematic Temple image continues to be a major symbolic motif in Jewish art, as seen in the mosaic floor of the synagogue of Hammath Tiberias (figure 15), the first of its kind to be followed in other synagogues later on. The centrality of the architectural structure of the Temple image, in the top panel, is a strong Jewish statement within the context of the historical and religious controversies among Jews, Christians, and pagans in this era (Kühnel 2004, 49–66).

As mentioned above, Moshe Dothan explained this Temple image as ‘an *oikos* type of shrine consisting of two slender columns surmounted by a triangular pediment or gabled roof’ (Dothan 1983, 34), a structure we also see in the Christian sarcophagi. The structure has three schematically drawn steps that lead up to the base of two closed doors. A white curtain, which hangs over the doors with its edges rolled inward and tied in a knot, transforms the image of the Temple into a synagogue ark, revealing its centrality to Jewish worship in the House of God, even after the Temple’s destruction. The other implements—the menorahs, the *lulav*, and the *ethrog* on both sides of the Temple/Ark image convey the same idea in the context of the Jewish–Christian debate. But here we find a striking new element. The Temple/Ark images in the mosaic floor are situated above a panel that displays an entire set of pagan signs—the zodiac, the image of Helios, the Sun God, and personifications of the four seasons of the year.

Jewish art historians were disturbed to see pagan symbols inside a synagogue. Clearly, the image of Helios with a whip in his left hand and a celestial globe in his right, which is raised in triumph toward the observer, seems to be in direct defiance of the Mishnaic prohibition against any kind of representations of the deified emperor and his insignia (AZ 3.1). But at the same time, the juxtaposition of the Hammath Tiberias Helios, the zodiac symbols of the twelve months, and the personifications of the four seasons suggests that the combined image is that of a calendar (Dothan 1983, 43).

A stylistic analysis of the Hammath Tiberias floor and a comparison with mosaics from Antioch indicate that it dates from the second half of the fourth century (Talgam 1988, 123–132; Weiss 2005, 184n262; Levine 2005, 22), a period of intense controversy among Jews, Christians, and pagans. We can gain a better understanding of the confluence of the artistic, Temple, pagan, and calendar motifs by contextualizing them in the Julianic period.

Julian, born and educated a Christian, became an apostate whose objection to Christianity led him to restore the pagan religion in the

Roman Empire. In his 'twenty-fifth epistle to the Jews' he proposed rebuilding the Jewish Temple and returning the Jews to their city Jerusalem (Adler 1893, II 591–651, 622–624; Weiss 2007, 75). His letter reveals a new sense of religious partnership and cooperation. The letter states: 'I may restore the Holy City of Jerusalem, and rebuild it at my own expense; even as you have for so many years desired it to be restored; and therein will I unite with you in giving praise to the Almighty.' Emperor Julian was aware of the significance of Jerusalem's destroyed Temple for the Jews and for the Christians. As Wilken argues in his book on *Chrysostom and the Jews*, Julian also respected Jewish law: 'Julian understood the inextricable link between Judaism and Christianity, but drew a different conclusion from the majority of Christians, arguing that if observance of the Law were legitimate, then Christianity was illegitimate' (Wilken 1983, 138; 148).

The mosaic floor in Hammat Tiberias seems to reflect the Jewish response to the events and to the attitudes prevalent during that period. The Temple image and all the other motifs on the floor declare that Judaism is not extinct. Its bold message is that Jewish law is robust and the continued observance of its holidays, despite the loss of the Temple in Jerusalem, is a living proof of its vitality. In order to ensure this observance, Hillel II, the leader of Palestinian Jewry during this period, further promoted the continuance of Jewish life by revealing the secret formula for the intercalation of the lunar and the solar year of the Jewish calendar, called in Hebrew *Sod Ha-Ibur*. This most important decision to release the control that was held by the court in the land of Israel and to provide Jews universally with this privileged knowledge demonstrates the vigor of Jewish law, its development and its observance.

Hence, the problematic pagan symbols appearing on the mosaic floor in the Hammath Tiberias synagogue can be seen as exposing the complexity of Jewish existence in the fourth century and the need to manifest the Jewish reaction to the historical events and theological ideas of the period. The image of the House of God so prominently displayed above the zodiac, the zodiac itself, the image of Helios in the center, and the personifications of the four seasons in the four corners give visual expression to the continued viability of Jewish observance within the pagan Hellenistic culture of the fourth century; all this, despite Christian antagonism and the loss of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Here again, the symbol of the schematic image of the Temple expresses the message that the God of Israel, the Creator of the sun and the moon who sends them on their way daily and controls the months and the

seasons and their entire workings, is the focus of the people of Israel in their daily worship and their celebrations.

In conclusion, the examples discussed here substantiate the special significance of the image of the destroyed Temple, 'the House of God', for both Christians and Jews during the fourth century. In Christian art, the Temple image served as a sign of Christianity's supersession over Judaism. It emphasized Jesus' divinity by confirming his prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and by transferring the religious significance of the Temple from Jerusalem to Bethany, as reflected by the image of Lazarus resurrected in the Temple in Bethany. In Jewish art, the schematic Temple edifice stressed the importance of preserving the memory of the Temple through the continued celebration of the Jewish holidays and observance of the Law. The Temple image alludes to God's promise of redemption, resurrection, and the rebuilding of the House of God (Kessler 2000, 64–72) and projects the conviction that even when it lost the physical structure of the Temple, Judaism did not lose its legitimacy nor its hope to rebuild the *Sukkat Shalom*—*oikos eirenes*.

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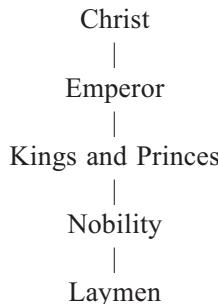
# THE KING OF THE KING OF KINGS: IMAGES OF RULERSHIP IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN CHRISTIAN ART AND SYNAGOGUE DESIGN

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Political propaganda has been an integral function of visual art from its very early stages until the present day. Since Constantine the Great bestowed imperial favor on Christianity in the Roman Empire and until modern times, Christian art celebrated Christ's supremacy over mundane government (Grabar 1968, 38–40). The Jews residing in Christian countries had to balance their obedience to the king—in accordance with the halakhic principle *dina de-malkhuta dina* ('the law of the country is binding')—with their aversion to Christ's proclaimed supreme monarchy (Shilo 1974). Consequently, the topic of the divine source of a king's rule seems to be almost absent from Jewish art in the Diaspora. However, it becomes more evident when comparing the symbols of kingship in the design of European synagogues and in Christian allegoric imagery at the waning of the Middle Ages and in the early modern period.

The election of Maximilian I of Habsburg (1459–1519) as 'King of the Romans' in 1486 gave impetus to the symbolic images of empire in German lands. The *Quaternionenadler*, with halos around its two heads and an imperial crown above (fig. 1), symbolizes the Holy Roman Empire in Heinrich van Beeck's chronicles *Agrippina* of 1469–72. The heraldic shields on the eagle's wings represent the governing bodies and social groups of the Empire, and the crucifix on the eagle's breast designates the Christian legitimacy of this state union (Kramp 2000, 599). An amplified allegory of a social order was produced in Bavaria a year later (fig. 2). Christ, whose cruciform posture echoes the spread wings of the eagle bearing the caption '*Das hailig [römisc]h Reich*', sanctifies the emperor's authority. The general composition seems to be modeled on the medieval pictorial schemes of the world as concentric circles with Christ atop (Pelletier 1989, 13, 25–28, 76). The emperor located above the figures of a king and a prince represents the king of

kings, and as such ensures harmony to the state structure.<sup>1</sup> This hierarchical order may be outlined in the following scheme:



This art reached its peak in the symbolic and allegoric depictions of governmental order produced by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1473–1531) after Maximilian I took the title of Elected Roman Emperor of the German People in 1508 without having been crowned by the Pope (Holler 2005, 186–90). The artist referred to the new relationship between imperial and papal authority in the frontispiece woodcut (fig. 3) for Johannes Stamler's play *Dyalogus de diversam gencium sectis et mundi religionibus* (Butsch 1878, 64). The book argues for the superiority of the Catholic faith over non-Christian religions (Nugent 1938, 989–97). A group of figures in the lower section introduces the characters of the play. The pope's representative, Doctor Oliverus, who sits on a throne, conducts a dispute with a historian, a scholar, an apostate, and a Jew marked with a round badge on his coat. Water sprinkling on Oliverus' head is the *fons vere sapience* ('the fount of the true faith') that flows from the throne of the *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* just above him. Instead of the crucifix, as in the two previous examples (figs 1–2), divine supervision is represented by a massive cross supporting the tent and an acronym of Christ's name at the tent's top. The sphere of the universe beneath the allegorical Church is a traditional iconographic allusion to the universality of Christianity (cf. Grabar 1968, 42).

Delivering 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Matt 16:19) to the pope, the Church confers on him spiritual care of the faithful, and by

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<sup>1</sup> A chivalric master appearing in the medallions under the emperor stretches his hands to a judge and a councilor. In the concentric circles set behind a fortress in the lower area of this picture, two knights guard a logger, a tailor, and a weaver, who sit around a ploughman.

giving a sword to the emperor it entrusts him with protection of the empire. The message of the complementary roles of *sacerdotium* and *imperium* in Christendom is reinforced by the papal motto *Ora et Cura* and the emperor's *Protege Impera*, and also by the pope's flag set on a cross with the imperial one on a lance. The flags that fly symmetrically behind the Church's throne suggest the pope's and emperor's roles in the triumph of the Christian faith. In contrast, the broken banners of the women representing Saracens, Jews, Tatars, and pagans symbolize their defeat.<sup>2</sup>

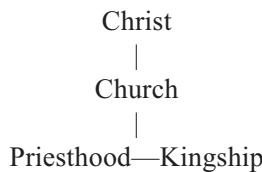
A significant feature of the depicted figures is their headwear. The tiara is on the pope's head as well as on his flag. The emperor wears the *corona clausa*, the imperial crown topped with two arches and a cross. All the figures representing religions wear open crowns, and a similar crown appears on the shields of the allegories of non-Christian religions. Judaism is marked by the *Judenhut*, a pointed hat that was used as a distinctive sign of Jews in the Holy Roman Empire (Aronstein 1948, 33–42). The hat image distinguishes the Synagogue's banner from those of the other non-Christians that bear only inscriptions, whereas *Samuel Iudeus*, with a round Jewish badge on his coat, is the only bareheaded person among the disputants. Possibly, the absence of the *Judenhut* from his head alludes to his conversion to Christianity in the final act of the play.

The pope portrayed as Julius II (1443–1513) and the emperor resembling Maximilian I are not heroes of Stamler's play. Burgkmair has appropriated the initial decoration in the book, dealing with religious encounter, for imperial societal propaganda. The same posture and identical location of the pope and the emperor convey Maximilian's claim that they both are concurrent possessors of divine rights.<sup>3</sup> The propagated order of government is thus as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> The Blind *Sinagoga* holds the banner inscribed *Machometus*, while her proper banner is in *Saracena*'s hand. It is either an artist's mistake or, as Heinz Schreckenberg assumes, the symbol of the anti-Christian conspiracy (Schreckenberg 1996, 229 fig. 15).

<sup>3</sup> Burgkmair's woodcut (fig. 3) was used only in the first edition of the *Dyalogus* (1508) in Maximilian's Augsburg, where the imperial ideology was commonly favored (see Bohm 1977). The engraving was already absent from the next edition of the book printed in the same year in Venice (Nugent 1938, 989), which then was at war with Maximilian (Hollegger 2005, 191–211). In 1511, the message of Burgkmair's picture was no longer relevant as the emperor planned to take possession of the papacy himself (*ibid.*, 212–13).



Since the 1520s, *Regnum* versus *Sacerdotium* became a major *topos* of Reformation polemics and a subject of Reformist images.<sup>4</sup> The political writings of Polish humanist Stanisław Orzechowski (1513–66) demonstrate a direct relationship of the allegorical and symbolic depictions of the ‘proper government’ to the text. The engravings were produced by an anonymous artist in accordance with the author’s instructions. The depiction of King Sigismund II Augustus (1520–72) and the Polish archbishop praying to the allegorical Church (fig. 4) in the *Rozmowa, albo Dyjalog okolo egzekucyjej polskiej korony* (‘Conversation, or a Dialog about the Government of the Polish Crown’) of 1563 resembles Burgkmair’s composition of Maximilian I and Julius II kneeling before the *Mater Ecclesia* (fig. 3). An allusion to Maximilian I would have been complimentary for the Polish king of the Jagiellonian dynasty who was allied to the imperial Habsburgs by his political pledges and close family connections. Stamler’s *Dyalogus* might have also inspired the title and genre of Orzechowski’s ‘Conversation, or a Dialog ...’ which is written in the form of a debate between the ‘Papist’ Catholic and the ‘Evangelist’, i.e. a Reformist. The non-Christians do not participate in the conversation, though the Papist mentions Jews and even cites them in Hebrew (e.g. Łoś & Kot 1919, 204).<sup>5</sup> Through the figure of his Papist, Orzechowski advocates Roman Catholicism and argues against the liberal attitude of Sigismund II Augustus towards the Reformists in Poland.

In the engraving for the ‘Conversation’ (fig. 4), the heraldic eagle bearing the initials of Sigismund Augustus adorns the figure of the Church. She wears a crown surmounted with the crucifix, holds the Eucharist chalice, and stands on the shoulders of the king and the archbishop. The three figures surround an altar on which there are a chalice

<sup>4</sup> For example, a woodcut in Lutheran preacher Andreas Osiander’s 1527 pamphlet *Eyn wunderliche Weyssagung von dem babstumb* shows the papal tiara placed above the imperial crown as a symbol of the pope’s claim for his superiority over the emperor (Hefner 1989, 629).

<sup>5</sup> Here and henceforth, I refer to Łoś & Kot’s annotated reprint of Orzechowski’s books from 1563 and 1564.

with a Host and a book opened at a depiction of the crucifix. In the volume, Orzechowski has put in the mouth of the Papist a statement that the Polish people ‘aby ni w czym *ex isto triangulo* Δ nie wykraczali’ ('should not deviate from that triangle'), actually inserting a drawing of triangle as a kind of hieroglyph in line with the letters of the printed text. The Evangelist, whom Orzechowski characterized as a somewhat simple-minded person, cannot understand such an abstract statement and wonders openly: What does this stake-like object mean? In response, the Papist explains his idea more explicitly: the apex of the triangle stands for the church altar, which symbolizes faithfulness as the uppermost virtue in Poland, and the state is established on both royal and priestly rule, just as the triangle's base rests on both its angles (Łoś & Kot 1919, 30–31).

The Papist's explanation unexpectedly ignores the title *Quincunx Polonia* visible in the banderol behind the crucifix. The definition of 'quincunx'—an arrangement comprising an object at each corner of a square and one more such object at the center—is at odds with the triangular layout of the picture. Jan Łoś reasonably supposed that Orzechowski had first completed the text of the 'Conversation' and then supplied it with the illustration (Łoś & Kot 1919, xi–xiii). Thus, while working on the program of the picture, Orzechowski began to invent a new, more complex model of the Polish state, and about a year later he expanded upon it in his *Quincunx, Tho jest wzor korony polskiéj* ('Quincunx, That is the Model of the Polish Crown'). In this book, Orzechowski, who himself appears in the text as a debater supporting the Papist, conceded that his previous explanations about the 'triangle' were not exhaustive, and added that the quincunx inherently exists within the triangle like 'fire within flint' (*ibid.*, 192–93). Orzechowski presented various combinations of the five dots lending the quincunx pattern different symbolic and philosophical meanings (*ibid.*, 187, 189–90, 212, 215). Finally, he interpreted the five dots as the angles of a pyramid built on a square base and illustrated this idea with a purely geometrical drawing of the *Pyramis ex quincunx* (fig. 5). The next full-size illustration in the book (fig. 6) translates the abstract scheme of the pyramid into the symbolic *Typus poloniæ regni / Wizerunk Królestwá Polskiégo* ('Image of the Polish Kingdom'). This image employs inscriptions in Polish and Latin, the heraldic eagle and ritual objects, but—unlike the *Quincunx Polonia* (fig. 4)—it depicts crowns and insignia instead of human figures. The royal crown, the bishop's miter, the Host, and the altar around the Polish Eagle represent, respectively, the royal and

priestly rulers, Christian faith, and worship as the fundamentals of the state. The papal tiara and keys, topped by the crucifix, are set in the apex of the pyramid to demonstrate the supremacy of the Catholic Church in the structure of the Polish Kingdom.

Orzechowski's books demonstrate a free transition of the same content from one artistic medium to another: the author conveys his political credo in theological discussions as well as in figurative compositions, in hierarchical combinations of emblems, and in abstract geometric patterns. The latter were sometimes also used as signs inserted into the printed text.

The development of political imagery in European art during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries suggests a re-examination of the symbols of government and its divine protection in synagogue art. While images of a royal crown were popular in European synagogues of the modern age, evidence for them from medieval synagogues is very scant and indirect. For instance, a crown-like cupola with three finials is set atop the ark in the paintings on folios 16v (fig. 7) and 72v of the Ashkenazi prayer book from 1395–98.<sup>6</sup> Although the artist rendered the images schematically and in conventional proportions, it looks as if he thoroughly depicted the details which, in his opinion, were significant for a credible portrayal of a cantor praying near the Torah ark in the synagogue, and even supplied each painting with an inscription of the cantor's full name in Hebrew. It is possible that the painter also supplied as reliable a depiction of the ark's crown-shaped superstructure, though no such medieval synagogue arks have survived. A crowned Holy Ark in the paintings, and perhaps in synagogues, might have been an allusion to the זר זהב (*zer zahav*), literally 'wreath of gold'. The Bible describes the wreath as a rim running along the upper perimeter of the Ark of the Covenant (Exod 25:11, 37:2), but early amoraic sages interpret the 'wreath of gold' as a royal or priestly chaplet (Yoma 72b).<sup>7</sup> The patrons of medieval synagogue arks might have learned explicitly that the *zer* is a כתר (*keter*, 'crown') from the commentaries of Rashi (Rabbi Shelomoh Yitzhaki, 1040–1105) to Exod 25:11 and Yoma 72b.

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<sup>6</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Cod. Vat. ebr. 324. A similar crown-shaped hat adorns the human head of a hybrid creature painted within a medallion on folio 139v of this manuscript.

<sup>7</sup> The wreaths woven of evergreen plants were popular symbols of triumph, dignity, and eternity in Greco-Roman culture. In his Epistles, Paul reversed the wreath as a sign of mundane glory into a sign of spiritual virtues and eternal salvation (1 Cor 9:24–25).

Since the Vulgate also translates *zer zahav* as *corona aurea*, Christian artists similarly understood the golden wreath as a crown. For example, the illuminator of the Lobbes Bible from 1084 (fig. 8) represented the wreath as a crown hovering above the Ark (Revel-Neher 1997, 60–61). A plant seen under the crown within the Ark is Aaron's rod (Num 17:25–26), whereas the Tablets of the Law that should have been kept in the Ark (Deut 10:1–2, 5) are outside—in Moses' hands. In Christian iconography, such a flourishing plant was a symbol for the Cross as *arbor vitae* (Bauerreis 1938, 12–17). Aaron's rod in fig. 8, like a medallion of Christ or a crucifix similarly emerging from an open chest in medieval depictions of the Ark of the Covenant, is perhaps a sign for an anagogic reference to the Ark of the Covenant as Christ's altar (Revel-Neher 1997, 59–66).

The antithetic perception of the golden wreath of the Ark as an indication for the Mosaic Law inside is apparent in the midrash emphasizing that the golden wreath was made to adorn the Ark of the Covenant ‘because the Torah was put there’ (*Tan Vayakhel* 7). The position of the crown atop the Torah Ark in the two miniatures from the Jewish prayer book from 1395–98 (e.g. fig. 7) clearly contrasts with the fallen crown of Judaism in the Christian images of *Ecclesia* declaring its victory over *Sinagoga* (Schreckenberg 1996, 31–63). For example, the three pointed finials of the synagogue ark's superstructure resemble the three tips of the *Sinagoga*'s lost crown in the *Liber Floridus* of Lambert of St. Omer from ca. 1100–20 (fig. 9), whereas Christ here crowns the *Ecclesia* with a circlet looking like the Ark's *corona aurea* in the Lobbes Bible (fig. 8).<sup>8</sup>

The earliest surviving representation of a crown in synagogue art is the Hebrew inscription **כתר תורה** (*keter Torah*, ‘crown of the Torah’) in the pediment of a Torah ark (fig. 10) built after 1451 in the synagogue in Nuremberg (Krautheimer 1927, 250–52). Interpretation of the crown as the biblical golden wreath can be well applied to the Gothic leafy ornament above and inside the ogee arch that is carved within the pediment of the Nuremberg ark. However, the *keter Torah* in the very popular MAbot 4.13 and in other tannaitic sources, just as the golden wreath of the Ark of the Covenant in amoraic texts, was understood as being headwear designating dignity rather than a mere ornament. This meaning was in accordance with the biblical *keter* of royalty and synonymous

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<sup>8</sup> An example of such a circlet inlaid with gems is the crown made in the 1010s or 1020s for Holy Roman Empress Kunigunde (Brunner 1977, 8–14, pls. 2–7).

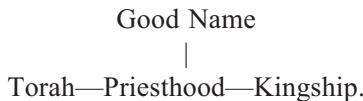
to the monarchic and priestly diadems called עטרה (*atarah*) and נזר (*nezer*) (Bar 1990, 397–417). Consequently, the discourse about the crown of the biblical Ark in midrashim (e.g. Tan *Vayakhel* 7) and in medieval rabbinical commentaries (Rashi on Exod 25:11 and on Yoma 72b) summarizes that, first, the golden wreath of the Ark of the Covenant looks like a crown, and secondly, that this crown symbolizes the crown of the Torah.

The painting of the Sinaic revelation in the late fifteenth-century Second Darmstadt Haggadah from southern Italy provides us with an emblematic depiction of the crown pertaining to the Mosaic Law (fig. 11). The illumination renders the Tablets with the first letters of the Ten Commandments in Moses' hand as a book-shaped double tablet supplied with a handle in the lower center. A figure standing at the bottom of the mount, supposedly Abraham, holds the handle of similar tablets, and another person at the head of a group of people gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai, assumedly Joshua ben Nun, bears an open book. The Tablets, in accordance with the rabbinical exegesis, stand for the entire corpus of Mosaic Law (Kogman-Appel 1999, 84–85), and the picture alludes to the statement in MAbot 1.1 that the Torah was transmitted in full from Moses to Joshua ben Nun and then to the Jewish sages of the generation after the destruction of the Second Temple. Consequently, the crown hovering over the Tablets adorns the entire Torah rather than the Decalogue alone.

The first material testimony to a crown image in synagogue art is probably the relief above the Tablets of the Law in the pediment of the Holy Ark built in 1523 for the *Scôla Catalana* in Rome (Migliau 1990, 191–205). The relief, representing a crown comprising a circlet inlaid with gems and topped by three shaped finials, is clearly visible in old photographs (fig. 12), but now is almost completely destroyed (Ascarelli et al. 2004, a photograph in the non-paginated section). The next example, dated twenty years later, is the Renaissance Torah ark from the *Scôla Grande* in Mantua (fig. 13), still in excellent condition and presently housed in the Museum of Italian Jewish Art in Jerusalem. Here a crown decorates the leafy pediment and the inscription ‘Crown of the Torah’ is carved on the crown’s circlet. The use of the motif of a single crown atop the Torah Ark or on the Tablets of the Law at the top of the Ark continued for centuries in synagogues of Italy and far beyond.

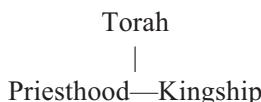
However, the rabbinical literature commonly incorporated the crown of the Torah into sets of several crowns. In the mishnaic parable starting

with the statement ‘There are three crowns’ but in fact enumerating four (Abot 4.13), the crown of the Torah symbolizing rabbinical wisdom is equal to two more crowns that distinguish the priestly and royal majesty. The most important additional ‘crown of the good name’, marking one’s ethical merits, is set above them all:



Rare examples of these four crowns in the design of Torah arks are reliefs of the ‘crown of the good name’ above a row of three lesser crowns at the top of the stone arks, one from 1623–24 and another, built in place of the former in 1704, in the Old Synagogue in Worms (Böcher 1961, 73–78, 110 no. XIIa, pls. 45–46).

The discourse in Yoma 72b transposed the values of the first three crowns of Abot 4.13 to the wreaths of the Sanctuary implements. The wreath of the altar (Exod 30:3, 37:26) is priestly and belongs to Aaron, while the wreath of the table of showbread (Exod 25:24–25, 37:11–12) designates royal dignity and is David’s. Unlike the mishnaic saying, the Talmudic text represents the Ark’s wreath of the Torah as having the uppermost value, though declaring that this wreath is available to anyone:



In later rabbinical mentions of the symbolic ornament of the ark, altar, and table in the Sanctuary, the mishnaic ‘crowns’ replaced the biblical ‘wreaths’ (e.g. ExodR 34:2; NumR 4:13, 14:10; Tan *Vayakhel* 7–8). The midrash emphasized the relation of the crown of the Torah to spiritual merits, which—in contrast to one’s priestly or royal ancestry—are universal (e.g. ExodR 34:2; NumR 4:13; EcclR 7:2), and Maimonides expounded that the crown of the Torah is available to all the people of Israel, just like the Torah itself (*Mishneh Torah: Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 3:1). It is likely that the didactic connotations of the crown of the Torah, along with its prevalence over the other two crowns and the polemical anti-Christian associations of this symbol, prompted the choice of a single crown image for the design of synagogue arks. While observing

the crown on the Torah ark, the worshippers familiar with rabbinical teachings might contemplate on the imaginary crown that is awarded to those who study the Torah and follows its prescripts.

A crown of gilded wood serving as a cupola of the cabinet for the Torah scrolls produced in 1635 and renovated in 1749 (fig. 14), from the same Mantuan *Scôla Grande* (Nahon 1970, 52–55), corroborates the assumption that synagogue arks with a crown-shaped top existed much earlier (cf. fig. 7). In the course of the renovation, the crowned ark was set within a richly elaborated architectural frame built in the form of a tripartite triumphal arch (fig. 15), which gives an additional visual expression to the glorification of the Torah. Unlike the ‘crown of the Torah’ engraved on the earlier Mantuan ark (fig. 13), the text *ציז נזרו* (*ziz nizro*, ‘a plate of his crown’) on the circlet of the great imperial *corona clausa* in the baroque Torah ark (fig. 14) adopts the biblical definition for the plate on the high priest’s diadem of pure gold (cf. *ziz nezer* in Exod 39:30). The Bible adds that the *ziz* was attached to the *nezer* to bear the words ‘holiness to the Lord’ (*ibid.*)<sup>9</sup> indicating the dedication of the Sanctuary and its service to God. It is probable that in the Mantuan ark from 1635, the *nezer* rather than the *keter* had been preferred because of the symbolic correspondence of the synagogue worship to the service in the Sanctuary. The principal implements of the Sanctuary and more details of the high priest’s vestments were depicted on the façade of the ark from Mantua in 1749. The location of the crowned ark within the ciborium-like apse decorated with a valance reinforces the parallel of the synagogue Torah shrine and the Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies in the biblical Sanctuary.

The royal crowns standing for the *zer*, *nezer*, or *keter* would have recalled the emblem of the actual monarchy, arousing questions about the status of royal authority under divine government. The Jewish point of view is apparent in the Talmudic story of the three crowns (*Yoma* 72b) that concerns the concept of secular and sacral rule, imposing divine law as the uppermost value: ‘Everybody who deserves the Torah, deserves also the Kingship and the Priesthood, as it is said, ‘Through

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<sup>9</sup> The *ziz* is represented as an oval medallion bearing the inscription ‘**קדש ל'י**’ (‘holy to the Lord’, Exod 39:30) at the upper center of the Torah Ark dated 1472 from Modena (Klagsbald 1982, 12–13 no. 1), now in the Musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme in Paris.

me kings reign and rulers decree just laws' (Prov 8:15).<sup>10</sup> PT Peah 8:21a emphasizes that any ruler's authority stems 'from the Torah', basing this statement on the same citation from Proverbs. Whereas the aspect of the Torah as divine source for temporal rulership is not evident in the crown images on Italian Torah Arks, it is apparent in the combination of the crown with this very verse of the Proverbs in the design of the first Renaissance Holy Ark in Poland (fig. 15). This stone Ark was constructed around 1558 in the synagogue established in 1553 by Israel Isserl in his private house in Kazimierz near Cracow (Żychiewicz 1953, 8–11). It was built as a Renaissance portal flanked by a pair of pilasters that support a broken entablature, with a crown relief on its recessed central section, a low wide panel containing the biblical citation, a narrower and higher panel set between volutes, and a triangular pediment (fig. 16).<sup>11</sup> Isserl, a prosperous merchant, enjoyed the protection of King Sigismund August and was familiar with the Renaissance culture of the Polish royal court (Bałaban 1931, 142–46). Isserl's consultant in the designing of the synagogue would have been his son, renowned as the Rema (acronym of Rabbi Moses Isserles, ca. 1530–72), one of the greatest Jewish scholars of that time. As the result of this unique cooperation, novel artistic devices of the Polish Renaissance were reinterpreted for Jewish symbolism and adopted into the Ark's design.

The plant with symmetrically curving branches carved in the Ark's stone pediment (fig. 16) resembles the arboreal pattern surmounting an altarpiece in Lucas Cranach the Elder's colored etching from 1518–20 (fig. 17). The vivid plant ornamentation of the altarpiece's superstructure and especially the great tree seemingly growing out of the cross depicted in the 'Lamentation' in the central panel allude to Christ's resurrection and to the cross as the Tree of Life. The Ark's sculpted pediment was purportedly produced for the Rema Synagogue by Italian sculptor Giovanni Cini who some twenty-five years earlier had carved similar vegetal reliefs (see Kalinowski 1989, 564 ill. 25) in the chapel of King Sigismund I in the Wawel Cathedral (Kozakiewicz 1984, 30, 81). The chapel's rich Renaissance arrangement (fig. 18) comprises a

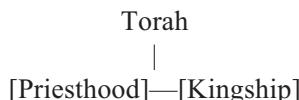
<sup>10</sup> The call 'through me' is voiced by divine wisdom (cf. Prov 8:12) that in rabbinical thought is commonly understood as being the Torah (e.g. *Sifrei Num* 119; *GenR* 9:1[31], *NumR* 12:9).

<sup>11</sup> The graphic reconstruction of the Ark in fig. 16 omits the inscription around the crown relief, the Tablets of the Law in the attic panel, and the great crown above the pediment seen in fig. 15 as all these are later additions to the original Renaissance structure.

throne and tombstones of Jagiellonian kings, royal symbols, sculptures of biblical kings and Christian saints, monumental Latin inscriptions in the friezes, and vegetal and grotesque decorative reliefs on the architectonic members and above the walls. The images and texts are part of the sophisticated symbolic program that praises Sigismund I as a descendant of the biblical kings David and Solomon, and as a ruler by divine right (Kalinowski 1989, 414–600; Białostocki 1976, 39–43; Mosakowski 2005, 9–162). The decorations convey Sigismund's political propaganda (Morka 1989, 21–33) and also evoke the ascent of the king's soul to God's celestial abode through the paradisiacal realm, where the symmetrical arboreal reliefs stand for the Tree of Life (Kalinowski 1989, 562ff.).

In the synagogue ark (fig. 16), a similar arboreal pattern, a royal crown, and a monumental inscription convey a different message. The Renaissance tree composed of a baluster-shaped trunk evokes the story of Aaron's rod (Num 17:25–26) that in the Lobbes Bible (fig. 8) and in medieval Hebrew illuminated manuscripts alike was usually depicted as a flowering stick with green stems (Revel-Neher 1997, 61–62). In Jewish art, the flowering rod is opposed to the sterile stick representing the same rod before it miraculously flourished, expressing the belief that Judaism, though historically having been oppressed, will thrive in the messianic future. The flourishing tree also evokes the Messiah, whom the Bible calls a 'righteous Plant' (Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5, 33:15; Zech 3:8, 6:12). Furthermore, the blossoming plant atop the Torah Ark alludes to the parabolic association of the Torah with the Tree of Life for those who 'grasp her' (cf. Prov 3:18). The royal crown sculpted above the niche for Torah scrolls is thus that of the Torah.

The quotation 'Through me kings reign' engraved in the panel above the crown establishes the relationship of the two connotations of the crown image: one, a symbol of Torah superiority, and the other, an emblem of temporal government. Although the two other crowns of the Sanctuary have not been depicted, the verse still suggests that the Torah is also the basis for priesthood and kingship:



The inscription is followed by a hexagram consisting of two intersecting triangles. Some twenty-five years earlier, the same pattern (fig. 19) was

set above the entrance to the Pinchas Synagogue of the Horowitz family in Prague, and even earlier, in 1512, a great hexagram appeared on the frontispiece of the prayer book (fig. 20) printed by Gershon Cohen with the support of Isaiah Ha-Levi Horowitz and four others (Yaari 1944, 124–26). The images and inscriptions on the frontispiece and the rhymed colophon on the next page suggest that the Messiah of the House of David will protect the Jews with the ‘Shield of David’ (*ibid.*). The crowned Shield of David that is drawn above another royal crown suggests that the royal dignity of the Messiah is superior to that of non-Jewish kings. The Shield of David enclosing the *Judenhut*—as if protecting the Jews—appears as an emblem of the Prague Jewish community vis-à-vis the coat-of-arms of the city of Prague on the initial page of the Book of Exodus printed by Gershon Cohen in 1518 (Wengrov 1976, 66, 92, ill. 6).<sup>12</sup>

The Shield of David had been introduced into the synagogue design in the course of the reconstruction of the Pinchas Synagogue by Aaron Meshullam Horowitz in 1535 (Volavková 1955, 61, 64). By placing the *Judenhut* within a hexagram above the entrance in the prayer hall (fig. 19), the patron obviously expressed his claims to leadership in the Prague community (Stern 1965, 131–37). Aaron Meshullam, a grandson of a co-publisher of the Prague 1512 prayer book, Isaiah Ha-Levi Horowitz, would also have been aware of the messianic connotations of David’s Shield. In the portal’s frieze, this symbol is remarkably inserted between the initial letters of the words זֶה הַשְׁעָר לִי צְדִיקִים יִבָּאֵן בָּו (‘this is the gateway to the Lord—the righteous shall enter through it’ Ps 118:20) as follows: זֶה שְׁעָר לִי צְדִיקִים יִבָּאֵן בָּו. The messianic allusions of the sign allow reading the phrase as ‘this is the gateway to the Messiah...’. Probably, Aaron Meshullam encoded in this inscription his attitude to Solomon Molcho as the coming Messiah (Heřman 1965, 32–34).

The defensive and eschatological connotations of the hexagram were legible in Jewish communities far beyond Prague. For example, the hexagram set on a tree is the printer’s mark of Tobias Foa on Hebrew books that he published in Sabbioneta since 1551 (Yaari 1944, 13 n. 21, 133). The biblical citations written around this symbol mention God as a shield for the faithful (Pss 3:4, 84:12, 119:114; Prov 2:7), suggest-

<sup>12</sup> From that time on, this combination of the two symbols was widely used as the coat-of-arms of the Jewish community in Prague in architectonic decoration and the applied arts (Putík 1993, 4–37).

ing again that this is a sign of divine protection and messianic redemption.

Israel Isserl and the Rema would have been very familiar with Hebrew books from Bohemia and Italy that were available in Kazimierz, and probably knew about the synagogue of the Horowitz family, with whom the Isserls had close ties.<sup>13</sup> Although the Rema did not believe that Molcho was the Messiah, he shared the traditional rabbinical concept that the messianic monarchy will terminate the rule of the temporal kings over Israel (see e.g. Sanh 91b). The messianic kingship will precede the supreme kingdom of God, who is commonly praised by rabbinical literature and in Jewish liturgy as the Lord and Sovereign of the Universe and the King of the Kings of Kings. Thus in his *Torat ha-Olah*, the Rema counted the Messiah as the ninth king and God as the tenth (Isserles 1570, 138v). The meaning of a hexagram as the messianic Shield of David is consistent with its assumed semantic role in the Rema Synagogue's Ark (fig. 16). If one reads the hexagram as a hieroglyph continuing the text: בְּ מַלְכֵיכֶם ☧ ('Through me kings reign ☧'), it appears to add to the biblical sentence the hint that the Messiah of the House of David will be the king who imposes the laws of the Torah on the mundane rulership.

The novel decoration of the Rema Ark (fig. 16) inspired several imitations but was never copied in full, obviously because its meaning was not communicated in written form but was expressed only through symbols and a short inscription. Similarly, the complex semantic content of the Sigismund chapel (fig. 18) was not fully understood in later Polish art (Białostocki 1976, 43–44). Orzechowski, who wanted to propagate his ideas to a wide audience (figs 4–6), had not only to accompany his symbolic pictures with inscriptions and captions, but also to explain them in detail in the text. In contrast, the non-narrative imagery on the Rema's Torah Ark did not betray the synagogue patrons' concept of the ideal kingdom based on the Mosaic Law to the Gentiles, who could then have accused the Jews of disobedience to the Christian king.

The message encrypted by the Isserls at the top of their Ark was better understood in their own community. Several Torah Arks built in

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<sup>13</sup> Aaron Meshullam Horowitz's grandson Pinchas ben Israel Horowitz was in Poland in 1556, studying in Lublin under Shalom Shakhna, the Rema's teacher and father-in-law. Later on, Pinchas married Rema's sister Miriam Beila (Friedberg 1928, 7). Pinchas, or perhaps his father, Israel ben Aaron Meshullam Horowitz (died in 1572), may have advised Isserl and the Rema when they planned to build their own private synagogue in Kazimierz.

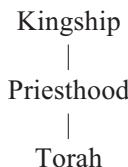
Kazimierz until the first decades of the seventeenth century repeated the combination of the verse ‘Through me kings reign’, a single crown, and a symmetrical plant relief. Shortly after the Ark in the Rema Synagogue had been completed, it was reproduced by Italian architect Matteo Gucci in the communal Old Synagogue of Kazimierz situated near by, at a distance of a few hundred meters (cf. Piechotka 1999, 50). Copying the general composition of the columned portal, Gucci unified and enhanced the style of the architectonic members and emphasized the crown image (fig. 21). Whereas a small crown of the Rema Ark is carved on the recessed section of the frieze (fig. 15), the great crown relief of the Old Synagogue Ark is located in a much more visible place in the panel above the inscription (fig. 21). However, the inscription ‘Through me kings reign’ on the newer Ark lacks the hexagram. The native Polish Jews, who confronted the claims of Jewish immigrants from Bohemia for leadership of the Old Synagogue (Bałaban 1931, 97ff.), may have omitted the image because of its association with the Prague Jewish community. The Rema’s Ark was reproduced again in the so-called High Synagogue in Kazimierz (Piechotka 1999, 120–23) more or less contemporaneously with the Ark of the Old Synagogue, and once more in the Kupah Synagogue of that same town at some point of time between 1608 and 1635 (*ibid.*, 127–28).<sup>14</sup>

The further from Kazimierz or the later in time that new Polish synagogues were built, the more selective was the influence of the Renaissance model on their Torah ark. In the early seventeenth century, a crown, the verse of Prov 8:15, and a pediment adorned by a symmetrical plant were chosen for the decoration of the Torah arks in the synagogue of Szydłów (*ibid.*, 84 ill. 66). In the same period, a crown labeled the ‘crown of the Torah’ and the verse of Prov 8:15 were depicted on the Torah ark in the synagogue in Pińczów (*ibid.*, 143). In the organization of Jewish self-government in Poland, the Jews of Szydłów and Pińczów were subjected to the Jewish community of Kazimierz near Cracow. The citation from Prov 8:15 is not found on the arks built after the mid-seventeenth century and is not present in synagogues beyond the

<sup>14</sup> In course of a later reconstruction of the High Synagogue Ark, the panel with a great crown and the pediment with an arboreal relief were transferred from their original location and built into the wall in the prayer hall. They are seen above the doors in a photograph of the synagogue interior before 1939 (Piechotka 1999, 121 ill. 108). In the Kupah Synagogue, the panel with a crown relief and inscriptions ‘Crown of the Torah’ and ‘Through me kings reign’ is still in situ, albeit having been somewhat altered during reconstructions.

Cracow region. However, the royal crown dominating the upper part of the Ark and often inscribed ‘crown of the Torah’ appeared on many other Polish synagogues until the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup>

The first example of which we are aware of a hierarchic set of crowns above East-European Arks is found in the synagogue in Zamość dating from the 1610s or 1620s. A crown in flattened stucco relief, located on the vault close to the top of the Ark, is purportedly a crown of the Torah. An ornamental stucco moulding that rises on the vault from the crown’s middle finial passes between a pair of jugs, a symbol of the Levites, and then splits into two bands that form a medallion enclosing another, more elaborated crown (see Piechotka 1999, 161 ill. 184). The crown prevailing over the crown of the Torah foreran a much more widespread and longer-used motif of three crowns that was developed in East European synagogues in the early eighteenth century. These crowns were set above each other in a new sequence:



The supreme crown designates God’s kingdom rather than the rule of the King Messiah of the House of David and alludes to the emanation of divine presence into the world (Yaniv 2003, 67–87). The ‘crown of the Torah’ at the lowermost position signifies the scrolls of the Torah in the synagogue Ark as a material record of Divine Law. After the original sixteenth-century meaning of the crown image had been forgotten, the concept of hierarchic crowns superseded the motif of the single ‘crown of the Torah’ in the Rema Ark’s decoration. In due course, a great ‘crown of the kingship’ was set above the Ark’s pediment (fig. 15), a decorative wooden panel concealed the original letters engraved on the low stone frame above the entablature, and round-headed Tablets of the Law topped by another great crown were attached to this panel.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., the crown and this inscription together adorn the synagogue arks in Lvov (the Nachmanowicz Synagogue, built 1582; the Institute for Theory and History of Architecture in Kiev, neg. no. I-10218); Lutzk (1629; Piechotka 1999, 191 ill. 233); Pinsk (1640; ibid., 89 ill. 73); Tykocin (1642; ibid., 213 ill. 270); the single crown image is on the arks in Chęciny (1638 or 1668; ibid., 145–148) and Slonim (1642; ibid., 198–203). The three latter arks are still in situ.

The old small crown carved in the frieze, that now became the third and lowermost one, was barely visible behind valances.<sup>16</sup>

Such neglect of the crown by which ‘kings will rule’ corroborates our proposition that the original meaning of this image went beyond its plain association with the biblical ‘golden wreath’ and depended on the semantic conventions that once were legible, but vanished in the course of time. The crowning of the Torah in the design of the synagogue Ark symbolically returns to Judaism the crown which has been lost by the Blind Synagogue in Christian art, just as the pointed hat that marks the humiliated Jews in medieval Christian iconography becomes the symbol of Jews who are to be protected by the Messiah in sixteenth-century Jewish art. It was the art in Maximilian Habsburg’s Empire and in late Jagiellonian Poland that was concerned with the hierarchic concept of government and the secular and sacral aspects of temporal rule, and also used headwear as emblems of social status. The Jews reread the symbols of rulership in the terms of rabbinical sources that deal with the same topics. In the sixteenth century, both Jewish and Christian symbols of rulership stipulate the dependence of mundane kingship on divine grace. Unlike the Christian images that aimed to confirm the existing governmental order or to express immediate political claims, the Jewish model of an ideal rulership created a vision of the messianic future. As opposed to Christian images of the *imperium* and *sacerdotium* blessed by the Church, in the Jewish perception the authority of the Torah was the true source of legitimacy for the rule of kings, princes, nobles, and ‘all the judges of the earth’ (Prov 8:15–16). To express this idea, only the crown of God’s Law, in some cases inscribed as the ‘crown of the Torah’, was represented in Torah Ark decoration. The legitimization of government by Mosaic Law controverts the Christian view of a king reigning by virtue of Christ’s identity with the Celestial Ruler. Although the sixteenth-century ‘crown of the Torah’ only implicitly relates to God as the supreme King (cf. Bar-Ilan 1997, 221–26), it heralds overt expression of this concept by displaying the hierarchic outlay of three crowns on synagogue Arks.

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<sup>16</sup> The crown atop the Tablets of the Law, the wooden panel hiding the Hebrew inscription, and wide valances seen in an old photograph (Bałaban 1935, pl. 16) have been lost. Currently, the Tablets of the Law have been transferred up to the greater stone frame and new narrower valances have been hung at the top of the *parokhet*, the curtain veiling the doors of the Torah scrolls’ compartment (fig. 15).

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THE SUN RAYS ON TOP OF THE TORAH ARK:  
A DIALOGUE WITH THE AUREOLE, THE CHRISTIAN  
SYMBOL OF THE DIVINITY ON TOP OF THE  
ALTARPIECE\*

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In 1837, when the *Hatam Sofer* (Moshe Sofer, Frankfurt-am-Main 1762—Presburg 1839) was asked whether the depiction of sun rays upon a window in a synagogue is in accordance with the *halakhah* (Jewish religious law), he could not foresee how relevant that matter would be a few decades later. His reply to that question in his *Teshuvot* [Responsa] (Part II, *Yoreh De'ah*, §129), mentions a ‘synagogue in which they had made, within a glassed window, an image of the orb of the sun with rays of light radiating outwards like the rising sun, inside of which was written the Divine Name, and adjacent to it the verse, “From east to west the name of the Lord is praised” ’ (Ps 113:3).

That anonymous synagogue was probably among the earliest European synagogues to present a Jewish representation of the divinity based upon the aureole, the visual image of the divinity. From the mid-nineteenth century on, sun rays on top of the Torah ark became a well-known motif in European synagogues. It is composed of sun rays arranged as a semicircle or as a complete circle shining upwards with the name of God in its center, as seen in the Dohány Synagogue in Budapest, designed by Ludwig Förster and consecrated in 1859 (fig. 1),<sup>1</sup> or in the Great Synagogue of Timișoara, Romania, designed by Lipot Baumhorn and consecrated in 1899 (Gruber 1999, 16). In the Dohány Synagogue the sun form is repeated above the Torah ark in a round window, through which the actual sun rays penetrate the prayer hall. An additional reference to the sun appears on top of the upper arch, in the inscription ‘From east to west the name of the Lord is

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\* I would like to thank my colleagues Dr. Sergey R. Kravtsov, Dr. Ilia Rodov and Aviva Levine for their useful comments on this article. Except for the common English spelling for Cracow, the eastern European geographic names are given in their contemporary form.

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of this synagogue, see Klein 2007.

praised'. The literal Hebrew translation of this verse is 'From where the sun rises to where it sets...'. Sun rays became the dominant motif in the design of the monumental synagogues that were built all over Europe in celebration of the emancipation granted to the Jews around the end of the nineteenth century.

But when the *Hatam Sofer* was asked about the depiction of sun rays on a synagogue window, this was a new feature in synagogue design and suspect of idolatry. No doubt, even at first glance these sun rays remind us of the aureole, the Christian symbol of the divinity on the top of the altarpiece, as seen on a side altarpiece in the Bernardine Church in Cracow, where, together with a wreath of clouds, it encircles the symbol of the Trinity in the shape of an eye within a triangle (fig. 2).

This resemblance of the sun rays on top of the Torah ark to the Christian aureole on top of the altarpiece is only one component of the similarity between synagogue architecture of the late nineteenth century and church architecture and design. Most architectonic components were taken for granted by art historians, since the synagogues under discussion were designed by non-Jewish architects<sup>2</sup> and were built as the result of the ongoing tendency for Jewish integration into Christian European society.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the resemblance of any synagogue architecture to local architecture is a well-known phenomenon throughout the Jewish diaspora, and thus need not be discussed here. Our concern is with the sun rays motif upon the eastern wall, namely on top of or above Holy Arks which were designed and built by Jewish craftsmen, wood-carvers, and carpenters. Moreover, most instances of the motif discussed here were, to our surprise, also expressing concepts similar to those of the Christian visual symbol for the Divinity.

The first stages of this research made it clear that the earliest depiction of the sun rays motif was in eastern European synagogues of the eighteenth century. Most of these synagogues no longer exist; therefore our research is based on archival material, mainly photographs taken in the course of the early twentieth century. These black-and-white photographs were taken, systematically or randomly, mainly by architects

<sup>2</sup> Since the Middle Ages Jews were dependent on non-Jewish architects in synagogue planning, as they were not allowed to join the guild of architects.

<sup>3</sup> About these synagogues and the activity of non-Jewish architects in the flourishing wave of synagogue construction in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Wischnitzer 1964, 171–230; Jarrassé 2001, 145–203; and others.

who took an interest in synagogue architecture but were not always aware of the importance of the eastern wall or the Torah ark. Even when they were, their work has not always survived. For that reason, our discussion is sometimes based on fragmentary data. The aim of this article is to reveal the process of the dialog on this matter between the synagogue and the church, to discover its early manifestations, and to understand how such a Christian form was considered acceptable in the synagogues by the halakhic authorities.

#### LITERARY REFERENCES AND ARTISTIC DEPICTION IN THE ANCIENT PERIOD

The earliest reference to the sun as a deity, though it is not mentioned there by name, appears in the second commandment: ‘You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image or any likeness of what is in the heavens above...’ (Exod 20:4). Concrete references to the sun appear when the Children of Israel are warned against worshipping celestial deities: ‘And when you look up to the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them...’ (Deut 4:19). No doubt, the negative attitude of the Jewish scriptures to the sun reflects the ancient struggle of the new monotheistic religion against the pagan world, for which the sun god was one of the popular deities.<sup>4</sup> The biblical sources witness that this struggle was not easy and mention worship of the sun among the sins of the Children of Israel. Such criticism is mentioned concerning the Israelite kings (2 Kgs 17:16, 21:3, 5, 23:4, 5; 2 Chr 33:3, 5) and in the words of the prophets (Jer 8:2, 19:13; Zeph 1:5). Accordingly, in the Talmudic sources dealing with the prohibition of idolatry, the sun is mentioned among the images that it was forbidden to depict (AZ 42b, RH 24b).

The well-known depictions of the zodiac in the floor mosaics of ancient synagogues prove that these prohibitions were not observed precisely. It is also well known that the sun or its representative in the central medallion of the zodiac—as can be seen in Hammat Tiberias in the form of *Sol invictus*, with a halo and sun rays; in the Bet Alpha synagogue floor, as Helios, with a radiated solar crown; and in Sep-

<sup>4</sup> Aten, sun god in ancient Egypt (Shaw & Nicholson 1995, 44) and Shamash, sun god in Babylon (Bienkowski & Millard 2000, 263–264).

phoris as the sun itself, as if riding in a chariot—were depicted under the influence of Greco-Roman art (Friedman 2005, 51–54, esp. nn. 1, 9, 12, 13). The explanation given by most scholars is that Helios was legitimized as part of the zodiac in its function as an agricultural calendar (Weiss 2005, 138–141; Weiss 2007, 13). According to another explanation, the Jews identified the riding figure with the *Cosmocrator*, that is to say with God's absolute rule over the universe (Weiss 2005, 231–235). This explanation is very convincing in light of the biblical verses referring to God as creator and absolute ruler of the universe, including the sun (Jer 31: 34; Ps 74:16, 104:19; Neh 9:6; 2 Chr 18:18). Moreover, in the verse ‘For the Lord God is sun and shield’ (Ps 84:12), the sun appears to be a metaphor for God.

#### RABBINICAL ATTITUDE TO THE DEPICTION OF THE SUN IN EUROPEAN SYNAGOGUES

Our knowledge about synagogue interior design during the Middle Ages allows us to assume that the sun was not depicted in synagogues in any manner during this period. Although the prohibition of such depiction is mentioned by Maimonides (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 3:11), and Jacob ben Asher (*Tur, Yoreh De'ah*, 141), followed by Rabbi Joseph Caro in the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Yoreh De'ah* 141, 3–4) and R. Moses Isserles (loc. cit.), they did not refer to a depiction in a synagogue, probably since such depictions did not exist. In the seventeenth century, R. Shabbetai ben Meir ha-Kohen (1621–1662), author of one of the major commentaries on the *Shulhan Arukh*, the *Siftei Kohen* or *Shakh*, refers to the *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah* 141:3 and concludes that the *halakhah* specifically relates only to those images made to represent the sun or moon, but not to an image of the bright disc of the sun itself or one of the crescent moon, ‘because it is not their custom [i.e. that of the idolaters] to worship them’ (*Shakh, Yoreh De'ah* 141:8). From these words we might understand that depiction of the sun in the synagogue will not contradict his objection, but as he continues with his gloss, he goes on to state that all this only relates to the question of which objects, made by non-Jews, fall under the strict prohibitions against deriving any material benefit whatsoever from objects of pagan worship. It is nevertheless forbidden to make or keep any images of the sun or moon, whether these are actual representations of the orb of the sun or the crescent of the moon. This opinion of R. Shabbetai ben Meir

ha-Kohen is most relevant for our discussion since he lived most of his life in Lithuania and was one of the most important halakhic authorities of eastern European Jewry—the main focus area of this discussion. In sum, we find that most, if not all, contemporary halakhic authorities did not approve of such representations of the sun or moon in synagogue art. If so, how did the sun rays motif enter the synagogue? Moreover, how did it get to the top of the Torah ark—the sacred object that attracts the attention of the worshippers in the synagogue?

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This Jewish phenomenon developed gradually in the course of the local historical events of the religious confrontations—Reformation and Counter Reformation—of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Additional wars that the Polish–Lithuanian kingdom faced since the mid-seventeenth century were the Cossack uprising led by Chmielnicki, the Muscovites' attacks, and the Swedish invasion, followed by severe epidemics. These wars emptied the small towns and weakened the bigger ones. The same wars, but mainly the persecutions the Jews suffered at the hands of Chmielnicki, were severely disastrous for the Jewish communities. When peace returned after 1670, the Polish–Lithuanian economic infrastructure was in ruins. As a result, and as part of its rehabilitation process, members of the nobility established new towns on their lands, thus creating new opportunities for Jews.

The Jews, whose economic activity was legally restricted to being peddlers, merchants, craftsmen, or agents for various services and goods, were just the persons the nobleman needed to resettle his town and stimulate its economy. At this point the interest of the small towns' owners coincided with the interest of the Jews, who sought a safe place to live in the nearby countryside. This common interest resulted in various economic, administrative, and jurisdictional privileges granted by the king and noblemen to the Jews in order to attract them to settle in their towns. The Jews took advantage of the new opportunities and settled in those towns, establishing new communities (Hundert 1992, 46–68; Rosman 1990, 36–105). While most Christians continued to earn their livelihood in agriculture in the villages around the towns, the Jews conducted open market days for the local and rural neighboring population. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Jews accounted for more than forty percent of the towns' population. In those

circumstances they became a strong and dominant minority and felt no fear in their relations with their Christian neighbors (Galas 2004, 42, 43; Teller 2004, 29–35). Such self-confidence was expressed in the employment of Christian architects and craftsmen in the planning and building of new synagogues.<sup>5</sup>

These were the circumstances which led to the building of many new synagogues during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries all over the Polish–Lithuanian territories. Those synagogues, whether built of stone and brick or of wood, were high-roofed buildings, which encouraged the design of high and tiered Torah arks. The artists who crafted these arks, whose professional name was *Schnitzer*<sup>6</sup> ('carver' in German), were Jewish woodcarvers who worked mostly for Jewish customers. But they were certainly aware of professional matters like technical means and pattern books, fashionable compositions, and the decorative patterns and contemporary style common in local Christian architecture and furniture.

When a Jewish artisan was commissioned to create a new Torah ark in the eighteenth century, he was already acquainted with the existing Torah arks built until that time in Renaissance style in the synagogues of Kazimierz near Cracow, and in those of Pińczów, Szydłów, and Lutsk (Łuck) (Piechotkowie 1999, 82–84, figs. 60–67; Rodov in this collection of articles). The common features of these Torah arks are the architeconic gate shape and the crown, symbolizing the crown of Torah, depicted on the upper part of the Torah Ark (fig. 16, 21 in the article by Ilia Rodov). The height of those Torah arks, built in the sixteenth century, is considerably modest when compared to the height of the building. But then, during the eighteenth century fashion and style were already changing all over Catholic Europe, and sacral architecture was baroque in style and intended to leave an impression of splendor in accordance with the Catholic doctrine of the Council of Trent. This doctrine, a step in the Counter-Reformation, dealt with the function of art in the Roman Catholic Church and was confirmed in the Council of

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<sup>5</sup> The synagogue of Druya (Druja), Belarus, for example was probably planned by the Venetian architect Antonio Paracco who was active in the Polish territory since ca.1750 (Lorentz 1932, 23; Piechotka 1999, 350). In Druya, Paracco built the Catholic church and the Dominican cloister in the years 1763–75 (Thieme & Becker 1932, 224).

<sup>6</sup> This professional name—originating in German—that became a surname appears in documents in various forms spellings: Chnizer, Schnytzer, Shnitzer, Shnizer, Schnitzler, Shnitzler, Sznicer, or Sznicerman (Guggenheim 1992, 675; Beider 1996, 417; Beider 2004, 485; Mahler 1958, 128). The Polish term for this profession is *snycerz*.

Trent in 1563 by Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, later to become the Archbishop of Milan (Murray 1998, 60, 61, 542). The decrees published by that council inspired the extraordinary opulence of the interior design of Catholic churches throughout Europe. In eastern Europe these decrees were implemented in churches returned to Catholic hands as well as in new ones (Gumiński 1997, 15, 16; Jakubowska 1965, 157–190; Kurzątkowski 1963, 129, 130).

#### TORAH ARKS—DESIGN AND INFLUENCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

This tendency resulted in the design of tremendous high altarpieces, many of which were tiered and winged, in towns<sup>7</sup> as well as in the rural churches, of which the high altarpiece of the seventeenth-century Trinity Church in Nowe Miasto, near Płońsk, is a good example (fig. 3). Such high altarpieces were fashionable in the seventeenth century (Kalinowski 1986, 44), just in time for the period in which construction of Torah arks flourished in the new synagogues spread throughout eastern European territories. No doubt the Jewish artisans were inspired by those tiered altarpieces, as is demonstrated by many Torah arks. One of them is the Torah ark from the synagogue of Grodno (Horodnia), today in Belarus, dating from the mid-eighteenth century (fig. 4). But in spite of the resemblance of the Torah ark, with its four tiers and the side wings, to the Christian altarpiece, the Jewish nature of the ark is immediately clarified: there is no human image, the decoration patterns are floral, and Jewish symbols are depicted along the central axis of the ark.

This resemblance raises the question whether there is any connection of such Torah arks to the earlier modest arks, mentioned above, or are they new in concept and iconography? The answer to this question is also given at first glance; the architectonic gate shape was not only preserved but even tripled, and the main motif of the Torah, which is symbolized by the crown, was now visualized by a crown set above the two Tablets of the Law as in the Valkininkai (Olkieniki) synagogue (Lithuania) of the second half of the eighteenth century, here photographed from below (fig. 5). In other Torah arks, the crown of Torah is flanked by two lions, eagles, or griffins representing the two cherubim

<sup>7</sup> See the Carmelite church in Cracow of the years 1659–1679 (Miłobędzki 1980 [2], fig. 217).

above the Tabernacle, and thus relating to another motif—the Torah ark as a substitute for the Ark of the Covenant (Piechotka 2004, figs. 152, 157, 159).

But the most interesting connection between earlier and new Torah arks is the development of the single crown of Torah motif into a tripled crown motif, one above the other, based on the well-known saying of R. Simeon: ‘There are three crowns, the crown of the Law, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of kingship ...’ (*Mishna Avot* 4:13). In accordance with this saying, three carved crowns, identified by their names, were presented along the central axis of the ark: the crown of Torah above the first tier, as already mentioned, the crown of Priesthood on the second tier, usually above two carved hands in a gesture of the priestly blessing, and the crown of Kingship on top of the Torah ark. On the Grodno Torah ark, the crown of Kingship is raised by two lions flanking a cartouche with the name of God inscribed on it (fig. 4).

This composition expresses a new iconography in Jewish art. Although the phrase ‘God, King of the Universe’ is recited daily by Jews, it was not expressed in any visual manner until then. It seems that the vertical composition which started with the traditional place of the image of the crown of Torah on the first tier, and the literary order of the crowns—Torah, Priesthood, Kingship—could only result with the crown of Kingship being on top of the ark. But since the crown of Kingship was placed above the two other crowns—Torah and Priesthood—it could not present its original literary meaning as the human kingship of the House of David. Thus, it turned into a presentation of the Heavenly kingdom—God’s Kingship (Yaniv 2003). This new iconography was reinforced by the verse ‘שָׁוִיתִי הַלְּנֶגֶד תְּמִיד’—‘I am ever mindful of the Lord’s presence’ (Ps 16:8)—a popular phrase displayed elsewhere in the synagogue, mainly in front of the reader’s desk. The Torah ark of Valkininkai presents a more complex version of that idea (fig. 5). Here the crown of Kingship is set above a double-headed eagle, a well-known European symbol of sovereignty which entered Jewish iconography as well (Khaimovich 2000, 132–138; Rodov 2004, 77–129). This visual metaphor of God is based on the literary metaphor ‘Like an eagle who rouses his nestlings, gliding down to his young, so did He spread His wings and take him, bear him along on His pinions’ (Deut 32:11). To ensure that the eagle is a metaphor for God, the Valkininkai artist inscribed on its body the verse ‘I am ever mindful of the Lord’s presence’, omitting the letter *he*, standing for the Lord, next to the round opening.

### THE LORD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, AND THE CREATION OF LIGHT

During the nineteenth century, the eagle became a dominant metaphor for the Lord, King of the universe, on top of eastern European Torah arks. Moreover, His name was now liberally inscribed in full by the letters *yod, he, vav, he* on the eagle's body, as demonstrated in the Torah ark of the synagogue of Šaukėnai (Szawkiany), Lithuania, of 1886 (fig. 6). In both examples of the eagles, there is an additional meaning which reinforces the cosmic Kingship of the Lord: the insignia held by the eagle, the ram's horn (*shofar*) and palm frond (*lulav*) in the Valkininkai Torah ark (fig. 5), and the citron (*etrog*) and palm frond in the Šaukėnai Torah ark (fig. 6). All three allude to the coming of the Jewish Messiah, the time when God will rule the universe according to Zechariah's prophesy (Zech 14:16).

This iconography correlated with the concept of the Torah ark as God's Throne, since the Torah ark in the synagogue is the substitute for the Ark of the Covenant. This concept is based on the idea that the synagogue is a 'little sanctuary' (Ezek 11:16), that is to say, a substitute for the destroyed Temple. These ideas are embedded in Jewish literature and are expressed in prayer and in the synagogue's atmosphere. In eastern European synagogues, it is also expressed in their design, and above all, these ideas led to the development of the sun rays motif, the topic of this article.

Jeremiah's words: 'O Throne of Glory exalted from of old, our Sacred Shrine' (Jer 17:12) for the first time linked God's throne with the Temple. This verse is the basis for identification of the Torah ark in the synagogue with God's Throne as demonstrated in the eastern wall of the synagogue of Třebíč, south Moravia, painted in the year 1707. A photograph taken after a recent preservation project shows the eastern wall, or more exactly, its remnants, including the covered niche of the missing Torah ark (fig. 7). The verse from Jeremiah, inscribed around the window: **בָּסָא כִּבְוד מֶרְאשׁוֹן מָקוֹם מַקְדֵּשָׁנוּ** clearly indicates the idea of the Torah ark as God's Throne. This verse became the basis for literary references, such as in Midrash Rabbah:

From whence were created the luminaries? ... 'wrapped in a robe of light' [Ps 104:2] ... The luminaries were created from the place of the Temple, as is written, 'And there, coming from the east ... was the Presence of the God of Israel' [Ezek 43:2], and Glory refers to the Temple, as is written, 'O Throne of Glory exalted from of old, our Sacred Shrine' [Jer 17:12] (GenR 3.4).

This exegetical text of the fourth to early fifth century CE from the Land of Israel reveals an additional early link—between the Temple and the creation of light, ‘the luminaries’. The creation of light, attributed to God, became part of the daily and festival Jewish prayer, recited in the morning service as the first blessing before *Shema*:

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates everything. (...) The God who daily opens the gates of the east, and breaks open the windows of the firmament; who brings the sun forth from its place and the moon from its dwelling place, illuminating the entire world and all its inhabitants, whom He has created with the attribute of compassion. He gives light to the earth and to those who dwell upon it with mercy.

This section of the prayer continues with a *piyyut*, an alphabetically arranged liturgical poem known as *El Adon*, a prayer of the Saturday and festive Morning Service:

He called to the sun, and its light shone ... Praise is rendered to Him by all the heavenly hosts, glory and grandeur by the seraphim and ophanim and the holy creatures (morning service for Shabbat).

The weekday and festival prayer repeats the main concept of God ruling the universe and links His honor with light around Him:

Blessed God of great knowledge, who prepares and made the radiance of the sun, The Good One created honor for His name, He placed luminaries around His Power...

These texts were supported by another concept of the synagogue, also based on its being a ‘little sanctuary’—the concept of ‘The Gateway to Heaven’. The first to identify a sacred site with the Gate to Heaven was Jacob who, when awakening of his dream, said: ‘This is none other than the abode of God and that is the gateway to heaven’ (Gen 28:17).<sup>8</sup> Other biblical verses, mainly from Psalms, served to express this idea in many synagogues, as seen in the barrel ceiling of the synagogue of Horb, south Germany, painted in 1734/5 by the artist Eliezer Susman from Brody, Ukraine (fig. 8).<sup>9</sup> In this case Susman expressed identification of the ceiling with Heaven by painting the central medallion in the shape

<sup>8</sup> This verse is the most popular inscription on Torah arks, as in the Włodawa Torah ark (fig. 16), and above synagogue portals. An interesting manifestation of this idea appears in the early eighteenth century on the ceiling of the Casale Monferrato synagogue, Italy (Dorfman 2000, 26).

<sup>9</sup> About Susman, the artist from Brody who settled in south Germany, and his artistic work, see Piechotka 2004, 138–143.

of the sun, composed of small yellow and orange flame-like units, encircling the inscription ‘The heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth He gave over to man’ (Ps 115:16). By choosing the sun form for the central medallion, Susman followed the eastern European tradition of painting God’s visual metaphor in the center of the ceiling. In most cases this metaphor takes the shape of a double-headed eagle, based on the verse from Deuteronomy 32:11, mentioned above, as demonstrated in the synagogues of Khodoriv (Chodorów), Ukraine (fig. 9) and Zabłudów, Poland (Piechotka 2004, fig 204). But in the Horb ceiling, the metaphor is based on the verse ‘For the Lord God is sun and shield’ (Ps 84:12) and thus takes the shape of the sun. Returning to the Khodoriv medallion, one can discern in its outer circle the flame-like units, probably painted in yellow and orange colors. Thus the meaning of this ceiling painting is a metaphor which presents the universal cosmic order, that is, God ruling heaven by the sun and stars, for which the zodiac signs stand. Unlike the stylized sun in the Khodoriv ceiling, there is the naïve style drawing of the sun of the Kórnik synagogue, in Poland (Piechotka 2004, fig. 403).

#### THE SUN AS METAPHOR OF GOD ON SYNAGOGUE CEILINGS AND TORAH ARKS

It seems that the ceilings were painted in only a few of the brick and stone synagogues of eastern Europe, thus the sun as metaphor of God was demonstrated only in wooden synagogues, which are known to us solely from photographs. Among these photographs, not many provide a clear view of the ceiling’s center; thus we have rare examples of the sun depicted on the center of the ceiling. But if we follow the path of the influence of the eastern European tradition towards Moravia, we can find synagogues still in existence with celestial features depicted on their ceiling. One of these is in Holešov, south Moravia, where the center of the ceiling was decorated during its 1737 renovations (fig. 10).<sup>10</sup> Here an oblong field contains a depiction of a square body send-

<sup>10</sup> The synagogue of Holešov was built in 1560 and renovated and enlarged several times, in 1615 and 1737. Its *Beit Midrash*, on the third floor, was built in 1756. Among the panels laid over the beams in the *Beit Midrash*, we discern two on which a sun is painted. On another panel, the hand of God is protruding from inside the clouds (author’s photographs, not yet published). A sun in the center of the ceiling also appears in the synagogue of Třebíč, south Moravia.

ing out red flame-like units separated by golden stars. This shape, surrounded by a circle of inverted flame-like units, is the visual metaphor for the cosmic ruler, and thus it is surrounded by its subjects, the main celestial bodies: sun, moon, and stars.

In sum, since the ceiling of the synagogue was considered a metaphor for Heaven, the depiction of the sun alone, or accompanied by the moon and stars, was acceptable, as evidenced in the synagogues of Moravia and Poland. In such an atmosphere, the depiction of the sun above the Torah ark was only a question of circumstances. To our surprise, these circumstances were created under the influence of church design.

As mentioned above, the religious struggles between Reformation and Counter-Reformation powers resulted in the triumph of the Catholics and the return of Protestant and other non-Catholic churches to Catholic hands. Thus, architecture became a means of a victorious proclamation according to the doctrine of the Council of Trent. Old churches were expanded, new ones were built, and many baroque styled altarpieces were designed (Miłobędzki 1980 [1], 27, 106, 108). Many of these altarpieces were designed along the lines of the momentous development in European church architecture motivated by the influence of the Throne of St. Peter, sculptured by Gian Lorenzo Bernini for the choir of St. Peter's in Rome during the years 1657–66. The focus of this ‘glory’ is a burst of heavenly light through a window of stained glass that propels a mass of clouds and angels before the eyes of the viewer (fig. 11). The metal lines of the window represent the sun’s rays, and the Holy Ghost, in the shape of a dove, hovers in its center. This magnificent work of art became the prototype of the baroque ‘glories’ that are found in many European churches. One of them, the high altarpiece in the Cathedral of St. Francisk Ksavery in Grodno (Horodnia), Belarus (1737) is very modest in comparison with Bernini’s work, but it includes its main components: light penetrating through a window designed in the form of a sun, clouds, angels, and sun rays (fig. 12). The distance from peripheral churches to the local synagogues was very short, and a dialogue is possible.

The Torah ark of the Warka synagogue, an important Polish Hassidic center, demonstrates such a case. This nineteenth-century Torah ark provides us with a concrete example of that dialogue (fig. 13). On top of the Torah ark is a three-dimensional depiction of four winged chariots, reminding us of Ezekiel’s vision, whose depiction is by no means forbidden by all rabbinical authorities. The inscription above the Torah

ark cites a passage from the *El Adon* prayer: ‘He is exalted above the holy beings, and is adorned in glory above the celestial chariot; purity and rectitude are before His throne, loving kindness and tender mercy before His glory’ המתגאה על חיים הקודש ונחדר בכבוד על המרכבה וותה ). Through this prayer, referring to the Divine Throne, the daring depiction received its legitimization in the synagogue. Even more surprising is the inscription within the sun, rising above the first inscription: ‘But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings’ (וזרחה لكم יראי שמי שמש). These words from Malachi 4:2 form the basis for the Christian attribution of the sun to Christ. This may be the reason why the end of the phrase, ‘healing in his wings’, is omitted. The Warka Torah ark indicates a direct dialogue with the Christian aureole.

It seems that this depiction was proposed, and perhaps even executed, by an artist who was familiar with the four creatures of the Divine Chariot, which in Christian art represent the four evangelists. One would even attribute it to a Christian artist. But a similar depiction from the synagogue of Grójec, not far from Warka, proves that such knowledge was not beyond a Jewish artist. The depiction above the Torah ark in Grójec includes the same text of the festival morning service, ‘He is exalted above the holy beings...’, and the image of the shining sun flanked by four winged creatures (Piechotka 2004, fig. 311).<sup>11</sup> The sun in this depiction is clearly identified with God by the letters *yod he vav he*. This synagogue was painted by David Friedlander,<sup>12</sup> no doubt a Jewish artist.

The lack of consistency in various representations of this phenomenon leads one to the conclusion that although it was common, it did not achieve a comprehensive standardized form. Moreover, it seems that local and even personal initiatives led to the adaptation of certain visual components of the aureole, without being aware of their Christian significance. The Torah ark of the Warka synagogue demonstrates such an example in the image of the eagle hovering in front of the sun. We know of such hovering eagles on top of the Torah ark from other synagogues like those of Zelva (Zelwa), Belarus (Piechotkowie 1999, fig. 400) and Suchowola, northeastern Poland (Piechotka 2004, fig. 156).

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<sup>11</sup> This photograph is in very poor condition, and only the two lower creatures can be clearly seen. Above them are wings one might attribute to the additional two creatures.

<sup>12</sup> About David Friedlander, see Davidovitch 1982, 152–161.

These hovering eagles differ from the double-headed eagle, whose wings are lifted upwards, standing for God's metaphor and bearing the crown of Kingship. The hovering eagles were, of course, inspired by the Christian image of the Holy Ghost, as demonstrated in Bernini's Glory, referred to above (fig. 11). Its hovering position above the Torah ark makes it clear that the image of the dove was mistakenly adopted as a pattern for an eagle.

It seems that sun rays took their place on the upper section of the Torah ark only after the design of the Torah ark as God's throne had finally taken shape during the second half of the eighteenth century. Its final form as a throne included not only the double-headed eagle and its Kingship crown, but also its entourage: flanking eagles, lions, or griffins, standing at its foot or supporting its crown, as in the Torah ark of the Druya (Druja) synagogue, Belarus, of ca. 1790 (fig. 14). In that synagogue the Torah ark stood in front of a high window; thus the artist, Tuviah, son of Yisrael Katz, incorporated the light which penetrates through the window into the ark's design. It would seem that Tuviah was aware of the Christian aureole, since he designed the two transparent openings exactly in the spot that would link the light with the honor of priesthood in the round opening at the second tier, and with the Tablets of the Law at the third tier. In a similar Torah ark, which he carved for the synagogue of Jurbarkas in western Lithuania, he designed identical Tablets of the Law, but they were not transparent (Piechotka 2004, 237, fig. 359).

Moreover, it seems that incorporation of the sun rays motif into the design of the Torah ark in the early nineteenth century was not dependent at all on any actual source of neither light, nor a round or elongated window, as demonstrated on the upper cornice of the ark from an unidentified synagogue in Ukraine (fig. 15).<sup>13</sup> The sun in this Torah ark serves as a footstool for a metaphoric presentation of God as a crowned double-headed eagle flanked by his entourage, in this case the griffins, who hold a trumpet and a horn, thus giving visual expression to the praising of the Lord: 'With trumpets and the blast of the horn raise a

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<sup>13</sup> A systematic survey of the available data proves that in most synagogues which have a round window above the Torah ark, the window is not incorporated into the ark's design; this was the case in the synagogues of Pińczow and Przemysl (Piechotka 1999, figs. 49, 208) and others. In most of the synagogues, the edge of the Torah ark reaches the round window and is even seen against its background, but does not incorporate it as seen in the synagogues of Novogrudok (Nowogródek), Luboml, and L'viv (Lwów) (Piechotka 1999, figs. 279, 257, 369) and others.

shout before the Lord, the King' (Ps 98:6). To anyone in that synagogue, this would bring to mind a section of the liturgical poem known as *El Adon*: 'He called to the sun, and its light shone ... Praise is rendered to Him by all the heavenly hosts, glory and grandeur by the seraphim and ophanim and the holy creatures'.

#### CONCLUSIONS—AN INDIRECT DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TORAH ARK AND THE ALTARPIECE

Here we should note that while the Christian aureole as a symbol of divinity is reserved for representations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Jewish literary sources refer solely to one God, and this interpretation made it easier for the Jewish artist to adopt the visual Christian form into his Jewish iconography. Only in the early twentieth century did the Christian feature of the aureole—the round window with its penetrating light—meet a precise expression of God's presentation on top of the Torah ark, as demonstrated in the synagogue of Włodawa, Poland, built in 1924 (fig. 16). Within the metal structure of this window is fixed a smaller circle on which the name of God is depicted by the letters *yod, he, vav, he*. Together with the word 'Shiviti' (שִׁבֵּיתִי), inscribed above it on the main circular frame, and the words 'le-negdi tamid' (לְנֶגֶד תָּמִיד) beneath it, it comprises the verse 'always before me' (Ps 16:8). The additional verses inscribed on the upper tier of the ark identify the synagogue with the Temple, which is the Gateway to Heaven, and the Torah ark with the Ark of the Covenant—both expressions of the concept of the Torah ark as the Throne of God.

This concept led to the adoption of the visual image of sun rays, one component of the aureole, on top of the Torah ark despite the objection of halakhic authorities such as the *Hatam Sofer* and the *Shakh*. During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, newly designed Torah arks began to conduct a close dialogue with the Christian aureole, the symbol of the Divinity on top of the altarpiece.

Although a comprehensive survey is impossible today, the available data points to an indirect dialogue based on the adoption of Christian forms and their incorporation into the design of the Torah ark in accordance with Jewish iconography. Sometimes this resulted in a similar meaning, since the Christian motif of the aureole is based on the Bible: Malachi 4:2. Moreover, the book of Psalms, as partly indicated above, contain many references to light, rays, and the sun that the Church

adopted as visual expressions of the sacred and divine. When the Jews, in their turn, were exposed to the visual formulas of such expressions, they were well acquainted with the literary sources and took up the challenge to use the same visual expressions for their Jewish iconography.

The main precondition for this dialogue was the mutual meaning attributed to certain components in theological thought, and mainly those ideas which reflected the design of the House of God, in both religions. The mutual ideas did not stem from cooperation between the two faiths. The more sensible explanation would be that this ‘sharing’ of ideas is due to the fact that the Jewish Bible is also revered by Christians as the Old Testament.

Was this ongoing indirect dialogue between the aureole, the Christian symbol of the Divinity on top of the altarpiece, and the sun rays on top of the Torah ark the basis for the sun rays motif for the Torah ark in the Dohány Synagogue? Did such an iconography establish the foundation for contemporary similar artistic expressions all over Europe? At this stage of research in synagogue architecture, the answer can probably not yet be provided. As for eastern Europe, if the answer would be positive, then the sun rays motif on top of the Torah arks discussed above proves to be the early stage of this phenomenon.

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## THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY FAMILY IN CHAGALL'S 1909–1910 WORKS

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By the second half of the 19th century, a number of Jewish artists had already studied in European art academies, from Rome and Munich to Krakow and St. Petersburg (Silver 2001, 123–141). While increasingly aware of their own Jewish identity, these artists had to focus during their art studies primarily on the classical and Christian models present in European fine art through the centuries. And so when they came to create a different iconography, reflecting their Jewish identity, they used such known models, but gave them new interpretations.

Mark Antokolsky was the first Russian Jewish artist to introduce the image of a Jewish Jesus (Amishai-Maisels 1982, 93–96). His 1873/74 sculpture entitled *Ecce Homo* did not show the Christian Deity crucified or performing miracles, but rather as an ordinary human being, caught, tied up and brought before his judges. By dressing him in a striped Bedouin robe and covering his head, adorned by side-locks, with a *kip-pah*, the artist introduced the 19th-century discussion regarding Christ's Oriental and Jewish origin into the field of modern Jewish art (Rajner 1990/91, 112–114). Moreover, by showing Christ as a humiliated Jew, at a time when Russian Jews were suffering from anti-Semitic attacks carried out by Russians in the name of Christ, Antokolsky also raised questions regarding the morality of these Christians' behavior.

Marc Chagall, a member of the third generation of Russian Jewish artists, continued this approach and in late 1909 and 1910 created several striking works—drawings and paintings—which comment on the subject of the Holy Family from a Jewish point of view. During this period of Chagall's career, which concluded with his departure for Paris, the situation in Russia worsened. Thus, by 1909 the Russian government had given up the effort to introduce social and political reforms in order to modernize Russia. The third Duma's decisions reflected a burgeoning Russian nationalism supported both by the Tsar and by the leading conservative forces. The ever-growing assertion of the rights of Russians over those of other nationalities, such as Ukrainians, Poles, Finns

and Jews, became a hallmark of the following period, and there was a renewal of fierce anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish laws (Gassenschmidt 1995, 105–109).

Chagall, strongly rooted in both the Jewish national revival and in Russian modernist culture, had hoped at first to find ‘a peaceful compromise’ between the Jewish and the Christian world surrounding him, in spite of the worsening situation. This hope was expressed in 1910, in the painting usually known as ‘Circumcision’ but lately entitled ‘The Family (Maternity)’ (fig.1). According to Franz Meyer, Chagall’s biographer who was the first to write about this work, the man sitting in front is the *mohel*, who will perform the circumcision and who is shown reading the preliminary prayers from a prayer book (Meyer 1963, 62). However, the act of circumcision or any clear indication that it will be performed is missing (Amishai-Maisels 1978, 79). Moreover, since the baby appears entirely naked, it is possible to see that it is a girl. This excludes the reading of this work as a circumcision and justifies the new title ‘The Family (Maternity)’.

The drawing (fig. 2) also usually known as ‘Circumcision’, but actually depicting a family scene and dated 1908, was probably created in 1909–10 as a preparation for this painting. It includes a man similar to the ‘*mohel*’ in the painting, sitting here on the left. He too does not act as a *mohel*, but seems to be holding a closed book, which in the painting is open. In addition, as Susan Compton points out, the scene showing the baby lying on the ground, the woman sitting in the center, and on the right the bearded old man wearing a skullcap and raising his hands in awe at the baby, reminds one of the Christian Adoration of the Child (Compton 1985, 159–160). Such a reading would then suggest that the characters depicted in the drawing are the baby Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and Joseph. Chagall was probably familiar with Filippino Lippi’s ‘Adoration of the Child’ at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (fig. 3), which he may have seen during his studies in the capital, at the Imperial Society’s School for Encouragement of Art. The school’s director, the Russian artist Nicholas Roerich, taught such subjects as history of art, Christian iconography, and icon and fresco painting (Dechter 1989, 29–30, 67). He probably also encouraged his students to study art collections at the Hermitage Museum. However, in contrast to Lippi’s work, the scene in Chagall’s drawing takes place indoors. The baby is naked as in the Renaissance painting, but in Chagall’s drawing it is lying on the floor, in the opposite direction, and is supported either by a pillow or by the legs of the kneeling Joseph. His kneeling position

recalls that of the Virgin and the angels in the Hermitage painting who kneel in adoration of the Child, but in the drawing, the family members—the traditional-Jewish-looking parents and a younger, beardless man wearing a contemporary short coat and beaked hat—appear to be sitting on the floor or on low stools. The baby's legs are slightly raised so that it is difficult to see whether it is a boy or a girl.

Another drawing, entitled 'Interior' and dated 1909–10 (fig. 4), seems also to be connected to the painting 'The Family (Maternity)'. In this unusual work, a family composed of a mother holding a naked child, another child, and two men sit on the floor or on low stools, despite the table and chairs that appear in the background. One of the men even lies on the floor while supporting his head on a pillow. This passive way of sitting and lying, without any communication between the figures, each of whom seems to be closed off in his or her own world, is typical of the Jewish tradition of sitting *shivah*. After the funeral of a close relative, the tradition is to mourn for seven days at home while sitting on the floor or on a low stool. The prayers are recited at home while relatives and friends visit to offer comfort.

The painting and the two drawings seem thus to be related: the adults in all these works sit on the floor or on low stools like mourners during a *shiva*, while the baby in the drawing 'Family Scene' seems to rest on a pillow similar to the one used by the man lying on the floor in the 'Interior'. Moreover, the mother's body from the 'Interior' is reversed in the 'Family Scene'. Her hands—the left one lowered and the right one raised—are empty since the child lies on the floor, and she raises her head, now seemingly wearing a traditional wig instead of the kerchief, to look at it. Finally, the entire composition from the 'Family Scene' seems to be reversed again in the painting, where the father now appears on the left and the mother and the child on the right. While the mother's hairdo and dress are close to those in the 'Family Scene', the man holding the open book in the painting wears a large skullcap rather than the beaked hat he wore in this drawing, so that he looks more traditional.

Simultaneously, the image of the mother and child in the painting recalls the Virgin and Child represented in icons. The mother holding a baby in the drawing 'Interior' also recalls such images, especially the iconographical type of the Virgin Eleousa (compassionate) probably known to Chagall from the famous 12th-century 'Virgin of Vladimir' and its copies (fig. 5). However, in contrast to the Child in this icon, who looks at the Virgin, places his cheek against hers, and turns towards

her to embrace her, the child in the ‘Interior’ neither looks towards his mother nor embraces her. The mother in this drawing resembles the Virgin in the icon more closely: she holds her child close to her with both hands, her cheek leans towards that of the child, and her kerchief recalls the Madonna’s mantle.

As noted before, Chagall learned about icons and their iconography while studying with Nicholas Roerich. In addition, by the time he created these works, icon painting had become very popular among the emerging Russian avant-garde artists. They found in it a Russian primitive source of art, similar to the non-European primitive art used as an inspiration by contemporary Western artists (Parton 1993, 87–90). However, while Russian artists such as Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov primarily examined the icon’s formal qualities, Chagall changed the traditional formula, adapting it to his own world (Rajner, 2004, 211–212).

Thus, while the mother in the ‘Interior’ holds her child in a much more natural way, in ‘The Family (Maternity)’, her frozen movement seems to be influenced by a different type of icon depicting the Virgin Hodigitria (fig. 6). Even the floral pattern on the mother’s dress in Chagall’s painting seems to be influenced by the same source. Finally, the baby, who was already pulling away from the mother instead of holding her in the ‘Interior’, appears in this painting to be leaning against her, without really being held. Thus, although the shape of the mother’s body would suggest that she is supporting the baby on her knee, the hand, which in the icon holds the Child, is here either missing, or it is hidden by the open book held by the man sitting in front of them. Moreover, since in the painting the child appears to be a girl, it seems that Chagall also was thinking of icons showing the Virgin Mary depicted as a child with her parents, Anne and Joachim, as shown in the detail appearing on the lower right of a 17th-century Nativity of the Virgin (fig. 7). Chagall also adopted the red and green colors of Anne’s and Joachim’s robes, typical of such scenes for the mother and the bearded man in his painting. While reversing the colors, he also replaced Joachim’s halo with a green skullcap. Finally, the baby’s whitish color in the painting may have been inspired by the Virgin’s white swaddling clothes in the icon.

In Chagall’s work the characters sit on the wooden floor or on stools, as they had also done in the two drawings. However, the lines of the planks on the floor are almost entirely vertical, and the line separating the floor from the wall is higher, creating an almost flat background

against which the characters appear. This causes the painting to seem flatter than the drawings and is reinforced by the less volumetric treatment of the figures. Finally, the two-dimensionality of the painting, combined with the character's closed eyes and the unusually rigid and erect figure of the whitish, faceless baby, give to this work an unreal, symbolic, and otherworldly character. This atmosphere is stressed even further by the fact that this Jewish family appears to be sitting *shiva*.

The situation depicted in this painting seems to be based on a real event that may be related to the sickness and death of Chagall's little sister Rachel, who died as a small child around 1908 (Chagall 1994, 60–61; Meyer 1963, 23). According to Jewish tradition, the family and those close to it have to do everything they can in order to save the sick person's life from the grip of the Angel of Death. Help is sought through prayer and by reading Psalms, usually from a small Psalm book, similar to the one depicted in the painting, and by means of blessings. Thus their closed eyes can be understood both as expressing the parents' sadness and their concentration on the prayers, while the baby girl's unusual color and facelessness can be understood as depicting her sickness and closeness to death. Moreover, the fact that she is shown white and sitting up erect all on her own recalls icons of The Dormition (fig. 8), where the Virgin's soul that is held by Jesus is shown as a little, erect baby swaddled in white cloth.

By referring to Christian images in order to depict his family's tragedy, Chagall gave to this work a more universal character. Thus, the pain suffered after the loss of a child unites the painter's mother with the Virgin Mary, and, since both are seen by Chagall as Jewish women, the differences between them become irrelevant. Moreover, Chagall's use of such New Testament characters as Joachim, Anna, Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus as models for his own Jewish family stresses the fact that all were Jews. This need to prove Christ's Jewishness was, as was mentioned above, not new in Russian Jewish art, and Chagall would have been familiar with Antokolsky's ideas as expressed in his 'Ecce Homo' (Stasov 1905, 70–71, 112). Thus, like Antokolsky, Chagall hoped that by showing that Jesus and his family were Jews, just like his own family, he might prove to the Christians—and to himself—that they are actually equal. Therefore, there is no justification for Christian anti-Semitism or for the Jewish feeling of 'otherness'.

This approach seems to reappear in his drawing 'Procession', dated 1909 but probably also created in 1910 along with the works exploring the New Testament images of the Holy Family discussed in this article

(fig. 9). In it a gathering of people is participating in a religious ceremony, indicated by the burning candles held by the two women with covered heads standing on the left. Two men are holding prayer books; one, slightly apart from the crowd, seemingly reads the prayers aloud to them. He stands directly opposite a frontal, rigid image of a naked baby boy held by his mother. Chagall seems to combine here two themes from Christian art, which he presents as a contemporary event. A group of people including a naked baby boy, two men, and two women with their heads covered by long mantles, accompanied by a woman carrying a candle, appear in the traditional 'Presentation in the Temple' scene (fig. 10). This scene depicts the Virgin and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, in order to redeem him by paying five shekels to the High Priest. According to Jewish law, all firstborn males, including humans, belong to God. Firstborn sons can be redeemed thirty days after their birth by the payment of five shekels to the High Priest in the Temple (Num 18:15–17). Moreover, thirty-three days after the birth of a son, mothers were required to offer sacrifices in the Temple in order to complete their afterbirth purification (Lev 12). The Purification of the Virgin was adopted as a feast by the early Church and celebrated on February 2. The holiday was initially called Candlemas due to a procession of lighted candles, which symbolized Christ who was described by St. Simeon as 'a light to enlighten the Gentiles' (Luke 2:32). However, for practical reasons, the Church united the celebrations of the Presentation of Jesus to the High Priest and Mary's Purification, which resulted in the combination of the two separate events into one scene (Murray 1996, 87, 407–408).

Chagall's drawing shows that he was quite familiar with the iconography of the Christian scene depicting the 'Presentation in the Temple', also called 'The Candlemas Day', showing St. Simeon as the High Priest. St. Simeon, who came to the Temple to see the Messiah, has been identified since the 14th century with the High Priest (Murray 1996, 407–408) and is depicted holding the infant Jesus. The additional characters include the aged prophetess Anna raising her hand and pointing to the Child in a gesture of prophecy, the Virgin with her hands crossed on her chest and Joseph standing behind her, and a young woman on the left who holds a tall candle recalling the Purification festivities tied to this event. Chagall may well have been familiar with icons depicting this scene, since one of them was published in the luxurious Russian art journal *Golden Fleece* as an illustration to Alexander Uspensky's articles on icon painting (Uspensky 1906, n.p.). Thus in his

work Chagall included two women holding candles whose long kerchiefs recall the women's mantles in the icon. The one with her hand raised and pointing seems to be the prophetess Anna, while the path separating people from the man standing in front of them on the right in Chagall's drawing could be understood as the steps leading to the altar in the Temple. The man stands on a higher step, as does St. Simeon in the icon. However, in Chagall's drawing, the Child is not held by Simeon, but offered to him by the Virgin. This is one of the possible variants of the scene (Hall 1974, 252) which indicated that Chagall may have turned to an additional source—possibly to such icons as the famous 12th-century Ustyug Annunciation icon from Novgorod (fig. 11) showing the Virgin holding the infant Jesus in a rigid fashion, similar to that shown in Chagall's drawing.

However, among the main differences from the icon sources is the depiction of two men who according to the Christian scene should be St. Simeon and Joseph. Instead of depicting them as old, bearded, and bareheaded, Chagall showed them as young and beardless, wearing visor hats and jackets. They are also the only ones who hold prayer books and read. Since these young men replace such New Testament characters as Simeon and Joseph, who were historically Jews, they also could be seen as such. Although Chagall did not depict them as traditional Jews (whose presence at the Christian religious ceremony would not be possible), they clearly stand out due to their literacy and covered heads. Moreover, their clothes recall school uniforms and possibly allude to young *maskilim* and Jewish populists who went down 'to the (Russian) people', in order to spread education. Chagall, himself enlightened and secularly educated in his youth, possibly thought of such famous examples as Shlomo An-Sky, whom he knew personally and who, although later known as a Yiddish poet, writer, and ethnographer, had as a young man lived among and taught Russian peasants (Ze'evi Weil 1994, 13). The 'Temple's' steps on which one youth stands reading aloud, while the other is down among the people holding a book, would in this context symbolize their move from the 'Temple of knowledge' down to the people.

Here again, Chagall's wish to point out the closeness between Jews and Christians led to his choice of this particular Christian scene. The connection is provided by the fact that the law of presenting the firstborn in the Temple exists until today among traditional Jews, in the symbolic ceremony called *pidyon ha-ben* (redemption of the firstborn). The ceremony, most probably performed by Chagall's father after his birth,

includes the payment of five coins to a Cohen, a descendant of the priestly tribe. By doing this, the firstborn's father symbolically 'redeems' his son (De Vries 1982, 199–200). However, the presence of the Virgin holding the Child and the prophetess Anna, pointing upwards, in order to stress St. Simeon's prophecy that through her child the Virgin would be pierced in the heart (Hall 1974, 251), announces the impending tragedy. Chagall's following works seem to concentrate on this tragic outcome, both for Christ and for the Jews, thus abandoning the hope for a peaceful solution of the conflict between Russians and Jews.

Such feelings were clearly expressed in Chagall's painting 'The Holy Family', most probably created in autumn 1910, close to his departure from Russia to Paris (fig. 12). The characters are now depicted sitting on a bench placed outdoors, on a street, which is—to judge from the low wooden houses on either side—in the area of Vitebsk where Chagall grew up. Judging from the title, the characters depicted are Joseph, the Virgin Mary, the Christ Child and the young St. John the Baptist, so that this work too stems from both icon painting and Western Christian art. However, as shown by Amishai-Maisels, Chagall played freely with these images and their usual iconographic representations in order to create, with the help of Jewish idioms, a powerful 'reinterpretation' of basic Christian doctrines, now viewed entirely from a Jewish point of view (Amishai-Maisels 1978, 79–80). Thus, everything seems to be different from the way it is usually depicted in Christian art: the Virgin Mary does not hold the Child, but instead the baby appears on Joseph's lap. Similarly, Joseph is beardless, while the naked baby Jesus has a beard. Finally, St. John the Baptist, instead of holding a lamb, is stabbing a little pig with a knife. While at first such changes seem to create a fantastic work with its own symbolic and primitive language, the inner, hidden meaning reveals itself when we know the specific Jewish sources and Chagall's personal situation. Thus, Amishai-Maisels explained the bearded baby Jesus as an application of the Yiddish saying '*Er iz geboyren gevoren an alter yid*', which suggests that every Jewish child is born old, i.e. with the burden of 'Jewish destiny' on its shoulders. This would clearly attest to Christ's Jewishness and his 'Jewish' suffering. However, another applicable idiom '*Safek yid, safek krist*'—debatably Jewish, debatably Christian—questions this and introduces doubt as to which religion he really belongs. The main pun is, however, the use of an unkosher pig (also slaughtered here in an unkosher way) instead of the Christian lamb. Such unusual reversals can be explained, as Amishai-Maisels suggested, with the expression '*davar aher*'—the

'other thing'—which is used among Jews as an euphemism for any un-Jewish element—from pigs to idolatry—or for all of 'unkosher' Christianity (Amishai-Maisels 1978, 80).

Such an outburst of sarcasm and hostility towards the duality of the Jewish and Russian worlds Chagall inhabited and which, until now, he had tried to bridge, seems to be the result of an ever-worsening political situation. During the spring of 1910, the Duma issued a bill that clearly manipulated elections for local councils in the Western provinces which were mainly populated by Polish landowners, Russian peasants, and Jews. In spite of this, in order to assure support for the Tsar and his policies, the new bill ordered that the number of Russian Orthodox priests was to be increased, while Jews mainly living in these areas were not to be allowed to vote or to stand for election (Waldron 1998, 169–174). Thus, by distorting the image of the Holy Family, Chagall seems to have expressed his bitterness and anger at such anti-Semitic policies, practiced, in the words of Antokolsky (who was himself involved with similar confrontations thirty-five years earlier), 'in the name of Christ—against Christ' (Stasov 1905, 112–113). This also seems to have influenced Chagall's image of the little bearded Jewish Jesus whose right hand and foot seem to be cut off and whose legs are immersed in what looks like a pool of blood. These mutilated limbs recall Christ's wounds and suggest that by muzzling the Jewish vote, the Russians were crippling Christ.

In addition, it seems that Chagall, who by the time he painted 'The Holy Family' must already have decided to leave Russia, tried to make this departure easier by stressing the differences between himself and his surroundings, rather than the similarities. The difficulty of making this decision was described in his autobiography:

But I felt that if I stayed much longer in Vitebsk, I would be covered with hair and moss.

I roamed about the streets, I searched and prayed:

‘God, Thou who hidest in the clouds or behind the shoemaker’s house, grant that my soul may be revealed, the sorrowful soul of a stammering boy. Show me my way. I do not want to be like others; I want to see a new world.’

As if in reply, the town seems to snap apart, like the strings of a violin, and the inhabitants, leaving their usual places, begin to walk above the earth. People I know well, settle down on roofs and rest there.

All the colors turn upside down, dissolve into wine and my canvases gush it forth (Chagall 1994, 95).

The image of Joseph looking up with his hand raised in wonder is based, as suggested by Franz Meyer, on the apostle Peter appearing lower left, in a similar pose, in the Russian icon of the Transfiguration (fig. 13) (Meyer 1963, 91). It also seems to be a reversed image of the young apostle John lying in the middle of the foreground, which would explain Joseph's youth and beardlessness in Chagall's painting. In this early 15th-century icon, Peter's and John's facial expressions and their gestures are referring to the miracle they witness: standing on top of a mountain, flanked by Elijah and Moses, Christ—while radiating white light—was showing to his disciples his divine nature. However, Joseph in Chagall's painting gestures somewhat differently: his one hand is lifted up to his chest, while the other is outstretched to the side with its palm open. In addition his face shows a raised eyebrow and a slightly open mouth. Such body language seems an appropriate accompaniment to Chagall's conversation with God and his prayers for finding his way in the quote from his autobiography, mentioned above. Moreover, considering the rise of anti-Semitism and lack of hope for Jews, Chagall in the character of Joseph, on whose lap the bleeding Jewish Jesus sits, may have been also asking 'why?' and praying for help. Although not depicted in Chagall's painting, the vision he sees seems to be an additional reason for Joseph to look up. Since Chagall's prayers were answered with a vision of a 'new world' in which people 'walk above the earth' and 'settle down on roofs' (as Christ, Moses and Elijah appeared 'above the earth' and 'settled down' on the peaks of mountains in the icon), it is possible that Chagall's Joseph is having a 'vision' that looked much like that of Chagall. Such a dialogue with the icon is also suggested by the use of a similar range of browns, reds, greens and white colors in both works.

'The Holy Family' may also have been inspired by one of the farewell photographs Chagall and his fiancée Bella took in 1910 (fig. 14), since the similarities between them are striking. Although Chagall and Bella are sitting on chairs rather than on a bench, they sit facing each other in a similar position to Joseph and Mary in the painting: Chagall and Joseph have their legs crossed in front, and Bella's and Mary's skirts hang down in back of the seat behind him. Their body language and expressions in the photograph point towards their relationship at this time: she seems more sure of it, and looks seductive, while he appears more reserved, looking out of the photograph with determination, as though ready to leave. The characters in 'The Holy Family' project, however, an entirely different feeling. While he looks up

towards the sky, praying and questioning, her mouth is slightly open and she holds a book that she does not read since her eyes are closed. This gives the impression that she too is praying aloud, with her eyes closed. If we think of the couple in the painting as Chagall and Bella and compare them to the photograph, Chagall depicts himself as more troubled, while Bella seems to be detached from the reality around her, concentrating on her inner communication with God.

Their individual prayers would have been as different as their talents and interests: he is devoted to art (to his vision) and she, at the time a student of literature and history at the Women's College in Moscow, to her book. Their child—an old and mutilated baby—although sitting on Chagall's lap, does not get any attention from either of them. The lack of communication between them seems to have the same purpose as the lack of dialogue between the Jewish and Christian worlds: to convince Chagall of the necessity of leaving, and to make this decision easier.

This lack of dialogue is stressed even further by the contrast between Joseph's (and Chagall's) admiration of the heavenly vision and the earthly and brutal act of stabbing a pig, performed by a little almost faceless St. John. In numerous Italian Renaissance paintings, St. John the Baptist as a child appears with the infant Jesus, and Chagall was probably familiar with Raphael's famous 'Madonna in the Meadows' of 1505–06 (fig. 15), which he could have seen reproduced and learned about it while studying with Roerich (Decter 1989, 29–30, 67). As in this painting, in Chagall's work the child St. John appears in profile on the lower left, and the positions of his arms and hands are similar to those in Raphael's depiction of the scene. However, while in the Italian painting St. John holds a cross which he offers to the infant Jesus, in Chagall's painting he points with one hand upwards while the other hand holds a knife pointed downwards. While the hand pointing towards Joseph stresses the communication with God and announces a prophecy, the one holding a knife is stabbing.

The irony here is that St. John is performing such an undignified act, which is abhorrent from the Jewish point of view: he not only stabs the unkosher pig, but collects its blood in a bowl on the ground, while according to Jewish dietary laws the blood of beasts and birds is forbidden and it has to be entirely drained after the slaughter. This seems again to have a dual meaning. On the one hand, Chagall seems to be referring here again to Russia's anti-Semitism and pogroms by revealing the falseness of Christianity which, while offering uplifting visions, also includes slaughter—performed, as the pointing figure reminds us, in the

name of these visions. The little cat leaning against Bella's body seems to reinforce this falseness: while endearing itself to her, asking to be patted, it looks down towards the slaughtered pig and blood as though expecting a treat. The choice of the non-kosher pig, rather than the traditional lamb associated with St. John the Baptist, again stresses Chagall's alienation from Christian Russia.

On the other hand, the contrast between St. John's contemplation of the higher spheres, and the bloody scene below him, in which the laws of *kashrut* are broken in a most aggressive, angry and anti-Jewish way, seems also to suggest Chagall's alienation from the traditional, provincial Jewish way of life and from his own family. They had not shown much understanding for his artistic visions, but 'valued meat very highly' (Chagall 1994, 13).

Chagall's interest in icons and Christian iconography continued after he left Russia. It seems that only in Paris did he begin to feel free enough to use such immediately recognizable symbols as the Crucifixion, halos, and images of Christian saints, rather than using himself, Bella, and members of his family to depict the Holy Family, as he had done in Russia. Thus, for example, Chagall's 1911 'Madonna and Child' continues his 1909–10 images of mothers and babies, but now, by adding halos, he reveals their true identity, previously concealed by rendering them as contemporary Jewish characters in their home settings. Such images, of which his Holocaust-related 1937–38 'White Crucifixion' is probably the most famous example, became a repeated and recognizable element of Chagall's iconography, associated with both the Christian–Jewish dialogue and anti-Semitic tragedies.

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PART SIX  
LITERATURE



## NOTES ON CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY IN AGNON'S WRITINGS

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S.Y. Agnon, winner of the 1966 Nobel Prize in Literature, was the most important of the Hebrew classicists. Agnon has produced important works which show a conspicuous interest in Christians and Christianity, whether because of his criticism or because of his concealed attraction. One example of begrudging attraction is expressed in his wonder at Christian monasticism in the novel *Shira*, where monasticism—which is embodied in being locked up in a leper colony as the solution presented in the novel—is used as an expression of surrender, a choice made in order to bypass the existential questions that arise in the novel. One of the chief areas of research of the novel's protagonist Professor Herbst, a historian, is the study of the burial practices of the poor in Byzantium. He delves into the minutiae of the subject in the Byzantine Empire and among the Church fathers. Presumably the focus on the burial practices of the poor is meant to lampoon the irrelevance of the academic preoccupation, attesting to Professor Herbst's own wasted life; however, the absurd sacrifice, like in Camus, is connected with the ethos of identification with the leper and the monk. Agnon weaves an Essean ethos which sometimes overlaps that of the early Christians. This is part of the identification with 'the other' brother and of listening to his voice.

Another important work which demonstrates his positive attitude towards Christianity is the novella *Behanuto shel Mar Lublin* (Inside Mr. Lublin's Store), which recounts Agnon's life in Leipzig, Germany during World War I when he lived in a neighborhood populated by four old Christians of almost mythological dimension. Two of them share Old Testament values. One can state confidently that the expression 'the old gentile' in Agnon is used in a mostly positive context.

The other side of the coin, his criticism, represents a major negative subject in Agnon's work and is characterized frequently by his use of the issue of the blood libels (Band 2000) to which he devotes extensive attention in his writing: the blood libels as a nightmare that accompanied

the lives of the Jews from as early as the Middle Ages. Agnon quotes a historian in *Behanuto shel Mar Lublin* who declares that not a single year in Poland passed without a blood libel.

Because Agnon also regarded himself as a master historiographer charting the course of Jewish history using literary tools in his belletristic writing, he uses his craft to express his commentary on Christianity's treatment of the Jewish people. His way of dealing with the gentile 'other' is similar to the Jew coping with the mythical entity known as 'the legend of the Christians' and the wandering Jew. It is absolute, it is religious, although it also has a modern secular façade. It promotes the idea of unmitigated free choice, even in Agnon's *Shira*, considered his most secular novel, which tries to portray the Church fathers and the norms which they represent, in contrast to Greece, Rome, and Israel. He depicts the patterns of behavior that were established in ancient times and which have an ominous strength even today—like the subjects of asceticism and leprosy—as a subject of reform, or change for the better. He sees Christianity as a threat to Jewish nationalism, even secular state Zionism, which continues into the modern age. For example, in the novel *Shira* this threat is represented by a Jewish apostate, one of several, known as the Priest Shikerson. He sees Jewish self-proclaimed superiority as an anti-ethical principle, and therefore he converts to Christianity. Agnon seems to identify with his authenticity in large measure. The secular professor Herbst is as contemptuous of the apostate Jew as a religious Jew would be who feels no need to apologize for the customs of his forefathers.

In dealing with the subject of blood libels as a major theme in his criticism of Christianity, we must distinguish between periods both in Agnon's writing and in the historical periods which Agnon raises for consideration, such as the period of early Jewish settlement in Poland, from the ninth century until the *gzerot tach ve-tat*—the anti-Semitic attacks in 1648–49; from Chmelnitzki to the division of Poland in 1795; the contacts between the Christian world and the Jewish scholars and community leaders, people of authority. These distinctions continue also into the more progressive period, the Period of the Enlightenment—the Haskala—when Agnon's own town was controlled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then the period after World War I, and then, of course, the Holocaust. That is apart from the direct dealings with the German gentiles of all denominations, from the unsophisticated Catholic through the Protestant professor of Scripture and all the way to the German

middle-class public during the First World War and afterwards, which was the preparation for the Holocaust, when Agnon was residing in Germany. He describes both the open and the veiled persecutions during the period of enlightened symbiosis.

Thus, too, he refers in his writing to the Christians in the land of Israel as well as to apostate Jews, some of whom are anticipating the return to their roots. One such character is one of the heroes of the novel *Temol Shilshom*, a man of kindness who saves the hero from starvation without any missionary motives, alongside the ‘inciters’, i.e. the missionaries, agents of the Christian religion, and that is mainly during the Turkish period and during the time of the British mandate in the land of Israel. In all of his works, one hears the reverberations of violence that come to a climax in the blood libels and other false accusations, the dispossession, and cruelty. A chain of hidden murders is linked directly to the blood libels, pogroms, and riots at Kishinev, such as one may find in *Shira*, where the Jews learned to defend themselves using the tactics of self-preservation that they developed because of the pogroms.

We will only point out the main topics. Agnon as a writer deals with the mythology of history, in a study of the encounter between myth, memory, and history as an extended and formative search through the creative process, in the worlds of the individual heroes as the subjects of each period. As a writer he traces and identifies with the shadow world in which the Jews lived during the long years of exile. One must cite the legends of Poland as a focal point for characterizing the terrifying encounters between the Jews and the gentiles which initially were based, ostensibly, on trust and harmony, at first promising shared advantages and interests and quickly sliding into a series of blood libels, murder, and humiliations. The legends of Poland have been called ‘ethnographic legends’ by the literary scholar Haya Bar-Yitzhak (1996). In some of the works, Agnon depicts the wanderings of the Jews, their arrival in Poland, and their settling down there as the result of their moral failure and their susceptibility to comfort. The caravans of Jews on their way to the Land of Israel after the Crusades were supposed to reach the land of Israel but were enticed to remain in Poland.

Agnon scholar Shmuel Wenses has written a comprehensive study (2000) of the relations between Jews and Poles in Agnon’s writings: ‘Between Historical Reality and Narrative Portrayal’. For the purpose of this essay we will not linger over a subject that seems to have been well covered, except for the areas of specific textual analysis, the micro

text that attests to the complexity of the texture in the closely-woven Agnonian fabric.

If we follow the development of Agnon from his Buczacz beginnings through the Germany period and onward, we see a gradual development of certain motifs in Jewish–gentile relations which are later treated more overtly. Shmuel Yosef Czaczkes of the Buczacz period (1903–1907) began with poetry and continued on to short stories and a few journalistic reports (Bacon 1999, 251–253). These are not considered important writings that portend the later development of the writer S.Y. Agnon nor even suggest their latent potential (Hoshen 2006, 357–358). It was only after Agnon immigrated to Israel that he arrived at ‘a new (and deeper) perception’ and developed the characteristic Agnonian world of creation. At the same time, prominent scholars (Sadan 1959, 125–138, 139–154) were intrigued by the question of what the (earlier) Czaczkes and (later) Agnon oeuvre did nonetheless conceal, if only allusively.

We would like to propose that there was an important significance to this early period as well, especially as it pertains to the developments that took place in the Jaffa and Germany periods. An important example of this is the development of *Polin* (Tales of Poland). We thus discover meaningful and sequential elements in Agnon’s work that began in the Buczacz years. In this chapter, at the beginning, we shall focus on the only story that appears in all of Agnon’s writing which survived from the Buczacz period as an autonomous story with its original title. It is noteworthy for its treatment of the Jewish–gentile theme, and significantly, we are dealing not with an antiquated story discovered in some forgotten periodical but rather with one that is found in every compendium of *Polin* from their beginning and in all printings and editions. This work, which becomes seminal in his depiction of the Jewish–gentile dichotomy, is the story entitled ‘*Or Tora*’, although it seems to have been pushed more and more towards the back of the entire collection of *Polin* (Elu We-el, 1953) for editorial reasons. ‘*Or Tora*’ came before two other stories which deal with the Jewish–gentile dichotomy and involve the motif of ‘Jesus the Jew’. These stories are ‘*Nifla’ot shamash bet ha-midrash*’ (first published in German: Agnon, ‘Aliasberg’, 1916) and later ‘*Ma’ageli Tzedeq*’ (*Haolam* 1923). Both of these stories were built on the theme of ‘Jesus the Jew’, which is the longest and most developed of the stories. (The situation of the Jewish gentile, the robber chief, the robber with tefillin, were developed in the opening of the story ‘*Bi-levav Yamim*’ *Elu We-el*). The predecessor of ‘*Or Tora*’ is ‘*Cherev Dubish*’ (1925), which deals with a gentile bandit

whose sword touched the drops of wine from the Jew's kiddush and thereafter rests on the Sabbath and restrains the sword of Esau who lives by his sword. The fabric of motifs associated with blood, blood libels, and preventing such malicious conspiracy is connected with the concept of the separation between Israel and the nations and is vaguely bound up with the whole series of Poland tales. This is a development that he apparently began to work on more fully in 1926.

'*Or Tora*' was first published in *Hamitzpe* (III, 49, 5667, 7 Dec 1906). The singularity of this story is that it is apparently Agnon's first obviously allegorical story. In '*Or Tora*' there is also a two-story building, a house with an attic; this is the house of the learned rich man Asher Baruch. The combination of house and attic is a Talmudic combination that represents a metaphor for what is revealed as opposed to what is concealed, the high and the lowly, the world above and the world below; it also is an internal conflict expressed in the character of the rich man contrasted with the nature of the embedded narrator. The physical structure is also a metaphorical one, laden with paradoxes which are both ironic and comic on the one hand, and have in addition an allegorical oxymoron. Take the example of the protagonist, the rich man Asher Baruch, described as 'straight-bent-over', who also unwittingly helps reveal the 'inside of the inside', that dimension which is hidden from gentile eyes and actually from everyone.

We shall begin with the status and significance of the short story '*Or Tora*', which is based on a ritual anecdote that repeats itself several times in the story and is set off by an expression that recurs, both in its entirety and in parts: *layla layla, kol ha-layla* (every night, all night), like a kind of magical initiation ceremony. The routine ends in a disruption, an ending that contains a surprise. *Or Tora*—the light of the Torah—unbeknownst to Asher Baruch but thanks to the candle by which he studies Torah all night, became a lighthouse for smugglers (representing the gentiles), enabling them to avoid getting lost in the darkness of night and guiding their path across the border. The world became accustomed to the routine, but when Reb Asher-Baruch died, the 'light of Karolivka went out', and with it, the light of the world as a guide to the gentiles. That is the last sentence. When the light was extinguished, the gentiles could not find their way and wandered lost all night. The story contains dormant paradoxical constructs that are revealed and concealed within the modest allegorical dimensions of the story alongside ridiculous facts, such as that Reb Asher-Baruch's wife gave him thin candles when he grew old because he no longer had the

strength to hold thick candles. Also in the story '*Ma'ase be-melech we-malka*' which was not included, there is a hidden parable but apparently not as well established an element as in '*Or Tora*'. In some of Agnon's earlier poetry, too, there is a message-carrying element that fulfills a function as parable or with a national-personal-allegorical intent consciously written for that purpose, and that may be why it survived. At first glance it seems to be an anecdote, a short humorous tale, a feuilleton, but it actually contains metaphysical, kabbalistic potential because it deals with an archetype that Agnon is conscious of from the very first version of the story, particularly in the opening, which in later versions was moved to other parts of the story. This is done allusively rather than as a motto opening the story.

As another example of Agnon's development of the motif of the relations between the Jewish people and the other nations, this story uses the verse from Isaiah 60:3 to demonstrate and dramatize in comic style: 'And nations shall walk at thy light and kings at the brightness of thy rising.' See the RaDaK commentary on Isa 42:1:

For the sustenance of every nation, because it is for your sake that the whole world is sustained.' Every use of the word *brit* [=covenant] refers to existence and that will also hold true for the light of the gentiles as it is written 'And nations shall walk at thy light'; this light is the Torah that will emanate to them from Zion, and Israel will be the sustenance of the nations for two reasons: First, there will be peace among all of the nations on their behalf as it is written 'And he shall speak peace unto the nations.' ... 'And he shall reprove many nations, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,' etc. The second aspect is that because of Israel, the nations will observe the seven Noachide commandments and will follow moral practices as it is written 'And he shall teach us of his ways and we shall walk in his paths.'

However, one must remember the verse at the beginning of the Book of Samuel: 'The lamp of God had not yet gone out' (I Sam 3:3), an expression that has become a cliché. We present this seemingly banal motif of the lamp in '*Or Tora*' which also appears in several places in Agnon's later work and in the collections. Using this we may evaluate the potential and pattern embodied in the story.

Because it is well-known, so that even the nations of the world know, but 'they are like those who know something and do not know what it is they know.' Sometimes they prophesy and do not know what they are prophesying.

They only see the exterior, the outer shell, and sometimes more of the inner side, but the truly internal core they will never see; the light within the light is something that they cannot grasp with their simple intellect and with their eyes, that are dim. And if someone should tell you otherwise, you may be sure that he does not understand.

'Every night, all night' is connected with the verse 'It is the burnt offering which shall be burning on the altar all night until the morning... The fire shall ever be burning on the altar; it shall never go out' (Lev 6:2, 6). The spiritual activity which is unaware of what use is being made of it is what makes the criminal activity possible: the act of smuggling which is the business of Esau who, even in his worldly affairs, is dependent on the light of the Torah, the light of the lamp of Jacob, otherwise he would not find his way. Neither Esau nor Jacob is aware of the other, alternative uses made of the lamp that sustains the world.

Here is the well-known motif embodied in the Talmudic adage 'The whole world maintains itself for my son Hanina, and Hanina maintains himself from a measure of carobs. (BT Ber 17b): Every day a voice emanates from Mount Horev and says: The whole world is given sustenance for the sake of Hanina my son; and Hanina my son is satisfied with a small quantity of carobs from one Shabbat to the next.'

In his story '*Bimtsulot*' (In the Depths), Agnon points out the inevitable law-like regularity in the rhythm of Jewish–gentile relations, a situation that is produced by the very fact of the Jewish people's existence in exile. Thus, too, the idea of the treaty that the Jews of Poland made with the kings of Poland was a treaty conceived in sin.

Haya Bar Yitzhak noted that Agnon quotes in its entirety the penitential prayer composed by R. Moshe Katz of Narul in Poland, the beginning of which is quoted by Agnon as the motto of the story '*Kedumot*'. The prayer was written immediately after the Decrees of 1648–49. The later lines in the prayer are appropriate to the destruction of all of European Jewry in the Holocaust, although they were actually written ca. 1648. 'What shall I testify and what shall I compare to you, O Poland / You have become weary with the chapters on those who are burnt and with lessons on how one puts to the fire,' etc. Agnon uses the etiological myth which sought to provide a religious–spiritual justification for settling and remaining in Poland in order to prove the opposite—the lack of legitimacy for the exile in all cases.

These ideas are also stated explicitly in the book *Ir U'meloa* and in *Korot Batenu* in various places. The Jews are caught up in a basic notion of a rhythm of sin and reform even without a sense of guilt, as in the story ‘*Agunot*’, written in Jaffa in 1908, that posits sin as a metaphysical–cosmic sin, yet the thread inside the veil is sometimes snapped and sometimes God sheds a light of kindness from above and the thread is joined. In Agnon’s work, everything that is associated with leaving exile and its temptations is connected to the enticements of Satan. On the road to the Land of Israel,<sup>1</sup> at various way stations en route, Satan lies in ambush. Thus, for example, in the story *Bilvav Yamim*, (pp. 496–497), the group of *Nilbavim* (Beloved pious people) are almost lured into stopping at the market in Lashkovitz, and thus they would be repeating the deeds of their fathers who eight hundred years earlier had tarried on their way to the Land of Israel by stopping in Poland.

In his story ‘*Bimtsulot*’, Agnon constructs with rhythmic and cyclic diligence the pattern of life in exile as a misleadingly positive routine of existence, in order to destroy it later in the story. ‘Jacob shall not envy Esau and Esau shall not hate Jacob.’ For many days the villagers acted similarly (p. 365). But tragedy stalks at their heels. The name of the village where the Jews who were drowned come from is Asonovky, in other words, a literary name that portends tragedy (*ason* = אָסֹן) (Holtz 1995, 248). (To the best that we were able to investigate, there is no place of that precise name, just one that sounds similar but is so far away that it is not relevant.) In changing Asonoska to Asonovky, a Russian ending is changed to one with a Ukrainian or Polish ending. See also the change of a place name ‘Lovovka’ in the first version of ‘*Or Tora*’ (1907) to Korlovka in the editions dating from 1916. The story takes place in Podolia, a province in the area of Buczacz, in eastern Galicia, present-day Ukraine. Buczacz belongs to the periphery of this district.

Agnon explicitly describes a realistic setting in his story alongside an imaginary mythical setting that is produced through the perspective of verses from the Scriptures. Realistic objects take on a mythical presence. The river that cuts through the city and also the bridge have a central role here (*Hakhnasat Kalah* [1931] 1953, 248). Asonovky is located near Dubrovna, in Belarus; in the local tongue, it is known as Asonava. Because the plot takes place in villages near Buczacz which is explicitly mentioned in the story, there is no connection between Asonova and Asonovky.

Such is the story of the inseparable lovers, where a man is about to hold a wedding for his daughter and the landowner comes and kidnaps the bride from under the wedding canopy and murders the groom, and such the story of the people of Asonovky whom that same landowner saw going to town to pray and commanded his servants to drown them in the river, and such is the story of the grandfather of Kalman the tailor whose blood the landowner spilled like the blood of an animal or a chicken, and such is the story of Paltiel's father who was killed in the town and like the story of his father-in-law Peretz who was scalded with a shower of boiling tar. Out of his pity for the murdered and the drowned, Rabbi Yudil would recite his Mishanyot to elevate their souls in order to do them good.

Agnon presents a thematic series, a summary anthology of *Tales of Poland* and points out the connection between them. ‘*Ma’aseh Hane’ehavim Vehane’imim*’ is the subtitle of ‘*Meholat Hamavet*’, the fourth story, and the story of the people of Asonovky in ‘*Bimtsulot*’, the seventh story.

The technique of writing chronicles of events that are the titles of seminal stories was already used by Agnon in the story ‘*Hapanas*’, from the Buczcaz period(1907), and it mentions the kernel derived from the story in Yiddish ‘*Toytentanz*’ (1911), converted into the story ‘*Meholat Hamavet*’. Similarly, the name of another place, Damishov, mentioned in the story ‘*Bimtsulot*’, is also a fabricated name (Bar Yitzhak 1996, 26-30), containing an allusion to revenge, to a demand for blood, (*dam* = blood), for retaliation against those who conspire evil. The motto appearing at the beginning of the story ‘*Bimtsulot*’ is ‘And [why] dost thou make men like the fishes of the sea, [like the creeping things that have no ruler over them]’, taken from Hab 1:14, which is interpreted as an expression for the loss of control by the Divine Providence over the world: ‘there is no judge and no law.’ Everyone is ready to swallow his neighbor whole, as in the vision of eternal, arbitrary violence where ‘the big fish swallows the little fish.’ See the exegetic tradition regarding this verse: R. Ovadiah of Bartenora, Av. 3:2:

[Pray for ] the welfare of the government—even if it be of the gentile nations; for otherwise everyone would ‘swallow each other alive’—as it is written (Hab. 1) ‘Thou hast made man like the fishes of the sea; like the fish in the sea, the larger ones swallow the smaller ones, so man—were it not for the fear of the authorities—the larger would swallow the smaller’ (AZ 72).

Ibn Ezra on Hab. 1:14:

Thou dost make—This man for whom you created the lowly world is considered like the fish of the sea which are permitted for eating and each one swallows whatever is smaller than himself. And in truth, there is no reason for their existence.

Thus, the message in the commentaries of Bartenura, Nachmanides, and Ibn Ezra in our story is directed not only at the Jews who were drowned, upon whom Tashlich was performed, but also at the fishermen and those who sent them, those who fished the Jews, and it is against them that revenge will be taken, as in the words of the Psalms 9:13: ‘For he avenges blood, he remembers it. He does not forget the cry of the humble,’ which became the text that ends the lamentation in memory of the martyred Jewish communities of Shum—Speyer, Worms, and Mainz (1906).

At the core of the plot is the story of a landowner in the city of Buczacz who ‘had a sudden urge’ to drown the Jews who had been coming for many years, perhaps even for generations, to pray during the High Holy Days in the district city of Buczacz. The tradition of the drowning story or this situation appears for the first time in the report *‘Ir Hametim’* written by the youthful Shmuel Yosef Czaczkes (1907). Wereses mentions this in his book *Agnon Kifshuto* (2000, 315–380), and he cites only some of the places in Agnon’s writing where this constituting event is mentioned or appears (‘Oreah Nata Lalun’, 15; *Hakhnassat Kalah*, 261–262). Wereses (380–381) writes of the landowner’s wife who drowned in the place where the Jews had been plunged into the river, the motif of revenge recalling the rule of a ‘measure for measure’ repayment (Wereses, 343–344). ‘That a man made a wedding for his daughter and the landowner came and kidnapped the bride and killed the groom’ (‘Sippur Pashut’, 185; ‘Oreah Nata Lalun’, 384; *Ir U’Meloa*, p. 31, 214, 215). Later on in the text, additional places were cited. Wereses hardly relates to the contents of the report *‘Ir Hametim’* (1907), which is actually a synopsis of the story *‘Ir I’Meloa’* (1973), the report that the youthful Czaczkes wrote fifty years after he began to deal with stories and signed under the pen name ‘One of the city’, and from here on it appears in many of Agnon’s stories as a constituting situation and a haunting memory.

We found a similar narrative kernel of fact in the research of Yaakov Goldberg that deals with the history of Poland:

And my [master] in order to silence him [the other master] and in order to demonstrate his generosity, ordered that a wagon be loaded with Jewish men and women, myself among them. They threw us on like sacks, drove

us to the estate grounds of the angry master, and there, upon command, the wagon driver overturned the wagon and unloaded us right in front of the door to the house. Upon witnessing this spectacle, the master of the house, the guests, and all of the servants almost exploded with laughter. After this entertainment of our masters the residents of Szlachta, where I sprained two fingers and was almost suffocated, many other disastrous events also befell me. (Goldberg 1999, 96)

Goldberg's book is full of Polish archival sources to which I have no access. He deals mainly with various aspects of Jewish social life in Poland in the 16th–18th centuries. Our story apparently took place in the period before Hassidism, as Agnon writes in the story, 'And in those days Hassidim were not yet seen in the land, and the habits of contention were not yet known.' This was presumably during the period when the Council of Four Lands was active. Agnon emphasizes this point to show the innocence of that period, the absence of the sin of schism between the Jews.

The behavior of the master of the city in '*Bimtsulot*' is seen as a caprice. He shattered the routine of life without any prior warning, on a mere whim. It is not a causal chain of events that determines the possibility of the historical event, but the basic potential of Jewish–gentile relations by its very nature. The drowning, which is a seemingly random murder, is attached to a blood libel, and afterwards there is also a rescue, thanks to the dead, the murdered, the drowned, who came to the synagogue on Yom Kippur and saved their fellow Jews from the conspiracy. All of these events embody the ultimate model of Jewish–gentile relations as well as the notion of miraculous rescue at the cost of those who had perished previously, a stroke that gives meaning to death, a form of Divine Providence. A similar though comically drawn situation appears in '*Niflaot Shamash Beit Hamidrash*', one of the *Polin* stories, first published in German in 1916, thus preceding '*Bimtsulot*' (1917).

The story of the drowning of the Jews in its many variations pursued Agnon into many of his central works. It was an obsessive model. In some of his works it appears as an earliest memory, and other motifs connected with drowning or abduction into the water were hinted at in the earlier works of Czaczkes–Agnon: 'When I was about nine years old, I wrote a ballad of a young fellow who went to light candles at the river on the first night of selichot, which was the custom of young men when I was a child. And one of the water maidens came and took him' (*Me'atzmi el Atzmi*, p. 7).

Agnon's work is always connected to myth-dependent genres like the fairy tale, poetry, the ballad, the legend, tales of saints, and folk tales, and this is true even within modern day genres like the great novels written by Agnon which deal with 'the splendor of history'.

The word *niflaot* (miracles) establishes the genre, which is an ironic-comic miracle tale reaching a climax towards the end of the story and concluding in a bout of inebriation shared by Jews and gentiles as they celebrate a temporary truce. The genre of the miracle tale, usually in the plural 'miracle tales', is regarded in various ways. For example, in *Ir U'Meloa—'Mazal Dagim'* (p. 631): 'Buczacz, just as it is full of Torah, is full of knowledge and is not fond of miracle tales which have no parallel in nature. Buczacz likes things as they are; as they happened, so they are recounted here.'

See also *Shira* ([1949] 1971, 344): 'It is not miracles and surprises that the heart requires, but an answer to questions that did not find words.' On the other hand, the entire tale of *Hakhnasat Kalah* is a kind of 'The Miracles of Reb Yudel Hassid', an expression that appears in this picaresque novel many times and especially in the rhymed parts: 'And thus they sat for hours untold, as the barkeeper miracles tales did unfold' (*Hakhnasat Kalah*, 316). It is a tale that deviates from nature, usually told in the vernacular, creating an unsentimental or ironic viewpoint. At any rate, this subject is worthy of a separate consideration.

Of major importance in the genre of the ironic-comic miracle tale reaching a climax is Agnon's story 'The Miracles of the Sexton of the Old Beit Midrash' (*Niflaot Shamash Beit Ha'Midrash*).

Synopsis of the story: The sexton of the old beit midrash concludes his work at the synagogue on Saturday night after havdallah, goes outside and sees a light burning in the church. He has never seen a light there at night before. He calls out to the policeman on his rounds, who curses him roundly and sends him on his way. The policeman prefers to visit the bar. However an official passes by and, overhearing the exchange, chases after the policemen and repeats the Jew's query of why the light is burning in the church. When they return and peek through the keyhole, they see a Jewish thief in the house of prayer. They shout and break down the door, thereupon discovering the charity box smashed open and the holy ritual objects missing. The Jew whom they glimpsed through the keyhole is standing in the church in a tallith and yarmulke. They beat him vigorously but are themselves wounded. When the prayer shawl is torn off the figure and the yarmulke falls,

they discover it to be a statue of their savior. Their wrath is boundless, and they resolve to punish the Jews for this affront. However, the cooler heads among them said: The door is still locked; the Jew must be hiding inside. They begin to search, and they find the church attendant hiding and with him the precious religious objects of the church. After beating him, they get his confession of the theft and of dressing the statue in order to incriminate the Jews. At the end of the story, everyone—Jews and gentiles—get drunk together, and the joy is complete.

This synopsis introduces the story's protagonists: the sexton, the yarmulke, the tallith, and 'more of another thing', hinting apparently at the tension with that 'other thing', the addition that complicates the story, the struggle with the gentile world. It might be mentioned as an epithet for swine which is known as 'the other (unmentionable) thing' or perhaps the 'other' in the sense of the evil inclination (the other spirit). In German, it was translated literally, *etwas anderes*, by removing the association with 'pig', calling it *mashehu nosaf*; 'another thing' (Kroyanker [1938] 1991, 63). The one who gives meaning to the whole series of frenetic and comic events is the Guardian of Israel who neither sleeps nor rests, Divine Providence. The writer as narrator is the typesetter, uniting all of the peculiar pieces into a meaningful whole: He is the one who represents this in his art: 'All of these have been joined together in this tale.' (A story with the summary at the beginning is a popular technique for presenting a synopsis of the plot in the form of rhymed prose, as in '*Vehaya Ha'akov Lemishor*' and especially in *Hakhnasat Kalah*, a kind of imitation of traditional morality folk tales, sometimes called Hassidic tales, possessing a kind of pseudo-primitive affirmation of the success of the protagonists, that is, the predictable miracle behind the scenes despite the seeming confusion in it).

The irony, created by a supernarrator, is directed at all of the characters in the story and at both groups, Jews as well as gentiles, without detracting from the horror story that hovers in the foreground which is directed only at the Jews, the looming possibility of a blood libel breaking out against them. Agnon alludes to the threat of the blood libel in the ominous phrase: 'if only what could happen will not happen' (par. 25), a libel that for once does not materialize in this story. The fear of the outbreak of a blood libel and of its consequences is a constant threat to the Jews. But it is not only fear that is interwoven into the comic.

Within the frivolous tone in which the tale is narrated, there is a central and serious purport which suggests another motif in the theme of Jewish–gentile dichotomy: the distinction (in Hebrew *havdallah*)

between the gentiles and the Jews. The tale itself is a provocation which in the final analysis is sufficient cause for blood libels. By showing the *havdallah* motif, the narrator elaborates upon and perpetuates the notion of chosenness behind which he positions himself, an idea rooted in the concept of separation that is expressed in, among other things, the piyut recited at the *havdallah* service the Jew performs at the end of the Sabbath which appears in the story: ‘Who separates between holy and secular, between light and dark, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six days of creation.’ This last blessing of the *havdallah* for Saturday night does not mention the words speaking of the separation between ‘Israel and the nations’.

The story represents a kind of revenge against the gentiles that is already discernible in the motto of the story, which is the verse ‘Let my adversaries be clothed with shame and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a robe’ (Ps 109:29), which appears only as of the Berlin 1931 version, the story’s third reprinting.

The story opens with the *havdallah*, at the departure of the Sabbath, a point in time which is also a point in space, the field of action constituting the starting point of the story, which presents the *beit midrash* as compared with the church (Ginzburg 2003, 350–369). Opposite the ‘house of God’ stands illuminated ‘the house of their veneration’, which in the first version was ‘the house of prayer’. God made each of these in contrast to each other. As compared with the story ‘*Or Tora*’ (Buczacz 1906), where the light of the whole world shines forth from the attic of Asher Baruch, here the light shines forth from ‘the house of their veneration’. This is a suspicious and strange phenomenon to the Jewish sexton who is not familiar with the possibility of light in a church at such an hour. This light is actually a sign of shame because it illuminates the transgression—the theft—and represents evidence of the presence of a stranger inside.

The burlesque or nonsense at the beginning of the story contains within it the horror, the news of a blood libel from which the Jews are saved. ‘And they wished to harm all of the Jews in the city,’ as in the *Megillat Esther*, and from this a *Purim Katan* is created which is a small carnival, expressing the joy of salvation from a palpable danger.

The starting point, the first scene, is the old *beit midrash* whose location is not specified, a kind of tale outside of space and time, if we do not accept Fruchtman’s interpretation. In his article ‘The Miracles of the Sexton of the Old *Beit Midrash*’, Dov Fruchtman speaks of an event that took place in 1870 in the city of Colomia, near Buczacz. This event

also appears in the book *Zichron Le'rishonim* (1914) by Rabbi Hayim Zvi Domitz Teomim, where a story takes place that Fruchtman believes 'most certainly represents the detailed source for Agnon's tale.'

Synopsis: A Jewish military man, Eli Kessler, passed in front of the Greek Catholic church at midnight and saw a lit candle through the window of the church. This aroused his suspicion, so he went to call for the police. They found the attendant of the church and with him, the stolen object. The thief had dressed the statue of their savior in tallith and kippa to throw suspicion on the Jews. The church utensils were found, and the Jews were saved from a blood libel.

It is possible that such an event was also possible in Buczacz, as the example of such an institution in other towns. The place is a place of spirits, a site of demonic potential, where miracle tales could take place. The beit midrash in Buczacz is a place of longstanding scholarship, as compared with the shtiebel or klaus or a Hassidic beit midrash. According to Dov Fruchtman's interpretation, the story of The Miracle of the Sexton of the Old Beit Midrash was about an event that took place in Colomia. The full phrase 'the sexton of the old beit midrash' appears one more time in Agnon's writings and is associated with the comic figure who appears also in other stories.

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## GIDE AND SARTRE ON JEWS AND JUDAISM

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There are many who would consider André Gide and Jean-Paul Sartre as two of the most important men of letters of the twentieth century, Gide in the interwar period and Sartre during and after World War II. Both were Protestants in a predominantly Catholic land, and the Jews did not occupy a central position in their writings. But both felt the need to address ‘the Jewish question’, since the Jews, in their opinion, were an important component of Western culture, society, and history.

### WHAT WAS GIDE’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE JEWS?

In 1898 a petition was circulated in defense of Emile Zola, who had taken the side of the Jew in the Dreyfus Affair. Gide was the first to sign the petition (Berl 1977, 49).

In 1933 Gide, as he himself pointed out a number of times in his own diary, declared that France should be the first country to offer political asylum to Albert Einstein after the latter had had to flee from Germany (Gide 1997, 7.4.1933, 404–405, 14.4.1933, 408–412).

In 1938 he encouraged others to write articles in support of the Jews. As an example, we may take his words to Claude Mauriac (the son of the writer François Mauriac, who was an admirer of Gide) after Mauriac had told him of threatening letters he had received following a philo-Semitic article he had written. Gide answered as follows: ‘Ce sont vraiment des gens effrayants ... Comme si la question [Juive] était résolue parce qu’on la supprimait artificiellement.’ (These are really very frightening people ... As if the [Jewish] question would be solved if we suppressed it artificially.) (Mauriac 1951, 22). Gide always adopted a subtle and circumspect point of view on matters Jewish, but in the end he reached strong and courageous personal conclusions.

In 1914 for instance, Gide analyzed the good and bad qualities to be found in Léon Blum, a talented intellectual and writer and later France’s first Jewish prime minister. He complimented him on his *noblesse*, his *générosité*, and his chivalry, but also criticized him because, as he put

it, ‘Blum considère la race juive comme supérieure, comme appelée à dominer après avoir été longtemps dominer’ (Blum considers the Jewish race as superior, as one whose calling is to dominate after having been dominated for so long a time) (Gide 1996, 24.1.1914, 762–763).

But in 1948, after Blum had served once more briefly as prime minister and concluded agreements between France and the United States, Gide commented that now he appreciated (and even admired) Blum that much more, after the tragic events which had come to pass had shown the man’s great worth (Gide 1997, 8.1.1948, 1053–1054).

Gide admired the Jews for their unique character. He stressed the Jews’ intelligence and their exceptional contributions to culture and ethics.

Gide was an ardent supporter of Jewish writers whose texts he admired, but also a sharp critic of those whose writings he did not like. Gide introduced France to the writings of Franz Kafka, whose novel *The Trial* he adapted for the theater. He praised a considerable number of Jewish writers and intellectuals: ‘Kafka, Proust, Svevo, Hoffmansthal, Zweig, Max Jacob, Durkheim, Einstein, Bergson, Freud, etc.’ (Berl 1977, 47).

Yet, Gide conceived of French literature as a continuation of the literature of Classical Greece and did his best to protect *la belle France*. Jewish literature, on the other hand, is different. As he wrote in his journal, it has its good points, but these derive from Jewish literature and Jewish history (not from French literature). In his words,

Il est absurde, il est dangereux même de nier les qualités de la littérature juive; mais il importe de reconnaître que, des nos jours, il y a en France une littérature juive, qui n’est pas la littérature française, qui a ses qualités, ses significations, ses directions particulières. (Gide 1996, 24.1.1914, 763–764)

(It would be absurd, dangerous even, to deny the admirable traits of Jewish literature; it is important to realize, however, that today there exists in France a Jewish literature which is not French literature, a literature with its own good qualities, meanings and specific tendencies.)

In Gide’s fictional writings, Jewish characters are rare; the few that do appear reflect his opinions. Let us consider as an example the character of a Jewish girl in one of his later works, dating from 1936, entitled *Geneviève*. The main topic of this book is feminism. One of its characters is a Jewish girl, Sara. She is the daughter of a Jewish painter named Keller. When reading texts aloud in class, Sara discovers that she possesses an amazing acting talent. She establishes a women’s association

for the care of single mothers. Two of her classmates join her. One of these is Geneviève, whose mother shows feminist tendencies which her father, the conservative and anti-Semitic Robert, represses. Robert forbids his daughter to associate with Sara who, so he says, does not belong to their world. He threatens to take his daughter out of her school if she continues to meet with the Jewish girl. The second girl is Gisèle Parmentier, the daughter of an English mother whose French father has passed away. The liberal atmosphere in her home is completely free of anti-Semitism, and she can associate freely with the Jewish girl (Wolfman 2000, 177, n. 7). Gide here subtly chose two opposing attitudes towards Jews in the France of his day.

Gide's double-faced attitude towards the Jews as a collective with both affirmative and negative traits can also be seen in earlier fictional works. Thus, for example, in *Les Caves du Vatican* (1914) the Jew Eudoxe Lévichon is presented as very different from the other representatives of society in the book: he is extraordinarily intelligent and diligent, using his sharp mind in order to climb the social and economic ladder with great rapidity, but he also retains his family traditions, which differ from those of non-Jewish French society. He remains attached to his Jewish origins, just like his father, who strengthened his Jewish ties by unifying two Jewish families (Lévy and Cohen) together with their businesses. Lévichon the son also contributes considerably to French society, but at the same time he brings with him traditions and behaviors which are foreign to that society. It would thus appear that in this work Gide was criticizing the anti-Semitic novels which appeared in France in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair, by presenting a satirical picture of Lévichon as a capitalist (Goulet 1972, 65). But at the same time, the book also clearly contains criticism of the Jew, whom Gide depicts as exploiting a Christian's invention in order to sell statuettes of saints to Christians—leaving his (Christian) associates the task of selling them in their smaller town while he moves to the big city and expands both business and wealth.

In *Corydon* (1925) Gide's ambivalent attitude is even more glaringly obvious. There he presents a conversation between Corydon and a companion about Léon Blum's essay 'Du Mariage'. In the course of their dialogue Corydon's interlocutor raises the issue of the Jewish problem and the difference between Jewish and French culture. His opinions and evaluations are truly racist:

Les juifs sont passés maîtres dans l'art de désagréger nos institutions les plus respectées, les plus vénérables, celles mêmes qui sont le fondement et le soutien de notre civilisation occidentale, au profit de je ne sais quelle licence et quel relâchement des moeurs, à quoi répugne hereusement notre bon sens et notre instinct de sociabilité latine. J'ai toujours pensé que c'était peut-être là le trait le plus caractéristique de leur littérature, de leur théâtre en particulier. (Gide 1925, 115–116)

(The Jews are past masters in the art of disintegrating our most cherished, our most venerable institutions—the very ones that are the pillars and foundations of our Western civilization, for the sake of who knows what license and laxity of morals which are fortunately repugnant to our good sense and our Latin instinct for social values. I've always thought that this might be the most characteristic feature of their literature—especially of their theater.) (Gide 1950, 103)

Corydon in reply states that although there were protests against Blum's monograph, no one has refuted it, and that the Jewish problem does exist still and will not be solved by ignoring it. Here Gide's defense of the Jews is much weaker than the attack against them, perhaps because the text was written many years before Hitler came to power and pursued policies which would arouse in him a greater need to express his support (Wolfman 1996, 333–367).

Gide also publicly expressed his opinion on ‘the Jewish question’ in the late thirties shortly before World War II broke out. In April 1938 he published an article in *NRF* entitled ‘Les Juifs, Céline et Maritain’, in which he criticizes the writer Céline, who was accused of fomenting anti-Semitic feelings. Gide comments that Céline’s writings may have tragic consequences since if his writing is intended as more than a game then—genius though he may be—he is guilty of thoughtless incitement, and that, adds Gide, is inexcusable. Here are his original comments:

Certains autres [lecteurs] pourront trouver malséant un jeu littéraire qui risque, la bêtise aidant, de tirer à conséquence tragique.... S'il fallait voir dans *Bagatelles pour un massacre* autre chose qu'un jeu, Céline, en dépit de tout son génie, serait sans excuse de remuer les passions banales avec ce cynisme et cette désinvolte légèreté. (Berl 1977, 59)

(Some other [readers] might find such a literary game unbecoming, which could, with the aid of stupidity, lead to tragic results.... If *Bagatelles pour un massacre* is to be seen as something other than a game, Céline, in spite of his genius, would have no excuse to rake up banal passions with such cynicism and casual irresponsibility.)

As for Maritain, the famous French Catholic philosopher, who had delivered a lecture on ‘Les Juifs parmi les Nations’ (The Jews among the Nations), in which he described the ‘Jewish question’ as an *immense et douloureux sujet*, Gide comments that according to Maritain, who certainly wanted only to help the Jews, the latter are a disturbing element within the nation in which they reside, and that a *modus vivendi* must be found that would make it possible for Jews and Frenchmen to coexist comfortably (Maritain, by the way, vehemently protested against Gide’s interpretation). According to Gide, the Jews are a race which makes a unique and positive contribution to the nations within which they live. To clarify his meaning, he quotes a sentence by Léon Bloy which Maritain also quoted in his lecture: ‘L’histoire des Juifs barre l’histoire du genre humain comme une digue barre un fleuve, pour en éllever le niveau.’ (The history of the Jews blocks the history of the human species just as a dam blocks a river, in order to raise its level.)

Gide points out that a characteristic trait of the Jews is a sense of justice and the pursuit of law. It is this unique element which stands in the way of moral laxness. Gide adds that although a minority may be a disturbing factor, in the case of the Jews to suppress them would greatly harm the nation which would do so and upset its equilibrium.

During World War II, Gide protests against the discrimination and unjustified harassment of Jews. In his diary for 1942, written when he was in North Africa, Gide protests against the persecution of Jews: ‘La population juive harcelée, spoliée, traquée...’ (Gide 1997, 15.12.42, 855).

In that same year he also comments on an anti-Jewish proclamation in three languages, distributed by the Axis Powers:

Des AVIS en trois langues (français, arabe et italien) sont placardés en abondance sur les murs de la ville. Il y est fait savoir aux Israélites qu’ils auront à payer, avant la fin de l’an, la somme de VINGT MILLIONS comme aide aux victimes des bombardements anglo-américains dont *ils sont responsables*, ‘la juiverie internationale’ ayant, comme chacun le sait depuis longtemps, ‘voulu et préparé la guerre’. (Les victimes juives sont naturellement exclues du nombre des gens à secourir.) Cela est signé par le ‘général von Arnim, commandant les forces de l’Axe en Tunisie’. (Gide 1997, 26.12.42, 859–860)

The proclamation states that the Jews will be required to pay twenty million before the year’s end as aid to the victims of Anglo-American bombings, *for which they are responsible*, since ‘International Jewry’, as everyone has known for a long time, wanted the war and prepared

it. Gide in his diary points out in parentheses that the Jewish victims are of course excluded from among those who deserve this aid. Note that Gide is in the habit of putting his most important comments, to which he wants to draw the reader's attention, between parentheses, as in the present case.

Gide also commented on Sartre's book *Réflexions sur la question juive* in 1948. He criticizes the book for occasionally lacking clarity, but one passage in the book impressed him very favorably. There Sartre represents the Jews as the most gentle of people, possessed of a burning hatred of violence, who maintain their stubborn gentleness even during the most terrible persecutions. At the end of the passage, Sartre explains that the Jews' sense of justice and reason is their only defense against a hostile, cruel, and unjust society, and this, so he believes, is the highest message which they pass on to non-Jewish society and the true sign of their greatness.

After quoting this passage of Sartre's in his journal, Gide acclaims the author, adding that Sartre is trying to blur the Jewish question and make it disappear, whereas he, Gide, believes that it still persists, that it is still worrying, and that it is far from solution (Gide 1997, 8.1.1948, 1053, 9.1.1948, 1054–1055).

To summarize, Gide has argued more than once that a solution to the Jewish question—a question which he considered deep-rooted and serious—must be found urgently. The reasoning behind his demand he formulated in figurative terms, saying that he preferred to shout 'Fire!' before one actually broke out. (Gide 1997, 9.1.1948, 1055) He was not satisfied with the approach taken by some intellectuals, both Jews and non-Jews, who argued in the defense of the Jewish people that it was not a separate race, and that the Jews have turned out as they have because of persecution (according to Maritain) or that anti-Semites are the cause of the problem (according to Sartre). But, claims Gide, these explanations only blur the problem and help sweep it under the rug, turning into a time bomb which may end in disaster.

#### SARTRE AND THE JEWS

Sartre in his *Reflections on the Jewish Question* (1946), his major composition on the subject, argues along the lines of the black writer Rich-

ard Wright, who said that in the United States there was no problem of the *black* man, but rather one of the *white* man. In the same vein, says Sartre, anti-Semitism is not a Jewish problem, but a problem of the French people (Sartre 1954, 183–184).

Before World War II, Sartre had few Jewish friends, except for Raymond Aron, his friend in the prestigious École Normale Supérieure. The Jewish characters in Sartre's works are marginal and very few in number. His most important work on the subject of the Jews is the aforementioned *Reflections*, whose publication began in 1945 in the journal *Les Temps modernes* which Sartre edited, and then as a book in 1946. The book was written as an attack on the French anti-Semites, whose influence was very considerable during the Vichy period and whose power unexpectedly grew even more after the liberation of France (Galster 2005, Introduction, 24). Postwar France was preoccupied with prisoners of war, heroes, and political prisoners and had no time to give a welcome to the Jews who returned to their homes. Sartre broke this silence, and this earned him the gratitude of numerous Jews, among them Bernard-Henri Lévy, Alain Finkielkraut, and Claude Lanzmann (Galster 2005, Finkielkraut, Galster, Lévy, 145–160).

We should note that the issue of anti-Semitism appears already in one of Sartre's early stories, 'L'Enfance d'un chef' (Childhood of a Leader), published in 1939. Here Sartre describes the conservatism of *la belle France*, represented by its rich bourgeois; he shows that this 'beautiful France' was anti-Semitic. The story's main character, Lucien Fleurieux, who is about to inherit his father's factory, is also an anti-Semite.

The bitter fate of the Jews, especially during the Holocaust when non-Jews collaborated with the government agents in their annihilation, is dealt with in Sartre's play *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* (1960), about a German industrialist who sells land to Hitler and his henchmen, who want to use it for the construction of a concentration camp. To his son the industrialist explains that he could have refused to sell the land, but then someone else would have provided the land for this purpose. Later, when a Polish rabbi escapes from the concentration camp built on his land and his son Frantz hides him in his room, he turns the fugitive over to the authorities, who kill him in front of the son's eyes, and saves his son from punishment by making him volunteer to serve in Hitler's army. According to Sartre the play in fact is about well-to-do bourgeois French

industrialists, although the background of the play itself is that of Nazi Germany.

Sartre took the same position also in *Les Temps modernes*, the journal which he edited, where in June 1967 he wrote that the systematic annihilation of the Jews would have been impossible without the silent collaboration of many Frenchmen (Sartre 1967, 9–10). In the same vein, he said at a conference in Tel Aviv on March 27, 1967: ‘Il y a chez nous des souvenirs pénibles d’antisémitisme, de complicité au moins passive d’un grand nombre avec les Nazis’ (We have many painful memories of anti-Semitism and of complicity with the Nazis by very many people, at least passively) (Ben Gal 1992, 9–10).

Gide viewed the Jews as a ‘race’ possessed of its own culture, different from that of the French. He demanded that French society accept the Jews into it but take into account the fact that they have a different culture and different customs. Gide saw the Jews as a minority with many positive qualities that Western, including French, society could not do without, because they were the kind of consummate champions of justice which every society needed.

Sartre, unlike Gide, did not occupy himself with Jewish culture at all. He wrote his book on the ‘Jewish problem’ without ever having read a single work on Jewish culture or philosophy, as he admitted to Benny Lévy in 1980, many years after the publication of his *Question juive* (Sartre and Lévy 1991, 74): ‘J’ai fait la *Question juive* sans aucune documentation, sans lire un livre juif’ (I wrote *The Jewish Question* with no documentation, without having read any Jewish book). But Sartre wrote this book after World War II, at a time when he was engaged in defending groups and peoples who were suffering from discrimination (including the blacks in the United States). The purpose of the work in question was to promote equality for the Jewish people within French society. He claimed that even supporters of democracy in his society did not treat the Jews with complete equality and were not sensitive enough to prevent injury to Jews out of negligence or indifference. For Sartre, Jews are human beings, and he demands that French society, too, view them as humans and not as Jews who in that society arouse anti-Semitic feelings even among liberals and not just among declared bigots.

While Gide’s attitude towards the cultural tradition of *la belle France* is one of appreciation, Sartre rebelliously and provocatively attacks the

bourgeoisie and those in authority. Sartre's criticism thus illuminates the negative aspects of *la belle France*, including the tendency of the preservers of French tradition to be anti-Semites. Gide spoke of the 'Jewish race', whereas for Sartre a Jew was simply a person with a Jewish name, with no special racial or cultural attributes. It was only the anti-Semite who associated certain traits with Jews. The 'Jewish question' in Sartre's view was a creation of anti-Semites, and it was they who had to be addressed in order for the problem to go away.

A few key characteristics of the anti-Semite according to Sartre:

Anti-Semites do not want to change; they want the stability and impenetrability of a rock. They are afraid of the truth. (Sartre 1954, 21)

Anti-Semites hate out of choice. They do not hate specific people who did them wrong, but rather the universal Jew. The petits bourgeois who possess nothing are the anti-Semites. By representing the Jews as those who want to plunder France, they manage to feel that they are the owners, that France belongs to them. (Sartre 1954, 29)

Anti-Semites are not solitary. The cry 'I hate the Jews' they call out in company, basing themselves on tradition.

Anti-Semites imagine that the persecution of the Jews is a task which has been imposed on them by the entire French nation.

'For the anti-Semite,' says Sartre, 'intelligence is Jewish, and therefore he can feel contempt towards it without qualms, as towards all the other qualities of the Jews.' (Sartre 1954, 26)

Sartre's anti-Semite in fact suffers from a self-delusion (*mauvaise foi*) in which, according to the philosophy expounded in his *L'Être et le néant*, the ego hides the truth from itself. (Sartre 1943, 87)

The anti-Semite tries to impose himself on the Jew, whom he considers his slave, because he imagines that in this way he can get rid of his enemies and demonstrate his own freedom. But this is not in fact the case and is nothing more than self-delusion.

Anti-Semites hate the ‘other’, all the ‘others’. This hatred is not aimed at any specific trait of the Jew, but at his very *existence*. The irony of this is, according to Sartre, that that hatred, which is abstract and negative, always fails. (Sartre 1943, 482–483)

Sartre classifies people into those who are *pour-soi* (for themselves), who know that they are free and who act in accordance with their freedom, and those who delude themselves and turn themselves into *en-soi* (in themselves) and thus become ‘objects’, namely instruments in the hands of others. According to Sartre, someone who is ‘for himself’ will always treat the other as a ‘being for another’ but will also be aware that such an ‘other’ is a ‘freedom’ just like himself, a ‘for himself’, unconditioned by anyone else. Every individual in his freedom may have the power to limit his own freedom and to decide to behave like an ‘object’ (instead of a ‘subject’) as, for example, a person who loves and wants to cease his independent existence and become part of the beloved.

Sartre classifies Jews into two groups as well, in keeping with his division of people into ‘for themselves’ and ‘in themselves’. He says that there are ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ Jews. An ‘authentic Jew’ will live out to the end his condition as a Jew, whereas an ‘inauthentic Jew’ will deny his situation or flee from it. In his words, ‘L’authenticité, pour lui [le Juif], c’est de vivre jusqu’au bout sa condition de Juif, l’inauthenticité de la nier ou de tenter de l’esquiver.’ (Sartre 1954, 110)

The Jew, says Sartre, *cannot* assimilate, because if he is accepted he does not become accepted into society as a human being but as a Jew, and thus he will be accepted but not assimilated. (Sartre 1954, 121)

Sartre further claims that a Jew who wishes to assimilate (an ‘inauthentic Jew’) will always be required to be better than others. If he does not always surpass everyone else he feels guilty. (Sartre 1954, 105–106)

Sartre summarizes the ‘Jewish question’ at the conclusion of his book by saying that in the end the fate of the Jew is the fate of every Frenchman. No Frenchman can be free as long as the Jews have not obtained all the rights they deserve.

Here we should also mention one of Sartre’s conversations (held in 1980, published in March 1980 in *Le Nouvel Observateur*) with the

Jewish philosopher Benny Lévy, who had become a close friend of his. In this conversation, shortly before Sartre's death, Lévy, who had returned to Jewish Orthodoxy, tried to turn Sartre's attention to the Jewish religion and Judaism's historical and cultural dimensions.

Sartre admitted that for his *Réflexions sur la question juive*, written for the purpose of fighting anti-Semitism, he had no need of a profound acquaintance with Jews or Judaism. But then, after the liberation of France from German occupation, he came to know Jews such as Claude Lanzmann and Arlette, his adopted daughter, and began to show an interest in Judaism as a religion and a nationality (Sartre and Lévy 1991, 72). His conversations with Benny Lévy introduced him to messianism and to the metaphysical and ethical dimensions of Judaism:

Le messianisme était pour moi une idée vide de sens, au moment où j'écrivais les *Réflexions sur la question juive*. S'il a pris une riche signification pour moi aujourd'hui, c'est en partie grâce à nos conversations, qui m'ont fait comprendre ce qu'il représentait pour toi. (Sartre and Lévy 1991, 71)

(Messianism was a meaningless concept to me when I wrote my *Réflexions sur la question juive*. If today it has taken on a rich significance for me, it is partly thanks to our conversations, which have made me understand that which it represents for you.)

Sartre was of the opinion that these aspects of Judaism, which he had discovered at that stage in his life, had a beneficial effect on Western civilization since, so he thought, they were consistent with his own social philosophy, which emphasized the permanent revolution that would carry humanity as a whole forward with it.

He goes on to explain:

Pour moi le messianisme est une chose importante que les juifs ont pensée, seuls, de cette manière, mais qui pourrait être utilisée par des non-juifs pour d'autres buts.... [Ainsi] la réalité juive doit rester dans la révolution. Elle doit y apporter la force de la morale. (Sartre and Lévy 1991, 78–79)

(For me messianism is an important thing which the Jews alone have conceived in this manner, but which could be utilized by non-Jews for other objectives.... [Hence] Jewish reality must remain in the revolution. It must bring it the force of morality.)

Sartre thus believed that a change in the attitude towards the Jews in France would improve the lot of the French people as well. Thus in this conversation too, Sartre in fact again leads us to the concluding sentence of his *Réflexions sur la question juive*: 'No Frenchman can be free as long as the Jews have not obtained all the rights they deserve.'

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PLATES





Figure 1 – Tor Tre Teste church of Richard Meier, exterior (photo: P. Post 2006).

[Post]

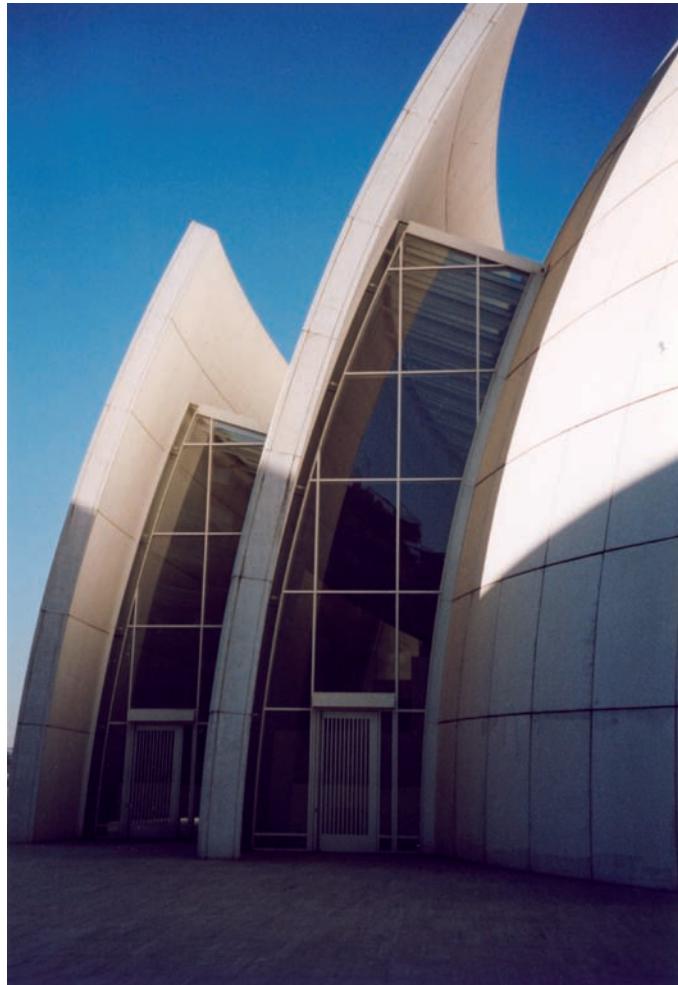


Figure 2 – Tor Tre Teste church of Richard Meier, exterior  
(photo: P. Post 2006).

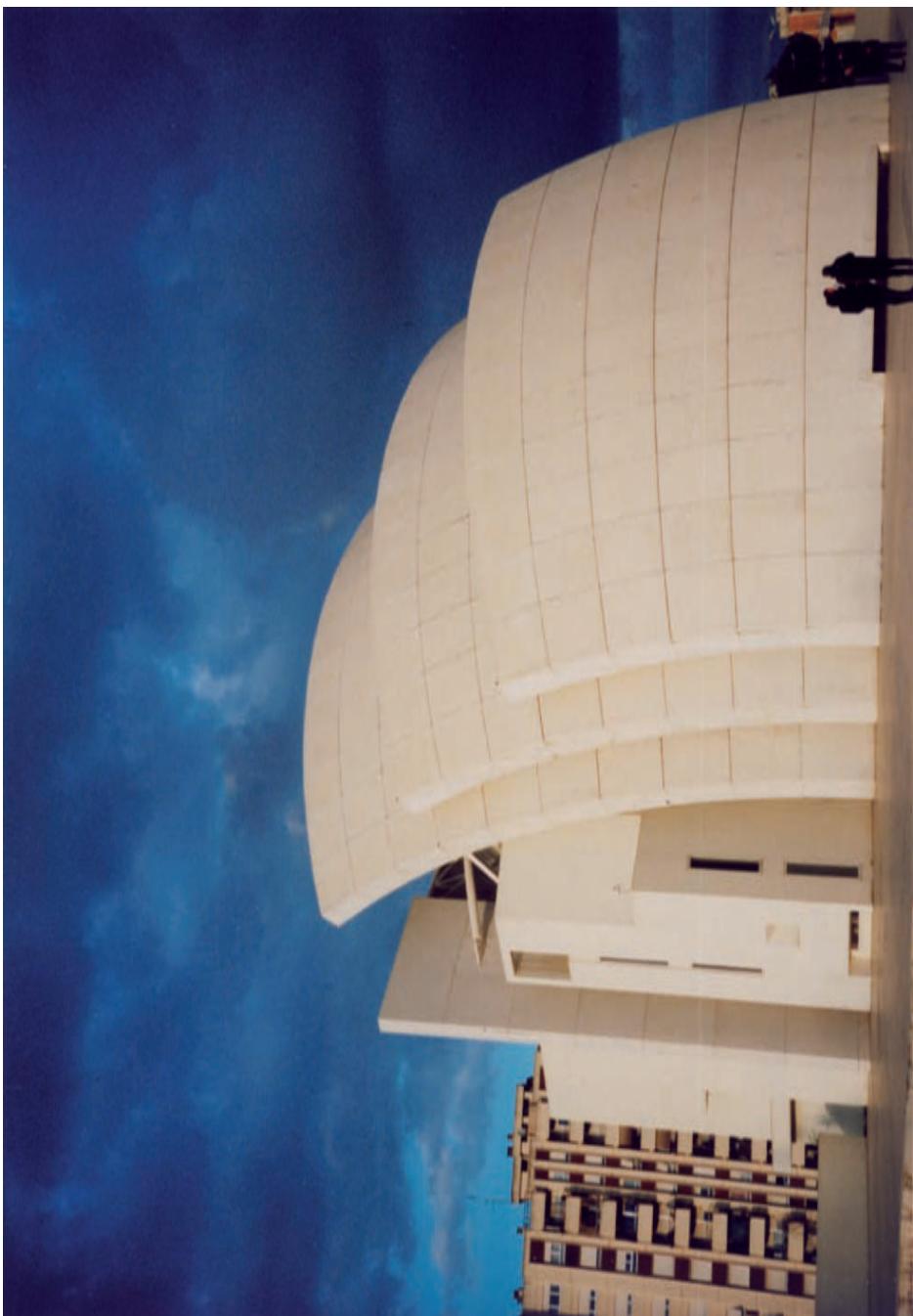


Figure 3 – Tor Tre Teste church of Richard Meier, exterior (photo: P. Post 2006).

[Post]



Figure 4 – Tor Tre Teste church of Richard Meier, interior  
(photo: P. Post 2006).

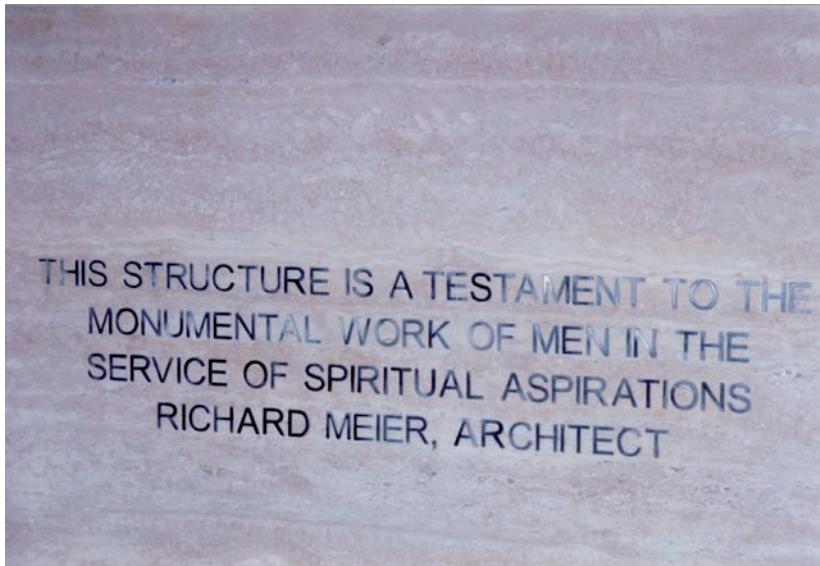


Figure 5 – Bronze text by Richard Meier, near the entrance of the Tor Tre Teste church (photo: P. Post 2006).



Figure 6 – Sign in the entrance of the Tor Tre Teste church (photo: P. Post 2006).



Figure 1 – Bar Kochba coin. Silver tetradrachma. Obverse: Temple façade, 132–135. Collection The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

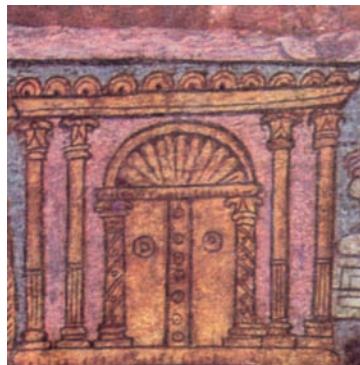


Figure 2 – Dura Europos Synagogue, Torah niche, Temple façade, 3rd century.



Figure 3 – Temple façade in the entrance to a burial cave in Bet Shearim (Catacomb 4, hall A, room VII) 4th century.  
Courtesy Israel Antiquities Authority.



Figure 4 – Wall painting of an arcosolium in Via Torlonia catacomb in Rome, 4th century.  
Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology.



Figure 5 – Gold-glass base, Roman Catacombs, 4th century CE, diameter 10 cm.  
Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by David Harris.



Figure 6 – ‘Dogmatic’ sarcophagus 320–330, Vatican, Museo Pio Cristiano. *Scenes from the Old Testament and the Gospels*. Photo: Courtesy of William Storage and of the Vatican Museums.



Figure 7 – ‘Two Brothers’ sarcophagus 330–350, Vatican, Museo Pio Cristiano. *Scenes from the Old Testament and the Gospels*.  
Photo: Courtesy of William Storage and of the Vatican Museums.



Figure 8 – Jesus with a wand resurrecting the dead Lazarus standing in a tomb pictured as a Roman temple façade. Photo: Courtesy of William Storage and of the Vatican Museums.



Figure 9 – The Rossano Gospels, fol.1r, Diocesan Museum, Arch episcopal Palace, Rossan, Italy. 6th century.



Figure 10 – Via Latina Catacomb, Cubiculum C, Crossing of the Red Sea, 4th century.  
Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology.



Figure 11 – Via Latina Catacomb, Cubiculum O, Crossing of the Red Sea, 4th century.  
Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology.

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Figure 12 – Via Latina Catacomb, Cubiculum C, a scene of a large crowd led by a figure gesturing with his staff toward a temple on the right, 4th century. Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology.



Figure 13 – Via Latina Catacomb, Cubiculum O, Rome, 4th century, *Jesus resurrecting Lazarus*. Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology.



Figure 14 – Vatican’s Museo Sacro in Rome, 4<sup>th</sup> century. Drawing of a Gold-glass base fragment found in the catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.



Figure 15 – Mosaic floor (Stratum IIa) of the Severos synagogue in Hammath Tiberias 4th century.  
Courtesy Israel Antiquities Authority.

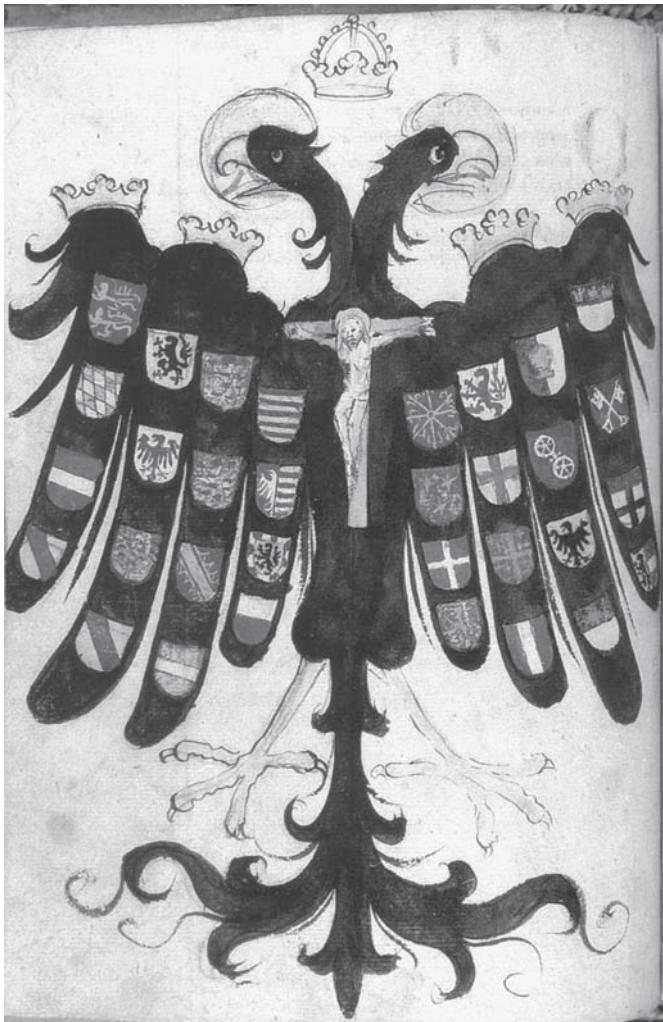


Figure 1 – ‘Quaternionenadler’, an illustration from Heinrich van Beeck’s *Agrippina*, Cologne 1469–72, Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln, Chroniken und Darstellungen, no 19A.



Figure 2 – ‘Das hailig [römisc]h Reich’, Bavaria, 1487. Wood engraving (from Baltrušaitis 1960, 245).



Figure 3 – Hans Burgkmair the Elder, frontispiece of Johannes Stammel’s *Dyalogus de diversarum gencium sectis et mundi religionibus*, Augsburg, 1508 (from Butsch 1878, pl. 19).



Figure 4 – ‘Quincunx Polonia’, an illustration from Stanisław Orzechowski’s *Rozmowa albo Dyjalog około egzekucyjej polskiej korony*, Cracow, 1563.

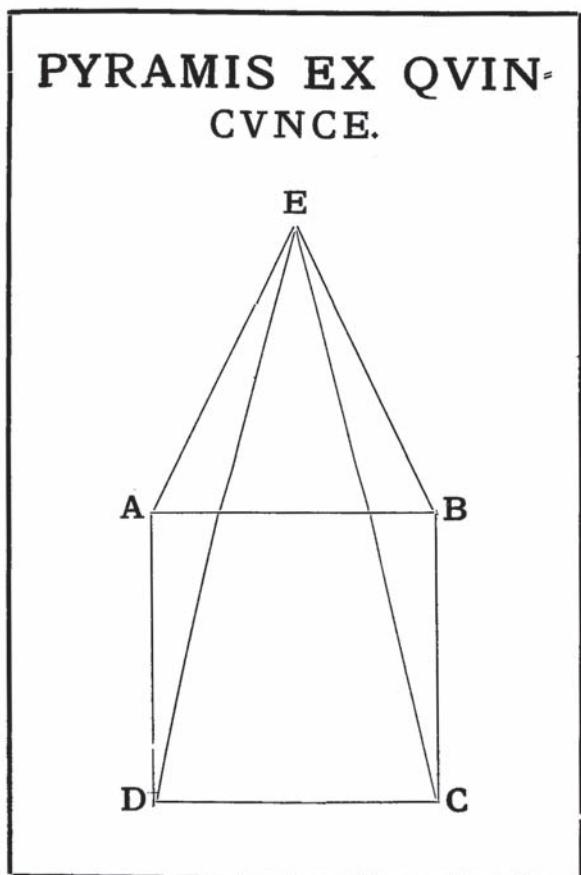


Figure 5 – ‘Pyramis ex quincunx’, an illustration from Stanisław Orzechowski’s *Quincunx, Tho jest wzor korony polskiéj*, Cracow, 1564.

# TYPVS POLONIÆ REGNI.



Wizerunk Grofesimyá Polskiégo.

Figure 6 – ‘Typus poloniæ regni’, an illustration from Stanisław Orzechowski’s *Quincunx, Tho jest wzor korony polskiéj*, Cracow, 1564.



Figure 7 – ‘The Cantor at the Torah ark’, prayer book, Germany, ca. 1395–98.  
Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Cod. Vat. ebr. 324, fol. 16v.



Figure 8 – Frontispiece to the Book of Numbers (detail), Lobbes Bible, 1084.  
Tournai, Bibliothèque du Séminaire, MS 1, fol. 77r.



Figure 9 – ‘Christ, Ecclesia, and Synagoga’, Lambert of Saint Omer, *Liber Floridus*, Saint Omer, before 1121. Ghent, Centrale Bibliotheek van de Rijksuniversiteit, Cod. 1125(92), fol. 253r.



Figure 10 – Pediment of the Torah ark, ca. 1451, from a synagogue in Nuremberg  
(from Krautheimer 1927, 251 fig. 98).



Figure 11 – ‘Moses Receiving the Law on Sinai’ (detail),  
Second Darmstadt *Haggadah*, Southern Italy, the late 15th  
c., Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbiblio-  
thek, Cod. Or. 28, fol. 9v.

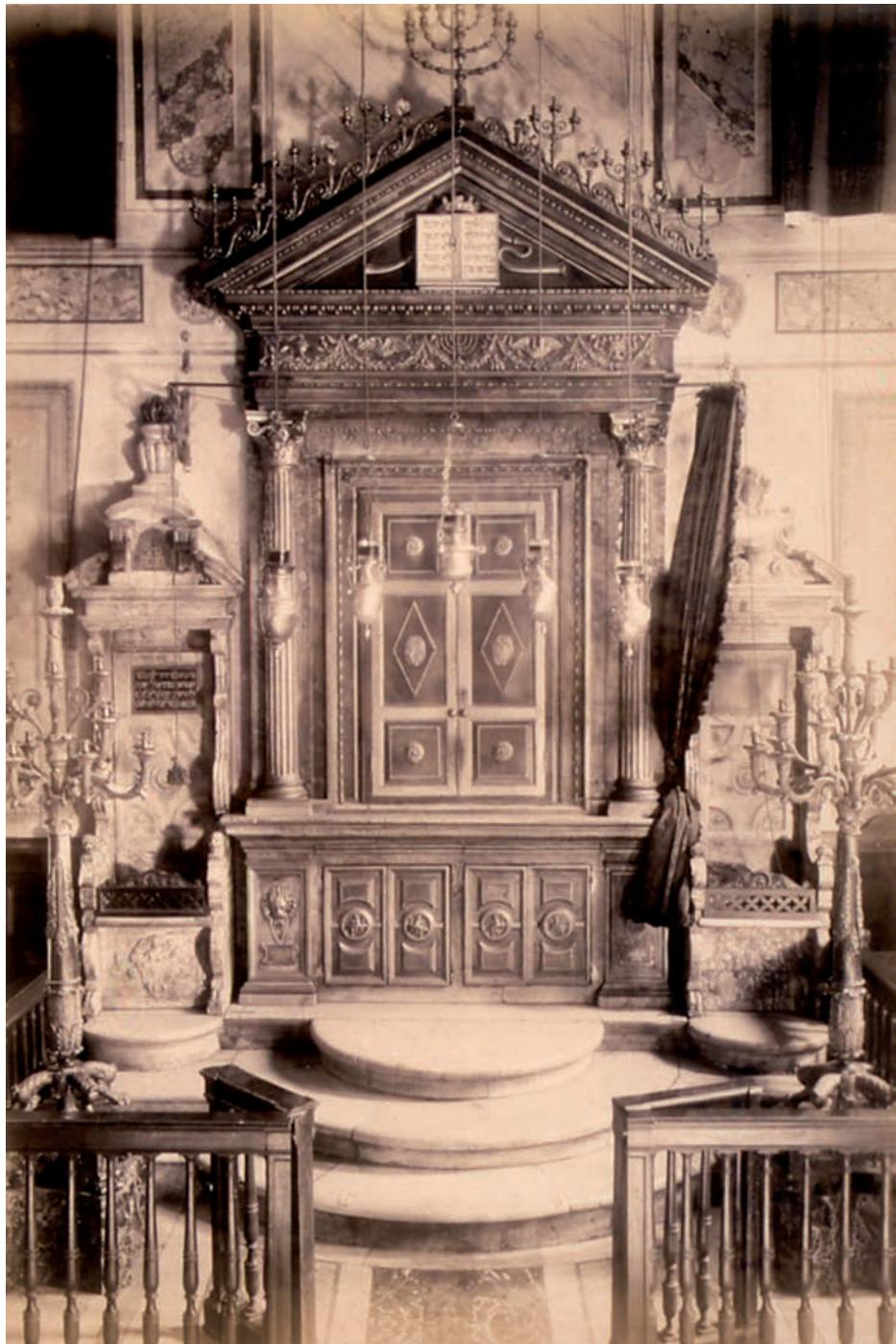


Figure 12 – Rome, *Scuola Catalana*: the Torah ark, 1523. Photograph, 1885–86. Rome, Museo di Roma (Palazzo Braschi), Archivio Fotografico Comunale.

[RODOV]



Figure 13 – Pediment of the Torah ark, ca. 1543, from the *Scuola Grande* in Mantua. Jerusalem, the Umberto Nahon Museum of Italian Jewry.



Figure 14 – Torah ark, 1635 and 1749, from the *Scuola Grande* in Mantua. Bnei-Brak, the Ponevezh Yeshiva.



Figure 15 – Cracow (Kazimierz), the Rema Synagogue: The Torah ark,  
1557–1558 and later additions.

[RODOV]



Figure 16 – Cracow (Kazimierz), the Rema Synagogue: The Torah ark, 1557–1558 (graphical reconstruction by S. Sirota).



Figure 17 – Lucas Cranach the Elder, a sketch for an altarpiece with the Lamentation, St. Peter, and St. Barnabas, 1518–20. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett – Sammlung der Zeichnungen und Druckgraphik, no 387A.



Figure 18 – Bartolomeo Berrecci and his workshop, the Sigismund Chapel at the Cathedral in Wawel of Cracow: interior looking towards the northwest, 1524–31 and latter additions.

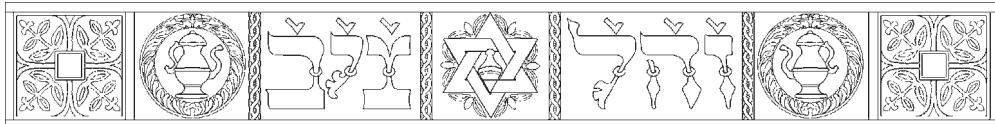


Figure 19 – Prague, Pinchas Synagogue: the frieze of the portal in the prayer hall, 1535  
(a drawing by S. Sirota).



Figure 20 – The frontispiece of a prayer book printed by Gershon Ha-Cohen, Prague, 1512.

[RODOV]



Figure 21 – Cracow (Kazimierz), Old Synagogue. Holy Ark (detail), 1557–ca. 1563.

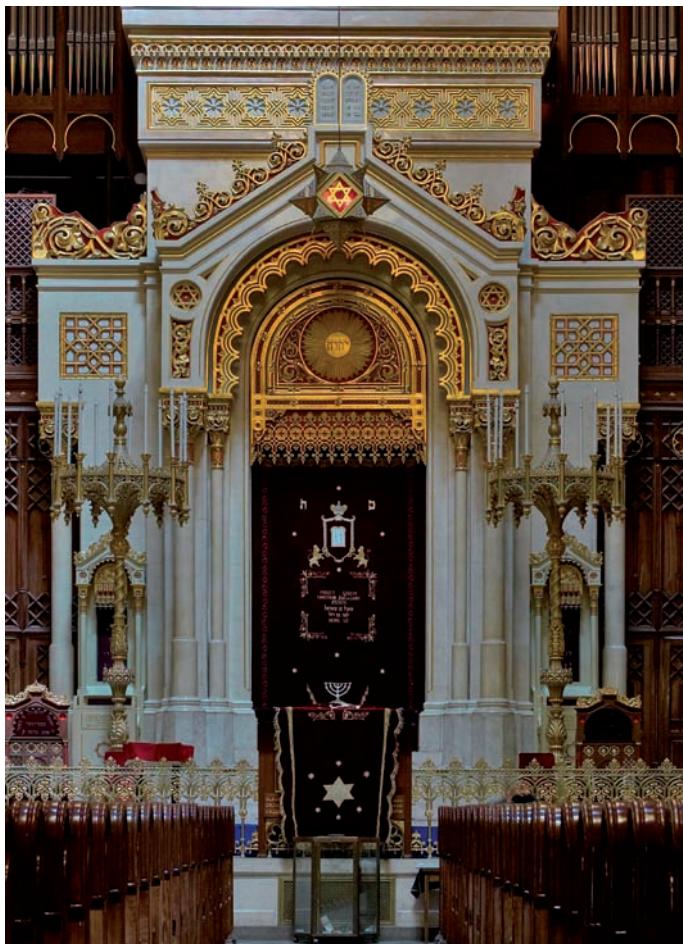


Figure 1 – Torah ark, Dohány Temple, Budapest, 1859.  
Photo: courtesy of Rudolf Klein.

[YANIV]



Figure 2 – Altarpiece, The Bernardine Church, Stradom, Cracow, Poland, nineteenth century.



Figure 3 – High altarpiece, Holy Trinity Church, Nowe Miasto near Płońsk, Poland, 1650–1700. Photo: IS PAN (Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences).



Figure 6 – Torah ark, synagogue, Šaukėnai (Szawkiany), Lithuania, 1886. Photo: IS PAN.

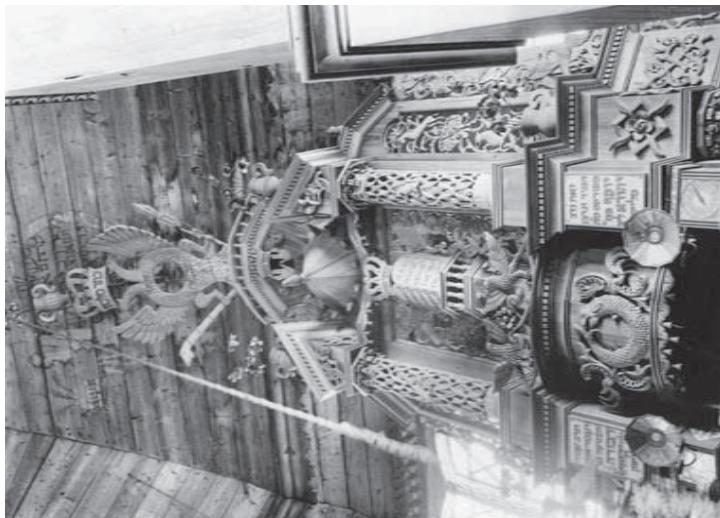


Figure 5 – Torah ark, synagogue, Valkininkai (Olkieniki), Lithuania, 1750–1800. Photo: IS PAN.

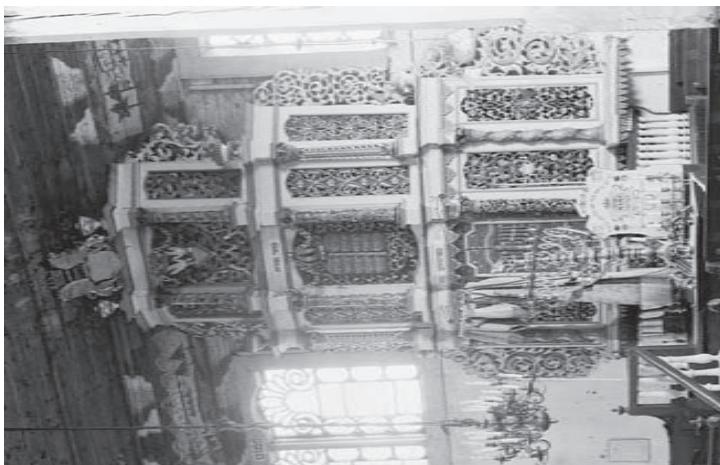


Figure 4 – Torah ark, synagogue, Grodno (Horodnia), Belarus, mid-eighteenth century. Photo: IS PAN.



Figure 7 – Eastern wallpainting, synagogue, Třebíč (Trebitsch), south Moravia, 1707.



Figure 8 – Ceiling painting, synagogue, Horb, south Germany, 1734/5. Photo: Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Permanent loan from the Bamberg Municipality, Germany. Reconstructed through donation from Jakob Michael, New York, in memory of his wife, Erna Sondheimer-Michael.



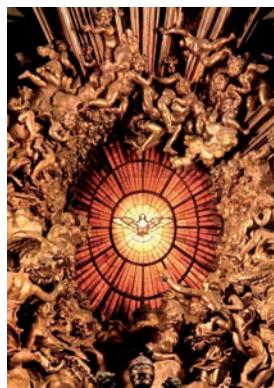
Figure 9 – Ceiling painting, synagogue, Khodoriv (Chodorów), Ukraine, ca. 1714. Photo: Tel Aviv Museum of Art Collection.



Figure 10 – Ceiling painting, main hall, synagogue, Holešov, south Moravia, 1737.



Figure 11 – Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Throne of St. Peter, 1657–1666, St. Peter's, Rome. Per gentile concessione della Fabbrica di San Pietro in Vaticano.



[YANIV]

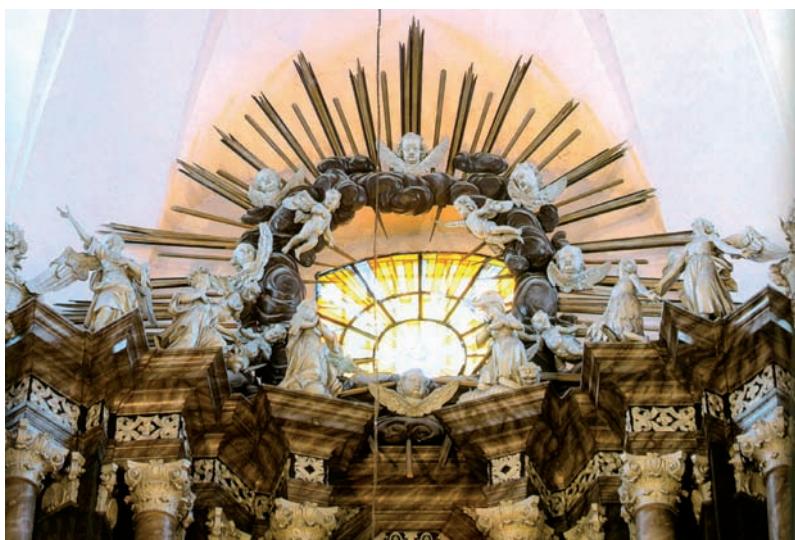


Figure 12 – High Altarpiece, Cathedral of St. Francisk Ksavery, Grodno (Horodnja), Belarus, 1737.



Figure 13 – Torah ark, synagogue, Warka, Poland, early nineteenth century.  
Photo: IS PAN.

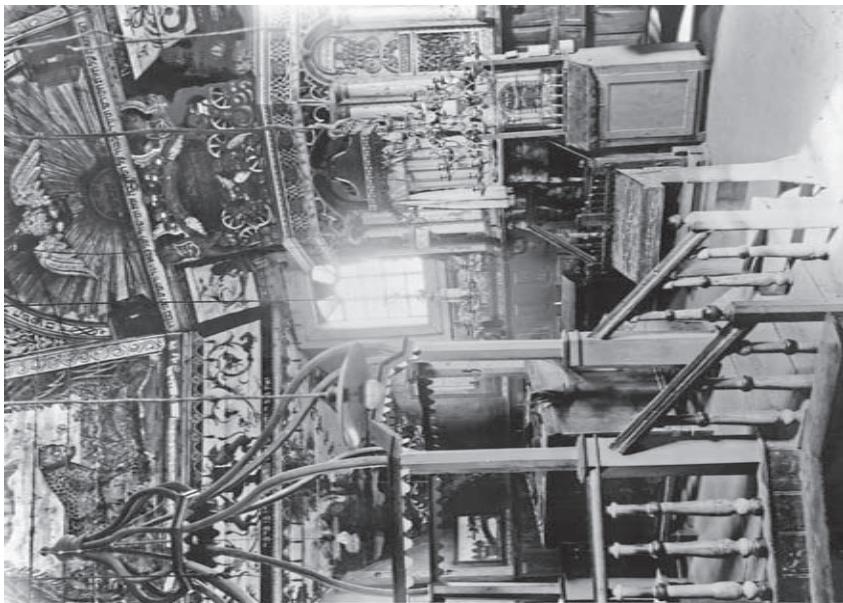




Figure 14 – Torah ark, synagogue, Druya (Druja), Belarus, ca. 1790.  
Photo: IS PAN.

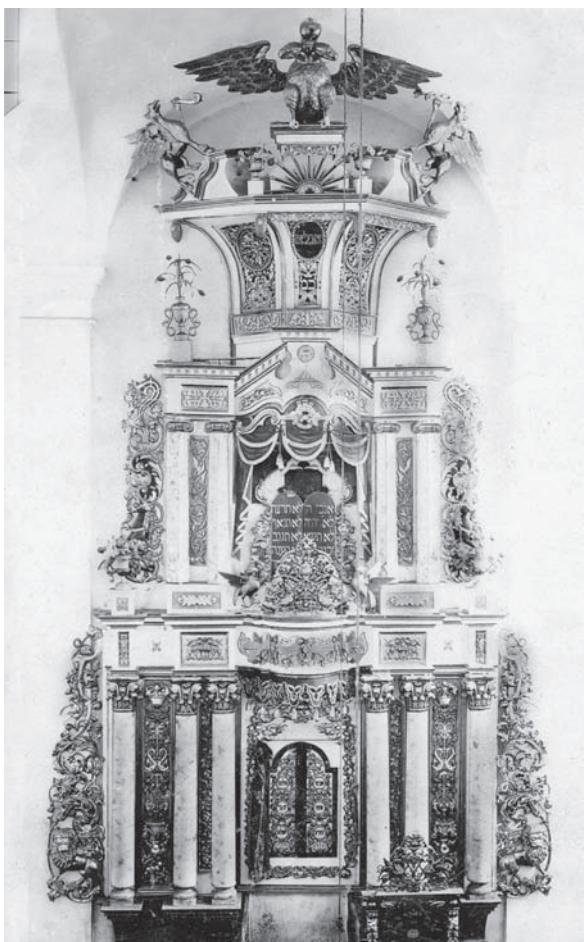


Figure 15 – Torah ark, unidentified synagogue, Ukraine, early nineteenth century. Photo: Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem.

[YANIV]



Figure 16 – Torah ark, synagogue, Włodawa, Poland, 1924.  
Photo: IS PAN.



Figure 1 – Marc Chagall, ‘The Family (Maternity)’, usually known as ‘Circumcision’, 1910,  
oil on canvas, private collection, © ADAGP, Paris 2008.



Figure 2 – Marc Chagall, ‘Family Scene’, usually known as ‘Circumcision’, 1909–10, drawing, private collection,  
© photo: Archives Marc et Ida Chagall, Paris © ADAGP, Paris 2008.



Figure 3 – Filippino Lippi, ‘The Adoration of the Child’, ca. 1485, tempera on copper-plate,  
The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

[RAJNER]



Figure 4 – Marc Chagall, ‘Interior’, 1909–10, watercolor on paper, private collection, Beverly Hills,  
© photo: Archives Marc et Ida Chagall, Paris © ADAGP, Paris 2008.

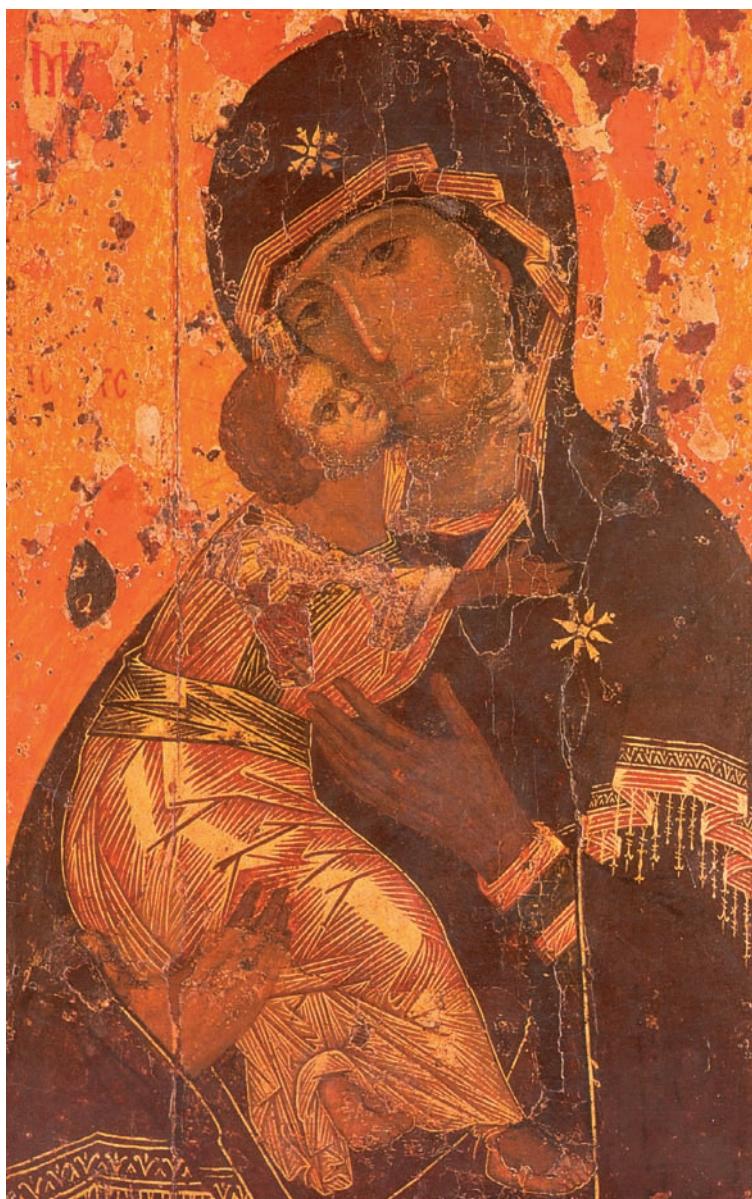


Figure 5 – ‘The Virgin of Vladimir’, icon, early 12th century,  
The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



Figure 6 – Virgin Hodigitria, icon, 1740, Republic of Belarus National Art Museum.



Figure 7 – ‘Nativity of the Virgin’, icon, 1648–50, Republic of Belarus National Art Museum.

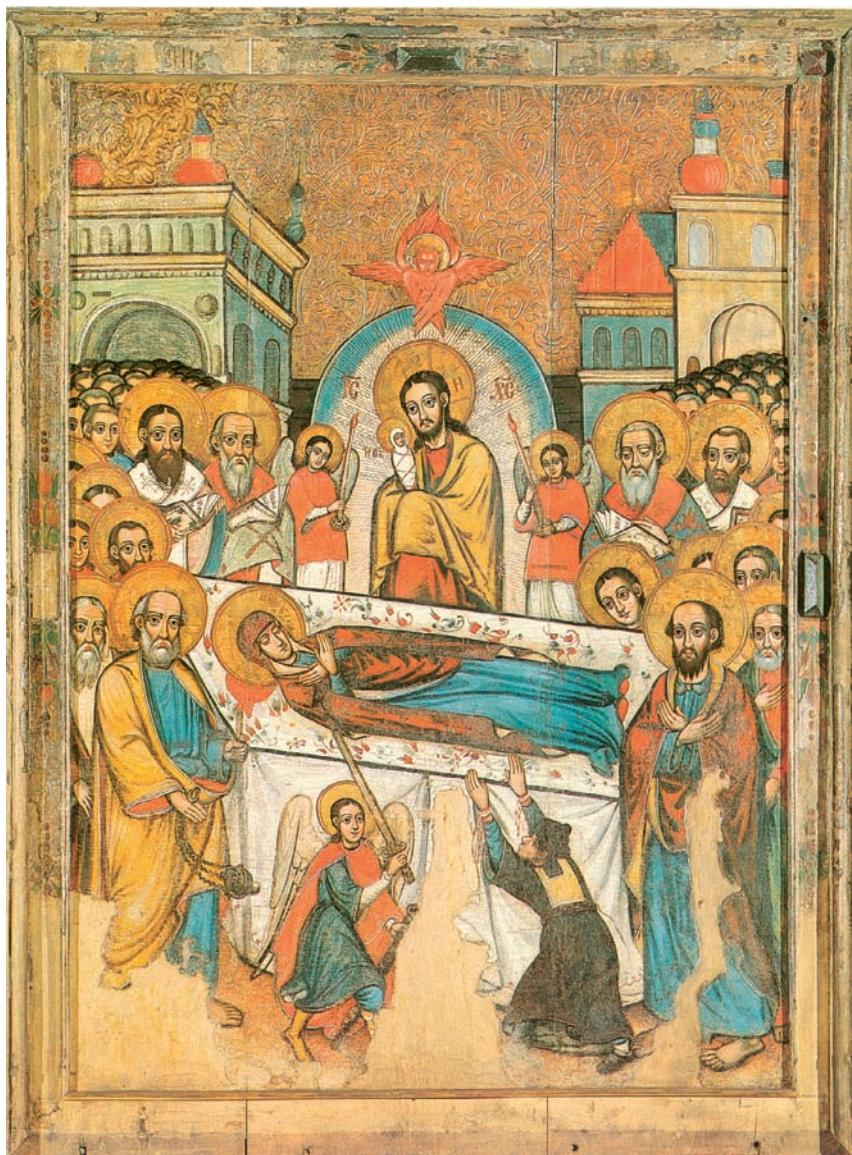


Figure 8 – ‘The Dormition’, icon, late 17th century,  
Republic of Belarus National Art Museum.



Figure 9 – Marc Chagall, ‘Procession’, 1909–10, pencil, ink, gouache and water-color on paper, © Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, © ADAGP, Paris 2008.



Figure 10 – ‘The Presentation in the Temple (Candlemas Day)’, icon, 1731,  
The Cathedral (a former Bernardine church), Minsk.



Figure 11 – ‘The Ustyug Annunciation’, icon, late 12th century,  $238 \times 169.6 \times 4.3$ ,  
The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

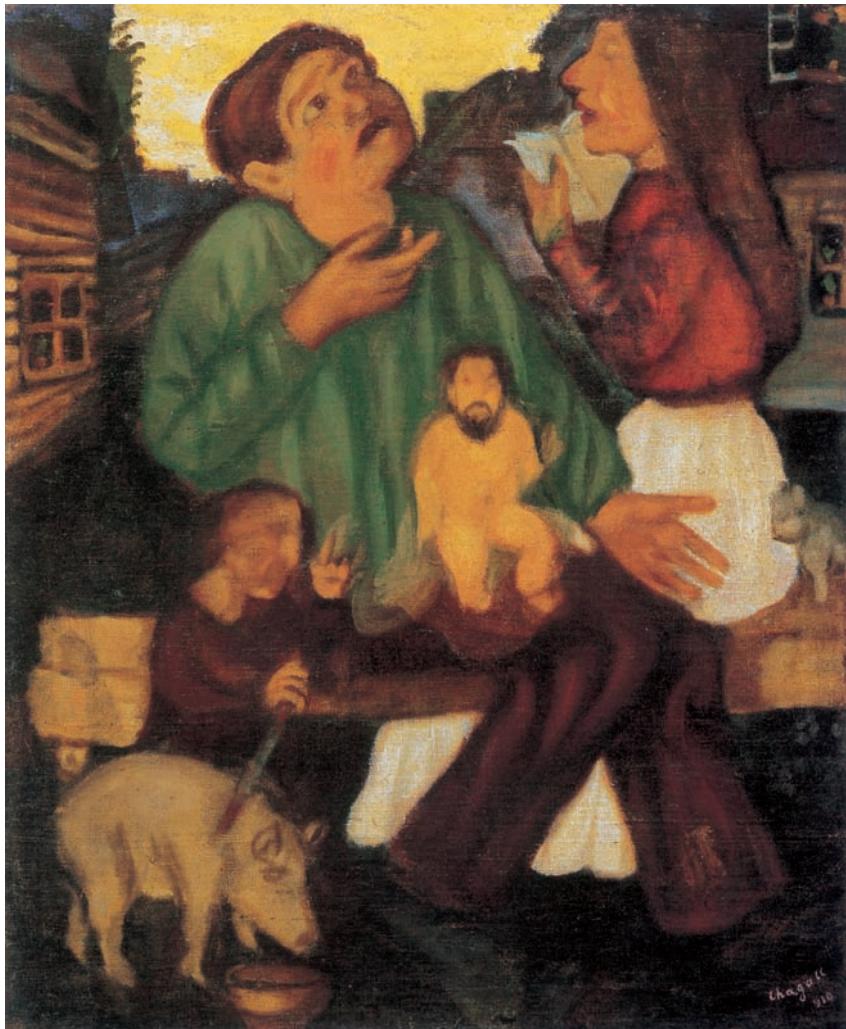


Figure 12 – Marc Chagall, ‘The Holy Family’, 1910, oil on canvas,  
© Kunsthaus, Zurich, © ADAGP, Paris 2008.



Figure 13 – ‘The Transfiguration’, icon, 16th century, Novgorod Museum, Novgorod.

[RAJNER]



Figure 14 – Chagall and Bella shortly before his departure for Paris,  
photograph, 1910, © Archives Marc et Ida Chagall, Paris.



Figure 15 – Raphael, ‘Madonna in the Meadow’, 1505–06, 113 × 88.5,  
© photo: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



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ISSN 1388-2074