

## Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism

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**Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives  
of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism**

# **An End to Antisemitism!**



Edited by

Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat,  
and Lawrence H. Schiffman

## **Volume 2**

# **Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism**



Edited by  
Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat,  
and Lawrence H. Schiffman

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# Preface and Acknowledgements

Antisemitism, the “longest hatred,”<sup>1</sup> still flourishes in our societies. It is not restricted to extreme right-wing movements and social groups, but it also flourishes in the political center and on the left. Political, religious, and lay groups alike continue a tradition of discrimination against Jews, insults, and antisemitic hate crimes every day. Given this unacceptable reality, in February 2018, approximately one thousand scholars, activists, decision makers, and influencers met in Vienna at the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” The conference was jointly organized by the European Jewish Congress, New York University, Tel Aviv University, and the University of Vienna to study antisemitism with an unprecedented interdisciplinary breadth and historical depth. Over 150 presenters from all over the world engaged with all forms of antisemitism from a variety of perspectives. The present series, “An End to Antisemitism!,” documents the conference’s output and research results from various fields. Leading experts in Religious Studies, History, Political Studies, Social Sciences, Philosophy, Psychology, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies shed light onto antisemitic traditions from all their respective viewpoints. Together, they help to shape a discourse of understanding, knowing, and recognizing various forms of antisemitism in order to confront and combat them.

One of the aims of the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” was, therefore, to create concrete policy recommendations regarding how to effectively combat antisemitism. These have been collected and published in a separate *Catalogue of Policies*,<sup>2</sup> a document of practical impact. They also form one of the bases of the first volume of the present series.<sup>3</sup> All subsequent volumes are addressed to an academic audience. They document the research leading to these policy recommendations.

The present volume is concerned with methods of confronting antisemitism in Christianity and Islam. As one of the pillars of cultural memory, religions have been contributing to and shaping images of “the Jew” from ancient and pre-modern into contemporary times. Fortunately, especially since the modern age, voices from inside these religions have been raised against these discrimi-

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1 R. S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (London: Methuen, 1991).

2 A. Lange, A. Muzicant, D. Porat, L. H. Schiffman, M. Weitzman, *An End to Antisemitism! A Catalogue of Policies to Combat Antisemitism* (Brussels: European Jewish Congress, 2018).

3 A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds., *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

natory images and age-old stereotypes that have served as justification for antisemitic hate crimes over and over again. In modern Christianity and Islam, important voices call for the tolerance, acceptance, and diversity of identities and opinions. The present volume not only responds to these calls but can also help strengthen the continuous effort to combat and eradicate antisemitism in both religions.

Unfortunately, as with most collective volumes, the present one does not document all the lectures in the field of Religious Studies that were delivered at the conference in February 2018. Not all colleagues were able to contribute due to a multitude of other obligations. However, the volume also includes some contributions from an earlier conference focusing on antisemitism in Islam. The conference “Islam and Antisemitism” was organized jointly by the University of Vienna and Tel Aviv University and held in Vienna, November 2016. We are grateful for the willingness of the participants in this conference to share their research results for publication in this volume.

The present volume consists of three parts. The first confronts *Ancient and Medieval Religious Traditions of Antisemitism*. The second part sheds light on *Antisemitism in the Study of Holy Scriptures and Related Writings in the Modern Period*. The third and final part confronts *Antisemitic Traditions in Contemporary Christianity and Islam*. The articles within the three sections follow a chronological order with regard to the time period with which they are concerned. A different sequence of articles was chosen whenever necessary to serve the overarching theme of the volume and its audience with regard to readability and accessibility. A general introduction to the volume tries to establish the notion of antisemitism as religion per se, as an integral component of self-definition for every religious and social group.

A project like this volume, and the whole series, surely cannot be completed without the assistance of other individuals. Therefore, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to a list of people who have supported us in shaping this volume and bringing it to life.

First, we would like to give a word of thanks to all our colleagues who have contributed to the present volume. Their research documents a vast interdisciplinarity of fields which makes not only the present volume but the complete series “An End to Antisemitism!” an unparalleled publication.

We are grateful to De Gruyter Publishers for accepting our five-volume series of conference proceedings for publication. The support that Albrecht Döhnert, Sophie Wagenhofer, and Alice Meroz gave us in preparing these mammoth proceedings for publication has been exemplary. The same gratitude is due to Anna Cwikla. As with volume one, she has made an enormous effort in proof-reading, copyediting, and English stylizing. Her work was particularly important in terms

of correct translations of professional terminology in the study of the three monotheistic religions.

The other editors are especially grateful to Kerstin Mayerhofer for taking the lead in editing our proceedings. Her commitment has been unparalleled and without her, the present volume and none of the other outcomes of the conference would exist.

Of course, a project like this requires significant funds which are often surprisingly difficult to raise. It is therefore a more than pleasant obligation to express our gratitude to our main sponsor Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress. Moshe Kantor provided much needed financial support not only for the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” in 2018 but also for all its printed outcomes. At the same time, we would also like to take the opportunity to convey words of thanks to all other sponsors as listed on pages 337–8.

Many more people have been involved in the project. They participated in the conference in 2018 and have supported us in the preparation of the conference proceedings. All their names are listed in volume one of “An End to Antisemitism!”<sup>4</sup>

New York, Tel Aviv, and Vienna, March 2, 2020

Armin Lange  
Kerstin Mayerhofer  
Dina Porat  
Lawrence H. Schiffman

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<sup>4</sup> Lange, Mayerhofer, Porat, and Schiffman, *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism*, xi–xvii.



# Armin Lange and Kerstin Mayerhofer

## Introduction

To effectively counteract contemporary antisemitism, it is important to recognize the traditions that feed modern hatred of Jews. Manifestations of antisemitism in contemporary cultures and societies are manifold. They range from hate speech to actual physical violence and can be encountered in political or economic realms, in social discourses of nation and race, or on a meta-level both culturally and ideologically. Religious and theological antisemitism can be regarded as the source for most of the other forms of Jew-hatred, especially in its shaping of a canon of discriminatory images and perceptions of “the Jews” as essentially different from anyone not Jewish.

Many contributions to the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” confirmed that ancient and medieval religious traditions of Jew-hatred still have an impact today. Their canon of antisemitic traditions remains vivid, and it is necessary to first recognize the traditions in question to subsequently eradicate them from contemporary discourse.

## Usage of Terms

The usage of the term *antisemitism* is as complex as the genesis of the term itself.<sup>1</sup> This is why some of the contributions in this volume dispute that the texts they study are “antisemitic” in nature. They rather wish to apply a more general term of “Jew-hatred” that subsumes all different forms of polemics against and persecutions of Jews. Focusing on theological concepts, especially in Christian religious history, some of the contributions also claim that specifically religious stereotypes confirm a notion of “anti-Judaism” that is not necessarily connected with other discriminatory allegations against Jews other than them accepting a system of beliefs and practices differing from and competing with Christianity. However, these traditions are also in fact clearly polemical and express negative images of and attitudes against Jews that reach far beyond the scope of religious alterity.

This seeming contradiction to the above claim of the ancient and medieval roots of modern antisemitism in some of the present volume’s contributions can

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1 See, e.g., G. I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

be explained in two ways. (1) Not all of the ancient and medieval roots of modern antisemitism are perceived by all authors to be antisemitic in nature themselves but are regarded as expressions of the rejection of Judaism for other reasons than Jew-hatred.<sup>2</sup> (2) Despite the conference being based on the IHRA's Working Definition of Antisemitism,<sup>3</sup> several contributions employ different definitions of antisemitism. While some essays perceive all forms of Jew-hatred and anti-Jewish discrimination as antisemitic, others are more restrictive in their use of the term antisemitism as mentioned above. The editors of the present volume have chosen not to unify the usage of the various terms mentioned above. However, each author has been asked to present a definition according to which they understand and use a respective term.

## Symbols, Images, and Traditions in the Formation of (Religious) Group Identities

Both individual and group identities are constructed and maintained by way of distinction and differentiation. A child develops its identity by differentiating itself from its mother in a process of several years. The construction of a personal identity includes thus not only the recognition “I am I” but also the recognition “You are not me.” Social and religious group identities are constructed and maintained in a similar way, that is, in differentiation from other social or religious groups implying thus the recognition “We are we but not you.” Group identities are thus constructed by way of distinguishing an in-group from an out-group, or—to say it in other words—a collective “I” from a collective “Other.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cf., e.g., the contribution by Reuven Firestone to this volume, “Is the Qur’an ‘Antisemitic’?,” 85–106.

<sup>3</sup> For further detail refer to volume 1 of the present series, A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds., *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 565–67.

<sup>4</sup> This is based on Henri Tajfel's social identity theory whose central idea is that members of an in-group (“us”) are conjoined together through the identification of negative aspects of an out-group (“them”). By doing so, the in-group members do not only differentiate themselves from their out-group opposites but also enhance their own self-image and identity. Cf. H. Tajfel and J. C. Turner, “The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior,” in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. S. Worchel and W. G. Austin (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), 7–24, and H. Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (London: Academic Press, 1978). While social identity theory is classical in scholarly fields related to social studies such as psychology, its core concepts are also very helpful for an analysis of the formation of religious group identity in religious studies.

In the case of some religions, such a group identity is constructed by defining a unifying set of religious doctrines that distinguishes this religion from all other religions. In the case of other religions, the same goal is reached by a set of religious, moral, and ritual rules that achieve the same differentiation.

How religious identity is understood and constructed—both in terms of differentiating oneself from another (“I am not you”) and understanding oneself as being part of a distinct group (“We are not them”)—is thus a process inextricably linked to how religions are shaped. In establishing a new system of beliefs, values, and moral codes, religions need an opposite against which to define these beliefs, values, and moral codes and to prove their validity. On the other hand, they help to form communal spirits, feelings of solidarity, and shared identity. When members of the same group are brought together and held responsible for by the same religious beliefs, values, and moral codes, a common sense of togetherness and identity is shaped. This is true for all major religions.

The construction of religious group identities in monotheistic religions *qua definition* is especially competitive. The claim that there would be only one god negates all other religions to a much larger extent than in the case of polytheistic religions. A polytheistic religion can differentiate itself from another polytheistic religion without rejection of their opposite religious group identity. As an example, the claim of a collective “We” to believe in Isis does not need to deny the veracity of veneration of Mithras in its differentiation from a collective “Them.” The construction of the religious group identity of the Isis mystery cult, therefore, did not depend solely on the differentiation from other mystery cults such as the Mithras cult. There is no need to fully negate another religious belief system in order to corroborate the very rationale of their own religious existence. Monotheism, however, beyond differentiation, implies rejection and condemnation of the religious “Other” against which its very own religious group identity is formed by default. If there can be only one god, then all other gods must be void.

This is even more so the case when a given monotheistic religion developed out of a preexisting one, that is, Christianity out of Judaism and Islam out of both Judaism and Christianity. Rejection, condemnation, and dismissal of a monotheistic ancestor religion is, if not a necessity, at least an obvious choice in the formation of the religious group identity of a newly born monotheistic religious group.

For the purpose of forming and maintaining their religious group identity in differentiation from Judaism, both Christianity and Islam constructed a set of religious symbols that guide their recognition of the Jewish out-group as to the Christian and Islamic in-group, respectively. Such symbols include the demoni-



zation of Judaism as purported, for example, in John 8:44 in Christianity<sup>5</sup> or the supposed violation of the covenant of Medina by the Jews of Medina in Islam.<sup>6</sup> The incorporation of antisemitic symbols into the religious canon of symbolism and imagery is thus inherent in and characteristic for both Christianity and Islam.<sup>7</sup>

Two examples from Christianity and Islam must suffice here to illustrate our point.

(1) From its early days onwards, Christianity has been drawing heavily on the notion of a Jewish “Other.” The Jews serve as their religious opposite and proof of Christianity’s truthful and righteous re-interpretation of the “Old Law.” Judaism is considered to be the outdated “parent religion” from which Christianity wants to set itself apart. This idea is already embodied in the phrase “New Testament.”

The term *New Testament* as a designation of the second part of the Christian Bible is inextricably linked not only with Christianity’s rejection of Judaism but also with its claims to replace it. The phrase itself means “new covenant” and is Latin in origin [*novum testamentum*]. The Latin renders in turn the Greek ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη [*ē kainē diathēkē*] (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6). The phrase is Jew-

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5 See, e.g., the contribution by Adele Reinhartz to the present volume, “‘Children of the Devil’: John 8:44 and its Early Reception,” 43–53, or the contribution by Maxine Grossman and Armin Lange to volume 1 of the conference proceedings, “Jews and Judaism between Bedevilment and Source of Salvation: Christianity as a Cause of and a Cure against Antisemitism,” in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!*, ed. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 133–64. Also, just recently, M. Lindsay Kaplan has drawn attention to the understanding of literal figures employed to illustrate a theological claim in medieval Christian writings as a form of (proto-)racist thinking. Cf. M. L. Kaplan, *Figuring Racism in Medieval Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

6 Cf., e.g., Israel Shrenzel’s contribution to the present volume, “Against the Mainstream: Muhammad Abduh’s Reading of Q1:7 and its Implications for Current Muslim-Jewish Relations,” 207–19, D. Pratt, “Muslim-Jewish Relations: Some Islamic Paradigms,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21, no. 1 (2010): 11–21. For a collection of common antisemitic perceptions and motifs in the Qur’an and related scriptures cf. A. G. Bostom, ed., *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism: From Sacred Texts to Solemn History* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2008).

7 Antisemitic traditions, symbolism, and imagery are not foreign to other major religions as well. Contemporary Hinduism and Buddhism show about the same prevalence of antisemitic notions and stereotypes as does contemporary Christianity. Cf. *ADL Global 100: An Index of Anti-Semitism*, <https://global100.adl.org/>, accessed March 21, 2020. Since the present volume’s contributions focus on Christianity and Islam, only these two religions will be discussed in terms of the history of their antisemitic tradition and its transmission into contemporary Christian and Islamic religious denominations.

ish in origin and goes back to Jer 31:31 which promises Judaism a “New Covenant” [בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה, *berit ḥadashah*] with its God after the double conquest of Jerusalem in the years 597 and 587 B.C.E. and the subsequent exile of many Jews to Mesopotamia. Jeremiah 31:31 promises thus a renewal of God’s covenant with his people after a period of punishment. Christianity, however, appropriated this promise and understood it as a forecast of itself. Instead of a renewed relationship between God and his elected people, Christianity perceived itself as representing a new covenant between God and the world replacing and superseding Judaism as the “Old Covenant” God made with his formerly chosen people. This pattern of thought is called *supersessionism* or *replacement theology*. It is embodied already in the names of the two parts of the Christian Bible, that is, the Old Testament and New Testament. Today, many Christians are not aware of the supersessionist implications of this terminology anymore. However, when this terminology is used, awareness of its implied antisemitic notion is important. Designations for the Christian Old Testament that avoid supersessionist implications and are in use today are “First Testament” and/or “Hebrew Bible.” Still, corresponding rhetoric for similarly appropriate terminology for the Christian New Testament such as “Second Testament” and/or “Christian Bible” is largely lacking.

Throughout the present volume, the term *New Testament* will be used, yet when this rhetoric is used, Christian supersessionist thought is nowhere endorsed here, rather its usage intends to depict a current Christian practice.

The establishment of a “new covenant” is both Christianity’s aim and reason for rejecting Judaism. This religious doctrine has served—and continues to serve—as one of the major pillars of Christianity. Replacement theology was, and to a significant extent is even now at the heart of constructing and maintaining Christianity’s religious identity. Christianity’s self-conceptualization as fulfilment of Judaism in assuming the role of God’s chosen people forms the basis for supersessionist thought even in contemporary Christianity. Notwithstanding different representations of Christian supersessionism, some more radical than others, all of them underline the general principle of Christian religious superiority with various images from the cultural, social, and economic realm which were formulated and continuously conflated already in pre-modern times. Right-wing ideologies such as the Christian Identity movement apply these ideas to argue for their calls for the eradication of Jews and Judaism. Ideologies like these have fueled and continue to fuel antisemitic and other racist hate crimes and acts of terrorism executed by White Supremacist or neo-Nazi groups.

(2) While the negative stereotypes regarding Jews in Islam differ from European Christian antisemitic perceptions, they too can be traced back to its earliest history. The Qur’an also shows the notion of a Jewish “counter figure” and em-

ploys the Jews figuratively to corroborate Islamist core beliefs and values. Quite often, these were discussed in the Hadith and Sira where they became increasingly discriminatory. An example for this phenomenon is the notion of *taḥrīf* that is present already in the Qur'an and is still employed today in Muslim polemics against both Jews and Christians. The idea of *taḥrīf* is even instrumental in forming an Islamic replacement theology that targets both Judaism and Christianity as the rejected and replaced religious out-group. *Taḥrīf* either claims that Jews and Christians would have forged their scriptures to suppress the true religious message of Allah to them (*taḥrīf al-nass*) and that they would interpret them wrongly to achieve the same goal (*taḥrīf al-ma'ani*). Therefore, Allah would have had to reveal his true message of Islam anew to Muhammad in the form of the Qur'an and Islam would have been necessary to replace both Judaism and Christianity as corruptions of the true message of God.

The *taḥrīf* polemic draws on Christian polemics that suggest that Jews would have forged their scriptures to suppress the truth about the messianic nature of Jesus of Nazareth<sup>8</sup> and turns them into a supersessionist rationale for the very existence of Islam. Its basis can be traced back to the Qur'an itself (e.g., Sura 3:78), however an increasing radicalization can be found in the Hadith and Sira. Examples for the latter include Sahih al-Bukhari's *Kitāb al-sahadat* [*The Book of Testimonies*, no. 29] from roughly 900 C.E. *Taḥrīf* polemics and *taḥrīf* replacement theology did not stop with the Sira but characterize the construction of Islamic group identity from the Middle Ages until today. An example from the high Middle Ages is Ibn Hazm (994–1064). In his book *Kitāb al-Faṣl fi l-milal wa-l-ahwā' wa-l-nihāl* [*Treatise on Religions, Sects, and Creeds*], the chapter polemicalizing against Jews and Christen is entitled:

Treatise on the obvious contradictions and evident lies in the Book which the Jews call the Torah and in the Rest of their books, and in the Four Gospels, all of which establish that these have been distorted, and are different from what God, Mighty and Exalted, revealed.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. W. Adler, "The Jews as Falsifiers: Charges of Tendentious Emendation in Anti-Jewish Christian Polemic," in *Translation of Scripture: Proceedings of a Conference at the Annenberg Research Institute, May 15–16, 1989*, ed. D. M. Goldenberg (Philadelphia: Annenberg Research Institute, 1990), 1–27.

<sup>9</sup> Translation according to M. Whittingham, "Ezra as the Corrupter of the Torah? Re-Assessing Ibn Ḥazm's Role in the Long History of an Idea," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1 (2013): 256. For *taḥrīf*, see also C. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); A.-S. Boisliveau, "Qur'anic Discourse on the Bible: Ambivalence and *taḥrīf* in the Light of Self-Reference," *MIDÉO* 33 (2018): 3–38; H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 19–49; H. Lazarus-Yafeh, "Taḥrīf," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P.

Concerning *tahrif* it is especially important to notice that it is directed against both Jews and Christians. This duo-direction documents how a positive self-image and self-esteem is created in an in-group through distinction from an opposite out-group, here in a most negative way. On the other hand, it also serves as example of how Jew-hatred often intersects with discrimination of other religious, cultural, social and ethnic groups.

While the basis for current Muslim antisemitism cannot be traced back to the Qur'an as Islam's foundational scripture to the same extent as Christian Jew-hatred can be traced back already to the New Testament as Christianity's foundational scripture, antisemitic hate crimes based on a discriminatory understanding of Muslim holy scripture can be encountered already in the pre-modern times. However, Muslim antisemitism changed significantly in the nineteenth century after common Christian antisemitic perceptions had found their way into Muslim theology. Both genuinely Muslim traditions of Jew-hatred as well as imported Christian and/or Western antisemitic traditions form the basis of contemporary discrimination against Jews in Islam. Many antisemitic ideas are employed today to advance an anti-Zionist agenda against the State of Israel by Muslim individuals and states.

Even though some of the classical Christian antisemitic notions and images are alien to Islamic culture and heritage, both religions have always conceptualized Jews as their religious "Other" in the process of formation of their own identity. These images prevail in both contemporary Christianity and today's Islam in their various denominations. Because the main question of our conference was how to combat antisemitism, the essays described below include some that focus not so much on ancient and medieval sources themselves but ask how the persistence of their antisemitic motifs and notions might be countered today. All of them, however, are dedicated to the questions of how traditions, symbols, and imagery that are employed to construct and maintain Christian and Islamic religious group identities in a way that is hostile to Judaism can be counteracted.

The present volume engages thus with one of the basic mechanisms underlying religiously motivated Jew-hatred. Only a thorough understanding of such mechanisms allows the development of successful strategies to combat antisemitism effectively. The traditions, symbols, and imagery that are used in the construction and maintenance of Christian and Islamic group identities and which

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Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 10:111–12; T. Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Hazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). For research on modern *tahrif*, cf. G. Nickel, "Higher Criticism," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, vol. 11, *Halah – Hizquni*, ed. D. C. Allison Jr. et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), and G. Nickel, *The Gentle Answer to the Muslim Accusation of Biblical Falsification* (Salmon Arm: Bruton Gate, 2015).

are discussed by the contributions of this volume are part of a system of religious symbols. This symbolic system lies at the core of both Christian and Islamic identity. It is dynamic and flexible, adjusting itself to social, historic, and religious developments through history and transforms in accordance with other cultural, political, and socio-economic changes in the world.<sup>10</sup> It is preserved in the world's cultural memories from which individual antisemitic symbols are drawn by antisemites to understand the Jewish "Other" in their respective light. The religious symbols provided by the world's cultural memories form pre-conceptions that allow for an interpretation of both the Jewish out-group per se as well as the antisemitic in-group as distinct from the Jewish-out group. In other words, the antisemitic in-group perceives the Jewish out-group by way of the antisemitic symbolic systems mentioned above. The religious symbol systems underlying both Christianity and Islam thus play a key role in the antisemitic construction of religious group identities.

In the present introduction, this mechanism was briefly discussed by way of the example of supersessionist thought in Christianity and Islam. It is addressed in more detail in the present series' first volume *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*<sup>11</sup> and forms the rationale from which the recommendations of the first volume against antisemitism in religious groups were developed. It has, of course, implications for the recommendations of how to combat antisemitism in other areas as well. These will be discussed further and corroborated by the contributions in the subsequent volumes of the present series.

## Confronting Ancient and Medieval Religious Traditions of Antisemitism

In ancient and medieval Christianity, the relation between Christianity as a newly established religion and its Jewish antecedent is one important pillar in the formation of Christian identity. Drawing on their belief system on Jewish thought, early Christians had to find a way of differentiating their new faith from it. As is often the case in processes of identity formation, Christianity em-

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<sup>10</sup> More about the continuities and discontinuities of antisemitic tendencies throughout the ages resulting from cultural, political, and socio-economic changes will be discussed in the subsequent three volumes of the present series, both in their introductions as well as in the contributions to the volumes.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Lange and Grossman, "Jews and Judaism between Bedevilment and Source of Salvation."

ployed the concept of alterity—being different from their former religious “parent” and therein finding their own religious group identity and self-expression. The idea of Christianity being the fulfillment of God’s promises and salvation as well as the belief in a spiritual, that is, allegorical way of interpreting the “Old Law” led to a subsequent conceptualization of the Jews as the ultimate opposite to the early Christians. A canon of images and theological notions helped to shape the idea of a Jewish “Other” that would in turn confirm and validate the new theological concepts of Christianity. In this ongoing process, that was reaffirmed especially during the Middle Ages, a variety of antisemitic imagery and traditions were established and substantiated that are effective even today. They led not only to an increasing rejection of Judaism but also to antisemitic discrimination and persecution of Jews on the basis of religion. The following contributions to the present volume focus on the theological concepts that are part of the core of this process.

Karin Finsterbusch identifies *Antisemitic Positions in Christian Holy Scriptures: The Idea of Israel’s Election and its Challenge for New Testament Authors and for their Readership* and engages with Christian supersessionism as a response to the Jewish idea of Israel’s Election. She argues that the examples of Rom 11:11–36; Eph 1:3–14; 2:14–16; and Acts 13:14–51 show how Christianity, in its development as new monotheistic religion, established itself as replacement of Israel and thus made it “nearly impossible to value Israel as God’s chosen people” (28). Early Christianity did only understand itself as the new Israel but also regarded Judaism unworthy of God’s protection and preservation—“the New Covenant was believed to have superseded the old Mosaic Covenant” (37). Finsterbusch argues that both Martin Luther and the figures of *ecclesia* and *synagoga* in Christian art are examples of how antisemitic supersessionism dominated Christian thought until the end of the Shoah.

Adele Reinhartz’s contribution “*Children of the Devil*”: *John 8:44 and its Early Reception* shows that supersessionism was not the only way in which early Christianity established its group identity through the rejection of Judaism. Reinhartz regards John 8:44 as a part of rhetorical program that is based on the concept of “a covenantal relationship with God through faith in Jesus” (51). The competing claim that Jews have been and are God’s covenantal partners is discounted by the statement of John 8:44 that the Jews have the devil as their father. The Gospel of John promotes thus “a parting of the ways” between those who follow Jesus “and the Jews who do not” (52). Throughout its history of reception, John 8:44 was read both with and without associating Judaism with the devil. When the Gospel of John became part of the Christian canon, “John 8:44, like the rest of the Gospel, came to be seen as a divinely inspired and eternally valid, and therefore, exceedingly dangerous text” (52).

Agnethé Siquans' essay analyzes *Anti-Jewish Polemic and Jewish Bible Interpretation: Two Examples from Origen and Ephrem the Syrian* and shows that biblical exegesis too was employed to maintain a Christian identity through the rejection of Judaism. The close link between Jewish and Christian hermeneutics and interpretative traditions demonstrates that both Origen and Ephrem conceptualized Jews as an alien and sometimes hostile religious "Other" to keep Christians away from Judaism. Many of the topoi formulated in patristic polemics against the Jews "soon became conventional and played a prominent role in later antisemitism." According to Siquans, therefore, "the first step towards avoiding the perpetuation of these concepts is critically revealing their way of construing identity and its ongoing impact on contemporary thought about Jewishness" (66).

The blood libel, that is, accusing Jews of murdering Christian children in order to use their blood for religious and medical purposes, is a narrative widely employed not only in medieval antisemitic polemic but continues its tradition even today. As other antisemitic polemics, the blood libel served the elevation of Christians above their Jewish "Other" and subsequent demonization of that Jewish "Other." The blood libel was instrumental in maintaining a Christian identity in delineation from their supposedly murderous Jewish opposites. David Berger reflects on *Scholarship and the Blood Libel: Past and Present* and uses the blood libel as an example to show how evidence and reasoned argument will not be able to reach the purveyors of antisemitic propaganda and persecution, that is, the core of antisemites. However, it can be applied to enlighten a substantial part of the world's population susceptible to antisemitic polemics and, consequently, to "overcome the resurgence of chimerical and near-chimerical fantasies about Jews and the Jewish state" (83).

The question whether early and medieval Islamic polemics against Jews should be regarded as antisemitism or not is widely disputed among modern scholars of Islam. As explained above, the answer to this question depends heavily on how antisemitism is defined. Polemics against Jews as well as hatred and discrimination of Jews can be found already in the Qur'an and widely throughout its medieval reception. Their abundance is undisputed. But even during those periods when Muslim Jew-hatred and antisemitic discrimination were more extensive, they mostly did not compare with what Jews had to experience and suffer in Medieval Europe. The example of scapegoating the Jews for the plague pandemic, which is pervasive in Christian Europe but absent from Muslim anti-Jewish polemic, needs to suffice to underline this point. Such differences between Christian and Muslim Jew-hatred and the fact that discrimination against Jews was less drastic in the Muslim world does not mean that contemporary an-



tisemitism in the Muslim world is free of roots that date back to the beginnings of Islam and the Qur'an itself.

Reuven Firestone discusses the question *Is the Qur'an "Antisemitic"?* He emphasizes that the "Qur'an does not racialize Jews, nor does it dehumanize them. It certainly does not call for their destruction" (104). Firestone understands Qur'anic polemics against Jews instead as part of the wider phenomenon of "scripturally sanctioned animosity toward the religious Other" (86) which occurs in all religions. The Qur'anic attitude towards Jews is ambivalent, ranging from admiration and esteem to criticism and antipathy. Especially the latter needs to be understood in the context of religious struggle between the established Jewish religion and its authorities and the new revelation expressed by Muhammad. Firestone suggests that the Qur'an would respond with its polemics against Jews to Jewish criticism of Muhammad and his followers.

Notwithstanding the reasons or the cause of the negative Qur'anic attitude towards Jews, it is inseparably linked to the formation of Islam and thus with the creation of a Muslim identity in distinction from Judaism. That Judaism was not the only foil against which Muslim identity was built does not negate this observation.

An example for increased discrimination against Jews is analyzed by Amir Mazor in his study of *The Position of the Jews in Egypt and Syria in the Late Middle Ages*. Mazor argues that the increased discrimination of Jews in the Mamluk period in Syria and Egypt (1250 – 1517) articulated itself in a particularly strict enforcement and radical interpretation of the discriminatory laws of the Pact of Umar. Mazor finds several reasons for the changed circumstances for Jews in the Mamluk period: (1) discrimination against Jews would have been part of an increased discrimination against all non-Muslims; (2) the Mamluk offensive policy against the Crusades; and (3) the economic crises that were caused by the Mongol invasion alongside severe epidemics and drought. The Mamluk rulers began as non-Muslim military slaves and were thus particularly zealous in proving their loyalty to Islam. Mazor shows how, in being based on earlier traditions and polemics, political, military, economic, and socio-religious factors could trigger systematic discrimination and hatred targeted against Jews and other non-Muslim minorities. Similar to Christianity, at least the increased discrimination and hatred of Jews and other non-Muslim groups in the Mamluk period is thus intricately connected to the creation and maintenance of a (Mamluk) Muslim identity. Herein, it mirrors similar processes of identity formation in Christianity that established the Jews as the ultimate theological, and subsequently also social and cultural, "Other."



## Confronting Antisemitism in the Study of Holy Scriptures and Related Writings in the Modern Period

Supersessionist ideas were not only employed in ancient and medieval times. The modern study of the Bible and the Qur'an has often been shaped by them. Again, the main goal of post-medieval supersessionism is to develop an antisemitic religious group identity and, in the case of the study of holy scriptures and related writings, support this notion with what is claimed to be a careful and correct reading and understanding of the main religious sources. Therefore, this part of the present volume brings together a wide variety of topics connected with study of holy scriptures and other religious writings. They do not only uncover antisemitic notions and traditions within the study of the Bible, the Qur'an, and other religious writings, but most of all they try to show how the study of these holy scriptures and other religiously important texts can help to overcome antisemitic hatred.

In his contribution about *The Impact of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Discovery of the "Original" Version of the Ten Commandments upon Biblical Scholarship: The Myth of Jewish Particularism and German Universalism*, Bernard M. Levinson uses an early publication by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe called *Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen* [Two Important but as yet Unaddressed Biblical Questions] from 1773 and its reception history in (Protestant) biblical studies as an example of how the emerging field of biblical studies could create "a myth of Judaism as the particularistic 'Other' in opposition to an allegedly normative, universal German identity" (122). Goethe abused the Decalogue's history of literary growth to construct a German cultural identity in contradistinction from the supposedly ritualistic and particularistic Jewish "Other." He portrays "Christianity as a 'universal' religion that supersedes and is completely independent of the 'particularistic' religion of Judaism. This portrayal entails his cultural construction of the Jew as 'Other.' It equally advances an unreflected cultural construction of the German self as a universal that contradictorily can only be universal to the extent that it constructs and excludes that which is other" (132–3). Goethe's essay did not only influence the way the literary history of the Decalogue was perceived but also how Judaism as a particularistic and ritualistic religion was superseded by universalistic and ethical Christianity. In this way, Goethe's early publication influenced a specific perception of Judaism in German-speaking Christianity in a negative way and became an integral part

of Christian antisemitism. The works of Julius Wellhausen are widely acknowledged as a case in point.

From its beginnings onwards, biblical scholarship corroborated the notion of a Christian group identity in the German-speaking world through the rejection of the Jewish “Other” as particularistic and ritualistic. Konrad Schmid’s essay on *The Interpretation of Second Temple Judaism as “Spätjudentum” in Christian Biblical Scholarship* provides another spotlight on this phenomenon. Schmid surveys the history of the term “Spätjudentum” [“late Judaism”] as a designation of the period in Jewish history that begins with the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple in 520 B.C.E. and that ends with its destruction in 70 C.E. Nowadays this period is designated as Second Temple Judaism. Schmid shows that the notion of “Spätjudentum” was prominent between 1870 and 1970 and is German in origin. It was coined by Karl Heinrich Ludwig Poelitz (1772–1838) and further developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1849), Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), and Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920). The term “Spätjudentum” describes Second Temple Judaism as a legalistic distortion of the supposedly true prophetic Israelite religion preceding it. Jesus Christ and Christianity would draw on the true prophetic Israelite religion thus being the true heir of Israel. Schmid clearly shows how among Christian scholars the conceptualization of Judaism depended on Protestant readings of the New Testament. To understand Judaism as a dead religion, that displaced the prophetic Israelite religion and that was superseded by Christianity, is key to maintaining a Christian group identity by defining Christianity as the true successor of Israel and condemning Judaism as a religious corpse without a right to exist dubbed thus as “late Judaism” already in an early phase of its existence.

Anders Gerdmar presents his readers with *The National Socialist Bible. “Die Botschaft Gottes”: Theological Legitimation of Antisemitism*. He focuses on a German Bible translation produced during the Nazi period by the *Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* [Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life]. This institute was a key research institution of the *German Christian* [“Deutsche Christen”] movement and was deeply antisemitic in its work. It aimed at eradicating anything Jewish from *German Christian* thought and thus not only legitimized the Shoah but participated actively in the cultural genocide of Judaism. The German Bible translation called *Die Botschaft Gottes* [The Message of God] was one of the institute’s major projects. It attempted to merge National Socialism with the New Testament by creating a *German* gospel for the German person. To achieve this goal, antisemitic principles were embodied in the translation technique of *Die Botschaft Gottes*. Including the Old Testament, the translators removed everything they regarded as Jewish from the text of the Bible. As a guiding principle, all Jewish elements were

regarded as secondary additions by Jewish Christians that would blur the supposed true message of the gospel. This antisemitic approach to the translation of the Bible was justified by the *German Christian* myth that as a Galilean, Jesus would not have been a Jew but an Aryan. In this line of thought, anything connected to Jewish blood needed therefore to be removed from the Bible to distill an antisemitic German gospel out of it.

With its antisemitic approach to the translation of the Bible, *Die Botschaft Gottes* marks a summit in the line of thought already addressed in the contributions by Levinson and Schmid. The hiatus between Christianity and Judaism develops into a new extreme. Christianity is no longer envisioned as replacing Judaism only, rather Jewish thought is regarded as a defilement of an Aryan Christian religion that needs to be removed from its tradition altogether. *German Christian* group identity is constructed racially by removing anything Jewish from the Bible as the heart of a German Aryan cultural memory. This approach became deeply influential in contemporary White Supremacist thought as presented in the contribution by Yaakov Ariel in the present volume (see below).

Attempts to use biblical studies in the construction of Christian identity by way of supersessionist thought did not end with the Nazi period nor with the demise of the term “Spätjudentum.” Russel Fuller offers two examples on *Christian Antisemitism in Biblical Studies* through which he demonstrates how ancient Christian supersessionist thought influenced and still influences the study of the Hebrew Bible. For this purpose, Fuller examines first a supersessionist typological reading of Hosea 11:11 in Matt 2:15 and traces its impact on Christian literature through modern scholarly commentaries. Fuller argues that the Hosea commentaries of Wilhelm Rudolph and Andrew A. Macintosh both “reproduce and authorize older theological antisemitic ideas” (197). The second example for supersessionist thought in contemporary biblical studies is a booklet on the text of Jeremiah 31 in its Hebrew and Greek versions by Adrian Schenker. Schenker claims that the earlier version of Jeremiah 31 as preserved by the Greek text would regard God’s covenant with Judaism as terminated while the younger Hebrew version would have reworked the text of Jeremiah 31 to argue the opposite. When Schenker communicates the earlier Jeremiah text with Christian supersessionist ideas about the old covenant having been terminated by God in favor of a New Covenant yet to come, Fuller points to the danger that Schenker “is indeed maintaining the heart of the older supersessionist theology and with it comes all of the dangers, which this pernicious theology has spread down through the centuries” (203).

The contributions by Levinson, Schmid, Gerdmar, and Fuller all point to the dangers of replacement theology. Regardless of its timeframe, Christian replacement theology has always served the purpose of creating a positive religious

group identity by way of a supersessionist salvation history. Christianity as a religion would distinguish itself from Judaism being the new object of God's salvation while Judaism would have lost any claim to it and would thus be condemned. This approach to religious identity building can only work by contrasting the supposed Christian bliss against the envisioned evil of a Jewish "Other." Supersessionist thought therefore has the need to construct a Jewish "Other" that is delivered to condemnation to enable Christian entitlement to salvation. In this way, religious antisemitism has become an integral part of Christian religious identity.

The above-mentioned observations give rise to the question of whether similar processes of religious identity construction can be observed also in Islam. Israel Shrenzel's contribution *Against the Mainstream: Muhammad Abduh's Reading of Q1:7 and its Implications for Current Muslim-Jewish Relations* helps to answer this question. Shrenzel surveys the hostile and tolerant verses of the Qur'an towards Jews showing that its polemical passages mainly date to the period after Muhammad's fleeing from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E. Upon encountering a group of Arabicized Jewish tribes in Medina and its surrounding areas, Muhammad gradually lost all hope in gaining Jewish support for his religious ideas. This experience changed his views and doctrinal thinking about Judaism. After his survey, Shrenzel discusses in detail the interpretation of verse 7 of the Quran's first Sura *al-Fatiha*. The three groups mentioned in that verse would traditionally be interpreted in Islam in a way that is hostile towards Jews and Christians: "the 'blessed ones' are the Muslims; those who suffered God's wrath are the Jews; and those who are astray are the Christians" (212–3). This threefold interpretation differentiates Muslims "sharply from the past and future of Jewish and Christian history and destiny" (213). Therein, it imposes an antisemitic reading on Sura 1:7 that is popular as of today, especially among fundamentalist radical circles. A case in point is the mastermind of many Muslim extremist organizations, Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966). Against this antisemitic reading of Sura 1:7, Shrenzel points to the work of the Egyptian scholar Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905). Abduh does not want to understand the three groups of Sura 1:7 as unified collective entities but rather as groups and individuals from pre-Islamic nations. The "blessed ones" would not be Muslims but the "prophets, righteous men, and the martyrs from previous nations, that preceded Islam" (214). Those who suffered God's wrath and those who went astray Abduh identifies as individuals from the "previous nations" and not as the Jewish and Christian "Other" as such.

Thus, Shrenzel's essay unveils a supersessionist pattern of thought that in interpreting Sura 1:7 creates an Islamic religious group identity by rejecting the Jewish and Christian "Other." Simultaneously, Shrenzel points to a very dif-

ferent reading of the same verse that allows for a peaceful coexistence of the three monotheistic religions. The study of holy scripture can thus be both an instrument of antisemitic hatred and the cure for this hatred.

The question of how the study of ancient texts can help to combat antisemitism is an important question that is addressed in another essay. The Dead Sea Scrolls can serve as a role model of how the study of a shared group of literature is ideally suited to enable mutual understanding between adherents of different monotheistic religions. In her contribution *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Antisemitism: Past Results and Future Possibilities*, Eileen Schuller discusses the impact that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls had on relations between Christians and Jews in general and on the issue of antisemitism specifically. Schuller demonstrates how the Dead Sea Scrolls played a “unique role” in the reconfiguration of earlier scholarship on Second Temple Judaism. Different from antisemitic ideas of earlier (Christian) scholars outlined in part above, this period in the history of Judaism is now understood as “vital, rich, diverse, and complex” and “Jesus and the early Christian community are ... situated firmly within the Judaism of the time and cannot be understood apart from that environment” (225). The Dead Sea Scrolls are thus documenting a crossroads between rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity. In this context, they could be of vital importance in facilitating interreligious dialogue beyond the ivory tower of scholarship. Starting out as a field in which Jewish and Christian scholars were deeply separated, the close collaboration between Jewish and Christian experts in the last decades has turned the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls in to a lived experience of Jewish-Christian relations and thus contributed to reducing antisemitism. To build on this positive example of Jewish-Christian relations, Schuller suggests “the promotion and formation of study groups that actually read and discuss the Scrolls. Such groups could be formed jointly by a church and synagogue from their members, or, more challenging, could seek to attract a more diverse clientele if advertised via social media, adult education networks or broadly based community channels” (232).

## **Confronting Antisemitic Traditions in Contemporary Christianity and Islam**

Confronting antisemitic traditions in contemporary Christianity and Islam is especially difficult. Not only do today’s antisemites still employ classical religious-theological ideas that date back to the formation of religious scripture itself, they also borrow from a variety of sources, established or not, and conflate them with

contemporary political and socio-economic aspects of society in order to underpin their own antisemitic claims. These too can have manifold intentions, ranging from political and economic propositions to cultural and social goals they want to achieve. Drawing both on theological motifs and psychological aspects of the formation of identity based on in-groups and out-groups, these concepts are often not only hard to grasp but also very difficult to identify as purely antisemitic in content and form. Especially problematic is the conflation with contemporary socio-political events such as the Israel-Palestinian conflict, social injustice, and deteriorating conditions of living, elections of right-wing governments, and the perpetuation of patriarchal hegemonic social structures especially in newscasts and advertising. It takes a close look to recognize the different strands of traditions, symbolism, imagery, and intentions in antisemitic utterances and incidents within a contemporary religious society. The essays in the last section of the present volume all make a significant effort to uncover what both Christian and Muslim antisemites try to veil.

Antisemitism in contemporary Christianity can manifest itself in a variety of ways. This is mainly due to the multitude of Christian denominations. Clearly, most of these denominations oppose antisemitism. After the Shoah, leaders of many Christian churches try to recognize the antisemitic religious traditions of their theological ancestry and to eradicate them. Other Christian groups, however, still draw upon the concept of the Jewish “Other” to reinforce their own theological and ideological concepts of self-determination. Herein, they use a diverse canon of traditions, imagery, and motifs the use of which can differ from denomination to denomination. Theological traditions, socio-cultural notions of the Jews as hereditarily different and as a separate race as well as anti-Zionist ideas are employed equally.

Wolfgang Treitler’s contribution deals with *Antisemitism, Christianity, and the Churches in Europe*. He traces a line of Christian antisemitic traditions from the church fathers of late antiquity into the Middle Ages. Their effort of stripping Christ of his Jewishness to shape and establish their own Christian identity as well as the concept of self-description of European Christianity based on Jew-hatred forms the basis for later discrimination and agitation against Jews. Treitler uncovers this in the collaboration of both the Protestant and Catholic churches with the Nazis. Finally, he recognizes *Nostra Aetate 4* and the continued bid of contemporary church leaders such as Popes John Paul II and Francis as an important effort in acknowledging and confronting Christianity with its antisemitic roots and manifestations. Based on the idea of Protestant theologian Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt to establish a new system of belief and dogmas faced with what happened at Auschwitz and during the Shoah, Treitler concludes his essay with a suggestion. All Christians have to ad-

dress scripture from a different angle, perceiving it first and foremost as a collection of Jewish texts. In so doing, Christianity might become more courageous “to turn their backs to claims that have turned out to produce hatred against Jews or indifference to their fate” (248).

Petra Heldt focuses on anti-Zionist antisemitism in the Protestant churches and calls for a *Quest for Reform*. She sees the responsibility for the spread of antisemitic imagery and ideas in Protestant Christianity especially in connection with contemporary anti-Zionist notions and sentiments directed against Israeli politics. Particularly important in this regard are the “Protestant church leadership in-groups” (251) especially in Israel. They would increasingly mislead the church and the public with their veiled antisemitic intentions. Heldt goes on to unveil their antisemitic discourse that “thrives on purposefully selected memory on the one hand, and on narratives that contest, marginalize, and suppress alternative views by ignoring, labeling, and smearing opposing voices on the other” (253). She shows that these groups use different forms of social power abuse, cognitive mind control, and discursive interaction to manipulate both the public discourse and their audience. This is especially dangerous when not countered because of the hierarchical structure of the Protestant churches. Therefore, Heldt calls for combined actions taken by both Christians and Jews in reviewing established Protestant theological concepts. She asks that fora be created to promote those theologians who oppose antisemitism and enable detailed research of and education on the phenomenon to prevent its spreading further.

The perception of Jews and Israel in American Christianity is Yaakov Ariel’s research topic, presented in his essay *American Christianity, Jews and Israel: Antisemitism and Faith?* While following the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, American culture had turned more pluralistic and inclusive and antisemitism had moved to the margins. Today antisemitism seems to be stronger than ever in the US and Canada, especially in the Christian religious realm. This is mostly due to the particular diversity of American Christianity and its multiple denominations. Most of these have diverse attitudes towards antisemitism, ranging from opposition to an openly positive affirmation of discrimination against Jews. In his contribution, Ariel traces these different strands in liberal and mainline Christianity, in evangelical Christianity, and in radical white supremacist Christian movements. He concludes that especially in a pluralistic nation like the US, it is important to enable interaction between different religious, cultural, and social groups in the form of dissemination of information, institutional education, and direct contact. This will help to reduce and ultimately remove barriers and delineations between these groups, and it “brings with it greater respect” (274) for each of their respective members.



It has already been established above that Islam differs from Christianity in its use of discriminatory images and ideas of Jews. The previous sections have shown, however, that the concepts of Muslim Jew-hatred and their manifestations are quite similar. Like Christians, contemporary Muslim theologians, in their antisemitic sentiments, use images and motifs from Muslim scripture (Qur'an and the Hadith) and conflate it with other forms of political, socio-economic and cultural discriminatory ideas. A supposed eternal Jewish enmity is established based on the Qur'an and forms the basis for antisemitic claims such as Jewish world conspiracy, Jewish financial dominance, and the "Holocaust against the Palestinians."

In his contribution, Raimund Fastenbauer identifies *Common Codes and Differences* between images of the Jews in the Qur'an and their reflections in European antisemitism and political anti-Zionism. Modern Islamic anti-Zionist discourse uses antisemitic motifs as forms of "cultural code."<sup>12</sup> Despite changes and adaptations in profaned social systems, religious motifs continue to function persistently, especially in societies that are dominated by Christian or Muslim religions alike. In a comparative approach, Fastenbauer chooses five motifs from Christian and Muslim hermeneutical discourses to compare them with manifestations in the print or internet media. Ideas of Jews as murderers of Christ and Christian children, as pigs, apes or other animals, as a secret conspiracy group and as economic exploiters can be found in classical religious scripture such as the Qur'an and the Hadith collection. Their elaboration in pre-modern times forms the basis for contemporary antisemitic and especially anti-Zionist sentiments about Jews as murderers of their Palestinian neighbors, leading members of world supremacy and controllers of the Wall Street and other global capital markets. Fastenbauer proves that these coded motifs of religious origin are often "underestimated in the research on antisemitism" (295) and calls for taking a closer look at them in our daily confrontation with information from the media.

Meir Litvak focuses on representations of Jews in modern Islam, too. He, however, draws attention to *Modern Antisemitism in Iran*, recognizing *Old Themes and New Trends*. The unique feature of Iranian Shi'i antisemitism according to Litvak is its conflation of motifs from pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism and classical Qur'anic teachings. The notion of the Jews' rejection of the Prophet Muhammad and Zoroastrian concepts of ritual purity form its basis. Its manifestations, however, varied throughout history. While in the 1970s Jews in Iran were largely tolerated, contemporary Iranian discourse transmits a different image of Jews

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12 Sh. Volkov, *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code* (Munich: Beck, 1990).



and Judaism. Especially modern media, TV programs and semi-official websites frequently express discriminatory sentiments against Jews. They all thrive on the age-old concept of the Jews as “historical yet active enemies, who are motivated by hatred against Islam and the Muslims” (304–5) based on their inherited negative traits that are documented already in the Qur’an. Litvak goes on to focus on the supposed Jewish role and responsibility for a series of historical events following Muhammad’s death. Herein, he proves a continuous politicization of former religious motifs and recognizes that deliberate disinformation especially on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict “helps popular readiness to believe hostile charges against Jews” (316).

Nesya Rubinstein-Shemer recognizes the same thing in her examination of *Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī’s Theo-Political Response to Trump’s Jerusalem Declaration*. She shows how al-Qaraḏāwī’s outcry in social media that followed Trump’s transfer of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem documents his “deep motivation to fight Israel’s existence” (319). His utterances show a high degree of hostility against Jews dangerously mixed with a deliberate inability to distinguish between the Jews of the Qur’an and contemporary Jews. He draws on classical Muslim motifs of Jewish (and Christian) eternal infidelity and enmity that call for a war against them. In this way, he employs the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a theological approach to file his own antisemitic claims and to justify his call for *jihād* against the State of Israel. While the target of al-Qaraḏāwī’s antisemitism is mainly the State of Israel and not individual Jews, Rubinstein-Shemer shows that, again, religious-theological imagery and motifs, established in the Middle Ages, are used to corroborate contemporary antisemitic theological ideas, sometimes even completely out of context.

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## **I Confronting Ancient and Medieval Religious Traditions of Antisemitism**



Karin Finsterbusch

# Antisemitic Positions in Christian Holy Scriptures: The Idea of Israel's Election and its Challenge for New Testament Authors and for their Readership

The religious idea of Israel as a chosen people has consistently played an important role in Christian antisemitic polemics. For example, in his well-known book *On the Jews and Their Lies* (*Von den Jüden und jren Lügen*), Martin Luther drew the picture of the boasting Jews with respect to God's election:

Then he (i. e., God) must hear how they are boasting and praising God that he has set them apart from the gentiles and has given them birth from the holy fathers and has chosen them to be a holy, treasured people etc. And there is no end and proportion of the boasting about the blood and the carnal birth from the fathers.<sup>1</sup>

Luther, however, left no doubt that the Jews were in his view by no means to be considered any longer as a chosen people, on the contrary:

Therefore, this angry deed (i. e., the destruction of Jerusalem) proves that the Jews, who are certainly rejected by God, are no longer his people and that he is no longer their God. This according to Hosea 1(:9): "Lo Ammi. For you are not my people and I am not your God." [...] The Jews might think about our Lord Jesus what they want. We see that it happens as he said (in) Luke 21(:20 – 23): "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by an army then know that its desolation has come near. [...] And there will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people."<sup>2</sup>

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1 M. Luther, *Von den Jüden und jren Lügen* (1543), in: WA 53 (p. 419, line 36 – p. 420, line 3). In German: "Da mus er (i. e., Gott) hören, wie sie sich rhümen, Und Gott loben, das er sie hat von den heiden gesondert, Und von den heiligen Vetern geborn lassen werden, und zum heiligen eigen Volck erwelet etc. Und ist des rhümens vom geblüt und leiblicher Geburt von den Vetern kein mas noch ende."

2 M. Luther, *Von den Jüden und jren Lügen* (1543), in: WA 53 (p. 418, line 20 – p. 419, line 3). In German: "Darumb schleusst dis zornig Werck (i. e. die Zerstörung Jerusalems), das die Jüden, gewislich von Gott verworffen, nicht mehr sein volck sind, Er auch nicht mehr ir Gott sey. Und gehet nach dem Spruch Hosea 1(:9): 'Lo Ammi. Ir seid nicht mein volck, So bin ich nicht ewr Gott.' [...] Wolan, die Jüden mugen unsern HErrn Jhesum halten, wo fur sie wollen, Wir sehen, das also gehet, wie er sagt Luce XXI(:20 – 23): 'Wenn ir sehen werdet Jerusalem belegert mit einem Heer so mercket, das erbey komen ist ihr verwüstung, [...] Und wird grosse not im lande sein und zorn uber dis volck.'"

Although scholars after the Shoah became increasingly aware of antisemitic<sup>3</sup> statements in the New Testament and of antisemitic patterns such as Supersessionism in the history of the Christian religion,<sup>4</sup> the antisemitic-coined references to Israel and its election in several New Testament scriptures have as yet largely escaped notice: the earliest antisemitic reception of this idea, which is crucial for Judaism, has yet to be thoroughly analyzed. Such an analysis would require a book-length study, however, in this paper, I may draw attention to at least some important points.

The paper includes three main parts: In the first part, I will explain some central aspects of the idea of the chosen Israel according to one of the most relevant passages in the Torah. In the second part, I will focus on New Testament reception and will exemplarily analyze selected passages of three different authors. Finally, I will consider some of the ways in which today's Christian readership may deal with the antisemitic positions in the analyzed New Testament passages in an appropriate way.

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**3** I do not differentiate between antisemitism and anti-Judaism, this differentiation (according to which antisemitism should refer only to the racial aspect of hatred for Jews in modern times) is in my view problematic: the use of the term Antijudaism obscures not only the continuity between hatred for Jews from antiquity to present times, but it also conceals the role of the ancient/medieval patterns of hatred for Jews in preparing the culmination of antisemitism/anti-Judaism in the Shoah. For a helpful definition of antisemitism, see <https://european-forum-on-antisemitism.org/definition-of-antisemitism/english-english>.

**4** See, for example, W. P. Eckert et al., eds., *Antijudaismus im Neuen Testament? Exegetische und systematische Beiträge* (München: Kaiser, 1967); R. Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974); F. Mussner, *Traktat über die Juden* (München: Kösel, 1979); G. Theissen, "Aporien im Umgang mit den Antijudaismen des Neuen Testaments," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte. FS R. Rendtorff*, ed. E. Blum et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 535–53; W. Dietrich et al., eds., *Antijudaismus—christliche Erblast* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999); R. Bieringer et al., eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Leuven Colloquium* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001); T. L. Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretation* (London: Baylor University Press, 2010); R. Chazan, *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism: Ancient and Medieval Christian Constructions of Jewish History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); U. A. Wien, ed., *Judentum und Antisemitismus in Europa* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017); D. Wendebourg et al., eds., *Protestantismus, Antijudaismus, Antisemitismus: Konvergenzen und Konfrontationen in ihren Kontexten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

# 1 Israel as God's Chosen People according to Deuteronomy 7

In Second Temple Judaism, in the aftermath of war, destruction, exile, and miraculous survival, the authors often describe the status of Israel<sup>5</sup> in terms of election. The issue is undoubtedly multifaceted.<sup>6</sup> Within the constraints of this paper, I will concentrate on Deut 7:6–11, a passage, which is often called a “locus classicus.”<sup>7</sup> In the world of Deuteronomy, the speaker of this passage is Moses, addressing his people on the plains of Moab just prior to their entry into the promised land:

6 For a consecrated people you (are) to YHWH your God: YHWH your God has chosen you to be his treasured people out of all peoples, that (are) on the face of the earth.

7 Not because you were in numbers more than any other people YHWH set his love upon you and chose you, for you (were) the fewest of all peoples.

8 But because YHWH's love for you and (because) he kept the oath that he had sworn to your fathers, YHWH brought you out with a mighty hand and rescued you from the house of slaves from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9 And you shall know that YHWH your God is the God, the faithful God, keeping the covenant and grace with them who love him and who keep his commandments to the thousandth generation

10 and repaying them who hate him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slow with one who hates him, to his face he will repay him.

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5 “Israel” is used here in the sense of the proper name for the Jewish people.

6 See for example the first seven contributions in S. Almog and M. Heyd, eds., *Chosen People, Elect Nation and Universal Mission* (Jerusalem: Graf-Chen, 1991 [Hebrew]); S. Grindheim, *The Crux of Election: Paul's Critique of the Jewish Confidence in the Election of Israel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 7–76. For interesting modern Jewish approaches to the meaning of the concept of Israel's chosenness, see W. G. Plaut, *The Case for the Chosen People* (New York: Doubleday, 1965); W. Herberg, “The ‘Chosenness’ of Israel and the ‘Jew’ of Today,” in *Arguments and Doctrines: A Reader of Jewish Thinking in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, ed. A. A. Cohen (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 267–83; M. Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporal Election* (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1983); D. Novak, “The Election of Israel: Outline of a Philosophical Analysis,” in *A People Apart: Chosenness and Ritual in Jewish Philosophical Thought*, ed. D. H. Frank (New York: State University Press, 1993), 11–50; J. Gellman, “Jewish Chosenness and Religious Diversity—A Contemporary Approach,” in *Religious Perspectives on Religious Diversity*, ed. R. McKim (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 21–36.

7 Cf., for example, K. Seybold, “Erwählung. I Altes Testament,” in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, ed. H. D. Betz, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 2:1479.



11 And you shall keep the commandment—the statutes as well as the judgements—which I command you today to do them.

The first important point to notice is that Israel's election is not shaped as an elitist concept: the election is solely based on divine love and by no means on Israel's strength (v. 7). Furthermore, the privilege of election aims at inducing Israel to live according to God's will (v. 11). This is, obviously, the very essence of the concept: the inseparable connection between election and Israel's (Torah-) obedience.<sup>8</sup> Finally, election is undoubtedly an exclusive concept: on the one hand the chosen people, on the other hand the not-chosen nations (v. 6). However, as other texts in the book of Deuteronomy show, not-chosen does not mean rejected.<sup>9</sup> For example, according to Deut 4:19, God allotted to the gentile world deities in order to serve them.<sup>10</sup> The designated religious ways for the nations certainly differ from that of Israel, but they are not considered as sinful or religiously illegitimate. This is a position which was held by other authors in Second Temple Judaism as well as in rabbinic Judaism, too.<sup>11</sup>

In sum: the conception of election within the developing monotheistic Jewish religion in antiquity did not lead inevitably to religious intolerance. At the same time, however, the construction of religious identity in the developing monotheistic Christian religion made it nearly impossible to value Israel as God's chosen people, as the following examples will demonstrate.

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**8** See as well Amos 3:2, and cf. L. H. Silberman, "Chosen People," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. F. Skolnik and M. Berenbaum, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 4:670.

**9** See K. Finsterbusch, *Deuteronomium: Eine Einführung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 86–87.

**10** See J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), xvi.

**11** A prominent example is the idea of the Noahide commandments, see, for example, D. Novak, *The Image of the non-Jew in Judaism: The Idea of the Noahide Law*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011). The general picture about the gentiles in the rabbinic literature is all in all negative. However, there are some remarkable exceptions, for example a Midrash on Deut 33:3 in Mekhilta Devarim: "'Also, he loves the nations': this teaches that with every love with which the Holy One, blessed be He, loves Israel, he loves the nations of the world," see M. Kahana, "Pages from the Deuteronomy Mekhilta on Haazinu and Wezot Haberakha," *Tarbitz* 57 (1988): 180–81 [Hebrew].

## 2 Israel and the Idea of Election in Selected New Testament Scriptures

In the first century C.E., the followers of Jesus Christ, who believed him to be the nation's God-given Messiah, could not ignore the religious idea of the special status of Israel because this was testified in many Jewish Holy Scriptures, which they themselves accepted as authoritative. On the other hand, they were faced with the fact that the majority of the members of the chosen people did not accept Jesus as their Messiah. Consequently, the first Christians were forced to take up a stance with respect to this part of Israel.

### 2.1 All Israel will be Saved: Israel as God's Chosen People in Romans 11

Paul's latest-preserved epistle is the epistle to the Romans, written in the fifties of the first century C.E. The apostle, who did not know the Roman congregation personally, introduced himself and his theology in this epistle. He expounded many central issues, among others the question of the religious status of Israel in chapters 9–11. In the following, I quote parts of the passage 11:11–36. In this passage, Israel is compared with a deep-rooted cultivated olive tree, the addressed Roman Christian gentiles with a wild olive:

11:16 [...] And if the root (is) holy, so (are) the branches.

17 But if some of the branches were broken off and you, although being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and made to share the root (and) the fatness of the olive tree,

18 do not boast against the branches! But if you do boast, (remember) it is not you who support the root,  
but the root that supports you.

19 Then you will say: "Branches were broken off in order that I might be grafted in."

20 True: they were broken off by (their) unbelief and you standest by (your) faith. Be not highminded, but fear!

21 For if God did not spare the natural branches neither will he spare you.

22 Note, then, the kindness and the severity of God: to those who fell, severity, but to you, kindness of God, if you continue in (his) kindness, otherwise you, too, will be cut off.

23 And they also, if they do not continue in (their) unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if you were cut off from a wild olive tree (to which you belong) by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural (branches), be grafted into (their) own olive tree.

25 For I don't want you, brothers, to be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own sight: hardening has come in part upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And thus all Israel will be saved, as is written: "From Zion will come the deliverer, he will turn away iniquities from Jacob.

27 And this (is) my covenant for them, whenever I take away their sins."

28 As regards to the gospel, (they are) enemies (of God) for your sake, as regards to the election, (they are) beloved (of God) for the sake of the fathers (i. e., patriarchs),

29 for irrevocable (are) the gifts and (is) the calling of God.

In the last decades, it has often been emphasized that this passage contains some of the most positive statements on Israel in the whole New Testament.<sup>12</sup> And indeed, according to 11:28, Israel is and will remain God's chosen people (via the patriarchs<sup>13</sup>); according to v. 26 and v. 27, all (!) Israel, this is the whole Jewish people, will finally be saved by God's own initiative<sup>14</sup> at the end of times, which Paul expected to be soon to come.<sup>15</sup>

However, a closer look at the passage may complicate this friendly picture: Paul compared the non-Christ-believing<sup>16</sup> Jews with branches of an olive tree

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**12** See, for example, F. Mussner, "Ganz Israel wird gerettet werden (Röm 11,26). Versuch einer Auslegung," *Kairos* 18 (1976): 241–55; S. Vollenweider, "Antijudaismus im Neuen Testament. Der Anfang einer unseligen Tradition," in *Antijudaismus—christliche Erblast*, ed. W. Dietrich et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999), 50–55; G. Lohfink, "Antijudaismus bei Paulus?" in *Im Ringen um die Vernunft: Reden über Israel, die Kirche und die Europäische Aufklärung* (Freiburg: Herder, 2016), 335–66, 536–43.

**13** The idea that the election of the Patriarchs led to the election of the whole people is expressed in several texts in Second Temple Judaism (e. g., Isa 41:8–13, and cf. also Acts 13:17 below).

**14** The quotation in Rom 11:26b–27 is a mixture of LXX Isa 59:20–21a and 27:9. The deliverer, mentioned in v. 26b, could be referring to God (as in Isaiah), or to Jesus Christ, thus the scholarly majority view, see Grindheim, *Election*, 167, note 115.

**15** See Romans 13:11f.

**16** The Christian exegetical literature is littered with biased terms like the "unbelieving Israel" or the "unbelief of Israel." An exception is M. Konradt, using the term "nicht-christusgläubige Juden," ("Die historisch-kritische Exegese und das reformatorische Schriftprinzip. Eine Reflexion über die Bedeutung der Exegese des Neues Testaments in der Theologie," *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* 39/40 [2017]: 122).

that were “broken off” by God<sup>17</sup> (v. 17, 20); furthermore, the apostle described them as “hardened” by God<sup>18</sup> until all plans with the gentile world will be fulfilled (v. 25); he classified their behavior, using scriptural language, as “iniquities” and “sins” (vv. 26–27); he claimed them to be God’s (!<sup>19</sup>) “enemies” with regard to the gospel (v. 28). These are strongly negative terms.<sup>20</sup> The language reveals in my view that Paul’s attitude towards contemporary Judaism was, to say the least, ambivalent. I only want to add briefly here that it was Paul who wrote one of the worst antisemitic statements of the whole New Testament in his first epistle to the Thessalonians<sup>21</sup> and who applied in his epistle to the Philippians in one passage the term “rubbish” to his Jewish roots, education, and way of life.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, the passage Rom 11:11–36 altogether demonstrates that Paul “somehow” was convinced that in God’s plan, there is a kind of particular way and a kind of eschatological happy end for God’s chosen people as a whole. This was undoubtedly the crucial point, which he wanted his Roman addressees to understand.

## 2.2 Expansion of Election and Deconstruction of Identity: Israel in the Epistle to the Ephesians

According to the prescript (1:1–2), the epistle to the Ephesians was written by Paul. Paul, however, was in all likelihood not the author, rather, the epistle

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17 See 11:21: God is behind all the actions concerning the branches.

18 See Rom 9:18 and 11:7–8: God is the subject of the hardening.

19 11:28 contains a carefully worked out antithetical parallelism. With regard to the meaning of the adjectives ἐχθροί/ἀγαπητοί, the correspondence of the individual members within the parallelism requires to take ἐχθροί (corresponding ἀγαπητοί) in the passive sense, i. e., hated (and not in the active sense, i. e., enmity against God, thus, e. g., R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 707), and referring to God (not to Paul nor to the Christians/the Christian gospel, thus, e. g., R. N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016], 901), as correctly pointed out by C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans. Volume II*, 5th ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 580, and cf. furthermore Rom 9:13. D. Zeller, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1985), 199, rightly called Paul’s use of the adjective ἐχθρός here “shocking.”

20 If Paul had known that the history of Christianity will last some thousand years more, he probably would have had written differently. Not least with regard to the different historical situation, Christians today are certainly not forced to adopt Paul’s attitude towards contemporary Judaism, see Konrad, “Schriftprinzip,” 122f.

21 See 1 Thess 2:14–16.

22 See Phil 3:8.

was written presumably only between 80 and 100 C.E.<sup>23</sup> With regard to the status of Israel and to the idea of divine election, the views developed in this epistle are rather peculiar. A first crucial text is the eulogy (1:3–14). The eulogy consists of one long complex sentence, I quote only an extract:

1:3a Blessed (is) the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ

3b who has blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenlies in Christ

4 according as he has chosen us in him (i. e., Christ) before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love

5 having predestined us for adoption as children through Jesus Christ to himself (i. e., God) [...].

9 having made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he set forth in him (i. e., Christ)

10 as a plan for the fullness of times: to gather together all things in Christ [...].

In order to understand the content, it is necessary to briefly analyze the syntactical structure of the eulogy:<sup>24</sup> After the opening with the Berakah formula in v. 3a (nominal clause *εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός* “Blessed [is] the God”), the focus in v. 3b is on the blessing God (attributive participle aorist *ὁ εὐλογήσας* “who blessed”). In v. 4, God’s blessing is specified as the election of “us” (referring to the author and the addressees<sup>25</sup>), and the election is claimed to be a pre-existent act which is linked to Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup> The meaning of the election, then, is spelled out in vv. 5–14 in two points: firstly, as adoption as children of God through the deliverance from sin granted by Jesus Christ (vv. 5–8, beginning with the participle aorist *προορίσας* “having predestined”), and secondly, as imparting

<sup>23</sup> See G. Sellin, *Der Brief an die Epheser* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 58.

<sup>24</sup> In terms of syntax, the passage is extremely disputed, especially with regard to the relationship of the three aorist participles in v. 3b (*ὁ εὐλογήσας*), v. 5 (*προορίσας*), and v. 9 (*γνωρίσας*). Many scholars take all three as attributive participles (meaning that the first participle is continued by the second and the third one), e. g., Sellin, *Epheser*, 75–81. However, neither the second nor the third participle is determined or connected with the first participle by *καί*, as already noticed by R. Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 68. Therefore, it seems much more likely to take *προορίσας* and *γνωρίσας* as predicative participles, modifying the preceding finite verb *ἐξελέξατο* (“he has chosen”) within the *καθώς* clause (“according as ...”) in v. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. E. Best, *Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 114.

<sup>26</sup> The author was in all likelihood inspired by the idea of the pre-temporal divine election of Israel according to several texts in Second Temple Judaism (e. g., JosAs 8:10, Ass Mos 1:14, and see Sellin, *Epheser*, 90–91).

of understanding of God's purpose for the cosmos including the summation of all things in Jesus Christ (vv. 9–14, beginning with the participle aorist γνωρίσας “having made known”).

In light of the eulogy, then, there is only one effectual divine election, and this is the pre-temporal election in Jesus Christ. It is clearly implied that “not chosen” means in this case “not predestined for salvation.” The Israel that would not accept Jesus Christ as Messiah may be called according to the Jewish Holy Scriptures or may understand itself as God's chosen people. However, this election would be of no consequence: the author of the eulogy left no doors open for acknowledging any legitimate relationship between God and Israel as his chosen people *alongside* this Christ-centered interpretation of God and his plans for the cosmos.

The reason to expand the idea of election on the one hand and to completely ignore or even repulse the idea of God's election of Israel on the other hand becomes all the more comprehensible, if we take a look at chapter 2 of the epistle. There, the author explains the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ. It may suffice to quote the vv. 14–16:

2:14 For he (i. e., Jesus Christ) is our peace who has made both (groups, i. e., Jews and Gentiles) into one (group) and (who) has broken down the wall of partition, the enmity, in his flesh,

15 (who) has abolished the law of commandments (contained) in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man/humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,

16 and (that) he might reconcile both (groups) to God in one body through the cross, thus having killed the enmity in it (i. e., the cross).

According to this text, the death of Jesus Christ aimed at deconstructing Israel's identity as well as the identity of the Gentiles in order to create “one new man/humanity” (v. 15). In light of this aim, all Jewish religious ideas such as Torah and election could only appear as “hostile” (cf. the term ἔχθρα in vv. 14, 16). To put it in another way: as long as this world would exist,<sup>27</sup> Jews could, at least from the author's point of view, only be judged as “enemies.”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> In distinction to Paul, the author of the epistle to the Ephesians did not show any interest in eschatology (including the parousia of Jesus Christ), see Sellin, *Epheser*, 109.

<sup>28</sup> At least in my view, the comment on v. 16 given by U. Luz, “Der Brief an die Epheser,” in *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser und Kolosser*, ed. J. Becker and U. Luz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 107–82, 140, is rather enigmatic: “Unser Verfasser zieht also das ‘religiöse’ Ereignis des Kreuzestodes in die Welt hinein, indem er die horizontale Dimension von ‘Friede’ und ‘Versöhnung’ betont. Damit leistet er nicht nur einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Kreuzestheologie, sondern auch zur Überwindung [!] des Antisemitismus seiner Zeit.”

## 2.3 Chosen Israel without Salvation: non-Christ-believing Jews in Acts 13

The book the Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke presumably in the last decades of the first century C.E. Especially important with regard to the topic of this paper is Luke's narrative about Paul and his missionary activity in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13. The vast majority of scholars agree that this narrative is not a faithful report about historical events. Rather, Luke, with help of this narrative, which includes a long sermon put into Paul's mouth, tried to explain to his readership from his point of view the theological message of the apostle.<sup>29</sup> I will concentrate at first on the sermon (vv. 16b–41), of which only selected parts shall be quoted:

14 [...] They (i.e., Paul and his companions) [...] came to Pisidian Antioch, and they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.

15 After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent to them, saying: "Fellow brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it!"

16 So Paul stood up and, making a sign with his hand, he said: "Fellow Israelites, and you who fear God, listen:

17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people during the sojourn in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he brought them out of it. [...]

21 [...] And God gave them Saul [...].

22 And after having removed him, he raised up David for them to be king [...].

23 Of this man's seed God, according to (his) promise, has brought to Israel a saviour, Jesus. [...]

26 Fellow brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us the word of this salvation has been sent.

27 For the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their rulers fulfilled, because they did not recognize this man, even<sup>30</sup> the voices of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, in having condemned (him).

28 And although they found no cause of death, they asked Pilate, to have him executed.

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, C. K. Barrett, *Acts 1–XIV* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 625.

<sup>30</sup> καί is used here in a kind of "adverbial" function, see F. Blass et al., *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, 18th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), §442 (second sentence in the introduction to this paragraph); E. Bornemann and E. Risch, *Griechische Grammatik*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Diesterweg, 1978), §253,23b ("steigerndes" καί in the meaning of "sogar"). The active, transitive verb πληρώω requires a direct object.

29 And when they had completed all that is written about him, after having taken (him) down from the tree (i. e., the cross), they laid him in a tomb.

30 But God raised him from the dead. [...]

38 So let it be known to you, fellow brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and (that) from everything from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses

39 in this man everyone who believes is justified. [...]"

For Lukan Paul (as for the historical Paul), the history of Israel begins with God's election of the people (via the patriarchs, v. 17<sup>31</sup>). It is this elect people (as represented by the house of David) that received God's promise, to bring a savior who is identified as Jesus Christ (v. 23). For the death of this savior, Lukan Paul does not blame the Romans, but he does hold responsible—as also the historical Paul and many others did—the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem and their rulers, alleging them to have acted in a malicious manner (vv. 27–28).<sup>32</sup> However, the Jewish communities outside of Jerusalem may make their own decision with regard to this savior, as Lukan Paul explains in the concluding part of his sermon (vv. 38–41). In this part, it is of particular interest that “forgiveness of sins” and “justification”<sup>33</sup> are linked exclusively to Jesus Christ (vv. 38–39). As a consequence of this exclusive linkage, Jews, who would not accept Jesus Christ as their savior, are automatically denied, although they are part of the chosen people, to have any possibility to gain forgiveness (for example at Yom Kippur) or to hold the attribute “just,” when acting according to the mosaic Torah and Halakha alone.

I will now turn to Luke's narrative about the reactions of the population to the sermon (vv. 42–51). Most problematic is the picture, which Luke drew of the Jews, who did not accept the way that was being offered to them by Paul. It may suffice to quote a few sentences:

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**31** Cf. Rom 11:28 above.

**32** It is one of the main antisemitic stereotypes in the New Testament that the Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus Christ (see, e. g., Matt 27:24–25; John 8:43–44; 1 Thess 2:14–16). See Theissen, “Aporien,” 537–39.

**33** δικαιῶσθαι ἀπό means something like “to be released from (sins).” As is indicated by the aorist (δικαιωθῆναι), the author had a punctual event or punctual events in mind and did not mean justification in the Pauline sense, see C. Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge: Traditions- und kompositionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Lukas' Darstellung der Frühzeit des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 117n258; Barrett, *Acts*, 650–51.



44 And the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

45 But when seeing the crowds, the Jews were filled with envy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, blaspheming.

46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying: “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first of all to you. Since you thrust it and you judge yourself to be not worthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

47 For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” [...]

50 And the Jews incited the devout women [...] and leading men of the city, and they raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their borders.

In this narrative, we find not only a revealing generalization: non-Christ-believing Judaism is equated with “the Jews.” But we find also a depreciative language with regard to “the Jews”: the application of the categories “envy,” “blasphemy,” and “incitement.” In light of these categories, the narrated rejection of the salvation offer does not only seem highly irrational, but it also seems to be a kind of moral and religious self-disqualification.<sup>34</sup> Luke did not offer in his book any further remarks to soften or to modify this picture.<sup>35</sup> How, then, would it be possible for the readers of Luke to think anything positive about non-Christ-believing Judaism?

### 3 Antisemitic Positions in Christian Holy Scriptures: The Challenge for today’s Christian Readership

In all the analyzed New Testament texts, the authors expressed in their own ways their depreciation of the non-Christ-believing Israel, underlined with pejorative emotional terms and statements. The rationale is the shared belief that *Judaism as such* is actually not worth being protected and preserved, since the focus is all on Jesus Christ and the universal consequences of his death—and it is precisely this rationale which makes it in my view impossible to relate the analyzed texts

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<sup>34</sup> In this passage, it is not God who (actively) rejected the non-Christ-believing Jews, contra E. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 7th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 397.

<sup>35</sup> In Acts, non-Christ-believing Jews are constructed as Paul’s particularly dangerous, life-threatening enemies during his missionary activities (see, e.g., Acts 14:4, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:12; 20:3; 21:27; 22:22; 23:12).

to Jewish texts in Second Temple Judaism that indicate indeed many controversial *inner-Jewish* discourses about religious identity<sup>36</sup> (the expressions of depreciation in the New Testament texts are not expressions of a dispute among “siblings”).<sup>37</sup> It is hardly surprising, then, that Supersessionism was a dominant pattern in the history of the Christian religion.<sup>38</sup> Christians have claimed to be the rightfully chosen people and the “true Israel” and have claimed the Jews to be rejected by God. Or in other words: the New Covenant was believed to have superseded the old Mosaic Covenant. I would just like to draw attention again to Luther’s statements, quoted at the beginning of this article.

It may be relevant to present one more example from the field of arts, namely the figures of *ecclesia* and *synagogue*, which can be found as a pair in many medieval cathedrals:

Both figures are a kind of artistic realization of Supersessionism: *ecclesia* in the position of triumph, *synagogue* in the position of weakness and defeat (blind with a broken lance and falling tablets of the law).

It was only after the Shoah that at least some of the main Christian churches in Germany and elsewhere started to reconsider their positions towards Judaism, for example, explicitly rejecting the view that Israel ceased to be God’s chosen people.<sup>39</sup> This leads to the crucial question, if it is indeed possible to (re)define the substance and identity of the Christian religion as a religion without antisem-

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**36** For example, in the eyes of the authors of the Damascus Document, Jewish identity must include a life according to Torah and Halakha (i. e., Halakha as presented in the CD), see K. Finsterbusch, “Konstruktionen kollektiver Identität in der Krise: ‘Israel’ nach dem exilischen Deuteronomium und der Damaskusschrift,” in *Konstruktionen individueller und kollektiver Identität (I)*, ed. K. Finsterbusch and E. Bons (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Theologie, 2016), 109–31.

**37** In historical terms, the relationship(s) between Christian and Jewish groups in the first and second century C.E. may have been rather complex. In scholarly literature, terms like “parting” or “partings” of the ways are discussed, see, for example, J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2006); T. Nicklas, “Parting of the Ways? Probleme eines Konzepts,” in *Juden—Heiden—Christen? Religiöse Inklusionen und Exklusionen im Römischen Kleinasien bis Decius*, ed. S. Alkier and H. Leppin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 21–42.

**38** See R. Kampling, “Substitutionslehre,” in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Vol. 3 Begriffe, Theorien, Ideologien*, ed. W. Benz et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 310–12.

**39** For relevant references, see, for example, N. Lohfink and E. Zenger, *Der Gott Israels und die Völker* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1994), 11–18; M. Goldmann, ‘Die große ökumenische Frage ...’ *Zur Strukturverschiedenheit christlicher und jüdischer Tradition und ihrer Relevanz für die Begegnung der Kirche mit Israel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 386–89; T. Czopf, *Neues Volk Gottes? Zur Geschichte und Problematik eines Begriffs* (Sankt Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 2016).



**Fig. 1:** The figure of ecclesia at the cathedral of Strasbourg.

Source: "Figur der Ecclesia mit Krone, römischem Vexillum und Messkelch. Straßburg, Cathédrale Notre-Dame."

© Claude Truong-Ngoc. [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia\\_und\\_Synagoge#/media/Datei:Strasbourg\\_Cath%C3%A9drale\\_Notre\\_Dame\\_statue\\_de\\_l'Eglise.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_und_Synagoge#/media/Datei:Strasbourg_Cath%C3%A9drale_Notre_Dame_statue_de_l'Eglise.jpg), accessed June 19, 2020.



**Fig. 2:** The figure of synagogue at the cathedral of Strasbourg.

Source: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia\\_und\\_Synagoge#/media/Datei:ND\\_strasb\\_synagogue.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_und_Synagoge#/media/Datei:ND_strasb_synagogue.jpg), accessed June 19, 2020.

itic elements. I would like to conclude with three considerations about the meaning of the Holy Scriptures for such a process of (re)definition—which would of course be necessary in every generation anew:

1. The Christian Bible with regard to its two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, is not a dogmatic text but a dynamic document. There are often several differing, multi-perspective positions (from different authors, written in different contexts and epochs) about one and the same issue. They were put together secondarily and this undoubtedly in order to allow, to encourage, or even to urge the readership or addressed communities to critically discuss, to choose, to shape positions and to take sides in a changing world. To put it in another way: the biblical texts themselves do by no means require that every single passage must be read and accepted in a fundamentalist way.
2. The Christian Old Testament is (*grosso modo*) the Tanakh in Judaism. The scriptures are shared heritage and valued canonical texts for both religions.<sup>40</sup> As a consequence, it is in my view impossible for Christians to declare the daily liturgical Jewish prayers to God, which are in part deeply rooted in the Scriptures, as invalid or inferior.
3. With regard to the status of Israel in the New Testament, Rom 11:26–27 (“all Israel will be saved”) could be a point of departure to develop a position, which would include the *full acceptance*<sup>41</sup> of Judaism alongside the Christian sector in the “divine economy.”<sup>42</sup> Statements on non-Christ-believing Jews, however, comparing them with branches of an olive tree that were broken off by God or views on Israel like those expressed in Eph 2:14–16 or in Acts 13, should be abrogated altogether.

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<sup>40</sup> Several times in the history of Christianity, the canonical status of the Old Testament was disputed. For a recent debate, see F. Hartenstein, “Zur Bedeutung des Alten Testaments für die evangelische Kirche: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Thesen von Notger Slenczka,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 140 (2015): 738–51, who rightly defends the position that the Old Testament is an indispensable part of the Christian Bible and essential for Christianity.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the statement “The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable” which was released by the pontifical “Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews” in October 2015, on the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, section 36: “That the Jews are participants in God’s salvation is theologically unquestionable, but how that can be possible without confessing Christ explicitly, is and remains an unfathomable divine mystery.”

<sup>42</sup> This expression is taken from Plaut, *Case*, 54–55.

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Adele Reinhartz

## “Children of the Devil”: John 8:44 and its Early Reception

In 1971, the first year of my BA studies at the University of Toronto, I read a powerful book that has stayed with me all these years: *The Devil and the Jews*, by Joshua Trachtenberg.<sup>1</sup> Trachtenberg wrote this book in 1943. Although he was living in the United States, he, like most Jews around the world, was alarmed and upset about what his fellow Jews were enduring in Europe, even though the full extent of those horrors were not yet known. As a child of Holocaust survivors, born some ten years after Trachtenberg’s book was published, I did not need a university reading list to introduce me to the idea of antisemitism. But what struck me about Trachtenberg’s book was the central role played by the association between the Jews and the devil, and its integral relationship to a host of other antisemitic tropes such as deicide, the blood libel, witchcraft, and sorcery.

Although Trachtenberg acknowledges that Jews became associated with Satan in the first centuries of Christianity, his focus is primarily on the medieval period. It was not until I began my doctoral work on the Gospel of John a few years later that I realized that this association was present in John 8:44, in which Jesus declares to the Jews: “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires.” And why? Because, asserts Jesus, the Jews, like the devil, are murderers and liars.

The historical Jesus did not actually utter these words. Rather, they were scripted for him by John’s author or authors as part of an anti-Jewish rhetoric that pervades this Gospel. Nevertheless, they were understood by the early readers of John as the authentic words of Jesus, and, for that reason, they were all too easily mobilized for anti-Jewish purposes. In this article, I will examine what just a few of these early readers made of Jesus’ declaration, and how, if at all, one might disarm the antisemitic power of this verse. Before doing so, however, let us look a bit more closely at the passage itself, which will be quoted first in Greek and then in an English translation.

ὁμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστὲ καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν θέλετε ποιεῖν. ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ οὐκ ἔστηκεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀλήθεια ἐν αὐτῷ. ὅταν λαλήσῃ τὸ ψεῦδος, ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων λαλεῖ, ὅτι ψεύστης ἐστὶν καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ.

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1 Cf. J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943).



You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

Most translations, and most scholars, view “father” and “devil” as nouns in apposition, that is, they are grammatically parallel and they have the same referent. If so, the verse is stating here that the Jews’ father is the devil. April DeConick has argued for a different translation that actually gives semantic weight to the genitive τοῦ. She translates the phrase not as “you are of your father the devil” but as “you are from the father of the devil.” This reading allows her to consider the differences between the “catholic” and “gnostic” readings of the verse, a conflict that she argues underlies 1 John.<sup>2</sup>

I do not find this argument to be compelling, and neither, apparently, did most of the early commentators. Origen commented on this issue directly. Taken literally, he acknowledged, the verse implies that the devil has a father. Preferable, however, is the following interpretation: “You are of this father, concerning whom the title ‘devil’ is predicated.”<sup>3</sup>

John 8 is not alone in associating the Jews and Satan. The association is explicit in the phrase “synagogue of Satan” that appears in the book of Revelation. In Rev 2:9, the Son of Man, via the seer John of Patmos, assures the church in Smyrna that “I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan” and warns them that “the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested” (Rev 2:10). In Rev 3:9, he promises the church in Philadelphia that “I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying—I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.” The identity of those who say they are Jews but are not is a matter of ongoing debate, but the phrase “synagogue of Satan” suggests that by the time Revelation was written, the association of Jews and Satan is firmly established.

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2 A. D. DeConick, “Who Is Hiding in the Gospel of John? Reconceptualizing Johannine Theology and the Roots of Gnosticism,” in *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, ed. A. D. DeConick and G. Adamson (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 13–29.

3 Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, ed. R. E. Heine (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 242, para. 171.

# 1 Early Reception of John 8:44

## 1 John

The earliest commentary on John 8:44 is found in 1 John 3, in which John the Presbyter tells his congregation:

Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God’s seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:7–10)

After having established the connection between sinners and the devil, the letter then—following the sequence of ideas in John 8:44—moves to a discussion of murder, into which it inserts the biblical figure of Cain, a link that persists in the patristic and medieval commentary tradition:

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous. (1 John 3:11–13)<sup>4</sup>

It is striking, however, that 1 John does not associate the devil with the Jews but rather with those who do not exhibit love, specifically, a group of people that has left the church. Indeed, the Jews are absent from the entire letter, which is concerned primarily with this specific situation.<sup>5</sup> The letter sets the stage for the two trends in interpretation that we find in patristic and later literature. As we shall see, some authors interpret John 8:44 without specific reference to the Jews, while others use it to support anti-Jewish vitriol.

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<sup>4</sup> DeConick, “Who Is Hiding in the Gospel of John?” 13. DeConick argues that 8:44 “functioned as a calling card for Gnostics who used it as plain evidence that Jesus taught that the Jewish God was the father of the devil.”

<sup>5</sup> P. Perkins, “Erasure of ‘the Jews’ in the Farewell Discourses and Johannine Epistles: Gnostic Connections?” in *The Gospel of John and Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. A. Reinhartz (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018), 3–20.

## Church Fathers

Most prominent in the former category is Origen (185–254), who wrote the first extant patristic commentary on John’s Gospel. Origen’s comments on 8:44 begin with some reflections on the commentary of the Valentinian Gnostic Heracleon,<sup>6</sup> which is known only through the fragments that Origen quotes.

According to Origen, Heracleon understood John’s statement “you are of your father the devil” to mean: “you are of the substance of the devil.”<sup>7</sup> With regard to the phrase, “and your wish is to do your father’s desires” in that same verse, Heracleon explains that this phrase was not said to those who are by nature children of the devil but to those “who have become children of the Devil by intent [...]. Because they have loved the desires of the Devil and performed them, they become children of the Devil, though they were not such by nature.” He then specifies that one can be a child by nature, by inclination, or by merit: “(A child) by nature means (the child) is begotten by someone who is himself begotten, and is properly called ‘child.’ (A child) by inclination is when one who does the will of another person by his own inclination is called the child of the one whose will he does. (A child) by merit is when some are known as children of hell, or of darkness and lawlessness, and the offspring of snakes and vipers.”<sup>8</sup> In this case, Jesus “calls them children of the Devil, not because the Devil produces any of them, but because by doing the works of the Devil they became like him.”<sup>9</sup>

In his comments on John 8:44, Origen critiques Heracleon’s claim that one can be a child of the devil by nature. Although he does not acknowledge it, Origen does agree with Heracleon that one can be a child of someone by doing their will or fulfilling their desires. Indeed, Origen argues that “Any son, then, of anyone wishes to do the desires of his own father, and any son of anyone does the works of his father. In the same way, the Savior wishes to do the desires of his own Father, and does the works of his own Father.”<sup>10</sup> The take home message? “If we do the works of God and wish to do his desires, we are sons of God; but if we do the works of the devil, and wish to do what he desires, we are of our fa-

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed study of Heracleon’s commentary, see E. H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon’s Commentary on John* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Fragment 44, on John 8:43–44a; see also Fragment 45, on John 8:44a. The fragments referred to in this discussion are taken from <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/heracleon.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Fragment 46, on John 8:44a.

<sup>9</sup> Fragment 46, on John 8:44a.

<sup>10</sup> Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, para. 191, 247.

ther, the devil.”<sup>11</sup> For that reason, urges Origen, “Let us pay attention, then, not only to what we do, but also to what we desire. For even to wish to do the desires of the devil is sufficient to be his son.”<sup>12</sup> Origen, then, recasts John 8:44, which is explicitly about the Jews, as a statement about the options open to humankind.

Most later commentators agreed with Origen that the Jews were children of the devil not by nature but by deeds. But they generally deviated from his approach by viewing Jesus’ words as directed specifically at the Jews and not at humankind more generally. In his commentary on John, Cyril of Alexandria asserts that “Cain was given to the Jews as their father,” just as Satan was given to Cain as his father. Here, it would seem, Cyril supports April DeConick’s reading of 8:44 as referring to the father of the devil and not the father, the devil. On this basis, Cyril continues, “Let our discourse therefore go forward to the impiety of the Jews, and putting around them the likeness of Cain’s villainy, let us shew that they essayed those things against Christ, which he did against Abel, that rightly and fitly he may be termed their father.” Just as Cain deceived Abel, says Cyril, so did the Jews deceive Christ, sending Judas as an ostensible friend, to betray Jesus to the authorities.<sup>13</sup> For Cyril, as for Origen, it is deeds rather than nature that determine one’s parent. “Having shewn that the Jews are utterly of other manner than their ancestor, and far removed from his piety, He with good reason strips them of their empty fleshly boast [to be God’s children].”<sup>14</sup>

Chrysostom adopts the same line of thinking, though for different purposes.<sup>15</sup> In warning his Christian audience of the dangers of attending synagogue, Chrysostom puts before them the following scenario: “Tell me this. If a man were to have slain your son, would you endure to look upon him, or accept his greeting? Would you not shun him as a wicked demon, as the devil himself? They slew the Son of your Lord; do you have the boldness to enter with them under the same roof?” He then compares going to synagogue with sharing in the devil’s table: “You dishonor him so much that you pay honor to those who slew him on the cross, that you observe with them the fellowship of the fes-

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11 Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, para. 193.

12 *Ibid.*, para. 194.

13 Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, trans. P. E. Pusey and T. Randell. *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church: Anterior to the Division of the East and West* 43, 48, Book 6, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1874/1885).

14 Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, trans. P. E. Pusey and T. Randell. *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church: Anterior to the Division of the East and West* 43, 48, Book 5 (Oxford, 1874/1885).

15 John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, trans. P. W. Harkins (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1979).

tivals, that you go to their profane places, enter their unclean doors, and share in the tables of demons. For I am persuaded to call the fasting of the Jews a table of demons because they slew God. If the Jews are acting against God, must they not be serving the demons?" Although Chrysostom does not explicitly quote John 8:44 here, he makes use of its association between the Jews and the devil, and he alludes also to Rev 2:9 and 3:9, which refer to the synagogue of Satan.

Cyril and Chrysostom are typical of the patristic commentators, who, aside from Origen, are only too happy to describe the Jews as Satan's spawn. Even more virulent, however, are the words of later medieval and early writers, perhaps none more so than Martin Luther. Luther's comments on John 8 draw not only on 8:44 but also on 8:47: "Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God." Luther takes this as a reiteration of 8:44, that is, as an assertion that the Jews are not from God but from the devil. He adds, however, that Jesus' statement was inimical to the Jews. The Jews, Luther states, "could not stand this, for they wished to be God's children and people."

In his virulently antisemitic work, *On The Jews and Their Lies* (1543) part 11,<sup>16</sup> Luther draws 8:44 together with the standard antisemitic accusations that the Jews "have poisoned wells, made assassinations, kidnapped children [...] I have heard that one Jew sent another Jew, and this by means of a Christian, a pot of blood, together with a barrel of wine, in which when drunk empty, a dead Jew was found." These and many other stories, says Luther, are consistent with the judgment of Christ

which declares that they are venomous, bitter, vindictive, tricky serpents, assassins, and children of the devil who sting and work harm stealthily wherever they cannot do it openly. For this reason I should like to see them where there are no Christians. The Turks and other heathen do not tolerate what we Christians endure from these venomous serpents and young devils. Nor do the Jews treat any others as they do us Christians. That is what I had in mind when I said earlier that, next to the devil, a Christian has no more bitter and galling foe than a Jew. There is no other to whom we accord as many benefactions and from whom we suffer as much as we do from these base children of the devil, this brood of vipers.

Any Christian who associates with these "venomous serpents and devil's children" will be "rewarded" "on the Day of Judgment, together with the Jews in the eternal fire of hell!" A quick search in Google images reveals dozens, perhaps

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<sup>16</sup> M. Luther, "On the Jews and Their Lies (1543)," in *Luther the Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer's Exegetical Writings 47: The Christian Society*, trans. M. H. Bertram (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), parts 11–13.

even hundreds, of images from contemporary websites of Jews as Satan. And if we needed further evidence of the ongoing antisemitic reception of John 8:44, posters from the white supremacist march in Charlottesville most recently (in August 2017), stated that “the Jews are Satan’s children” and cited John 8:31–47.

## 2 John 8:44 and an End to Antisemitism

It is important, however, not merely to document antisemitic discourse but to address it in some fashion. It would be naïve to believe that the academic study of ancient sources can indeed put an end to antisemitism. Despite its seminal role in antisemitic discourse, no attempt to reinterpret or contextualize John 8:44 can undo two millennia of anti-Jewish interpretation, or eradicate the deeply integrated ideas of Jews as children of the devil and Christ-killers. Nevertheless, I believe it can be valuable to take a closer look at the two points: first, the underlying premises of the description of the Jews as having Satan as their father, and, second, the role of this claim in the overall rhetorical program of John’s Gospel.

### Epigenesis

In my own work on John over the years, I have become convinced that, contrary to the views of Origen and other church fathers, the Gospel writer—the one who scripted Jesus’ words—viewed the Jews quite literally as the children of the devil, just as he viewed Jesus, quite literally, as the Son of God. Underlying both these claims is the Aristotelian theory of epigenesis, the most popular theory of reproduction from the classical through to the early modern periods.<sup>17</sup>

According to this theory, animals and human beings grow organically—not part by part—from the sperm of the male as set within the medium of growth provided by the female. The male semen determines the form of the embryo as well as the process by which it reaches maturity. The female semen, that is, the menstrual fluids (also called σπέρμα), provides the matter of generation, the substance from which the offspring is made. Both male and female semen

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion, see A. Reinhartz, “‘And the Word Was Begotten’: Divine Epigenesis in the Gospel of John,” *Semeia* 85 (1999): 83–103; A. Reinhartz, “‘Children of God’ and Aristotelian Epigenesis in the Gospel of John,” in *Creation Stories in Dialogue: The Bible, Science, and Folk Traditions*, ed. R. A. Culpepper and J. G. van der Watt (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 243–52.

are residues of blood, the ultimate food of the body.<sup>18</sup> The most important difference between male and female semen lies in their consistency. As weaker creatures than males, females produce semen that is thinner and has less form than that of males.

For Aristotle, the fact that the male generates in the body of another and the female generates in her own body explains “why in cosmology too they speak of the nature of the Earth as something female and call it ‘mother,’ while they give to the heaven and the sun and anything else of that kind the title of ‘generator,’ and ‘father.’” Furthermore, males are described as more “divine” than females due to their active role in the process of creation.<sup>19</sup> In this way, Aristotle’s theory of epigenesis does not limit itself to the mechanical and physical aspects of reproduction but also places reproduction in a broader, even cosmic, context.

Most important for our topic is how the question of paternity was determined in this era, long before DNA testing or any genetic understanding of procreation. For Aristotle, the degree and nature of the resemblance between parents and offspring are determined by a competition between the male and female principles in the early stages of the generative process. In ideal circumstances, the male principle will father a son who is identical to himself in all respects. This means that the son will resemble the father not only physically but in personality and behavior. Aristotle expected children to be “chips off the old block.” To know the father is to know the son; conversely, the qualities of the child confirm the identity of the father. According to the first-century rhetor Quintilian, “persons are generally regarded as having some resemblance to their parents and ancestors, a resemblance which leads to their living disgracefully or honorably, as the case may be.”<sup>20</sup>

The Gospel provides ample support for my hypothesis that the theory of epigenesis underlies the portrayal of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus’ actions and desires come only from God and resemble those of God. If Jesus’ words and works demonstrate that he is his Father’s son, the Jews’ repeated attempts to kill Jesus demonstrate that they have the murderous and deceitful devil as their own father.

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**18** Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), para. 726b14;

**19** Aristotle, para. 732a9.

**20** Quintilian, “Institutio Oratoria,” in *Quintilian. With An English Translation*, ed. H. E. Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), 5.10.24.

## John 8:44 and the Gospel’s Rhetorical Program

Most commentators recognize that the Gospel of John is a rhetorical document that aims to persuade its audience that a person can achieve a relationship with God only by believing in Jesus as the messiah and Son of God. Although the term for “covenant” does not appear in this Gospel, John’s entire rhetorical program is based on the concept of covenant, specifically, that the human desire for eternal life depends on being covenantal relationship with God through faith in Jesus. To execute this rhetorical program, however, the Gospel also has to address a competing claim: that it is the Jews who have long been, and continue to be, God’s covenantal partners, that is, God’s elect or chosen people. John must discount the claims of the Jews at the same time as it puts forth its own.

John 8:31–59 is the key text in this effort. Here the Jews outline three claims as the foundation on which their covenantal relationship with God is based: first, they trace their origins back to Abraham, viewed by Jews in the Second Temple period as the first monotheist (8:33, 39); second, they have never served or been enslaved to foreign gods (8:33; cf. Ps 106:36; Gal 4:9; Jer 5:19);<sup>21</sup> and, finally, they are children of God (8:41). By describing themselves in this way, the Jews stake their claim to an exclusive and binding relationship with the one true God and in doing so also condemn Jesus’ claims to be the messiah and Son of God as a violation of the monotheism upon which this relationship is based.

The Johannine Jesus, however, argues against each of these three claims. When the Jews argue that they have Abraham as their father, he counters that if so, they would have done what Abraham did. He does not specify what that was, but the allusion is likely to Genesis 18, in which Abraham welcomed the three angels—one of whom was later identified as the Lord and, therefore typologically as Jesus—with refreshment and a sumptuous feast. As for enslavement, most commentators here suggest that the Jews are lying, or, if not actually lying, conveniently forgetting their centuries-long enslavement in Egypt prior to the Exodus. Parallels in the Septuagint, however, suggest that they are not referring to physical enslavement but to polytheism. As for God being their father, well, Jesus argues in our passage, far from it! Their father is not God but the devil. With these arguments, John’s Jesus presses home the point that a new covenant now exists, mediated through himself as the Son of God. Anyone who believes

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<sup>21</sup> On “enslavement” in the sense of idolatry, see A. Reinhartz, “The Grammar of Hate in the Gospel of Love: Reading the Fourth Gospel in the Twenty-First Century,” in *Israel und seine Heilstraditionen im Johannesevangelium. Festschrift in Honour of Johannes Beutler, S.J.*, ed. M. Labahn (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), 416–27.



otherwise must relinquish their claim to a covenantal relationship with God and must therefore be a child of the devil.

If my reading of John 8:44 in context is correct, the statement that the Jews have the devil as their father, though grounded in the reproductive theory of epigenesis, is important for John not so much as a blanket statement about all Jews everywhere and for all time. Rather, it is part of an intricate rhetorical program that is designed to persuade its audience to accept its claim regarding faith as the key to covenantal relationship with God and thereby also to erect a wall between themselves and the unbelieving Jews. Ultimately, John uses rhetoric to promote a parting of the ways between those who follow his lead and the Jews who do not.

In its literary, historical, and cultural context, John 8:44 contributes to John's efforts to stake out some conceptual territory for himself and those who, he hopes, will be swayed by his rhetoric. But when the Gospel became part of the Christian sacred canon, John 8:44, like the rest of the Gospel, came to be seen as a divinely inspired and eternally valid, and therefore, exceedingly dangerous text. It is time to put it back in its historical, literary, and rhetorical place, and to strip it of the destructive power that it has exercised for so many centuries.

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Agnethe Siquans

# Anti-Jewish Polemic and Jewish Bible Interpretation: Two Examples from Origen and Ephrem the Syrian

## Introduction

Anti-Jewish polemic, sometimes very vehement and insulting, can be found in various writings of the patristic era: not only in treatises such as *Adversus Iudaeos* or so-called “dialogues” between a Christian and a Jew but also in collections of testimonies, homilies, didactic works, and biblical commentaries.<sup>1</sup> Yet even with the frequency of anti-Jewish polemic in these writings, patristic interpreters of the Bible refer to Jewish sources of information, as do Origen and Jerome, or their biblical interpretation displays striking parallels to various forms of Jewish interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Origen, for instance, owes much to Philo, and the writing of Ephrem the Syrian appears partly like a midrash. These parallels have often

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1 There are many studies on early Christian anti-Judaism, and there was and is vivid discussion about the nature of Christian anti-Jewish polemic. To name just a few important studies: S. Krauss and W. Horbury, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy: From the Earliest Times to 1789: Vol. 1, History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); J. M. Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); S.E. Porter and B. W. R. Pearson, *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000); E. P. Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980–1983); H. Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.–11. Jahrhundert)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995); M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425)*, trans. H. McKeating (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

2 For this topic, see E. Grypeou and H. Spurling, eds., *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); M. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity*, trans. Batya Stein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); W. Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); A. Kamesar, “Rabbinic Midrash and Church Fathers,” in *Encyclopaedia of Midrash: Biblical Interpretation in Formative Judaism*, ed. J. Neusner and A. J. Avery-Peck (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 20–40; E. Kessler, “The Exegetical Encounter between the Greek Church Fathers and the Palestinian Rabbis,” *Studia Patristica* 34 (2001): 395–412; G. Stemmerger, “Exegetical Contacts between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation, vol. 1: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (until 1300), part 1: Antiquity*, ed. M. Sæbø, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 569–86; B. L. Visotzky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995).

been noticed and explained in different manners.<sup>3</sup> In particular, however, one question stands out: how is it possible that authors simultaneously display anti-Judaism,<sup>4</sup> on the one hand, and interpret biblical texts in a “Jewish” way or use “Jewish” methods of interpretation, on the other hand? Obviously, such apparent discrepancies were not perceived as such by the ancient writers or perhaps were perceived differently. Mono-causal and oversimplified explanations do not fit the historical reality of Jewish-Christian relations in late antiquity and the multiplicity of the literary sources. Judith Lieu, for example, aptly points out the necessity of a “detailed mapping of the complex interplay of individual personalities, situations, theological traditions and literary forms which make up the early Christian responses to and constructions of Judaism.”<sup>5</sup> In an exemplary study, Lieu shows that several parameters overlap and interplay: “While it would be wrong to deny any contact between these authors and contemporary Judaism, the arguments they used quickly become standardised and predictable, following well-established themes, and extend from explicit polemic to homiletic, exegetical and liturgical rhetoric.”<sup>6</sup> Theological stereotypes and current challenges, “image and reality,” as Lieu entitles her study, shape the Christian stance toward Judaism. The result is not a uniform image but “multiple images, sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory.”<sup>7</sup>

In this essay, I present two examples out of this multifaceted panorama of texts dealing with Jews and Judaism in connection with patristic interpretation of the Bible, one from Origen and the other from Ephrem. Origen,<sup>8</sup> born in Alexandria around 185 C.E., was a prolific writer and occupied himself intensively

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**3** For a critical perspective, cf. S. Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 1–13.

**4** According to a definition by Johannes Heil, anti-Judaism is a theological concept, which is directed against Judaism as a whole and maintains the spiritual inferiority of Judaism and at the same time, of course, the spiritual superiority of Christianity. J. Heil, “‘Antijudaismus’ und ‘Antisemitismus’: Begriffe als Bedeutungsträger,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 6 (1997): 93–114, here 105–6: “Zu sprechen ist von Antijudaismus, sofern das gegen das Judentum als Ganze gerichtete theologische Konzept von der spirituellen—und daraus gefolgert rechtlich-sozialen—Inferiorität der Juden im Vergleich zum ‘neuen Israel’, d. h. den Christen als Trägern des ‘neuen Bundes’ gemeint ist.” This last point is the crucial point of the whole problem: anti-Judaism often functions as a means to corroborate one’s own superiority, identity, and even right to exist.

**5** Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 1.

**6** *Ibid.*, 4.

**7** *Ibid.*, 18.

**8** For Origen’s life and work, cf. H. J. Vogt, “Origen of Alexandria,” in *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, ed. C. Kannengiesser (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:536–74; J. A. McGuckin, ed., *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

with biblical interpretation. He wrote commentaries, homilies, and scholia, of which only a small part has been transmitted and preserved until today. Origen preached and wrote in Greek, but most of his works only survived in the Latin translations made by Rufinus and Jerome. Origen spent the last two decades of his life in Caesarea in Palestine where the bishop commissioned him to preach. The homilies on the Old Testament, including those on the book of Exodus, were held probably between 245 and 250. Origen died in Caesarea around 253 from the consequences of torture he had suffered during a persecution of Christians. Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306–373)<sup>9</sup> lived in Nisibis until 363. He was an active teacher, catechist, exegete, and poet of liturgical texts. Due to political circumstances (the Roman emperor transferred Nisibis to the Persians), many Christians left Nisibis. Ephrem took residence in Edessa where he continued his activities. Ephrem wrote in his mother tongue, Syriac. His commentaries on Genesis and Exodus are extant in their original Syriac version. They were written in Edessa after 363. A large portion of his work consists of poetic texts, usually called “hymns” (*memre* and *madrashe* in Syriac), which were composed for liturgical purposes. These texts, being interpretations of Scripture, are rather specific in genre, style, content, and above all, in their rhetorical purpose.<sup>10</sup> Origen and Ephrem were prolific preachers and exegetes. Both lived in towns where a degree of contact with Jews was unavoidable. Both were engaged in eager discussions with “other” doctrines and practices. Their geographical, cultural, and political situations, however, differed from each other, as did their ecclesiastical position and the development of Christian doctrine.<sup>11</sup> In the following discussion, the interpretations of Exodus 1–2 by Origen and Ephrem will be presented as examples of two differing Christian ways of biblical interpretation.<sup>12</sup> Both authors, on the one hand, owe much to Jewish biblical interpretation, and on the other, express their anti-Jewish attitude in this context.

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**9** For Ephrem’s life and work cf. S. H. Griffith, “Ephraem the Exegete (306–373): Biblical Commentary in the Works of Ephraem the Syrian,” in *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, ed. C. Kannengiesser (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2:1395–428; A. Friedl, “Ephräm der Syrer,” in *Syrische Kirchenväter*, ed. W. Klein (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 36–56.

**10** Cf. S. A. Harvey, “Spoken Words, Voiced Silence: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2001): 105–31; Griffith, “Ephraem,” 2:1402. Griffith, “Ephraem,” 2:1404 mentions “Ephraem’s conviction that the heart of his scriptural commentary is to be found in his liturgical compositions.”

**11** Ephrem preaches after the council of Nicaea (325) and fervently defends its decisions.

**12** The focus on Exod 1–2 is due to my project “The Saved Saviour: Exo 1–2 in Patristic and Rabbinic Interpretation,” financed by the “Austrian Science Fund” (P 28441-G24).

## Origen

Origen's second homily on Exodus<sup>13</sup> provides the first example for this study.<sup>14</sup> This homily expounds the midwives episode and Moses' nativity story in Exod 1–2. In the fourth paragraph of this homily, Origen interprets the exposure of the newborn Moses on the Nile and his salvation by Pharaoh's daughter. Origen understands Moses as "the law."<sup>15</sup> In his perspective, the law has to be understood spiritually, as he already states in his introductory remarks (referring to Rom 7:14).<sup>16</sup> Pharaoh's daughter is identified as the "Church which is gathered from the Gentiles."<sup>17</sup> This identification of Pharaoh's daughter is motivated by Origen's aim "to edify the church"—as he says—and is backed by a quotation from Psalm 45.<sup>18</sup> Origen relates her coming to the water of the Nile to baptism. Thus, she has left her father, Pharaoh, who represents evil or even the devil. As a small child, Moses was nourished by his own family. But his mother, the synagogue, put him into a basket and exposed him. For Origen, this means that the law was concealed until Pharaoh's daughter, the gentile church, found it and opened it. Thus, the veil was removed (allusion to 2 Cor 3:14–15). Only then was Moses able to grow up, because the church accepted the law

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**13** Edition of the Latin text: W. A. Baehrens, *Origenes Werke: Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung, vol. 1: Die Homilien zu Genesis, Exodus und Leviticus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920); English translation: R. E. Heine, ed., *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982).

**14** For Origen's relation to the Jews and to Jewish biblical interpretation, cf., for example, G. Bardy, "Les traditions juives dans l'œuvre d'Origène," *Revue biblique* 34 (1925): 217–52; J. A. McGuckin, "Origen on the Jews," in *Christianity and Judaism: Papers Read at the 1991 Summer Meeting and the 1992 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. D. Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 1–13; N. R. M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-century Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); N. R. M. de Lange, "Origen and the Jewish Bible Exegesis," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 22 (1971): 31–52; N. R. M. de Lange, "Origen and the Rabbis on the Hebrew Bible," *Studia Patristica* 14 (1976): 117–21; J. S. O'Leary, "The Recuperation of Judaism," in *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible/Origen and the Bible*, ed. G. Dorival and A. Le Boulluec (Leuven: University Press, 1995), 373–79; Schreckenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*, 228–35; A. Tzvetkova-Glaser, "Polemics against Judeo-Christian Practices in Origen's Homilies," *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010): 217–22.

**15** Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 2.4: "Moyses quia lex appellatur, in multis locis iam saepe disertum est." (Baehrens, *Origenes Werke*, 160).

**16** Cf. Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 2.1. Cf. Rom 7:14: "the law is spiritual." All English Bible quotations in this article are from the JPS translation.

**17** Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 2.4; Heine, *Origen*, 246.

**18** Psa 45:11: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

and understood it in the right way, that is, spiritually. Furthermore, Origen allegorically interprets the wages that Pharaoh's daughter gives to Moses' mother: The synagogue receives the release from idolatry from the church—as a payment for nurturing Moses, the law, in his childhood—a somewhat paradoxical idea. Subsequently, Origen maintains that the gentile Christians' father had been Pharaoh—that is, the devil. In accepting Christ, the Christians had turned away from their father. Like Pharaoh's daughter, they came to the river and received baptism. Pharaoh's daughter is thus the ancestress of all gentile Christians.

In this interpretation, Origen constructs three groups on different levels: The “we-group,” who are Christians like himself, the Jews, and the pagans who are identified with evil.<sup>19</sup> The pagans are identified as the Christians' opponents on the level of the narrative: the Egyptians who threaten the Hebrews in Egypt (with their king, the devil). The Hebrews, then, are identified with the Christian audience. There are in fact no Jews in Origen's interpretation of the Exodus narrative. This is due to the direct application of the biblical text to the situation of his contemporary audience. Since Exod 1–2 implies a dichotomic structure of Egyptian = evil and Hebrew = good, there is no room for a third party. By claiming the Scriptural narrative for Christians, the Jews disappear from the story.<sup>20</sup> The only exception is Moses' mother who is blamed for hiding and exposing Moses, the spiritual law.

The group, which Origen directly addresses, is the “we-group.”<sup>21</sup> He is part of this group himself. Of course, these people are Christians. But this is not enough: what is decisive for Christians is their spiritual understanding of Scripture. In the introductory paragraph of this homily, Origen polemicizes against other Christians who are “friends of the letter and do not think that the Law is spiritual and is to be understood spiritually.”<sup>22</sup> This group is opposed to the “we-group”: “But we” (*sed nos*), Origen continues, understand all these things to have happened in the interior of every Christian. His Christian interpretation includes two refer-

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19 For an analysis of this interpretation technique and the identifications of biblical characters and groups with Origen's contemporaries, cf. A. Siquans, “Origen's Fifth Homily on Exodus: A Narratological Approach to Ancient Biblical Interpretation,” *Biblical Reception* 3 (2014): 291–307.

20 However, the dichotomic pattern is not strictly maintained throughout the narrative: There is an Egyptian princess who saves the Hebrew baby. And already in Exod 2:13–14, there are two Hebrews fighting each other and repudiating Moses.

21 See also A. Siquans, “Macht und Geschlecht in Ex 1–2 in der Auslegung von Origenes und Exodus Rabbah,” in *Macht und Machtkritik: Beiträge aus feministisch-theologischer und befreiungstheologischer Perspektive. Dokumentation des 4. internationalen Workshops “Kontextuelle befreiende Theologien,”* ed. G. Prüller-Jagenteufel, R. Perintfalvi, and H. Schelkshorn (Aachen: Mainz, 2018), 124–34.

22 Origen, *Hom. Exod. 2.1*; Heine, *Origen*, 240.



ences: the church, that is, the Christian community, and the individual with his/her interior struggle for virtue and against evil.

The Christian and the “Jewish” groups oppose each other on the level of reading the Scriptures. All who do not interpret Scripture in a spiritual sense are the opponents of the “we-group,” and according to *Hom. Exod. 2.4*, these are the Jews. Thus, Origen identifies “spiritual” with “Christian” and “literal” or non-spiritual with “Jewish.” Moses’ mother, the synagogue, did not recognize the law in its spiritual sense. This also means that the Jews do not correctly understand their own law and their own Scriptures. Two aspects are implied in this reasoning: First, the Jews are not completely evil and completely different from the Christians; there is some common ground and boundaries that cannot easily be defined. Second, the Jews have a wrong understanding of the Scriptures, and thus their interpretation and their practice must be rejected (and so must the practice and interpretation of all Christians who use the same method to interpret the Bible).

This reasoning is corroborated by other texts with more explicit statements concerning this subject. In the seventh homily on Numbers, interpreting Num 12, Origen clearly defines where the boundaries must be set:

But I think that it is not merely that first people [i. e., the Jews] nor the heretics alone, whom we have mentioned above, who “speak disparagingly of Moses” [Num 12:8]. For all who understand the writings of Moses badly and those who receive the spiritual law in a carnal fashion also speak disparagingly of Moses, because from words that proceed from the Spirit, they teach people in a fleshly way.<sup>23</sup>

In this text, the abovementioned idea is expressed more explicitly. To be Jewish is not necessarily defined by belonging to a certain religious group or a certain ethnicity but by a particular way of reading the Bible.<sup>24</sup> The consequence is that “Jewish” is synonymous with “not spiritual,” thus fleshly and carnal. Moreover, Jews are close to heretics in Origen’s view.

Jews in these texts are “the religious others” who are very close to oneself. We know that in those centuries, Christian bishops or preachers often com-

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<sup>23</sup> Origenes, *Hom. Num.* 7.1.3: “Ego autem puto quod non solus ille populus prior neque soli haeretici, de quibus supra memorauimus ‘detrabat de Moyse’, sed et omnis qui scripta eius male intellegit et qui spiritalem legem carnaliter suscipit, ‘Moysi derogat’, quia de uerbis spiritus carnaliter homines docet.” The quotation refers to Num 12:8. English: T. P. Scheck, trans., *Origen: Homilies on Numbers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 25.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, 104–6.

plained that Christians went to synagogues and participated in Jewish festivals.<sup>25</sup> This is the very reason why the polemic is so sharp—because the boundary is not clear to every Christian. But according to Origen, this is the boundary between heaven and earth.

Nevertheless, Origen's biblical interpretation owes a lot to the exegesis of Philo of Alexandria.<sup>26</sup> Origen knows that Philo is a Jew, yet Philo is an allegorical interpreter of the Bible. Therefore, by Origen's implicit definition, Philo's exegesis is not "Jewish." Philo himself sometimes polemicizes against those who reject an allegorical interpretation of Scripture. However, he insists on the observance of the Mosaic Law. Origen only borrows the allegorical interpretation from Philo—even detailed explanations—and "Christianizes" it.<sup>27</sup> Thus, there is again common ground on the one hand and differentiation and alienation on the other.

Origen's worldview is determined to a high degree by a dichotomic order, opposing heaven and earth, spirit and flesh, male and female, good and evil, Christian and Jewish, etc. However, his dichotomic worldview is not as clear as one might think at first glance. Origen's texts leave room for nuances. Although for him all non-Christians belong to the earthly, fleshly pole of the cosmological hierarchy, he concedes differences between pagans, Jews, and heretics and between different Christian groups. Undifferentiated polemic is primarily due to the moral focus of his homilies, which intends to warn the audience not to fall into any error or deviate from the right Christian way of life. Origen is quite anxious about the possible return of his Christian flock to a pagan or Jewish lifestyle.

Origen is one of the few patristic exegetes who explicitly refers to Jews as the source of particular interpretations. He uses Jewish interpretations, and at the same time, he rejects "the Jews" as others whose religious practice and biblical interpretation should be avoided.

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<sup>25</sup> So did Origen (e.g., *Hom. Lev.* 5), John Chrysostom (e.g., *Adv. Jud.* 1.1.5), and others. Cf. Simon, *Verus Israel*, 306–38; for Chrysostom, cf. also W. Kinzig, "'Non-Separation': Closeness and Co-operation between Jews and Christians in the Fourth Century," *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 27–53; R. L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 75–76.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. D. T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Assen: Van Gorcum/Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 157–83.

<sup>27</sup> In contrast to other Christian interpreters, as for instance Ephrem or Gregory of Nyssa in his *Life of Moses*, Origen's interpretation does not show parallels to Philo's more literal presentation in the *Vita Mosis* but only to the allegorical commentaries.

## Ephrem the Syrian

The case of Ephrem the Syrian is even more problematic. His anti-Judaism has frequently been discussed.<sup>28</sup> However, his biblical interpretations are at the surface very much like Jewish interpretations, similar to Targum and midrash.<sup>29</sup> The interpretation of Exodus 1 and 2 is a literal interpretation of the biblical text.<sup>30</sup> It contains no Christological or allegorical/typological readings.<sup>31</sup> Ephrem also presents traditions otherwise known from Philo, Josephus, and the later midrash Tanhuma. These parallels are interpreted differently by scholars. Sten Hidal, for instance, is skeptical about the direct influence of Jewish sources on Ephrem.

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**28** Cf., for example, K. McVey, “The Anti-Judaic Polemic of Ephrem Syrus’ Hymns on the Nativity,” in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins*, ed. H. W. Attridge, J. J. Collins, and T. H. Tobin (Lanham: University of America Press, 1990), 229–40; C. Shepardson, “Anti-Jewish Rhetoric and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Sermons of Ephrem Syrus,” *Studia Patristica* 35 (2001): 502–7; C. Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem’s Hymns in Fourth-century Syria* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008); Schreckenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*; S. Kazan, “Isaac of Antioch’s Homily against the Jews,” *Oriens Christianus* 45 (1961): 30–53; 46 (1962): 87–98; 47 (1963): 89–97; 49 (1965): 57–78; A. P. Hayman, “The Image of the Jew in the Syriac Anti-Jewish Polemical Literature,” in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity*, ed. J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 423–41; for Ephrem see especially 427–33 (Hayman explicitly notes Ephrem’s personality as a relevant aspect of his anti-Jewish invectives: “But it also owes a lot to Ephraem’s own fiery temperament, for he reacted to other threats to the Church [from Bardaisanites, Marcionites, Manicheans, etc.], with the same degree of virulence and abuse.”); H. J. W. Drijvers, “Jews and Christians at Edessa,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 36 (1986): 88–102; K. H. Kuhlmann, “The Harp out of Tune: The Anti-Judaism/anti-Semitism of St. Ephrem,” *The Harp* 4 (2004): 177–83; E. Narinskaya, *Ephrem, A “Jewish” Sage: A Comparison of the Exegetical Writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian and Jewish Traditions* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010). Narinskaya’s attempt to portray Ephrem as not anti-Jewish but friendly toward Jews does not convince the reader.

**29** Cf., for example, D. Gerson, “Die Commentarien des Ephraem Syrus im Verhältnis zur jüdischen Exegese: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Exegese,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 17 (1868): 15–33, 64–72, 98–109, 141–9; S. P. Brock, “Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 (1979): 212–32; S. P. Brock, “Some Syriac Legends Concerning Moses,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982): 237–55. According to Brock, “Jewish Traditions,” 218, the knowledge of Targum tradition is clearly discernible in Aphraates and Ephrem, especially in his commentary on Genesis.

**30** Edition of the Syriac text with Latin translation: R.-M. Tonneau, ed., *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum Commentarii* (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1955); English translations: K. McVey, ed., *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1994); A. Salvesen, trans., *The Exodus Commentary of St. Ephrem* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2011).

**31** There are such readings in the exegesis of Exod 12, however.

Ephrem, in contrast to Origen and Jerome, never refers to the Jewish origin of an interpretation. Because of the anti-Judaism in his different writings, Hidal assumes that Ephrem became acquainted with these interpretations as distinct from Jewish ones.<sup>32</sup> I think this is not necessarily the case. In all likelihood, he did not perceive these interpretations as exclusively Jewish but as a common type of interpretation. Similarly, Alison Salvesen states that “Syriac-speaking Jews and Christians shared a language, traditions, and Scripture that gave some common elements to their respective worship services”<sup>33</sup>—and, I wish to add—to their respective Scriptural interpretation. Brock mentions three ways in which Ephrem learned about Jewish traditions: the Peshitta, apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, and independently of these, oral or written sources.<sup>34</sup> Drijvers is convinced that Ephrem had personal contact with Rabbis.<sup>35</sup> Narinskaya maintains that there was a common tradition of biblical exegesis of Semitic origin, which Ephrem knew and used.<sup>36</sup> Today, we can no longer be sure about the ways Ephrem became acquainted with Jewish exegetical traditions, and we should not draw too far-reaching conclusions about contacts with Rabbis, for example. What is certain, indeed, is Ephrem’s remarkable proximity to rabbinic interpretations of the Bible.

Therefore, it is quite surprising to find vehement anti-Jewish invectives in his hymns and sermons. I want to quote just one example out of numerous possibilities. Characteristic of Ephrem is his thinking and writing in contrasting opposites: light and dark, sweet and bitter, etc. He contrasts “the people,” that is, the Jews, with “the peoples,” that is, all other peoples who have come to the church. The following passage describes the Jews as foolish. Although they have the Scriptures, they do not understand them:

The People have the voice and the reading; the peoples have the shining forth and the explanation. They have the books and we have the deeds; they have the branches and we

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**32** Cf. S. Hidal, *Interpretatio syriaca: Die Kommentare des heiligen Ephräm des Syrers zu Genesis und Exodus mit besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer auslegungsgeschichtlichen Stellung* (Lund: Gleerup, 1974), 131–38.

**33** Shepardson, “Anti-Jewish Rhetoric,” 41.

**34** Cf. Brock, “Jewish Traditions,” 231.

**35** Drijvers, “Jews,” 101. He also mentions apocryphal and pseudepigraphical texts as a possible source.

**36** Narinskaya, *Ephrem*, 178: “There may have been a tradition of biblical exegesis common to both Jews and Christians, of Semitic origin. This tradition could have involved work with Semitic languages, i. e. Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac. Later, this tradition could have been developed further by rabbinical exegesis to form the basis of various later Jewish compilations like the Talmud, and classical Midrashim.”

their fruits. The scribes read in books; the magi saw in actions the flash of that reading... The simple believers recognized two advents of Christ, but the foolish scribes were not aware of even one advent. Yet the peoples received life from one and there at the other they will be revived. The one advent scattered the People whose understanding was blind; the second will blot out its memory.<sup>37</sup>

Where does this hostile attitude towards the Jews come from? Alfred Friedl mentions several possibilities: the strong presence of Jews in Nisibis and Edessa; their better social and political situation; their privileged position during the rule of the Seleucids; the strong ascetic orientation of Syriac Christianity as opposed to Judaism; the suspicion of many Christians toward Jewish religious practice; and the theological tradition of Judaism as antipode of Christian identity.<sup>38</sup> Ephrem's anti-Judaism is part of a then already long-standing tradition in Christianity. He also draws clear boundaries between "us" and "them."<sup>39</sup> Christine Shepardson concludes: "Ephrem thus distances the category 'Jew' from that of 'Christian,' making the Jews an incompatible 'other' to the Christian self."<sup>40</sup> It is important to be aware of the character and purpose of these kinds of texts: they are liturgical rhetoric aimed at convincing the audience to distance themselves from "deviant" positions, represented by "the Jews."

Shepardson demonstrates that Ephrem uses his anti-Jewish rhetoric in many (or most) cases for the defense against or attack of Christian opponents, namely people who do not follow the Nicene doctrine. Nevertheless, their anti-Jewish thrust remains. Again, the problem is that of setting clear boundaries. Shepardson writes about the controversy about the council of Nicaea:

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<sup>37</sup> Ephrem, *De Nativitate* 24.4.11. E. Beck, ed., *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)* (Louvain: Secretariat of the CSCO, 1959), 1:122–24. English translation: K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 63–217. Quotation from Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Friedl, "Ephräm," 54–55. With the acceptance of multiple causes and motivations for anti-Jewish polemic, an age-old discussion between strict alternatives can be laid aside. The discussion exists between authors who explain anti-Judaism as a merely theological necessity, as for instance already S. Krauss, "The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers IV," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 6, no. 1 (1893): 82–99; and concerning Ephräm 88–99: "His resentment seems to have been aroused and stimulated by the marvellous power of resistance shown by the old creed" (89), and authors who presuppose a strong Jewish missionary activity, as for example, Kazan, "Isaac." Several aspects, which may change in the course of time, continuously interact. See also A. Siquans, "Anti-Jewish Interpretation of the Bible with the Church Fathers," in *Anti-Semitism and the Bible*, ed. A. Lange, S. Gillmayr-Bucher, A. Colella, and L. Stuckenbruck (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 151.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

As with the problem of Judaizing, so too with this controversy Ephrem criticizes in an effort to make his congregation conform to the boundaries of Nicene orthodoxy. Just as he draws clear boundaries for their behaviour with respect to Judaizing and Nicene orthodoxy, so too, he delineates clear lines between orthodox and heretical teachings about God and God's Son, fighting not against a separate Nisibene or Edessene "Arian" church, but against the non-Nicene teachings currently dominating the empire that might infiltrate his community and lead his flock astray. Thus while Ephrem seems to warn against "real" fourth-century teachings, the rhetorical opponents whom his poetry paints are again "image" as well as "reality," a constructed clear threatening and dangerous "other" with which he attempts to frighten his listeners to take shelter behind the safe walls of Nicene orthodoxy.<sup>41</sup>

What Shepardson says about the Christian anti-Nicene opponents is likewise valid for Jews. In his hymns and sermons, Ephrem constructs Jews as the threatening and disgusting "others," in order to keep his Christian community away from them, their teaching, and their practice. Obviously many Christians in Nisibis and Edessa did not catch the importance of the differences that Ephrem claims and the boundaries he draws. It is likely that for many people, these boundaries did not exist or at least did not matter.<sup>42</sup> Thus, it was all the more important to establish and make clear these boundaries. The setting of boundaries is most necessary in demarcation from the closest neighbors: "The problem is not alterity, but similarity—at times, even identity."<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusion

The presented examples of patristic biblical interpretation may illustrate the complex attitude of Christian interpreters to Jews and Jewish interpretations. Origen and Ephrem continue already established theological stereotypes against the Jews and adapt them to their present reality. They use Jewish exegetical traditions, sometimes "Christianizing" them and at the same time polemicizing against Judaism. I want to add two remarks in order to shed some more light on this evidence. Firstly, both Origen and Ephrem are preachers. They play a cru-

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<sup>41</sup> Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 153.

<sup>42</sup> J. C. Paget, "Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 1 (1997): 195–225 states that at a popular level "absolute distinctions between Judaism and Christianity were likely to be less clear" (211). Cf. Kinzig, "Jews and Christians," 29: "on the level of *popular piety* there was a wide overlap between Church and Synagogue at least until the end of the fourth century, but probably far beyond" (emphasis by Kinzig).

<sup>43</sup> J. Z. Smith, "What a Difference a Difference Makes," in "To See Ourselves as Others See Us": *Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 3–48, here 47.

cial part in the formation of their audiences' ideas about themselves and others: Who are "we," and who are the others? What is problematic about "them," and why should their teaching or their practice be avoided? They vilify the others, including the Jews. The greater the perceived proximity to another group, the greater the vehemence of the polemic against it.<sup>44</sup> Just because the Jews were not absolutely "different," but, on the contrary, very close, at least at the time of our authors, they had to be *construed* as being absolutely "different" in order to clarify, delimit, and affirm their own Christian identity. The roots of anti-Judaism in early Christian interpretations of the Bible are a situation of insecurity about their own identity (*vis-à-vis* Jews, pagans, and so-called heretics). Furthermore, they perhaps also reflect the challenges of the minority situation of the Christians, as well as the lack of clear boundaries. This leads to a polemical rhetoric, often including verbal violence. This theological verbal violence becomes threatening for Jews as soon as Christians become a majority and are in a position of political power. Then, the boundary between merely theological verbal violence and the exertion of physical violence is often too fragile and can easily be transgressed. This implies a high responsibility of preachers, teachers, and all persons who speak on behalf of religious groups. Secondly, Origen and Ephrem both use thought patterns of dichotomy and contrast, albeit in different ways. In such systems, there is no alternative beyond light and darkness, good and evil.

However, an alternative "in between" does exist insofar as there is a certain diversity in every community and society. The question is: who is defined as the "other" one, and how are certain forms of "otherness" or diversity evaluated? A dichotomic worldview is not able to integrate ambivalent phenomena, which are normal facts of life. The problem is not diversity *per se*—diversity and "otherness" simply exist. Rather, the problem is the evaluation and definition of these facts. Every community has to answer the question of the phenomena they experience as acceptable or not. Patristic biblical interpretation answered this question to the disadvantage of the Jews. This direction was retained throughout the centuries.

Many of the *topoi* against the Jews constructed by the church fathers soon became conventional and played a prominent role in later antisemitism. The first step towards avoiding the perpetuation of these concepts is critically revealing their way of construing identity and its ongoing impact on contemporary thought about Jewishness. Furthermore, alternative ways of defining identity

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Smith, "What a Difference," 15: "Such distinctions are found to be drawn most sharply between 'near neighbors,'" and they are "essentially political."

have to be developed—alternatives that do not operate in dichotomic patterns and do not define identity in terms of uniformity but appreciate diversity. Diversity exists; the “other” one simply exists, even nearby. Boundaries are necessary and discussions about identity are unavoidable as well. The challenge is to strengthen the own identity without denigrating others. Perhaps the patristic texts in their ambivalence and multiplicity can also provide evidence for this task.

Now what makes the inquiry into the reciprocal conceptions of Judaism and Christianity in these formative centuries critical? It is the simple fact that the developing theories of the other left a legacy, for both medieval and modern Western civilization, of not only intolerance but also restraint, not only a quest for universal conformity but also a capacity to sustain difference.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs, eds., “To See Ourselves as Others See Us”: *Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), xiii.



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David Berger

# Scholarship and the Blood Libel: Past and Present

Twenty years ago, I presented a paper entitled “From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions: Some New Approaches to Medieval Antisemitism.”<sup>1</sup> Part of that essay attempted to assess significant recent scholarship on the blood libel by distinguished medievalists, notably Gavin Langmuir and Israel Yuval. Here I would like to expand that discussion in multiple ways: by examining how earlier scholars attempted to refute the libel, by discussing scholarship published after 1997, by assessing scholarly efforts to reveal and analyze genuinely problematic Jewish attitudes and behavior despite the danger of providing aid and comfort to antisemites, and by wrestling with the challenges of scholarly confrontation with contemporary falsehoods that Jews reflexively and often properly see as new blood libels.

## Medieval and Early Modern Times

One of the earliest Jewish denunciations of the libel focuses on two themes that took center stage through the centuries: the prohibition of murder and the prohibition of consuming blood. The anonymous author of the late thirteenth-century anti-Christian polemic *The Nizzahon Vetus* writes that “no nation was so thoroughly warned against murder as we.” He proceeds to point out that the term “your neighbor” appears in the commandment not to covet but not in “do not murder,” “do not commit adultery,” and “do not steal.” Those prohibitions consequently apply with respect to Jews and gentiles alike. “Moreover,” he continues, “we were also warned against blood more than any nation, for even dealing with meat that was slaughtered properly and is kosher, we salt it and

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1 D. Berger, *From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions: Some New Approaches to Medieval Antisemitism, The Second Victor J. Selmanowitz Memorial Lecture* (New York: Touro College Graduate School of Jewish Studies, 1997). Reprinted in D. Berger, *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), 15–39.

rinse it extensively in order to remove the blood. The fact is that you are concocting allegations against us in order to permit our murder.”<sup>2</sup>

On a technical level, these arguments were not without their complexities, but in the deepest sense they were entirely valid. Thus, some Jewish authorities took the position that the ten commandments were technically limited to actions within the Jewish collective, but any murder remained unambiguously forbidden by rabbinic law. As to blood, the biblical prohibition applied according to the rabbinic understanding specifically to animal blood, and so the a fortiori argument implied here is in the narrow sense incorrect. What is correct is that on an emotional, psychic level, the sense of revulsion toward blood triggered by the prohibition in question and reinforced by rabbinic law certainly led to undifferentiated abhorrence.

That a fortiori argument already appears in Frederick II’s Golden Bull of 1236, which emerged out of the first formal investigation of the blood accusation.<sup>3</sup> The most detailed formal exoneration of the Jews by a Church official was authored by Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli (later Pope Clement XIV) in 1759,<sup>4</sup> though it is a matter of considerable significance that he accepted the validity of two accusations, one of which was the purported ritual murder of Simon of Trent. He argued against generalizing from these cases, but the usefulness of his report was significantly weakened by this concession since even when some defenders of the Jews conceded that one could not rule out the theoretical possibility that a deranged Jew might have killed a Christian ritually, perhaps under the influence of the libel itself, the concession was generally limited to the behavior of an individual. In the case of Trent, the allegation applied to an entire (albeit small) Jewish community, and the judicial record underlying the conviction speaks of a carefully thought-out ritual connected to the observance of Passover. To assert the validity of this accusation is to affirm that some Jewish collectives believed that their religion requires or at least looks with favor on the ritual

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<sup>2</sup> D. Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), English section, 229.

<sup>3</sup> See H. L. Strack, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice: Human Blood and Jewish Ritual* (London: Cope & Fenwick, 1909), 240–41, for an English translation of the relevant section. A footnote to p. 241 provides the Latin text of the key sentences. The sources in the last two notes were cited in A. Ehrman, “The Origins of the Ritual Murder Accusation and Blood Libel,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 15 (1976): 87.

<sup>4</sup> *The Ritual Murder Libel and the Jew: The Report by Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli* (Pope Clement XIV), ed. C. Roth (London: Woburn, 1935).

murder of Christians and the consumption of their blood. The door was left open to the perpetuation of the libel.

## The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

The libel was relatively quiescent in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries—though only relatively—and then it enjoyed a resurgence beginning with the Damascus Affair of 1840 and continuing through the Beilis case in the second decade of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, it was then reaffirmed in Nazi publications. Though efforts to refute it emerged throughout the history of the accusation, scholarly efforts to confront it intensified along with the accusation itself.

The most significant of the various scholarly responses included: *Efes Damim (No Blood)* by the prominent *maskil* Isaac Baer Levinsohn, written before the Damascus Affair, which was translated from the original Hebrew into English in the context of the Damascus libel;<sup>6</sup> a work by Daniel Chwolson, a learned convert to Christianity who was probably the Jews' favorite apostate in all of Jewish history;<sup>7</sup> and the most impressive and popular of them all, Hermann Strack's *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*.<sup>8</sup> Strack proffered standard arguments about the prohibition of murder and blood but contributed some new or at least atypical points. He cleverly pointed to the prohibition in Jewish law against deriving benefit from a dead body and noted the requirement that a Jew of priestly lineage avoid contact with the dead.<sup>9</sup> In another original argument, he maintained that since Jews are prepared to give up their lives for their religion, they would still be using blood annually if there were such a requirement, and

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<sup>5</sup> On Damascus, see J. Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder," Politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On Beilis, see R. Weinberg, *Blood Libel in Late Imperial Russia: The Ritual Murder Trial of Mendel Beilis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Original Hebrew, Vilna, 1837. English translation: *Ephes Dammim*, trans. L. Loewe (London, 1841).

<sup>7</sup> The Russian work appeared in 1861, and an expanded edition was issued in 1880. For the German version, see D. Chwolson, *Die Blutanklage und sonstige mittelalterliche Beschuldigungen der Juden: Eine historische Untersuchung nach den Quellen* (Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 1901).

<sup>8</sup> The works of Levinsohn and Strack were examined briefly but insightfully by D. Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 164–67, 170–73.

<sup>9</sup> Strack, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*, 129–31.

there is no evidence of this in the “law-governed states of Europe.”<sup>10</sup> This, however, required the reader inclined to believe the accusation to accept the proposition that a country like Hungary was not law-governed. Finally, Strack provided extensive and powerful evidence that Jewish converts to Christianity rejected the accusation.<sup>11</sup>

At this juncture, the libel was often part of a larger attack against rabbinic Judaism, and medieval assaults on the Talmud going back to Nicholas Donin in the Paris disputation of 1240 were resurrected, refurbished, and expanded. Consequently, refutations of the blood accusation became part of a broader tapestry addressing Jewish attitudes toward non-Jews in general and Christians in particular. The most notorious critic of the Talmud who also promulgated the blood libel was August Rohling, who held academic positions of some stature.<sup>12</sup> The distinguished scholar Franz Delitzsch wrote vigorous refutations of Rohling’s work, but the most wide-ranging responses were formulated by Joseph Bloch, who eventually published his magnum opus, *Israel and the Nations*.<sup>13</sup> The title itself reflects the broad scope of this learned, impressive work of apologetics, which is simultaneously persuasive and problematic.

To take a central example illustrating both the challenge and the perceived need to resort to a less than wholly candid response, Bloch cites Rohling’s assertion that “we (Christians) are not looked upon as idolaters as regards the doctrine of the trinity, but because we worship Jesus as God-man.”<sup>14</sup> Idolatry is not really an appropriate term, but if we substitute the Hebrew term *avodah zarah*, which literally means foreign worship while bearing much of the force of “idolatry,” this classification of Christianity is in my view an accurate depiction of the view of almost all medieval Jewish authorities and many modern ones. The only appropriate reservation is that many of them did focus on the trinity in affirming that Christianity constitutes *avodah zarah*. Bloch assembled a list of quotations from medieval and modern rabbinic figures affirming that non-Jews are not forbidden to associate the true God with “another being,” and he dealt with the worship of Jesus as a God-man by the questionable strategy of equating it with an anthropomorphic conception of God and emphasizing that the medieval Talmudist R. Abraham b. David of Posquieres had declared such a conception non-heretical. At one point, Bloch affirmed that Maimonides him-

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<sup>10</sup> Strack, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*, 153.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 239–50.

<sup>12</sup> His major work on this subject was A. Rohling, *Der Talmudjude* (Muenster: A. Russell, 1872).

<sup>13</sup> J. S. Bloch, *Israel and the Nations* (Vienna: Harz, 1927). The original German version *Israel und die Voelker* was published in 1922.

<sup>14</sup> Bloch, *Israel and the Nations*, 44.

self did not consider Christians to be idolaters.<sup>15</sup> The quotations he cites are authentic, but some are subject to other interpretations. Moreover, if we substitute *avodah zarah* for idolatry, the assertion about Maimonides is incorrect. Finally, much material pointing in the opposite direction is intentionally overlooked.

## Recent and Contemporary Times

Beginning in the 1960s, a reconsideration of the apologetic bent emerged among Jewish historians. The pioneering work in this genre was Jacob Katz's *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, which I have analyzed elsewhere at length.<sup>16</sup> Katz provided a balanced depiction of medieval and early modern rabbinic assessments of Christianity as *avodah zarah* and of Jewish attitudes toward Christians and Christianity more generally. Beginning in the 1990s, two Jewish historians of stature—Israel Yuval and Elliott Horowitz—took this non-apologetic approach to new lengths by uncovering and emphasizing Jewish hostility to Christians and in Yuval's case connecting this hostility to the origins of the blood libel.<sup>17</sup> Some observers have seen this historiographical development as a manifestation of an unprecedented Jewish sense of security, connected in part to the establishment of a Jewish state, that diminished concerns of providing ammunition to antisemites. Nonetheless—especially in the first case—vigorous criticism ensued even, perhaps especially, from Israeli scholars.

Yuval did not merely provide a candid acknowledgment of medieval Jewish hostility toward Christians; this was the primary thrust of his work. He rejected the view that such hostility emerged primarily out of persecution; rather, he said, the attitudes of Ashkenazic Jews in particular were rooted in Palestinian texts or traditions that also found expression in early medieval Italy. Moreover, he attributed the persistence of such hostility well after the first crusade to an entrenched traditional attitude since, he says, these Jews did not suffer from “especially se-

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<sup>15</sup> Bloch, *Israel and the Nations*, 51.

<sup>16</sup> D. Berger, “Jacob Katz on Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages,” in *The Pride of Jacob: Essays on Jacob Katz and his Work*, ed. J. M. Harris (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 41–63. Reprinted in D. Berger, *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue*, 51–74.

<sup>17</sup> Yuval's initial formulation of his thesis appeared as “Ha-Naqam ve-ha-Qelalah, ha-Dam ve-ha-Alilah,” *Zion* 58 (1992/1993): 33–96. This was followed by a Hebrew book translated as *Two Nations in your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). The relevant discussion is in chapters 3 and 4, 92–204. For Horowitz, see *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).



vere attacks” in the two hundred years after 1096. His commitment to this position is especially striking when we consider that he illustrates this ongoing Jewish hostility by citing a remark by Ephraim of Bonn, who was reacting to the ritual murder accusation at Blois in 1171, where more than thirty Jews were burned to death.<sup>18</sup>

Yuval’s central thesis, argued with erudition and panache, is that the blood libel was probably inspired by the Jews’ ritualized killing of their own children during the Crusader persecutions of 1096. This is the sort of speculation that is not subject to definitive refutation. The assertion that I find most problematic is his affirmation that the killing of children by some of the martyrs, on rare occasions even after the immediate threat seemed to have passed, was seen by the Jewish chroniclers—at least in part—as an effort to arouse God’s wrath against Christians, so that He would be inspired to initiate His planned eschatological campaign of vengeance. Yuval strives to be careful in his formulation, but I think that in the final analysis, this is a fair depiction of his position, which is not, in my view, supported by any genuine evidence. The chroniclers certainly called upon God to exact such vengeance, but they did not ascribe such intentions to the martyrs themselves.

Horowitz’s study, like that of Yuval, aims to expose and document Jewish hostility toward Christians and Christianity. Much of the book is focused on the holiday of Purim and the wild and sometimes violent behavior that it generated. Beyond this central theme, Horowitz demonstrated that Jews really did desecrate crosses and argued that they may sometimes have even taken the opportunity to attack or defile a consecrated host. I am persuaded that instances in which Jews defiled crosses were by no means rare; on the other hand, evidence for attacks on the host is sparse, and there is not even one instance cited by Horowitz in which Jews planned to obtain a host, succeeded in doing so, and then desecrated it. He quotes me to the effect that “I have little doubt that if [...] a Jew had found himself in possession of this idolatrous object symbolizing the faith of his oppressors, it would not have fared very well in his hands.”<sup>19</sup> I stand by this assessment, but it is worth noting that my previous line reads, “Obtaining a consecrated host was no simple matter, and there is no reason to believe that any medieval Jew bothered to take the risk.”

Horowitz also addressed the historiographical record with respect to the acknowledgment or non-acknowledgment by scholars, especially Jewish scholars, of objectionable Jewish behavior, devoting special attention to the mass killing of

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<sup>18</sup> Yuval, *Two Nations*, 106.

<sup>19</sup> Horowitz, *Reckless Rites*, 173.

Christians by the Jews of Israel during the Persian invasion of 614. He points to candid presentations by some historians and suppression of uncomfortable facts by others. In his introduction, he places the work in the context of contemporary events, pointing to the identification by Jews on the extreme Right of Palestinians and even of some Jews with the biblical Amalek and underscoring the horror of Baruch Goldstein's murder of worshippers in the mosque at the Cave of the Patriarchs on Purim. On occasion, he can conflate relatively innocuous behavior with far more serious offenses; thus, the elimination of crosses from scenes in a film to be shown at an International Bible Quiz for Youth in Jerusalem is more or less equated with the action of a Jew who spat at a cross during a Christian procession.<sup>20</sup> In addressing issues with damaging potential, historiographical candor should be tempered by cautious evaluation and rhetorical restraint.

The approaches of Yuval and Horowitz, whatever criticisms they may evoke, are the product of responsible, excellent historians. In 2007, an anomalous work on the blood libel by a heretofore serious historian appeared that crossed every red line. Ariel Toaff's Italian publication *Passover of Blood* treated the generally torture-induced testimonies of the Jews of Trent with the utmost seriousness and entertained the possibility that some Ashkenazic Jews may have practiced blood rites that escalated into ritual murder.<sup>21</sup> Under the severe pressure of communal, institutional, and scholarly condemnation he withdrew the volume and produced a more restrained second edition, but the initial work was eagerly embraced by Jew-haters, and an English translation remains available on the web.<sup>22</sup>

In the wake of these developments, Hannah Johnson wrote a book entitled *Blood Libel: The Ritual Murder Accusation and the Limits of Jewish History*,<sup>23</sup> which attempts to place the recent historiography into a theoretical framework. I reviewed this book in *Speculum* and cannot revisit it here in any detail.<sup>24</sup> She addresses the work of Gavin Langmuir, who saw the blood libel as a product of a Christian inner struggle with religious doubt and a prime example of what he called "chimerical" antisemitism. In her view, his work suffers from a "juridical," "binary" approach in which Jews bear no responsibility at all for their victimization. Yuval, she says, introduced "an ethic of implication," while Toaff went "beyond implication." I think she goes too far in rejecting the so-

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<sup>20</sup> Horowitz, *Reckless Rites*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> A. Toaff, *Pasque di sangue: ebrei d'Europa e omicidi rituali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> [https://archive.org/stream/BloodPassoveredited/BloodPassoverByToaffEdited\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/BloodPassoveredited/BloodPassoverByToaffEdited_djvu.txt).

<sup>23</sup> H. Johnson, *Blood Libel: The Ritual Murder Accusation and the Limits of Jewish History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> D. Berger, review of *Blood Libel: The Ritual Murder Accusation at the Limit of Jewish History*, by Hannah Johnson, *Speculum* 89 (2014): 210–12.

called juridical approach, and I do not find the sophisticated theoretical framework particularly edifying.

In 2015, E. M. Rose published an important study on the earliest libels that points away from theoretical discourse and even from overarching explanations.<sup>25</sup> Rather, she subjects the accusations in Norwich, Bury St. Edmonds, Blois, and Paris to a meticulous examination, stressing local issues of a personal, political, or economic character. The message of the book is that these early accusations should be understood in their concrete, limited context and not be “explained” by approaches that are inspired by the overall history of the libel seen through the prism of later accusations. She does not, of course, deny that even the early cases following Norwich were rooted to some degree in the earlier incidents, but she makes an explicit point of avoiding the term antisemitism or any equivalent formulation. The book indeed calls into question the persuasiveness of efforts to explain the origins of the libel through factors that transcend local motivations, but the thorough rejection of any generalized reference to hostility toward Jews seems excessive.

In a very different vein, Rose sometimes assigns too powerful a historical role to the libels that she examines. Thus, she says that the burning of the Jews of Blois

constituted a radical reinterpretation of the status of Jews in Christian society, for it contradicted traditional views of Judaism as a divinely ordained stage in the evolution of sacred history [...] The condemnation of Jews at Blois overturned the notion of toleration, replacing it with a determination that for their perfidy, Jews could be rooted out and killed.<sup>26</sup>

This, I think, is an extreme overstatement. Jews continued to be tolerated after Blois. Even the more sophisticated effort by Nicholas Donin that Jeremy Cohen sees as a delegitimation of Jewish toleration did not, in my view, succeed in overturning the fundamental doctrine.<sup>27</sup> And the libel itself, as we have seen, was generally rejected by the Church despite the disturbing recognition and even canonization of purported victims.

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<sup>25</sup> E. M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich*, 237.

<sup>27</sup> This is a central thesis of Cohen's *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

## Persistence and Transmutation of the Libel

At the current historical juncture, the relevance of the blood libel transcends the renewed historiographical interest that we have been examining. First, the libel itself persists in the statements and writings of some not entirely marginal figures in Arab countries and to a lesser degree even elsewhere.<sup>28</sup>

Second, it has become such a paradigmatic specter for Jews *that* some accusations leveled at Israel are reflexively characterized as blood libels. When Menachem Begin resorted to this term to characterize international criticism of Israel for the killings in Sabra and Shatila, he was, in my view, using the term inappropriately.<sup>29</sup> But Israel—and sometimes the Jewish collective—has in fact been subjected to imaginary accusations for which the blood libel metaphor is entirely on point. Thus, Israel poisons Palestinians; it harvests their organs; Jews, thousands of whom are said to have refrained from coming to work at the World Trade Center on that fateful September 11, are responsible in whole or in part for the attacks. A substantial number of academics signed a statement before and immediately after the outbreak of the first Gulf War alerting the world to the possibility that Israel would take advantage of the distraction caused by

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**28** For a list including twelve examples from 1986 to 2014, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood\\_libel#20th\\_century\\_and\\_beyond](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_libel#20th_century_and_beyond). The accusations continue. For example, Dr. Mustafa al-Lidawi, a former Hamas official, who has promulgated the standard libel associating ritual murder with Passover, affirmed in 2018 that Jews also kill children to utilize their blood in baking Purim pastries. See “Former Hamas Official: In The Past, The Jews Slaughtered Christian Children On Passover; Today They Torment And Kill Palestinians Instead,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch, no. 5295, issued May 6, 2013, <https://www.memri.org/reports/former-hamas-official-past-jews-slaughtered-christian-children-passover-today-they-torment> and “Former Hamas Official In Antisemitic Article: The Jews Used The Blood Of Non-Jews To Prepare Pastry For Purim,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch, no. 7361, issued March 1, 2018, <https://www.memri.org/reports/former-hamas-official-antisemitic-article-jews-used-blood-non-jews-prepare-pastry-purim>. See also T. Balmforth, “‘Ritual Killing’? Probe Into Murder Of Tsar’s Family Spotlights Old ‘Anti-Semitic’ Conspiracy Theory,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 28, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/tsar-nicholas-ritual-killing-jews-anti-semitism/28884466.html> for a 2017 investigation suggesting that the killing of Tsar Nicholas II was a ritual murder.

**29** See D. K. Shiploter, “*Israeli Inquiry Give Leader ‘Indirect Blame’ in Massacre*,” *The New York Times*, February 9, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/02/09/world/israeli-inquiry-gives-leaders-indirect-blame-massacre-calls-for-sharon-s.html>. See also JTA, “Cabinet Rejects All Accusations That Israel Was Responsible for Massacre of Palestinians in Beirut,” September 21, 1982, <https://www.jta.org/1982/09/21/archive/cabinet-rejects-all-accusations-that-israel-was-responsible-for-massacre-of-palestinians-in-beirut>.

the fog of war to take action against the population of the West Bank “up to full-fledged ethnic cleansing.”<sup>30</sup>

Most recently, Duke University Press has published a work by Prof. Jasbir Puar of Rutgers University entitled *The Right to Maim*<sup>31</sup> whose thesis has been described as a blood libel.<sup>32</sup> Puar asserts that Israel’s policy of shooting dangerous, violent demonstrators or attackers in a manner that avoids killing them if at all possible should be seen as a strategy of maiming the Palestinian population in order to create a debilitated people more easily subject to exploitation. Written in the highly sophisticated language of theoretical discourse current in certain historical and social scientific circles, it has led a significant number of academics—as we shall see—to shower the author with extravagant praise.

At the very beginning of the volume, the reader encounters a preface entitled “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot,” a slogan of the Black Lives Matter movement based on the alleged cry of an unarmed black man killed by a police officer. While the author, whose unequivocal identification with the movement suffuses the entire preface, does not tell us that the victim actually said this, neither does she tell us that two investigations concluded definitively that the assertion that he did is a lie.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the attentive reader knows after twenty-four pages that this author suppresses truth in the interest of political/ideological commitments.

Here are some examples of the level of argument in this book.

For many on both sides of the occupation, it is better to “die for your country” [...] than to face a life with a body that is deemed disabled.

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**30** See “American Academics Join Israeli Colleagues In Warning Against Ethnic Cleansing,” San Francisco Bay Area Independent Media Center, January 30, 2003, accessed December 2, 2019, <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2003/01/30/15682691.php>. The authors cite support by elements of the Israeli coalition for “transfer” of the Palestinian population and assert that several members of parliament have advocated forcible expulsion. Aside from the fact that there was nothing remotely resembling a government plan to carry out such an action, the notion that hundreds of thousands of West Bank Palestinians could have been expelled (to Jordan? to Lebanon? to the Sinai? to Syria?) during a brief period, and this would go more or less unnoticed because the fog of war would distract world attention is so risible that it allows us to borrow Langmuir’s terminology. This is chimerical anti-Israelism.

**31** J. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

**32** See R. L. Cravatts, “‘The Right to Maim’: Jasbir Puar’s Pseudo-Scholarship and Blood Libels against Israel,” *The Times of Israel: Blog*, November 6, 2017, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-right-to-maim-jasbir-puars-pseudo-scholarship-and-blood-libels-against-israel>.

**33** See M. Y. H. Lee, “‘Hands up, don’t shoot’ did not happen in Ferguson,” *The Washington Post*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/03/19/hands-up-dont-shoot-did-not-happen-in-ferguson/>.

The last part of the sentence is a formulation that would not occur to anyone on either side of the conflict. Puar invents it to lay the groundwork for the continuation, to wit,

“Not killing” Palestinians while rendering them systematically and utterly debilitated is not humanitarian sparing of death. It is instead a biopolitical usage and articulation of the right to maim.<sup>34</sup>

Even Puar cannot easily depict the roof knocks and phone calls intended to warn civilians before bombings in Gaza as part of a campaign to maim, but she is undaunted. Such measures provided very short notice, they were useless for residents who are not mobile, and in the case of phone calls, they appear more like a reminder of how powerless the Gazans are given the control that Israel has over the telecommunication networks.<sup>35</sup> These arguments do not even begin to address the undeniable reality that these tactics constituted efforts to avoid civilian deaths (and maiming), and they underscore the lengths to which Puar will go in pursuing her imaginary thesis.

Similarly, she presents Israeli attacks on Palestinian medical facilities, ambulances, and health workers as part of an intentional policy to debilitate.<sup>36</sup> There is not even a gesture toward finding a member of the IDF who indicates awareness of a policy of deliberate targeting of medical infrastructure and services because they treat the ill, disabled, and wounded. Since some Israeli soldiers have made vigorous, public assertions of unethical behavior by members of the IDF, and it is virtually impossible that this purported policy could have been kept secret from every soldier and officer with such inclinations, the absence of such a reference speaks volumes.

Building on a hyperbolic statement by a Gazan Water Utilities official that it would be better if Israel would just drop a nuclear bomb on Gaza, she asserts with evident agreement that he is essentially saying that “it is as if withholding death—will not let or make die—becomes an act of dehumanization: the Palestinians are not even human enough for death.”<sup>37</sup>

It is by no means improper to classify this book as the rough equivalent of the blood libel. Moreover, its publication points to an even deeper concern, namely, the corruption of the academy. During the Beilis trial of 1913, the prosecution was hard pressed to find an academic who would testify that the blood

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<sup>34</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 108.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–34.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 140–41.

accusation is true, and it had to mobilize a priest from Tashkent who was easily, if cleverly, discredited under cross-examination. *The Right to Maim* was not only published by a respected university press; it also bears an effusive blurb from the prominent academic Judith Butler, and when a talk that Puar delivered at Vassar College on this theme was attacked in a *Wall Street Journal* article, nearly one thousand academics ranging from distinguished professors like Rashid Khalidi to graduate students—most of whom have no expertise in relevant fields—wrote a letter to the president of the university containing a similarly effusive declaration of the quality of her work and her standing as a scholar. Most recently, the National Women’s Studies Association announced that Puar’s book is the co-winner of their Alison Piepmeier Book Prize for 2018 awarded for contributions to feminist disability studies.

Even amidst the moral and intellectual wreckage that litters the academic landscape with respect to Israel, this award stands out. Thus, my instinct that a book like this, for all its footnotes and hyper-sophisticated jargon, should be ignored because of its manifest absurdity, is, I am afraid, misguided. Academics who care about Jews and Israel, and even those who care only about the academy itself, face a daunting challenge.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

The survival of the blood libel through the centuries has, I think, engendered not only fear, anger, and depression but also a degree of puzzlement. In a famous essay, the nineteenth-century Hebrew writer who called himself Ahad ha-Am affirmed that the revival of the libel can serve as a “partial consolation” by preventing Jews from internalizing anti-Jewish stereotypes and accusations on the assumption that people would not conjure up characterizations of Jews and their behavior that did not have some element of truth. Since every Jew, he wrote, recognizes the utter falsity of this accusation, its persistence serves to counter this damaging threat to the Jewish self-image.

The primary imperative, however, was to refute the libel, and we have seen how this objective was pursued by polemicists and scholars, aided on occasion

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**38** After the presentation of this paper and the subsequent publication of a slightly modified version of its final section (D. Berger, “Academic Prize for Scholarly Form of Blood Libel,” *The Jewish Week*, September 27, 2018, <https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/academic-prize-for-scholarly-form-of-blood-libel/>), C. Nelson’s important work *Israel Denial: Anti-Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Faculty Campaign against Israel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019) appeared with a detailed, devastating analysis (202–57) of Puar’s work.

by the testimony of Christian converts. To a significant degree, the power and persuasiveness of this effort succeeded in marginalizing the accusation, though by no means wiping it out. In a world where the threat appeared to have abated, some scholars felt comfortable to point to Jewish beliefs and behavior that in their view contributed to this lie.

We now face a situation in which falsehoods no less egregious than the blood libel are leveled against the only Jewish state. Some of the purveyors of these falsehoods are no less committed to them than the medieval and early modern executioners and torturers were to the validity of the libel, and there is no hope of persuading them otherwise. But a substantial segment of the audience susceptible to their assertions is not impervious to evidence and reasoned argument, and the largely successful polemic against the blood libel itself pursued by scholars of previous generations can serve as a precedent for contemporary efforts to overcome the resurgence of chimerical and near-chimerical fantasies about Jews and the Jewish state.

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Reuven Firestone

## Is the Qur'an "Antisemitic"?

The Qur'an expresses significant antipathy toward Jews. Jews (or Israelites) are portrayed as disobeying God (2:93), rejecting their own covenant (2:100), failing to follow their own Torah (5:66), and distorting or twisting the meaning of the divine revelation they received (2:101, 174). Jews are even cursed by God in the Qur'an (2:88; 4:51–52), and on occasion it calls to fight them (or more accurately, some of them: 9:29). For some observers, that is enough to condemn the Qur'an as "antisemitic." But this reaction is reductive, mistaken, and irresponsible. To arrive at such a conclusion requires expressly avoiding any consideration of the complexity of scripture and religion. To be precise, the Qur'an, like the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, directs resentment, anger, and even occasional rage toward its detractors. These emotions are elemental in scripture, as I will demonstrate below. To consider such sentiments whenever directed against Jews to be antisemitism is erroneous and irresponsible, for there exists a vital and unobvious difference between the resentment and anger expressed in scriptures against parties considered threatening, and the preaching of racialized hatred that lies at the core of antisemitism.<sup>1</sup> The Qur'an, like the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and other sacred texts believed by their devotees to be divinely authored or inspired, includes a significant amount of negative rhetoric directed against the communities it considers threatening. Jews are not singled out in the Qur'an. In fact, at least two other communities are feared and reviled significantly more in the Qur'an than Jews, as we shall observe in what follows.

In the case of the Hebrew Bible, the threatening communities that it reviles (Canaanites, Moabites, Amalekites, etc.) have long since disappeared from human history, so angry and even hateful language directed against them does not feel personal. It can be dismissed as symbolic or rhetorical. Moreover,

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**Note:** An earlier version of this article was published as "Qur'anic Anti-Jewish Polemics," in *Intolerance, Polemics, and Debate in Antiquity*, ed. G. H. van Kooten and J. van Ruiten (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 443–62.

<sup>1</sup> Angry rhetoric directed against certain Jews perceived as threatening becomes amplified and generalized ("racialized") in later writings and teachings. It is the later layer that is truly antisemitic, though—not the scriptural negativity, which is directed also against other detractors in both the New Testament and the Qur'an. A number of definitions for antisemitism have been proposed, for which there is no universal agreement. The working definition for this volume is that of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA definition), but others exist as well.

no one can self-identify seriously as Canaanites, Moabites or Amalekites today, so one does not hear of anyone becoming personally incensed for these communities' degrading portrayals in Hebrew Scripture. But that is not the case for Jews, who are understandably distressed at the negative rhetoric directed against them in the New Testament and the Qur'an, or Christians who are portrayed negatively in the Qur'an. The Hebrew Bible includes no negative references to Christians and Muslims, of course, but that is only because these two religious identities did not exist until after the canonization of the Hebrew Bible. This does not leave Judaism off the hook, since there are plenty of severely negative portrayals of Christians and Muslims in post-biblical Jewish sacred literature, just as there are plenty of negative portrayals of Jews and Christians in Muslim post-scriptural tradition and negative portrayals of Jews and Muslims in Christian post-scriptural tradition.<sup>2</sup> I will treat the problem of scripturally sanctioned animosity toward the religious Other below, but first, let us take a look at what the Qur'an really has to say about Jews.

## 1 Jews in the Qur'an

It is quite clear that the Qur'an has a lot to say about Jews, and it uses a number of different terms to refer to them. The most common is "Children of Israel" (*banū isrā'īl*),<sup>3</sup> which appears forty-three times and often refers to the ancient Israelites in narrations of stories with clear parallels in the Hebrew Bible. The term can also refer to Jews living contemporarily with the Qur'an, but when it does, the use of *banū isrā'īl* is evocative of their biblical origins—usually in relation to Israelite opposition to or rebellion against Moses and God. Parallel to this appellation are such terms as "the people of Abraham" (*qawm ibrahīm*; two times), the people of Moses" (*qawm mūsā*; 3 times),<sup>4</sup> "those who have Judaized" (*al-ladhīna hādū*; 10 times), "Jews" (*al-yahūd*; 8 times), and "Jew" or "Jewish" (*yahūdī*;

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<sup>2</sup> See T. L. Hetteema and A. van der Kooij, *Religious Polemics in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); S. Stroumsa, "Jewish Polemics Against Islam and Christianity in the Light of Judaeo-Arabic Texts," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. R. Hoyland (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2002), 201–10; N. Caputo, "Jewish-Christian Polemics Until the 15<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Oxford Bibliographies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199840731/obo-9780199840731-0038.xml>.

<sup>3</sup> All Qur'an translations here are based on A. J. Droge, *The Qur'ān: A New Annotated Translation* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> "The people of" is a common term referring to other characters known in the Bible who may or may not have been associated with the ancient Israelites, such as "the people of Lot" and "the people of Noah."

once). The last three terms, all constructed from *yahūdī*, seem to refer to Jews living in the period of the Qur'an's emergence—which is usually taken to be seventh-century Arabia.

Another common locution is various forms of "People of the Book" (*ahlū al-kitāb*), which occurs thirty-three times: "[those] who have been given the Book" (*al-ladhīna ūtū al-kitāb*; 19 times), "[those] whom We have given the Book" (*al-ladhīna ātaynā al-kitāb*; 6 times), "[those] who have been given a portion of the Book" (*al-ladhīna ūtū naṣīban min al-kitāb*; 3 times), and occasionally other locutions, such as "[those] who read/recite the Book" (*al-ladhīna yaqra'ūna al-kitāb*) or "successors who have inherited the Book" (*khalfun warithū al-kitāb*), and "People of the Reminder" (*ahlu al-dhikr*; twice), in which "Reminder" (*dhikr*) becomes a synonym (as it does elsewhere) for Scripture, meaning divine writ.

This last set of designations refers in general to people who are in possession of pre-Qur'anic Scripture (*al-kitāb* = "the Book"), so they actually refer to both Jews and Christians. Sometimes *ahlū al-kitāb* refers only to Jews, sometimes only to Christians, and sometimes to both simultaneously. But the contexts in which they appear most often reflect reference specifically to Jews. The distinctive language of the references is sometimes purposeful, such as the locution "those who were given a portion of the Book," in which "the Book" may refer generically to *all* of God's scriptural revelations, including the Qur'an.

The Qur'an uses still other terms, such as "[those] who have been given the Knowledge beforehand" (*al-ladhīna ūtū al-'ilm min qablihi*, 17:107) and the collective "one who has knowledge of the Book" (*man 'indahu 'ilmu al-kitāb*, 13:43), which probably refers not only to Jews and Christians but also to followers of Muhammad. Other appellations include "People of Abraham" (*āl ibrahīm*, 4:54), who were given "the Book and the wisdom and [...] a great kingdom," and "the tribes" (*al-asbāṭ*), which always (four times) occurs in the expression "Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes."

The Qur'an also refers to two additional categories within the community of Jews. One refers to rabbis—*rabbāniyūn* (3:79; 5:44, 5:63) and perhaps *rabbīyyūn* (3:14)—and the other to scholar-colleagues—*ahbār* (sing: *ḥabr*, 5:44, 5:63; 9:34). The latter category is known in the Talmud as *ḥaver/ḥaverim*—learned Jews at a slightly lower status than rabbis.<sup>5</sup> Qur'anic regard toward Jews is not all negative. It calls on sceptics to consult with the "People of the Reminder" to learn the truth about revelation and Scripture (16:43–44) and even instructs the

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5 M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Jerusalem: Chovev, n.d.), 421–22; M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2002), 428–29.

Prophet to consult “[those who] have been reciting the Book before you” (10:94) if he has any doubts about the revelation he himself received.

The large number of references to Jews and their ancestors, the Israelites, reveals the important status Jews held in the region from which the Qur’an emerged in late antiquity.<sup>6</sup> It also attests to the literary complexity of the use of these references, for it is likely that the different ways of referring to Jews carry different cultural meanings that might be recovered with further in-depth research. The Qur’an cannot avoid the Jews, nor does it wish to, yet it nevertheless expresses a clear ambivalence. In some contexts it expresses admiration and esteem: “Surely We sent down the Torah, containing guidance and light. By means of it the prophets who had submitted (*al-nabiyyūn al-ladhīna aslamū*) rendered judgment for the Jews, and [so did] the rabbis and the teachers (*wal-rabbāniyyūn wal-aḥbār*), with what they were entrusted of the Book of God, and they were witnesses to it” (5:44). More often, however, the Qur’an is highly critical of Jews. Jews are accused of refusing to accept their own divinely inspired prophets and even going to the extreme of killing many of them (2:87, 92; 3:52, 112, 183; 5:70).<sup>7</sup> They are cursed by God for their unbelief and refusal to accept God’s messages (2:88; 4:51–52). God is angry with them (3:112). They consistently disobey God (2:93), reject their own divine covenant (2:100; 3:187; 4:155; 5:12–13), and fail to follow their own Torah (5:66). They (or some of them) hide or distort and twist the very revelation they received from God (2:101, 174; 3:78; 4:46; 5:13, 41). They claim that Ezra (*‘Uzayr*) is the son of God (9:30). They lack true commitment to God (2:246), speak lies against God (3:78, 93; 6:20–24, 28; 61:6–7), and followed the words of the satans (*al-shayāṭīn*) in the time of Solomon (2:102). As a result of their stubbornness and evil behaviour, God ordained that they observe strict behavioural laws (4:160–161; 6:146–147; 16:118) and punished them in various ways, including exile from their land (59:2–4).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The best source for information about the Jews during the earliest period of emerging Islam is M. Lecker’s many studies, including *The Banū Sulaym: A Contribution to the Study of Early Islam* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1989); *Muslims, Jews and Pagans: Studies on Early Islamic Medina* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); *Jews and Arabs in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); *The “Constitution of Medina”: Muḥammad’s First Legal Document* (Princeton: Darwin, 2004); *People, Tribes and Society in Arabia around the Time of Muḥammad* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); and *Muḥammad and the Jews* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2014) [Hebrew].

<sup>7</sup> Some of the negative references that follow may be directed at both Jews and Christians, though they are usually directed specifically against Jews.

<sup>8</sup> Some of these criticisms are also found in the New Testament, and many can be observed in the self-critical nature of the Hebrew Bible itself.

The Qur'an complains that the Jews refuse to accept the prophethood of Muhammad and the revelation he was given (2:105; 5:59; 61:6). Jews wish to turn believers into disbelievers and lead them astray (2:109; 3:98; 5:77). Jews (and Christians) will never accept anyone who does not follow their creed (2:120, 135; 3:69), nor will they ever accept the leadership or believe the revelations of Muhammad, even though they recognize their validity and truth (2:145–146; 3:98). They mix truth with falsehood and conceal the truth (3:71). They demand that the prophet bring down a book from the sky to prove the authenticity of his mission (4:153). Of all the opponents of the prophet, the Jews (along with the idolaters) are among the most violent in their enmity (5:82).<sup>9</sup>

The Qur'an recognises that not all Jews (or not all Jews and Christians) are alike. Some are believers and behave properly by doing good deeds and acting righteously (2:62; 3:113, 3:199; 4:54, 4:155; 5:69; 22:17; 28:52–55). Such references may refer to those Jews who recognise the prophethood of Muhammad and accept his revelation (3:199; 4:162).

## 2 Contextualising Polemic in the Emergence of New Religion

If we were to organise the Qur'anic references to Jews on a continuum from positive to negative, the great majority would fall into the negative category. Of this there can be no doubt, but in order to truly understand and appreciate the anti-Jewish polemic of the Qur'an, it needs to be put into context in three ways.

First, the Qur'an's view of Jews needs to be examined in relation to its positions on other communities that contested its self-proclaimed status as a divinely revealed text. These include Christians, as mentioned above, but also practitioners of indigenous Arabian religion, usually designated specifically as *mushrikūn*—literally “associaters,” who associate other beings or divinities with God. Perhaps the most threatening to the early community were those who joined up with Muhammad but were later perceived by the Qur'an as undermining him. These are designated as *munāfiqūn* or “hypocrites.”<sup>10</sup> Sorting out these complex

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<sup>9</sup> “The closest [...] in affection to the believers are those who say, ‘We are Christians’” (5:82).

<sup>10</sup> This Arabic root is associated with the Aramaic/Syriac *n.f.q.*, the basic meaning of which is “to go out” (the closest parallel is between the causative forms in the two languages) and which can mean “to change from one status to another” (Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 764). I find that a better translation in the context of the Qur'an may sometimes be “dis-senter.”



views would require a much larger study than is possible in this chapter. Suffice it to say here that the Qur'an, like the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, rails mightily against all those who oppose its authority and the community that it represents. For readers of the Qur'an to single out only one community as the singular victim while ignoring all others creates a distorted picture and fails to consider the important phenomenology of scriptural polemic in general, which must be taken into account in a fair and scholarly inquiry.

Second, the Qur'an's view of Jews must be observed historically in relation to the emergence of the Qur'an in late antiquity. What was the position of Jews in the historical context of Qur'anic emergence? How were Jews perceived in general at the time? What was their influence on contemporary religious communities in general? While I will take these questions into consideration in what follows, any comprehensive illumination would also require a much larger and deeper study, which is not possible here.

Finally, the Qur'anic attitude towards Jews must be considered phenomenologically in reference to the emergence of Scripture and the birth of religion in general. It is this third aspect that I will attempt to treat here in some detail.

Sacred Scripture can be described in many ways, and it serves many purposes. Among them is its function as a recorded testimony chronicling a community's experience of the transcendent. It is generally understood as a communication from beyond normal human experience and is often referred to as a documentation and record of divine revelation. In fact, the very term "Scripture"—used in the West to describe these testimonies of divine communication—connotes their nature as proof of God's will in written form.<sup>11</sup> Among the scriptural monotheisms, because the "One Great God" is presumed to be the one and only source of ultimate power and authority, every religious community attributes its own revelation to the same divine source. As Jan Assmann and others have pointed out, this creates an immediate problem, because the obvious dissimilarities and disparities between revelations in their fixed scriptural form rais-

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**11** It has proven difficult to offer a succinct and inclusive definition of Scripture because it appears in a variety of forms among various world communities. I limit my comments here to the scriptural monotheisms. See F. Denny and R. Taylor, eds., *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 2–4; W. Cantwell Smith, *What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 1–20 and 212–42; M. Levering, "Rethinking Scripture," in *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. M. Levering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1–24; W. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 5–8. Current scholarship insists on the existence and importance of oral-aural "scripture" (see Smith, *What is Scripture?*, 7–9; Levering, "Rethinking Scripture," 5; Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*).

es the question of which proclaimed rendering of the divine will actually and truly reflects the authentic will of God.<sup>12</sup>

Although new religions tend to emerge fluidly and develop, adjust, and grow organically by responding to stimuli in a manner comparable to a living organism, at some point in their growth and development they institutionalize.<sup>13</sup> Institutionalization does not stop change and development, but it does create leaderships and hierarchies as power becomes concentrated among various parties within large communities of believers. As part of this institutionalization process, the record of divine dispensation becomes canonized in a discrete and delimited sacred written text.<sup>14</sup> Canonization is a process that determines which material is authentic, and thus sacred, and which is not. Only what is deemed to be authentic material can be included in the official canon of Holy Scripture. Once canonization occurs, it is virtually impossible for any new communication or message to be added to it, nor is it possible to remove anything from it (Deut 4:2, 13:1; Rev 22:18; Qur'an 33:40).<sup>15</sup> The act of canonization is highly political and

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**12** J. Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); J. Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); M. Jaffee, "One God, One Revelation, One People: On the Symbolic Structure of Elective Monotheisms," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69 (2001): 753–75; R. Firestone, "A Problem with Monotheism: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in Dialogue and Dissent," in *Heirs of Abraham: The Future of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Relations*, ed. B. Hinze (New York: Orbis, 2005), 20–54.

**13** This is not to suggest that religions necessarily experience any particular evolution. My point is that, as humanly constructed communal institutions, religions tend to undergo the same kinds of processes as other social institutions. This inevitably includes the development of structures and hierarchies as they reach a particular critical mass.

**14** L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders, *The Canon Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002); C. A. Evans and E. Tov, *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); L. M. McDonald, *Forgotten Scriptures: The Selection and Rejection of Early Religious Writings* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

**15** Cf. D. S. Powers, *Muhammad is not the Father of Any of Your Men: The Making of the Last Prophet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). A possible exception to this rule might be Judaism's "Oral Torah," which emerged after the destruction of the Second Temple and after the canonization of the Hebrew Bible. According to rabbinic Judaism, however, the Oral Torah is not new at all but actually contemporaneous with the Torah given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. The difference is that the "Oral Torah" was not written down but passed down orally through the generations until it was finally written down centuries after the canonization of the "Written Torah." Modern critical scholarship considers this narrative fiction and an attempt to provide scriptural authority for what is essentially a new religion: the religion of rabbinic Judaism. This development parallels the development of a new "testimony" of the divine will in the New Testament. In each case, the new Scripture authorizes new religious practice, liturgy, the-

institutional. It is carried out by the leaders of a religious community, who claim authority over interpretation of the divine message and responsibility for articulating Scripture's meaning for the community of believers.

In the scriptural monotheisms, it is God who is the ultimate authority for religion. But God's transcendence requires the medium of interpretation in order to clarify the divine message for the common people. That interpretation is typically controlled by religious leaders, who inevitably differ over who has the most accurate and thus most legitimate interpretation of God's word.<sup>16</sup> Whenever an establishment or hierarchy develops within a religious community, some oppose it. When the basis for religious authority is knowledge of Scripture (and thus knowledge of God's will and design), those who oppose the establishment may argue over interpretations of Scripture and ultimately over the religious establishment's authority to proclaim its meaning.

As noted above, the most powerful religious authorities in scriptural monotheisms act at some point in their history to control the canon by defining what is included within it and then fixing it. Making an absolute and definitive determination of what lies within the canon also defines what lies without. The establishment of a canon is a foundational act of institution-building. Fixing a canon also represents a declaration that God's direct revelation has ceased.<sup>17</sup> After that moment, knowledge of the divine will can continue to develop through the interpretation of canonized Scripture, but no new revelation will be accepted as a means of learning the will of God.

Despite the power of religious establishments to fix a canon of revealed Scripture, however, they cannot actually control future revelation. It is always

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ology, and creed. In the case of the New Testament, this new Scripture is celebrated as a new divine dispensation for legitimizing reasons. In the case of the Oral Torah, however, the newness was hidden, also for legitimizing reasons, as it is its ancient status of text in its ancient *oral* form, given at Sinai, that provides its authority.

**16** This divide may produce sectarian movements and even, eventually—if the divide is great enough—a new religion.

**17** This is codified classically in rabbinic Judaism in the Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 9b (with slightly different wording in Sanhedrin 11a; Jerusalem Talmud Sota 9:24; Tosefta Sota 13:2): "The rabbis taught: when [the last biblical prophets] Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit left Israel, though they could still use the *bat kol*." This was not the end of the story, however, as there remained significant controversy over the end of prophecy (P. Alexander, "'A Sixtieth Part of Prophecy': The Problem of Continuing Revelation in Judaism," in *Words Remembered, Texts Renewed: Essays in Honour of John F. A. Sawyer*, ed. J. Davies et al. [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995], 414–33). The New Testament and the Qur'an also reflect anxiety about the likelihood that some in the future may claim prophethood (Matt 7:15, 24:24; Acts 20:28–30; 2 Pet 2:1–2; Qur'an 33:40). So do post-scriptural writings in all three traditions.

theoretically possible that God will reveal again. Even powerful religious establishments cannot control or inhibit the possibility of God's return to immanence through the provision of new revelation. And in every generation, some individuals believe that they experience God through a variety of means: visions, voices, feelings, dreams, and so forth. In many cases, people with such experiences are accorded a certain level of credence within religious communities, as soothsayers, clairvoyants, or psychics. But it is extremely rare for them to be considered seers or prophets, because these latter offices tend to be associated with the authority of God and therefore challenge the authority of religious establishments over the communities of believers they represent.

The appearance of a new prophet is a statement which represents a direct challenge to established religious authorities. Nevertheless, the assertions of new prophetic claimants are usually ignored at first by members of established religions, and most prophetic aspirants falter and disappear as a result of their failure to convince enough people of their authenticity. However, when the new candidate for divine representative succeeds in attracting a sizable following, he or she inevitably draws the attention of representatives of religious establishments.<sup>18</sup> Thus we observe how Jesus is tested by Pharisees and Sadducees in the New Testament,<sup>19</sup> and the Israelites as a whole are in effect tested by a Moabite holy man, Balaam, in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>20</sup> The *Sīra* or official biography of Muhammad, first written by Muhammad ibn Ishāq, also records a series of attestation narratives in which Muhammad was tested by Jews and Christians.<sup>21</sup> Attestation narratives may be much more than simple tests. They are often portrayed as attempts to trip up the prophetic claimant in order to prove that he or she is not credible and that the alleged revelation is not a truly divine revelation.<sup>22</sup>

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**18** I recognize that a prophet can be male or female in the scriptural monotheist tradition. Some female prophets in the Hebrew Bible are Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22), "No'adiah the prophetess" (Neh 6:14); and "the prophetess" (*hanevi'ah*) (Isa 8:3). But English still relies on gendered pronouns. Because we are treating Muhammad's prophethood here, I feel it is legitimate to use the male pronoun.

**19** Matt 16:1, 19:3, 22:23–46; Mark 10:2–12.

**20** Num 22–24. The Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac Peshitta identify Balaam as an Ammonite, while the Talmud (Baba Batra 15b) identifies him as a prophet.

**21** See R. Firestone, "The Problematic of Prophecy: 2015 IQSA Presidential Address," *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association* 1 (2016): 11–22; B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 37–60.

**22** As Roggema points out, the same basic attestation narratives may appear differently among different parties. A classic case is the tests of Muhammad's prophethood. While the Muslim ver-

The Qur'anic polemic against Jews and Judaism must be understood in relation to this phenomenology of scriptural and religious emergence. The Qur'an provides a great deal of evidence that Jews tested the Prophet's authority in a variety of ways, such as by their insistence that he bring down a new revelation in their presence (4:153).

### 3 Scripture *Is* Polemic

One must bear in mind that the appearance of a new revelation conveyed by a prophet claiming the authority of God is a very powerful message. The Qur'an's appearance as a divine disclosure occurring after the closure of Jewish and Christian scriptural canons represents a criticism of prior Scripture and the religious communities and practices that prior Scripture authorises. In other words, the very *existence* of the Qur'an is a polemical statement. Its appearance conveys the message that prior religion is inadequate or incomplete, and that prior Scriptures, practices, and beliefs are flawed. Why else would God cleave the heavens to provide a new revelation when a Scripture already exists? This is a fundamental characteristic of emergent Scripture and religion. They cannot avoid representing a critique of the practices and assumptions of the religions that came before.

Since according to Jews and Christians their Scriptures are sufficient for carrying out God's will,<sup>23</sup> any new divine dispensation is burdened with the need to justify its existence. At the same time, emergent Scripture is inevitably criticized by members of established religions for being inauthentic and false, even deceptive. Thus the motivating factors that produce the polemic in emergent Scripture derive not only from its very existence as critique but also in reaction to attacks by members of established religions.

Regarding this last point, it is worth considering the difference between the polemics of sectarian movements that share a Scripture with an established religion and the polemics of new religions that emerge in conjunction with a new Scripture. New sectarian movements *within* established religions criticise practices or beliefs of the religious establishment while maintaining what they claim to be the authentic truth and meaning of its established Scripture. That is, sectarian movements critique the faith and practice but not the Scripture of an established

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sions show Jewish and Christian religious authorities attesting to the authenticity of Muhammad's prophetic status, Jewish and Christian versions of the same basic story show the opposite. **23** On this Jews and Christians can agree in general, but of course, they do not customarily agree over the validity of each other's respective scriptural canon, theology, and practice.

religion. In fact, they criticise the way in which Scripture is understood and interpreted by the establishment while insisting that their ideals and/or practices reflect the true intent of the commonly recognized Scripture.

New religions claiming a new revelation, however, critique both the faith and practice *and* the sacred Scripture of established religions. New religious movements that justify their existence through new prophecy and revelation must demonstrate that these are authentic and authorized by God. But for God to make the extraordinary move of cleaving the heavens by bringing a new dispensation is in itself a statement that it is not only the faith, practice, and prior claims to ownership of divine communication that are faulty, but that the established divine communication itself is defective. In the case of the New Testament's critique of the "Old" Testament, it argues that a new dispensation came with the arrival of God's new revelation in the person of Jesus, the "walking revelation" of Christ as God incarnate. The prior testimony of God in the Old Testament represented an earlier and subsequently outmoded, transcended stage.

The Qur'an likewise justifies its existence in relation to prior Scripture. It claims, for example, that the words of former Scriptures are inaccurate and do not represent the complete and unadulterated will of God because they have been physically altered and/or their meaning has been distorted (2:75; 4:44–46; 5:13, 5:41). It also argues that Jews (and Christians) do not practice religion properly, so they need a new divine dispensation (4:160–161).<sup>24</sup> They hold improper beliefs (9:30–31). The details of these critiques reflect a significant knowledge of Jewish and Christian Scripture, religious practice, and belief, though some references—such as the condemnation of Jews for claiming that Ezra is the son of God—have perplexed Jews for centuries (9:30: *qālat al-yahūd 'uzayr ibnu Allāh*). And as I will demonstrate below, specific details within the verses in question suggest that some or even many of the Qur'anic critiques represent reactions to Jewish critiques of Muhammad and the message he claimed to have brought. I will attempt to reconstruct some of these criticisms below.

Knowledge of prior Scripture and religious practice is not obvious, or perhaps not deemed particularly important, in what are generally considered the early parts of the Qur'an.<sup>25</sup> While I do not uncritically accept the standard chronological assumptions of Islamic tradition regarding the order of revelation

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<sup>24</sup> The Qur'an often notes exceptions and is often careful not to condemn all practitioners of established religions (Q. 2:62; 3:100–115, 199; 4:162; 5:69; 22:17?).

<sup>25</sup> On the chronology of revelation, see W. M. Watt and R. Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'an* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 108–20; T. Nöldeke, F. Schwally, G. Bergsträßer, and O. Pretzl, *The History of the Qur'ān*, ed. and trans. W. Behn (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

(which have been accepted in general by most modern critical scholarship), it does appear that little to no anti-Jewish polemic occurs in presumably early *sūras*.

This observation would seem reasonable, given our general view of scriptural and religious emergence. What are identified as the earliest utterances of the new revelation of the Qur'an are generally exhortative, directed at the local audience, which is mostly made up of practitioners of indigenous Arabian religion(s), but likely includes a smattering of Jews and Christians of one sort or another, along with people who hold other religious beliefs as well (perhaps deriving from Zoroastrian or African milieus). These exhortations represent innocent calls to respond to the newly articulated divine message delivered by the new prophet. Any polemics are directed against the presumably common practice of polytheism, along with the call to worship the One Great God. They are not directed at monotheists but rather call on all the indigenous Arabian polytheists to abandon their traditions and become monotheists themselves.

When such prophetic messages become known to the larger community, members or representatives of religious establishments inevitably come to test their assertions. Moreover, Jewish tradition awaits the coming of a redemptive messianic figure, and the Hebrew Bible cautions its audience that God will continue to send prophets (Deut 13:2–6; 18:15–22). It is quite logical, therefore, that some Jews would test Muhammad's claims, for there is always the possibility that a new prophetic figure may indeed be the one they are waiting for.<sup>26</sup> Testing includes questioning and critiquing the new messages and claims pronounced with alleged divine authority. In such a situation, it can safely be assumed that argument would naturally ensue, and those investigators who were unconvinced would predictably criticise the authority of the new prophet and the validity of the new revelation. Subsequent revelations could then be received in response to these critiques and attacks, serving as countermeasures in the form of polemics directed against the claims of the critics or against the critics themselves.

Qur'anic polemic indeed includes much material that appears to be reactive to arguments directed against it and to the authors of those arguments. It some-

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**26** One of the most provocative sections is Deut 18:15–22. For a history of messianic Jewish movements, see A. Ze'ev Aescoly, *Jewish Messianic Movements. Sources & Documents on Messianism in Jewish History: From the Bar Kokhba Revolt until the Recent Times*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1956, in Hebrew); A. H. Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* (Boston: Beacon, 1927); G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971); M. Saperstein, *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities* (New York: New York University Press, 1992).



times preserves portions of the arguments within its own ripostes. Polemics and apologetics are closely related. As the adage teaches, “the best defence is a good offense,” and the Qur'an clearly contains both.

## 4 Examples

As noted above, polemical references in the Qur'an often suggest, indicate, or allude to criticisms and challenges to which they are responding. This observation is not new, but in the following I will try to organise these references in relation to what are most likely Jewish critiques of the new prophet and his message. Because Jewish criticism of Muhammad and the Qur'an is alluded to but rarely recorded verbatim, it is not always clear which particular issues the Jews were attempting to critique. Nevertheless, trends can be noted, and they fit into a few basic categories.

It should be kept in mind that criticisms can fit into more than one category, and it should also be noted that polemical statements in the Qur'an are not always applied indiscriminately. They are sometimes directed only to a portion of the identified group – that portion likely made up of those who opposed or critiqued Muhammad and his message. 6:160, for example, begins with: “So for the evil-doing of those who are Jews [“those who are Jews” is an idiom for Jews in general], We have made [certain] good things forbidden to them [...] for keeping many [people] from the way of God. And for their taking usury [...] their consuming the wealth of the people by means of falsehood.” But the tone changes in verse 162: “But the ones who are firm in knowledge among them [...] who observe prayer and give alms [...] We shall give them a great reward.”

In the following survey, the headings represent categories of critique levelled against the new prophet and his message, to which the Qur'an seems to be responding. Because of the great volume and complexity of the material, I have included only those parts of the Qur'anic arguments that relate to the specific category under which they are listed. Sometimes, therefore, the sections of the Qur'an that identify the criticising party as Jews are missing. These can easily be identified, however, by reading the verses that precede those cited. The schema and samples in this preliminary exercise are not exhaustive, and the categories could be altered significantly.



## 4.1 Jewish Rejection of the New Revelation

2:91: “When it is said to them,<sup>27</sup> ‘Believe in what God has sent down,’ they say, ‘We believe in what has been sent down on us,’ but they disbelieve in anything after that, when it is the truth confirming what is with them. Say: ‘Why did you kill the prophets of God before, if you were believers?’”

2:105: “Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book, and the idolaters, do not like [it] that anything good should be sent down on you from your Lord. But God chooses whomever He pleases for His mercy, and God is full of great favour.”

3:70: “People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve in the signs of God, when you are witnesses [to them]?”

3:98: “Say: ‘People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve in the signs of God, when God is a witness of what you do?’”<sup>28</sup>

4:155: “So for those breaking their covenant, and their disbelief in the signs of God, and their killing the prophets without any right, and their saying, ‘Our hearts are covered’ – No! God set a seal on them for their disbelief, so they do not believe, except for a few.”

6:20 – 21: “Those to whom We have given the Book recognize it, as they recognize their own sons. Those who have lost their [own] selves, they do not believe. Who is more evil than the one who forges a lie against God, or calls His signs a lie? Surely the evildoers will not prosper.”

6:157: “Or you would say, ‘If [only] the Book had been sent down to us, we would indeed have been better guided than them.’ Yet a clear sign has come to you from your Lord, and a guidance and mercy. Who is more evil than the one who calls the signs of God a lie, and turns away from them? We shall repay those who turn away from Our signs [with] an evil punishment for their turning away.”

62:5 – 7: “Those who have been loaded down with the Torah (*al-tawrāt*), [and] then have not carried it, are like a donkey carrying books. Evil is the parable of the people who have called the signs of God a lie. God does not guide the people who are evildoers. Say: ‘You who are Jews! If you claim that you are the allies of God to the exclusion of the people, wish for death, if you are truthful.’ But they will never wish for it because of what their [own] hands have sent forward. God knows the evildoers.”

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<sup>27</sup> This is a continuation of an argument begun earlier, in which Jews are identified as “Children of Israel” in 2:83.

<sup>28</sup> See also 3:110, 199. In the idiom, “Why do you disbelieve in the signs of God?” (*limā takfur-ūna bi’ayātil-Lah*), “signs” in Arabic is the same word used to refer to Qur’anic verses (*ayāt*), so at the very least, this serves as a subtext—if not a direct accusation—of refusing to accept the new divine utterance.

## 4.2 Jewish Criticism of the New Revelation

3:65–66: “People of the Book! Why do you dispute about Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospel were not sent down until after him? Will you not understand? There you are! Those who have disputed about what you know. Why do you dispute about what you do not know? God knows, but you do not know.”

3:71: “People of the Book! Why do you mix the truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth, when you know [better]?”

3:78: “Surely [there is] indeed a group of them who twist their tongues with the Book, so that you will think it is from the Book, when it is not from the Book. And they say, ‘It is from God,’ when it is not from God. They speak lies against God, and they know [it].”

5:15: “People of the Book! Our messenger has come to you, making clear to you much of what you have been hiding in the Book, and overlooking much. Now a light and a clear Book from God has come to you.”

## 4.3 Jewish Rejection and Undermining of the Authority of the Prophet

2:109: “Many of the People of the Book would like [it] if you turned back into disbelievers, after your believing, [because of] jealousy on their part, after the truth has become clear to them. So pardon and excuse [them], until God brings His command. Surely God is powerful over everything.”

2:120: “Neither the Jews nor the Christians will ever be pleased with you until you follow their creed. Say: ‘Surely the guidance of God—it is the [true] guidance.’ If indeed you follow their [vain] desires, after the knowledge which has come to you, you will have no ally and no helper against God.”

2:145–146: “Yet even if you bring every sign to those who have been given the Book, they will not follow your direction. You are not a follower of their direction, nor are they followers of each other’s direction. If indeed you follow their [vain] desires, after the knowledge which has come to you, surely then you will indeed be among the evildoers. Those to whom We have given the Book recognize it, as they recognize their [own] sons, yet surely a group of them indeed conceals the truth—and they know [it].”

3:69: “A group of the People of the Book would like to lead you astray, but they only lead themselves astray, though they do not realize [it].”

3:72–73: “A contingent of the People of the Book has said, ‘Believe in what has been sent down on those who believe at the beginning of the day, and disbelieve at the end of it; perhaps [then] they may return.’ And: ‘Do not believe (anyone) except the one who follows your religion.’ Say: ‘Surely the [true] guidance is the guidance of God—that anyone should be given what you have been given, or [that] they should dispute with you before your Lord!’ Say: Surely favour is in the hand of God. He gives it to whomever He pleases. God is embracing, knowing.”

3:81–85: “[Remember] when God made a covenant with the prophets: ‘Whatever indeed I have given you of the Book and wisdom, when a messenger comes to you confirming what is with you, you are to believe in him and you are to help him.’ He said, ‘Do you agree and accept My burden of that [condition]?’ They said, ‘We agree.’ He said, ‘Bear witness, and I shall be with you among the witnesses.’ Whoever turns away after that, those—they are the wicked. Do they desire a religion other than God’s, when whoever is in the heaven and the earth has submitted to Him, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they will be returned? Say: ‘We believe in God, and what has been sent down on us, and what has been sent down on Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and what was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.’ Whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.”

3:99: “Say: ‘People of the Book! Why do you keep those who believe from the way of God, desiring [to make] it crooked, when you are witnesses? God is not oblivious of what you do.’”

3:110–112: “You are the best community [ever] brought forth for humankind, commanding right and forbidding wrong, and believing in God. If the People of the Book had believed, it would indeed have been better for them. Some of them are believers, but most of them are wicked. They will not cause you any harm, except for a [little] hurt. And if they fight you, they will turn their backs to you, [and] then they will not be helped. Humiliation will be stamped upon them wherever they are found, unless [they grasp] a rope from God and a rope from the people. They have incurred the anger of God, and poverty will be stamped upon them. That is because they have disbelieved in the signs of God and killed the prophets without any right. That is because they have disobeyed and transgressed.”

3:183–184: “Those [are the same people] who said, ‘Surely God has made us promise not to believe in any messenger until he brings a sacrifice which fire devours.’ Say: ‘Messengers have come to you before me with the clear signs, and with that which you spoke of. So why did you kill them, if you are truthful?’ If they call you a liar, [know that] messengers have been called liars before you, who brought the clear signs, and the scriptures, and the illuminating Book.”

4:51–56: “Do you not see those who have been given a portion of the Book? They believe in al-Jibt and al-Ṭāghūt,<sup>29</sup> and they say to those who disbelieve, “These are better guided [as to the] way than those who believe. Those are the ones whom God has cursed [...] Or are they jealous of the people for what God has given them of His favor? Yet We gave the house of Abraham the Book and the wisdom, and We gave them a great kingdom. [There are] some of them who believe in it, and some of them who keep [people] from it. Gehenna is sufficient as a blazing [fire]. Surely those who disbelieve in Our signs—We shall burn them in a

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**29** These appear to be the names of gods. Jibt occurs in the Qur’an only in this verse, but Ṭāghūt appears elsewhere in the Qur’an as well. The Hebrew-Aramaic cognate, *ṭā’ūt / ṭā’ūtā*, carries the meaning of “error” but can also denote a spirit or false god in the Jewish *targumim* (Aramaic translations of the Bible), such as Deut 4:28: “And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands.” Targum Onkelos renders it: *vetifliḥūn tamān le’amemāya pālḥey-ṭa’vātā ‘avad yedey anāshā*. See also Jer. Talmud San.10:4; *Sifrei Bamidbar* 131: *uleṭā’ūtḥem*.

Fire. Whenever their skins are completely burned, We shall exchange their skins for others, so that they may [continue to] feel the punishment. Surely God is mighty, wise.”

4:150–151: “Surely those who disbelieve in God and His messengers, and wish to make a distinction between God and His messengers, and say, ‘We believe in part, but disbelieve in part,’ and wish to take a way between [this and] that, those—they in truth are the disbelievers. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.”

4:153: “The People of the Book ask you to bring down on them a Book from the sky. They have already asked Moses for [something] greater than that, for they said, ‘Show us God openly!’ So the thunderbolt took them for their evildoing. Then they took the calf after the clear signs had come to them. But We pardoned them for that, and We gave Moses clear authority.”

4:156–159: “and for their disbelief, and their saying against Mary a great slander, and for their saying, ‘Surely we killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of God’—yet they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it [only] seemed like [that] to them. Surely those who differ about him are indeed in doubt about him. They have no knowledge about him, only the following of conjecture. Certainly they did not kill him. No! God raised him up to himself. God is mighty, wise. [There is] not one of the People of the Book who will indeed believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.”

4:160: “So for the evildoing of those who are Jews, We have made [certain] good things forbidden to them which were permitted to them [before], and [also] for their keeping many [people] from the way of God.”<sup>30</sup>

6:25: “[There are] some of them who listen to you, but We have made coverings over their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and a heaviness in their ears. If they see any sign, they do not believe in it, so that when they come to dispute with you, those who disbelieve say, ‘This is nothing but old tales.’”

6:147: “If they call you a liar, say: ‘Your Lord is full of abundant mercy, but His violence will not be turned back from the people who are sinners.’”

#### 4.4 Jewish Criticism of New Religious Practices (?)

3:93–94: “All food was permitted to the Children of Israel, except for what Israel forbade itself before the Torah was sent down. Say: ‘Bring the Torah and read it, if you are truthful.’ Whoever forges lies against God after that, those—they are the evildoers.”

5:57–59: “You who believe! Do not take those who take your religion in mockery and jest as allies, [either] from those who were given the Book before you, or [from] the disbelievers.

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<sup>30</sup> The section continues with the accusation of Jewish usury: “And [for] their taking usury, when they were forbidden [to take] it, and [for] their consuming the wealth of the people by means of falsehood, We have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful punishment.”

Guard [yourselves] against God, if you are believers. When you make the call to prayer, they take it in mockery and jest. That is because they are a people who do not understand. Say: ‘People of the Book! Do you take vengeance on us [for any other reason] than that we believe in God and what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down before [this], and because most of you are wicked?’”

## 5 Conclusion

As noted above, these verses appear to represent responses to disapproval and disparagement levelled against the new community of believers, its revelation, and its prophet. The strong Qur’anic reaction is directed not only against Jews, but against Christians and indigenous practitioners of Arabian religions as well, but the prominent and respected status of Jews living in Arabia in the seventh century seems to have made them a particularly important target for rebuttal. Early Muslim traditions refer to the highly respected status of Jews living among native Arabian peoples, so it is likely that Jewish critiques of Muhammad and the revelation he brought had to be countered vigorously.<sup>31</sup> The Jewish community as a whole clearly did not accept Muhammad’s prophetic claims, though some individuals certainly did, which then defined those Jews who followed the Prophet and his revelation as apostates from the Jewish perspective.

Islamic tradition depicts some Arabian Jews as anticipating the coming of a prophetic or redemptive leader from somewhere in Arabia.<sup>32</sup> If it is true that some Jews were expecting a redemptive figure, then it would be likely that those Jews who did not consider Muhammad to be the awaited one would have been particularly unhappy with their fellow religionists who did and thus likely to level strong criticisms both against them and against Muhammad and his message.<sup>33</sup>

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31 R. Firestone, “Muslim-Jewish Relations,” in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), published online January 2016, <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-17>.

32 *Al-Sira al-nabawiyya li’ibn hishām*, 2 vols., *Dār al-thiqāfa al-‘arabiyya* (Beirut, n.d.), 1:213–14, 513–14, 527; 2:522–23; A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 93–95 and 239–41; Ibn Sa’d, *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 8 vols. + index (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1997/1418), 1:126.

33 This sentiment seems to be reflected in the story of ‘Abdullah b. Salām, a learned Jew who converted to Islam according to Muslim sources, for which he was harshly attacked by his fellow Jews (*Al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, 1:516–17; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 240–41). The story may not be historical, but it certainly reflects a historically accurate Jewish sentiment directed against

The concerns of Jews considering the possible redemptive status of Muhammad are intrinsic to all the scriptural monotheisms, which are sceptical (at the very least!) when evaluating the authenticity of prophetic claimants. The problematic issue revolves around the tension between scriptural canonization on the one hand and the possibility of new divine communication on the other. As noted above, centres of religious power, at some point in their institutional development, determine that all the revelation that can be recorded into an official repository of divine communication has come to an end. The decision becomes institutionalized through the act of canonization—that is, determining what is official divine revelation and what is not, recording the official material, and then excluding all else from the official canon. The official, accredited material is sanctified in the form of an official document, which we refer to today as Holy Scripture. All other material must then be rejected as false claims to divine disclosure.

Yet while a religious body can designate and limit an official canon, it does not have the authority to proclaim that henceforth God can never provide any new communication to humanity. There is always the *possibility* of more, but it is also always in the interest of the religious establishment to limit that possibility, because new divine revelation carries with it a higher authority than that of any institutional religious establishment. It is impossible for claims to new revelation to be approved or endorsed by religious establishments, because such an approval would invalidate the authority of their own religion and their status as religious leaders. This tension is evident among the three traditional scriptural monotheisms, all of which reject the authenticity, reliability, or relevance of competing Scriptures.

Most new religious movements fail, but some that claim the authority of divine revelation do indeed succeed in establishing new religions. When this occurs, they remain forever threatening to the authority of previously established religions. Earlier scriptural monotheisms therefore continue to disparage newer religions even after they become established. The newer religions, in turn, carry within their sacred Scriptures the institutional memory of those early attacks and their own defensive reactions in the form of invective directed against their accusers. As a result, the hostility becomes embedded in both religions' worldviews, as it is internalized and then preserved forevermore in theology, ritual, law, and practice. Qur'anic anti-Jewish polemics cannot be properly understood without taking into account the historical and phenomenological

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those Jews who apostatized and then used their knowledge of Judaism to attack their former religious brethren.

context of their origin. Given the phenomenology of religious emergence, it should not be surprising that religious resentment, fear, and prejudice are so difficult to transcend.

One last observation is in order. We examined what the Qur'an says about Jews. We did not consider what it does not say. It is important to note that the Qur'an does not call anywhere to "kill the Jews." Neither does it single out "the Jews" as the enemy. Moreover, the Qur'an never associates Jews with the devil, despite the fact that *al-shayṭān* and *iblis* occur as regular terms for Satan within it. These malicious sentiments and accusations against Jews were floating around in Christian writings by the time of Qur'anic emergence, yet the Qur'an does not pick them up. It would be wrong to label the Qur'an as antisemitic. The Qur'an does not racialize Jews, nor does it dehumanize them.<sup>34</sup> It certainly does not call for their destruction.

But some Muslim leaders do racialize and dehumanize Jews, and some do indeed call for the Jews' destruction. And some Muslim religious leaders cherry-pick so-called "proof-texts" from the Qur'an and use them to support their antisemitic views. Like all scriptures, the Qur'an includes plenty of negative material about opponents. Negative Qur'anic references to Jews or Israelites can be and are exploited today to promote antisemitic sentiments, policies, and actions. Put differently, antisemitism is not inherent to the Qur'an, but the Qur'an can nevertheless be exploited to promote antisemitism. A deeper understanding how scripture "works" helps to make sense of all this. In order to resolve our issues, we need to move beyond accusations and work toward educating ourselves and those with whom we find ourselves in conflict for the mutual benefit of all our communities.

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<sup>34</sup> Some might refer to the supposed Qur'anic accusation that Jews and Christians are all "pigs and apes." For a careful study of the relevant Qur'anic sources, see R. Firestone, "Apes and the Sabbath Problem," in *The Festschrift Darkhei Noam: The Jews of Arab Lands*, ed. C. Schapkow, S. Shepkaru, and A. Levenson (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 26–48.

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Amir Mazor

## The Position of the Jews in Egypt and Syria in the Late Middle Ages

The legal position of the Jews in the medieval Muslim world was clearly defined in Islamic law: Jews are considered part of “the protected people” (Arabic: *ahl-dhimma*, or: *dhimmi*), together with other non-Muslim groups who live under Islamic rule, such as Christians, whose religion is acceptable to Islam. As *dhimmi*, individual Jews have the right to observe their faith and to run their affairs without interference, as well as the right to protection for their life and property, as long as they take upon themselves two commitments:

- a) The regular payment of the poll tax (*jizya*) to the Muslim state.
- b) Observance of a list of discriminatory laws, called “the Pact of Umar,” attributed to one of the early Muslim caliphs. These laws included, for instance, symbolic acts meant to humiliate and distinguish the *dhimmi* from the Muslims, such as the requirement to rise in the presence of Muslims when the latter was sitting down, to refrain from riding horses or using saddles and bearing arms, to construct their houses at a lower elevation than those belonging to Muslims, and to distinguish themselves from Muslims by avoiding the use of honorific names (such as names beginning with *Abū*), and, of special importance—by dressing in distinct garb. In addition, the “Pact of Umar” also prohibited non-Muslims from building new houses of worship and even from making repairs to existing buildings that had fallen into ruin, or displaying their religion publicly.<sup>1</sup>

We may say that in general, with few exceptions, this basic Islamic attitude toward Jews was observed in the breach during the Middle Ages. This paper, however, will be mainly focused on the situation of the Jews in the heartland of the Middle East in the late Middle Ages, in Egypt and Syria (including the land of Israel) under Mamluk rule, between 1250 and 1517.

It is widely accepted among scholars that the Mamluk period witnessed a significant deterioration in the situation of the Jews in Egypt and Syria. All historical sources seem to indicate that the Mamluk period was indeed a low point for Jews in almost every aspect of life. However, in order to grasp the situation of

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1 M. R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 52–72.

the Jews more clearly, I will examine the situation in its true social and cultural contexts, and in relative attitude.

The attitude of the Mamluk sultans toward Jews and Christians stood in sharp contrast to the policies of the preceding heterodox Shī'ī Fatimid Caliphs, who ruled between 969 and 1171. Except for a short period under the caliph al-Ḥākīm bi-Amr Allāh (1007–1021), in which *dhimmīs* were persecuted, during the long Fatimid period Jews and Christians enjoyed a distinguished position. Cairo Genizah documents indicate that the requirements for *dhimmīs* to wear distinguishing clothing, one of the better known laws of the “Pact of Umar,” were not normally enforced, nor were other discriminatory laws. Moreover, Jews were employed as high state officials and physicians.<sup>2</sup>

The situation of the Jews worsened under the Ayyubid Sultanate, founded in Egypt by Saladin in 1171. Deposing the Shī'ī Fatimid Caliphate after two hundred years, Saladin restored Sunnism as the only legitimate religious rite of the state. In order to strengthen Sunnism in Egypt and Syria and to justify his image as a holy warrior (*mujāhid*) against the infidel Crusaders, his rule inclined to orthodox zeal, including the implementation of some of the Pact of Umar laws. For instance, Muslim historians note that during Saladin's reign, for the first time, *dhimmīs* were not allowed to ride on mules (in addition to horses, which was always forbidden).<sup>3</sup> Both Muslim sources and Jewish sources—that is, the Cairo Genizah documents—indicate that toward the end of the Ayyubid period, around the mid-thirteenth century, Jews in Cairo wore distinctive yellow marks on their turbans, whereas Christians wore their distinctive belt, the *zunnār*.<sup>4</sup>

The pressure on the non-Muslims became much stronger in the Mamluk period. This was due to several circumstances, mainly political and economic. First, the offensive policy against the Crusades—conducted by the early Mamluk sultans—increased the hatred felt by Muslims against Christians, and—to a lesser extent—also against the infidel Jews. Second, the economic crises that befell Egypt due to the Mongol invasions from the north, alongside severe epidemics

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–1993), 2:285–87; 2:374–80; N. Stillman, “The non-Muslim Communities: the Jewish Community,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: 640–1517*, ed. C. F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 201.

<sup>3</sup> A. b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr, 1934–1973), 1:77.

<sup>4</sup> A. b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār fī Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1854), 1:367, 1.29; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 2:288; N. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 68; Stillman, “The non-Muslim Communities,” 207–8.

and droughts, increased the frustration of the people and brought about religious persecution. Finally, and perhaps the most important factor, is related to the nature and origins of the Mamluk regime. The Mamluk rulers were initially non-Muslim military slaves who originated in the north-eastern areas of the Muslim world and beyond. They were imported to the lands of Islam from these regions as young boys and were acculturated as Muslims. Thus, they were anxious to prove their loyalty to their new religion and to gain the support of the Muslim religious scholars (*'ulamā'*) in order to legitimate and strengthen their rule. Hence, they tended to accept the demands of the *'ulamā'* and the people, and to increase the burden on the *dhimmīs*.

Therefore, during this long period, Sultans declared again and again the renewal of the discriminatory laws, most of them originating in known ordinances of the "Pact of Umar," but sometimes, new restrictions were added. Among these laws were the prohibition of Jews and Christians from riding mules, and sometimes even donkeys, and the dismissal of *dhimmī* officials from the state bureaucracy. The most innovative and—from a historical perspective—perhaps the most terrifying law, concerned the distinguishing color of the *dhimmīs'* clothing. Jews were obliged to wear yellow turbans.<sup>5</sup> The color yellow began to be identified with Jews for the first time in eleventh-century Baghdad. In Egypt, as we mentioned, Jews were ordered to bear yellow marks on their turbans in the mid-thirteenth century, though we do not know for how long this restriction was implemented. However, it was only in the Mamluk period that yellow was identified exclusively, distinctively, and consistently with the Jews, whereas other colors became identified with other religious groups: Christians with blue and Samaritans with red. Several testimonies of Christian European travelers, as well as Muslim and Jewish sources, indicate unequivocally that Jews in Egypt and Syria wore yellow clothes, whereas Christian and Samaritans wore blue and red respectively.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, we have sufficient indications to conclude that the law that prohibited Jews and Christians from riding horses and mules was also enforced. *Dhimmīs* were allowed to ride donkeys inside the cities during the fourteenth century, while in the fifteenth century, *dhimmīs* were allowed to ride donkeys only outside the cities.<sup>7</sup> One should bear in mind, however, that Muslims who were not part of the Mamluk elite were also prohibited from riding horses and sometimes even mules.

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5 On the persecutions of Jews in the Mamluk period, see: E. Ashtor and R. Amitai, "Mamluks," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), 13:438–41.

6 E. Ashtor, *The History of the Jews in Egypt and Syria under Mamluk Rule* (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1944–1970), 2:210–14 [Hebrew].

7 Ashtor, *History*, 2:214–16.

Popular riots accompanied state policy. In cities like Alexandria and Cairo, people attacked and destroyed parts of *dhimmī* buildings that were higher than those of the Muslims. Christians and Jews were attacked in the streets by mobs. Although synagogues appear to have escaped unscathed during most attacks on *dhimmī* houses of prayer, Muslim and Jewish sources attest that at the beginning of the fourteenth century, synagogues were closed and Jews forbidden to pray in them for about ten years. We do know, however, that two synagogues were demolished by the state during this period: a Karaite synagogue in Damascus in 1321 and a Rabbanite synagogue in Dammūh, near Cairo, in 1498. In 1442 a partial destruction of a Rabbanite synagogue in Fuṣṭāṭ had been carried out by the authorities after an anti-Islamic blasphemy was discovered in its dais, and in 1474, the synagogue in Jerusalem was demolished by the people but was renovated based on the sultan's order.<sup>8</sup>

In the fifteenth century, due to the deteriorating economic situation, the imposition of heavy taxes on the *dhimmīs* became more common. Sultans increased the poll tax of the *dhimmīs*, imposed tariffs on the production and consumption of wine and on family events and costumes.<sup>9</sup> The economic crises brought about a clear demographic decline in the Jewish population. Jewish communities in little towns dwindled and sometimes vanished.<sup>10</sup> This development is especially lamentable, since Egypt had been a prominent center for Jews since the last quarter of the tenth century, with the establishment of the new city of Cairo as the capital of the Fatimid Caliphate.

The rise of Islamic zeal in the Mamluk period was reflected also by anti-*dhimmī* polemical literature and responsa (*fatwas*) that flourished. These works were written by important 'ulamā' and called for an increase to the pres-

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**8** Ashtor, *History*, 2:401–15, 2:503; D. Arad, “Being a Jew Under the Mamluks: Some Coping Strategies,” in *Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Middle Islamic Period*, ed. S. Conermann and B. Walker (Göttingen: V&R unipress; Bonn University Press, 2017), 22–23; T. el-Leithy, “Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety: Moral Regulation in Fourteenth Century Upper Egypt,” in *Le développement de soufisme en Égypte à l'époque mamelouke*, ed. R. McGregor and A. Sabra (Cairo: Institute français d'archéologie orientale, 2006), 80n22; M. R. Cohen, “Jews in the Mamlūk Environment: the Crisis of 1442 (a Geniza study, T-S. AS 150.3),” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984): 425–28; J. Kraemer, “A Jewish Cult of the Saints in Fāṭimid Egypt,” in *L'Égypte Fatimide: son art et son histoire*, ed. M. Barrucand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999), 598.

**9** Ashtor, *History*, 2:310–16.

**10** For a recent survey of Jewish communities in Mamluk Egypt, see: D. Arad, “The *Musta'rib* Jews in Syria, Palestine and Egypt 1330–1700” (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2013), 26–36 [Hebrew].

sure on the *dhimmi*s, to humiliate them and to keep them away from Muslim society.<sup>11</sup>

The deteriorating status of Jews could be also examined through the prism of Jewish physicians. During the Mamluk period, a generally increasing opposition of orthodox Muslims to the treatment of Muslim patients by Jewish and Christian physicians is noticeable. Muslim scholars warn in their writings against hiring non-Muslim physicians as well as against buying medicine from them. It also seems that more Muslim physicians refused to teach non-Muslims.<sup>12</sup> In 1448, the Mamluk Sultan even issued a decree that for the first time prohibited non-Muslim physicians from treating Muslims. The decree was not enforced for too long. However, it marks, as noted by Norman Stillman, “a momentous reversal of the longstanding non-confessional nature of the medical profession in the Islamic world.” Up to then, the medical occupation in the Muslim world had always been nonsectarian, characterized by a universal spirit, in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as Goitein puts it, “formed a spiritual brotherhood that transcended the barriers of religion, language and countries.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the decline in the status of the Jewish physicians is shown by the dwindling number of court physicians and dynasties of court physicians in the Mamluk period, compared to the previous Fatimid and Ayyubid periods. In addition, Jews could not serve in the office of “Head of the Physicians” in Cairo. They also found it difficult to serve in public hospitals.<sup>14</sup>

Now, despite the clear deterioration of the situation of the Jews in Mamluk Egypt and Syria, in order to evaluate the situation of the Jews more correctly, one has to take into consideration several issues regarding the government and the

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**11** For important anti-*dhimmi* literature that emerged and flourished during the first half of the fourteenth century, targeted mostly against Christian Copts, see: el-Leithy, “Sufis,” 76n6. For selected articles on this literature, see: Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 229n101.

**12** M. Perlmann, “Notes on the Position of Jewish Physicians in Medieval Muslim Countries,” *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 316–19; S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 17:175, 378n61; E. Ashtor, “Prolegomena to the Medieval History of Oriental Jewry,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50, no. 2 (1959): 154–55; Ashtor, *History*, 1:107–8; 1:341–43; Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 72; D. Behrens-Abouseif, *Faḥ Allāh and Abū Zakariyya: Physicians Under the Mamluks* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1987), 14; P. B. Lewicka, “Healer, Scholar, Conspirator: The Jewish Physician in the Arabic-Islamic Discourse of the Mamluk Period,” in *Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Middle Islamic Period*, ed. S. Conermann (Göttingen: V&R unipress; Bonn University Press, 2017), 121–44.

**13** Stillman, “The Jewish Community,” 209; Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 71–72; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 2:241.

**14** A. Mazor, “Jewish Court Physicians in the Mamluk Sultanate during the First Half of the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> Century,” *Medieval Encounters* 20 (2014): 64–65n92.

people's attitude to *dhimmīs* and to Jews in particular. First, most of the discriminatory and humiliating regulations against *dhimmīs* were enforced for limited periods or not at all. This is admitted by contemporary Muslim historians and that is the reason for the need to reinforce these laws again and again. This is especially true regarding the dismissal of *dhimmī* bureaucrats, since the Mamluk sultanate could not function properly without them.<sup>15</sup> Jewish bureaucrats continued to serve in state offices and in the households of Mamluk officers throughout the Mamluk period, though their number and status was much lower than those of the Christians. Jews served mainly in financial offices, such as customs officials, state lessees, and especially as money changers.<sup>16</sup> Second, generally, *dhimmīs* received the protection of the authorities against the attacks of Muslim figures and the mob. Muslim chronicles mention several episodes in this regard. For instance, in 1315, when a Muslim rode along the streets of Cairo, striking Jews or Christians who passed by him with his sword, he was captured and beheaded.<sup>17</sup> Documents from the archive of the Jewish community in Cairo indicate that Jews were permitted to renovate their synagogues in Cairo several times, when the case was found permissible by Islamic law.<sup>18</sup>

Third, the wearing of yellow clothes should be put in the right cultural context. This practice was not considered an act of outstanding humiliation for Jews, in stark contrast to medieval and modern Europe. Whereas in late medieval Europe Jews were a tiny isolated minority, different in its external appearance from the vast majority of the Christian population, in the Islamicate society of the Mamluk sultanate, there were several ethnic and class groups, each one adopted a color and other external features of its own, which were considered a mark of identity and, to a certain extent, a sign of self-definition.<sup>19</sup> The streets of fifteenth-century Cairo, Jerusalem, or Damascus, were a cultural mosaic embodied in external features. The members of the Mamluk elite were identified by the horses they rode on, their distinctive headgear and their fancy robes. The Muslim religious elite, the *ulamā'*, were discerned by their wide white turbans, the Christians by their blue turbans, the Samaritans by their red ones, the Georgians by

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15 Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:924; D. P. Little, "Coptic Conversion to Islam under the Bahri Mamluks, 692–755/1293–1354," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39, no. 3 (1976): 54.

16 Ashtor, *History*, 2:170, 2:176–77. Most of the Jews mentioned in contemporary Muslim sources were money changers (*ṣayrafīs*). See, for instance, Behrens-Abouseif, *Faṭḥ Allāh*, 23; Ashtor, *History*, 1:205, 2:29n9, 91–93, 177.

17 Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:139–40.

18 Arad, "Being a Jew," 26–27.

19 *Ibid.*, 28; Cohen, *Under Crescent*, 110–11.



their black turbans, and the Jews by their yellow ones. Jews, hence, were only one group among several others.

Moreover, the yellow clothes were much less inflammatory than the blue clothes of the Christians. It was the dominant community of the Christians that formed the target of most mob riots. This was due to the fact that they occupied the highest positions in the state bureaucracy. Despite Jews also being affected, since they were part of the *dhimmīs*, they were only secondary victims of the anti-*dhimmī* decrees and riots. It was mainly churches and monasteries that were destroyed in Mamluk Egypt. Instructive examples of the better position of the Jews are cases mentioned in contemporary Islamic sources, in which Christians borrowed the yellow clothes of Jews in order to escape the rage of the mob.<sup>20</sup>

Christian Copts were also the main target for conversion. Though conversion was definitely a more common phenomenon among Jews, too, compared to pre-Mamluk periods, their number was much lower than the Copts and included mainly individuals such as merchants and especially prominent physicians. In contrast, numerous Christian state officials converted in order to maintain their high positions and offices. It seems that the middle of the fourteenth century marks the turning point after which the majority of the population in Egypt, for the first time, became Muslim.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, anti-*dhimmī* polemics were not written particularly against Jews but against *dhimmīs* in general, and in fact, mainly against the majority among the infidels—the Christians. In addition, they were written precisely because reality stood, to a large extent, in contradiction to the ideal of these Islamic theologians. It is these very same parameters that were different in Christian Europe at that time: polemical literature was written only against the single unique big “infidel” majority—the Jews; anti-Jewish works were not only an ideal but in many cases obligatory state laws.<sup>22</sup>

Another aspect of the situation of the Jews in Mamluk Egypt that differed from that of their co-religionists in Christian Europe is related to the extent of Jewish integration into general society. The Jews in Mamluk Egypt and Syria by no means were an isolated community. They never lived in total “ghetto-like” isolation as in Europe. There were mosques and other Islamic institutions in the Jewish districts in Muslim cities.<sup>23</sup> Jews played an integral part in official

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<sup>20</sup> Little, “Coptic Conversion,” 564; Ashtor, *History*, 1:338–39; al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:516, 1.26–7.

<sup>21</sup> Little, “Coptic Conversion,” 567–69.

<sup>22</sup> Ashtor, *History*, 1:104 ff; 209–10; Cohen, *Under Crescent*, 52.

<sup>23</sup> I. M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 85–86, 271; S. D. Goitein, “Cairo: An Islamic City in the Light of the Geniza Docu-



public and religious events and ceremonies such as royal processions and coronations, prayers for rain and for the inundation of the Nile. Jews, together with Christians and Muslims, also used to worship at the same sacred sites; they participated in joyous and sorrowful “national” events, and they still maintained social, cultural, and intellectual contacts with the Muslim environment.<sup>24</sup> Whereas during the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century European Jews fell victims to massive pogroms and were believed to have poisoned wells “in the attempt to destroy Christian civilization,” nowhere in the Mamluk Sultanate at that time were Jews blamed for the epidemic, which was perceived as a natural disaster. Moreover, in Damascus, Muslims, Christians, and Jews prayed together, pleading the one God for salvation and the removal of the evil destiny.<sup>25</sup>

In light of all the above mentioned, could we speak of antisemitism in the Mamluk period? According to most scholars, the answer to this question is negative. Antisemitism, understood as irrational belief in a malevolent, violent, anti-social Jewish alliance with satanic forces seeking to control the world, did not exist in the Mamluk Sultanate, or in the medieval Muslim world in general. This is not to say that there are not anti-Jewish notions, instilled in Islamic tradition from its inception, including the Qur’an and the Islamic oral tradition (Hadith), which originated in Muhammad’s conflict with the Jews of Medina. However, negative depictions of Jews (mainly as wicked and treacherous) never seem terribly effectual or possess any of the demonic qualities attributed to them in medieval Christian literature. Anti-Jewish propaganda seem to appear in the medieval Muslim world mainly when a Jew was perceived to have egregiously transgressed the boundaries of propriety as stipulated in the “Pact of ‘Umar,” by rising too high in the bureaucracy and behaving arrogantly. It was only in the nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries, due to, inter alia, the confrontation of opposing Jewish and Arab nationalisms, that irrational beliefs about the diabolical, malevolent, and all-powerful Jew started to flourish in Muslim

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ments,” in *Middle Eastern Cities: A Symposium on Ancient, Islamic, and Contemporary Middle Eastern Urbanism*, ed. I. M. Lapidus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 80–81.

<sup>24</sup> Ashtor, *History*, 1:328–35; 1:350–56; 2:105. For Mamluk Syria, see: N. Hofer, “The Ideology of Decline and the Jews of Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria,” in *Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Middle Islamic Period*, ed. S. Conermann (Göttingen: V&R unipress; Bonn University Press, 2017), 102–3, 114; see also: M. R. Cohen, “Sociability and the Concept of Galut in Jewish-Muslim Relations in the Middle Ages,” in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction. Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, ed. B. H. Hary et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 37–51.

<sup>25</sup> Cohen, *Under Crescent*, 169; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya* (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1413/1993), 14:261. This episode was also witnessed by the famous traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, see: *Voyages d’Ibn Batoutah: texte arabe accompagné d’une traduction par C. Defrémery et B. R. Sanguinetti* (Paris: 1853), 1:227–29.

world. These “modern myths of Muslim antisemitism” as termed by Mark Cohen, were mainly “European import,” which first found an audience among the Arab Christians of Syria.<sup>26</sup>

An attempt to succinctly evaluate the situation of Egyptian and Syrian Jewry under the Mamluks in the larger perspective of medieval world Jewry brings to mind the saying that everything is relative. Compared to the situation under the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt and Syria during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Jews in the Mamluk period definitely became humiliated and suffered a significant decline. However, compared to their brothers in Christian lands, their situation was considerably good. As opposed to their European co-religionists, even during the oppressive period of Mamluk rule, Jews usually received protection from the authorities for their life and property and for any kind of injustice; they were much more integrated in the general social, economic, and even intellectual life; above all, they were not exposed to abysmal hatred which led to horrible pogroms and expulsions. Based on Mark Cohen’s observation in his summarizing study *Under Crescent and Cross*, we may say that Jews in the Mamluk Sultanate, and generally in the whole medieval Muslim world, were part of a hierarchical social order, in which they were at the lower level but still an integral part of the general, “Islamicate,” society. In Christian Europe, however, Jews were excluded from society.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> N. A. Stillman, “Anti-Judaism/Antisemitism/Anti-Zionism,” in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1:221–23, 1:232–35; M. Cohen, “Modern Myths of Muslim Anti-Semitism” in *Muslim Attitudes to Jews and Israel: The Ambivalences of Rejection, Antagonism, Tolerance and Cooperation*, ed. M. Ma’oz (Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2010), 31–47; Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 104–7.

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, *Under Crescent*, 107–20.

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## **II Confronting Antisemitism in the Study of Holy Scriptures and Related Writings in the Modern Period**



Bernard M. Levinson

# The Impact of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Discovery of the "Original" Version of the Ten Commandments upon Biblical Scholarship: The Myth of Jewish Particularism and German Universalism

*In memoriam, Hans and Sophie Scholl, founders of the White Rose movement, executed February 22, 1943, for their opposition to National Socialism*

## Introduction

In 1773, the twenty-four year old Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, perhaps the greatest writer of the German literary tradition, anonymously published an essay entitled *Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen: Zum erstmal gründlich beantwortet, von einem Landgeistlichen in Schwaben* [*Two Important but as yet Unaddressed Biblical Questions: Fully Answered for the First Time by a Country Clergyman in Swabia*].<sup>1</sup> In this text, the young Goethe experiments with many of the literary devices that will mark his mature work. The composition presents itself as a letter written by a rural pastor to a trusted old friend. Writing on a cold wintry night, the pastor describes the confusions in the mind of his son, triggered by the son's study of theology at the university. This essay is the first work of literature known to me in which the newly emergent discipline of academic biblical scholarship, just then being introduced into the curriculum of the European university, is directly thematized, let alone given literary treatment.

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1 J. W. von Goethe, *Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen: Zum erstmal gründlich beantwortet, von einem Landgeistlichen in Schwaben, Lindau am Bodensee 1773* (Darmstadt: Merck, 1773). Goethe's original essay is published in several German editions; this article will use the *Münchener Ausgabe* [Munich edition], edited by G. Sauder: J. W. von Goethe, "Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen: Zum erstmal gründlich beantwortet, von einem Landgeistlichen in Schwaben, Lindau am Bodensee 1773," in *Der junge Goethe: 1757–1775*, vol. 1.2 of *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens: Münchener Ausgabe*, ed. G. Sauder (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1987), 434–43; commentary 849–52. Another recent edition worth noting is that of H. Fischer-Lamberg: J. W. von Goethe, *Der junge Goethe: Neu bearbeitete Ausgabe in fünf Bänden*, ed. H. Fischer-Lamberg, 5 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966), 3:117–24; commentary 3:447–49.



Goethe's essay marks an important moment in cultural and intellectual history. The essay is significant to the topic of ending antisemitism for a number of reasons: first, for its reflections on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity; second, for the way it creates a myth of Judaism as the particularistic "Other" in opposition to an allegedly normative, universal German identity; and third, for its intellectual afterlife.<sup>2</sup>

The distinctiveness of Goethe's essay for biblical scholarship is its claims regarding the composition of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. The essay deconstructs the conventional view of the Pentateuch as a unified literary composition, presented as spoken by Moses prior to Israel's entry into the land of Canaan. Specifically, it raises the question whether the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue, commonly known to us today could really have been the original text of the covenant between God and Israel that is narrated in the biblical book of Exodus. Goethe's pastor argues that the biblical text has undergone a severe disruption and that in order to recover its pristine condition, extensive surgery is necessary to repair the textual trauma and to restore the Bible to its original sequence. In using the language of literary disruption and in reordering the sequence of the biblical text to make it conform to a claimed more correct historical sequence, Goethe's protagonist anticipates and reflects the developments then taking place as academic biblical scholarship was just beginning to take shape in Europe.

Nearly one hundred years after Goethe, perhaps the most brilliant of all German Bible scholars, Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), credits Goethe as having anticipated one of Wellhausen's own claims. Goethe was correct, Wellhausen argued, that the most ancient version of the Ten Commandments was not to be found in Exodus 20 (see Appendix 1), as conventionally understood. Rather, the earliest Decalogue was located in Exodus 34 (see Appendix 2), in the narrative of the renewal of the covenant and the replacement of the tablets of the law after Moses had destroyed the first set of tablets during the episode of the Golden Calf. In terms of content, the two texts differ in that Exodus 20 contains several broad ethical or moral prohibitions, such as "do not kill" (v. 13) and "do not steal" (v. 15), while Exodus 34 gives more of its attention to matters of cultic ritual and the ritual calendar. These perceived differences were central to the claim made first by Goethe, and then later by Wellhausen, that the familiar Decalogue of Exodus 20 represents a later composition than the sequence of laws in

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<sup>2</sup> On the fluctuating status of Goethe as a symbol of German literature, see D. Borchmeyer, "Goethe," in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, ed. E. François and H. Schulze (Munich: Beck, 2001), 187–206.

Exodus 34: in other words, that Exodus 34 preserves the more original and primitive version of the two legal passages. Wellhausen's model stood for more than a century as a nearly classical position. Multiple generations of biblical scholars, with only a couple of exceptions, continued to draw upon it, viewing Exodus 34 as the original of the Decalogue.<sup>3</sup>

I will not go into the details of the debate about the relative dating of the two texts here. Rather, I will focus on the *Nachleben* [afterlife] of Goethe's essay as an important moment in cultural and intellectual history, one that has been insufficiently examined. While biblical scholars have certainly noted the essay's influence on Wellhausen, the cultural biases that govern the essay and the way it constructs a double myth (both about Judaism and about Christianity) have not been addressed.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, within academic German studies (*Germanistik*), despite the iconic status of Goethe, his ideological use of formative biblical scholarship to construct a myth of German identity seems to have escaped attention.<sup>5</sup> Despite

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3 Among the scholars who do not share Wellhausen's viewpoint regarding the priority of Exodus 34 are R. H. Pfeiffer, "The Oldest Decalogue," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 43 (1924): 294–310; A. Alt, "Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts (1934)," in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel I* (Munich: Beck, 1953), 278–333; and L. Peritt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 216–32. More recently, a number of scholars have argued that the unit is late and post-Deuteronomic. See, for example, H. L. Ginsberg, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982), 64–66; M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 194–97; W. Johnstone, "Reactivating the Chronicles Analogy in Pentateuchal Studies, with Special Reference to the Sinai Pericope in Exodus," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1987): 16–37; E. Aurelius, *Der Fürbitter Israels: Eine Studie zum Mosebild im Alten Testament* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988), 116–26; E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 67–70 and 369–77; E. Blum, "Das sog. 'Privilegrecht' in Exodus 34,11–26: Ein Fixpunkt der Komposition des Exodusbuches?," in *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction-Reception-Interpretation*, ed. M. Vervenne (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 347–66; S. Bar-On, "The Festival Calendars in Exodus XXIII 14–19 and XXXIV 18–26," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998): 161–95; and, brilliantly, S. [Bar-On] Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year: Studies on Festival Legislation in the Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). Note the astute early analysis by N. M. Nicol'sky, "Pascha im Kulte des jerusalemischen Tempels," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 45 (1927): 174–75.

4 This applies to the most recent studies by T. Tillmann, "Vom Sprechen zum Lallen: Glossolalie und Prophetie in Goethes *Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen*," in *Goethe und die Bibel*, ed. J. Anderegg and E. A. Kunz (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 17–33; and T. Tillmann, *Hermeneutik und Bibelexegese beim jungen Goethe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 122–57.

5 A recent exception is K. Schutjer, *Goethe and Judaism: The Troubled Inheritance of Modern Literature* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015). Schutjer draws closely on my approach in my article, B. M. Levinson, "Goethe's Analysis of Exodus 34 and Its Influence on Wellhausen:

the rich literary and cultural issues it raises, the essay was not included in the recent Princeton series of Goethe's works in English translation.<sup>6</sup> I am preparing the first comprehensive English translation and commentary of the essay, to place it in its cultural context and address these issues in an integrated way.

## The Intellectual Structure of Goethe's Essay

As I noted above, in Goethe's essay, the fictional pastor in the letter writes to a colleague about his concern for his son. The young man has recently graduated from a theological faculty, but he lacks any historical understanding of religion. In a question and answer format that explicitly evokes Luther's catechism, Goethe's pastor argues that the familiar Decalogue of Exodus 20 could not possibly have been inscribed on the tablets of the covenant that God first made with Israel: "Nicht die zehen Gebote, das erste Stück unsers Katechismus!" ["Not the Ten Commandments, the first paragraph of our catechism!"].<sup>7</sup> The proprietary genitive already begins to hint at the direction of the following textual arguments: Goethe argues that the "Ten Commandments" that are central to the Christian catechism cannot properly be ancient Judaism's Decalogue. Why does he make such a claim? Just beforehand, and before turning to any direct textual study, Goethe's village pastor begins to reflect on the theology of history. His prior assumptions there provide the foundation for the textual arguments that ensue. The extended metaphor of God as divine gardener who grafts (*pfpöfen*) a slip (*Reis*) onto a root stock (*Stamm*) warrants particular attention:

Das jüdische Volk seh ich für einen wilden unfruchtbaren Stamm an, der in einem Kraus von wilden unfruchtbaren Bäumen stund, auf den pflanzte der ewige Gärtner das edle Reis Jesum Christum, daß es, darauf bekleibend, des Stammes Natur veredelte, und von dannen P[f]ropfreiser zur Befruchtung aller übrigen Bäume geholt würden.

Die Geschichte und Lehre dieses Volks, von seinem ersten Keime bis zur Pfpöpfung ist al-

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The *Pfpöpfung* of the Documentary Hypothesis," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 114 (2002): 212–23; as well as subsequent manuscript material that I shared with her; and personal discussions. Her work does directly begin to address the issues I have raised.

<sup>6</sup> The most appropriate volume in the series would have been J. W. von Goethe, *Essays on Art and Literature*, vol. 3 of *Goethe: The Collected Works*, ed. J. Gearey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). See further D. Glass, *Goethe in English: A Bibliography of the Translations in the Twentieth Century* (Leeds: Maney Publishing for the English Goethe Society and the Modern Humanities Research Association, 2005), 316, which contains no entry for this essay. The one partial English translation that does exist is incomplete and apologetic. See M. Waldman, *Goethe and the Jews: A Challenge to Hitlerism* (New York: Putnam, 1934), 119–27.

<sup>7</sup> Goethe, "Zwo . . . biblische Fragen," 437.

lerdings *partikular*, und das wenige universelle, das etwa in Rücksicht der zukünftigen großen Handlung mit ihm möchte vorgegangen seyn, ist schwer und vielleicht unnöthig aufzusuchen.

Von der P[f]ropfung an wendet sich die ganze Sache. Lehre und Geschichte werden *universell*. Und obgleich jeder von daher veredelte Baum seine Spezialgeschichte, und nach Beschaffenheit der Umstände seine Speziallehre hat, so ist doch meine Meinung: hier sey so wenig partikulares als dort universelles zu vermuthen und zu deuten.

[The Jewish people I regard as a wild, infertile stock (or “tribe”) that stood in a circle of wild and barren trees, upon which the eternal Gardener grafted the noble scion Jesus Christ, so that, by adhering to it, it ennobled the nature of the stock and from there slips were fetched to make all the remaining trees fertile.

The history and teaching of this people, from its first shoots up to the grafting, is certainly *particularistic*, and the small amount of the universal (teaching) which may perhaps have been accorded it in anticipation of that future great deed is difficult and perhaps not even necessary to seek out.

From the grafting on, the entire matter took a turn. Teaching and history became *universal*. And although each tree that was ennobled from it had its own special history and its own special teaching according to its circumstances, my opinion is nonetheless: Here (in the case of Christianity) there is as little particularistic to be suspected and interpreted as there is universal there [in the case of Judaism]].<sup>8</sup>

Goethe's pastor makes a proprietary claim about ethical universality. Consistent with the elaborate allegory of propagation by means of grafting, the religion of ancient Israel and that of Judaism are conflated. They are then jointly conceptualized as sterile, particularistic, and lacking in world-historical significance. Christianity is alone conceived of as fruitful and universally significant.<sup>9</sup> In the pastor's view, the ethical, which is to say, the universal, cannot logically be Jewish. The *Stamm*—Israel as a particular “tribe,” Israel as allegedly embodying particularity—cannot be the *Stamm*—the “root stock”—of ethics or the universal. Consequently, the ethical Decalogue of Exodus 20—“das erste Stück unsers Ka-

<sup>8</sup> Goethe, “Zwo . . . biblische Fragen,” 436–37 (emphasis and emendation in original).

<sup>9</sup> On these grounds, N. Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991–2000), 1:142, is incorrect in his analysis of Goethe's view of the Bible and its relation to Johann Herder (see below, page 127). His interpretation of “Zwo . . . biblische Fragen” asserts: “The notion that the Bible is the vehicle of a universal rational and moral religion (such as the Ten Commandments might be held to summarize) is therefore rejected in favor of Herder's cultural theory which gives value to particular and local traditions.” By reducing Goethe to Herder, Boyle overlooks the importance that Goethe attaches to Christianity: to the Incarnation viewed in philosophical terms as the indispensable means for local and particular cultures to achieve universal significance. Whereas for Herder, particular nations share in a larger human cause and thus implicitly participate in the universal, for Goethe, it is with the *Pfropfung* alone that the universal enters history. Prior to that point, there is only sterile particularity.

techismus!” [“the first paragraph of our catechism”]—could not have been, now by definition, the original covenant that God made with the Jews. The proprietary force of the *unsers* [“our”] is of course clear, both in its appropriation of the Decalogue and in the dispossession that accompanies it. By means of such exegesis, Goethe’s solitary pastor is relieved: “Wie gerne wirft man den beschwerlichen alten Irrtum weg: es habe der partikularste Bund auf Universalverbindlichkeiten [...] gegründet werden können” [How gladly one dispenses with that ancient burdensome error: as if that most particular covenant could ever have been grounded upon universal ethical laws [...]].<sup>10</sup>

This theology of history motivates the textual analysis that follows. Despite the text’s own claims, the covenant renewal of Exod 34:11–26—whose focus is the *Stamm*, with its so very *partikular* ritual law—must actually have constituted the original of the covenant and not merely its inconsistent repetition. On that basis, Goethe reconstructs the “Decalogue” of ten laws in Exod 34:11–26 which, he asserts, were originally inscribed on the tablets of the covenant. It is worth noting, however, that the material in Exodus 34 does not divide naturally into exactly ten laws. In fact, one particularly enterprising German scholar compiled a chart showing thirty-six mutually inconsistent attempts to identify the “ten commandments” within the material of this chapter.<sup>11</sup>

The pastor in Goethe’s essay attributes the textual disruption that led to Exodus 34 being presented as the last Decalogue, rather than the first, to the chaos of the Babylonian exile in the sixth century B.C.E., when the Babylonian Empire force-marched the Israelites out of their homeland and resettled them in Mesopotamia. Only as the literary materials of the Pentateuch were being assembled and traditions forgotten did the fateful error occur that led to the ethical Decalogue of Exodus 20 being confused with the ritual text in Exodus 34 that was properly the Jewish covenant.<sup>12</sup> Goethe’s own dualistic and Romantic assumptions leave him, however, with no way to account altogether within Israel for the origins of the ethical Decalogue to which the original ritual Decalogue allegedly yielded its rightful, rite-filled, place. The issue is never discussed. Although it is impossible to detail within the confines of this short study, Goethe’s own reconstruction of the alleged Decalogue here requires multiple sleights of hand: strategic textual transposition and reordering, as well as selective additions, rewordings, and omissions. The project simply does not work.

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<sup>10</sup> Goethe, “Zwo . . . biblische Fragen,” 439.

<sup>11</sup> F.-E. Wilms, *Das jahwistische Bundesbuch in Exodus 34* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1973), 200–206.

<sup>12</sup> Goethe, “Zwo . . . biblische Fragen,” 440.

Like the young academic son about whom the troubled Swabian pastor wrote on this dark winter's night of 1773, twenty-four year old Goethe was himself educated in the emerging field of the historical critical study of the Old and New Testaments.<sup>13</sup> The fictional letter was written in Frankfurt just two years after Goethe's return from Strasbourg, where he lived from 1770 to 1771 and completed a legal training that had been interrupted by ill health. The time in Strasbourg represented a major turning point in Goethe's literary and intellectual life. He met Johann Gottfried Herder and became active in the *Sturm und Drang* movement, with its lasting impact upon German poetry and literature. During those years, Goethe studied law and political theology, while also working through Genesis and Exodus in Hebrew and reading widely, presumably also in emergent biblical scholarship.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the main lines of Goethe's hypothesis about the

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13 Several times in his autobiography, Goethe discusses his familiarity with the assumptions and methodology of the historical-critical method and its divergence from the conventional view of the authorship of the Bible. He describes the Bible as a composite work that slowly grew together, as containing contradictions, and as having undergone internal revision. See J. W. von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit*, vol. 16 of *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens: Münchner Ausgabe*, ed. P. Sprengel (Munich: Hanser, 1985), 298–99 and 543–44; J. W. von Goethe, *From My Life: Poetry and Truth, Parts One to Three*, vol. 4 of *Goethe: The Collected Works*, ed. T. P. Saine and J. L. Sammons, trans. R. R. Heitner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 208–9 and 377. Note the background provided by G. Janzer, *Goethe und die Bibel* (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1929); and W. Schottroff, "Goethe als Bibelwissenschaftler," *Evangelische Theologie* 44 (1984): 463–85.

14 While Goethe in his autobiography several times refers to Spinoza as an important influence, that is always done in the context of his ethical development; the reference is always implicitly to Spinoza's *Ethics* (see Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 667–68, 712–15, and 870). Goethe emphasizes the feeling of calm that came over him in perusing the posthumous works of Spinoza (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 713). The reference can only apply to Spinoza's posthumously published *Ethics* (1677); his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was published anonymously (Amsterdam, 1670) during his lifetime. Nor does Goethe refer to the *Tractatus*, even where such an allusion might logically be expected, as in the discussion of historical criticism. Moreover, while Spinoza does distinguish between a divine and a ceremonial law and views the latter as contingent and particularistic, he never equates the one with the Decalogue and the other with the text of Exodus 34. Accordingly, the suggestion by the editor of the Munich edition that Goethe's position corresponds to Spinoza (*Tractatus*, books 1, 4, and 5) in distinguishing the contents of the tablets of the covenant from the Decalogue is inaccurate (editor's notes in Goethe, *Der junge Goethe* [ed. Gerhard Sauder], 851). Similarly, the analogies suggested by W. Schottroff take insufficient account of the dialectical structure of Spinoza's thought ("Goethe als Bibelwissenschaftler," 472). Both Sauder and Schottroff overlook the meticulous earlier work of H. Barner, demonstrating that Goethe had read Spinoza only after composing the pastor's letter and then, only the *Ethics*, never the *Tractatus*. See H. Barner, *Zwei "theologische Schriften" Goethes: Ein Beitrag zur Religiosität des jungen Goethe* (Gräfenhainichen: Heine, 1930), 141–43.

Decalogue were originally submitted as a dissertation to the Faculty of Law at the University of Strasbourg. The dissertation was rejected.<sup>15</sup> This original version seems, however, to have proposed that the original terms of the covenant were to be found not in the legal proclamation of Exodus 34 but in the series of curses in Deuteronomy 27.<sup>16</sup>

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Spinoza's text has been published in English as: B. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. J. Israel, trans. M. Silverthorne and J. Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The original Latin is available in: B. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, vol. 3 of *Spinoza Opera*, ed. C. Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925). Until recently, this was the best critical edition of the original Latin. It has been recently superseded by a bilingual Latin-French edition: B. de Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, vol. 3 of *Oeuvres*, ed. P.-F. Moreau, trans. F. Akkerman (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1999).

**15** In his autobiography, Goethe discusses his decision to undertake the licentiate in law at the University of Strasbourg, his father's urging him to submit a doctoral dissertation in addition, the ensuing dissertation on political theology that he submitted in Latin to the Faculty of Law, and his relief at its rejection. Although the publication of the dissertation was denied, Goethe was permitted to hold a pro forma oral defense and thereby, on August 6, 1771, obtained the licentiate permitting him to practice law. (See Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 504–8; trans., *Poetry and Truth*, 350–52). G. Sauder, in his annotation to the essay, assumes that the arguments of Goethe's "Zwo . . . biblische Fragen" derive from that rejected dissertation, "De legislatoribus." Sauder's observation is based on the report of Franz Christian Lerse (1749–1800), Goethe's nearly inseparable friend during the Strasbourg years. (See Goethe, *Der junge Goethe* [ed. G. Sauder], 851.) Sauder's assumption is incorrect and must be based on a misunderstanding (see the following footnote). The dissertation's rejection is also noted by M. Buber, *Moses* (Oxford: East and West Library, 1946), 119.

**16** Lerse reported that the first draft of Goethe's dissertation for the Doctor juris degree maintained that: "die zehn Gebote nicht eigentlich die Bundesgesetze der Israeliten waren, sondern daß nach Deuteronomium zehn Ceremonien eigentlich die zehn Gebote vertreten hätten" (as reported by K. A. Böttiger [1760–1835]: *Literarische Zustände und Zeitgenossen: In Schilderungen aus Karl Aug. Böttigers handschriftlichem Nachlasse*, ed. K. W. Böttiger [Leipzig: 1838], 1:60 [entry dated: "Lerse im Club den 30. Nov. 1798"]). If this account is correct, Goethe must have had in mind the ritual text of Deut 27:15–26 as the original terms of the covenant (where, however, there are not ten but twelve ritual curses). In writing without further qualification concerning "Zwo ... biblische Fragen" that "Dieselbe These" was previously presented as the rejected dissertation, the editor of the Munich edition of Goethe's work seems to have misunderstood Lerse's reference to Deuteronomy (Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* [ed. P. Sprengel], 1010). Lerse's report, if accurate, raises further issues. It is not easy to see how the series of bans in Deut 27:15–26 could be interpreted as purely "ceremonial" rather than ethical in concern. They prohibit idols; disobedience to mother and father; removal of boundary markers; abuse of the blind; exploitation of alien, orphan, and widow; incest; bestiality; assault; hired murder; and violation of the Torah.



Much later in his life, Goethe subsequently disavowed that pastor's letter when he reflected back on his Strasbourg years in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the well-known autobiography he wrote in his sixties:

Ich arbeitete mich mit unsäglicher Mühe, mit unzulänglichen Hilfsmitteln und Kräften durch die fünf Bücher und geriet dabei auf die wunderlichsten Einfälle. Ich glaubte gefunden zu haben, daß nicht unsere Zehn-Gebote auf den Tafeln gestanden, daß die Israeliten keine vierzig Jahre, sondern nur kurze Zeit durch die Wüste gewandert, und eben so bildete ich mir ein, über den Charakter Mosis ganz neue Aufschlüsse geben zu können.

[With untold trouble and inadequate aids and ability I worked my way through the Pentateuch, meanwhile falling into the strangest notions. I believed I had discovered that it was not our Ten Commandments written on those tablets, that the Israelites had not wandered forty years in the desert but only a short time; and I also flattered myself that I could furnish some completely new insights about the character of Moses.]<sup>17</sup>

But it is that recycled dissertation, written with youthful exuberance and rejected first by the University of Strasbourg and then by Goethe himself, which, a century later, Wellhausen—curiously never citing Goethe's renunciation—claimed that his investigations had *bestätigt* [confirmed].<sup>18</sup> Of course, Wellhausen was seeking to lend legitimacy to his own new controversial challenge to conventional piety, which makes the connection he claims to the greatest figure of the German literary canon a rather convenient way to write himself into an established cultural tradition, one that he was in fact sharply challenging.

Wellhausen argued that the doublets and repetitions in the patriarchal narratives could be source-critically resolved as originally independent and parallel versions that have been edited so that they appear to be a single narrative. He saw in the Decalogue a similar variety of versions, equally easily resolved and assigned to the specific textual sources he had identified in the Pentateuch. In Wellhausen's view, the three versions of the Decalogue are those of three different literary sources. The oldest text was that of the Jahwist (in Exodus 34), followed by those of the Elohist (in Exodus 20), and the Deuteronomist (in Deuteronomy 5). That Exodus 34 presents itself as a repetition and renewal of older law<sup>19</sup>—not as an independent, let alone the original, legal proclamation

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<sup>17</sup> Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 546; *Poetry and Truth*, 378. Goethe's disavowal is also noted in the polemic against source criticism by J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary* (London: Soncino, 1938), 368.

<sup>18</sup> J. Wellhausen, "Nachträge," in *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963), 330.

<sup>19</sup> Exodus 34:1; note also the citation tag of 34:18b.



—was explained away as a product of redactional disorder. The ritual Decalogue thus narrates “nicht die dritte, sondern die erste und einzige Gottesoffenbarung am Sinai” [“not the third, but the first and only divine revelation on Sinai], misplaced from its original context by an exilic redactor.”]<sup>20</sup> Given this doubling of Decalogues within Exodus, the last must be made first for a proper reconstruction of the literary history of the Pentateuch. Wellhausen urges the sharpest possible distinction (*am schroffsten*) between Exodus 20 and Exodus 34 in language that recalls Goethe’s own dichotomy between “here” and “there” in the history of religions: “*dort sind die Gebote fast nur moralisch, hier ausschliesslich ritual*” [“there the commands are almost exclusively moral, here, exclusively ritual”].<sup>21</sup>

Wellhausen’s thesis of the antiquity, priority, coherence, and originality of the legal revelation of Exodus 34, as prompted by Goethe, has effectively defined the subsequent course of the history of scholarly interpretation. Direct challenges have been few.<sup>22</sup> Even those analyses that did not accept Wellhausen’s attribution of Exodus 34 to the Jahwist source held fast to something more essential: the assertion that the chapter, far from being a repetition of earlier law—as the text itself asserts—represents an original and independent legal source: in fact, the most ancient Israelite law.<sup>23</sup>

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**20** J. Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, vol. 2, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs* (Berlin: Reimer, 1885), 84. Reprinted in *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Reimer, 1899; repr. as 4th ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963).

**21** Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, 96; translation by the author of the article.

**22** Astutely, A. Alt explicitly rejects Goethe’s position, describing the unit as “ein sekundäres Mischgebilde” (“Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts,” 317n1). See further n. 3 above.

**23** J. Halbe’s influential traditio-historical study pushed the date of Exod 34:11–26 back to the early settlement period, regarding it as a chiastically structured ancient tradition of Yahweh’s “Law of Privilege” (*Privilegrecht*, a model derived from medieval European feudalism). In this radical claim for priority and originality, Exodus 34 functioned as a legal source for the Covenant Code (J. Halbe, *Das Privilegrecht Jahwes Ex 34,10–26: Gestalt und Wesen, Herkunft und Wirken in vordeuteronomischer Zeit* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975], 449–50 and 502–5). Similarly, C. Dohmen’s redaction-historical study proposes that the Law of Privilege in Exodus 34 comprised part of the original Sinaitic theophany, even if one not yet understood as a covenant and not originally identified with the tablets of the covenant. On his opening page, he credits Goethe for first raising the question (C. Dohmen, “Was stand auf den Tafeln vom Sinai und was auf denen vom Horeb? Zur Geschichte und Theologie eines Offenbarungsrequisits,” in *Vom Sinai zum Horeb: Stationen alttestamentlicher Glaubensgeschichte*, ed. F.-L. Hossfeld [Würzburg: Echter, 1989], 9–50). Even F. Crüsemann’s recent major study, although questioning the notion of a Decalogue structure and disputing Halbe’s pre-monarchic dating, affirms that the unit belongs to the eighth century as Israel’s earliest law and argues that it represents a pre-Deuteronomic source for the Covenant Code (F. Crüsemann, *Die Tora: Theologie und Sozialgeschichte des alttestamentlichen Gesetzes* [Munich: Kaiser, 1992], 135–70).

Goethe's proposal, which was eagerly grafted onto the documentary hypothesis by Wellhausen and which has since vigorously propagated itself, raises some interesting issues. The horticultural allegory clearly draws on one employed by Paul in reflecting on his mission to the gentiles in Rom 11:17–24. While Goethe's argument is inspired by the Pauline text, it completely inverts the terms of the original.<sup>24</sup> In Paul's epistle, it is the gentile addressee who is figuratively described as "a wild olive shoot" that is grafted onto Judaism, "the rich root of the olive tree" (v. 17). Paul frames the unit with an *inclusio* which contrasts the "wild olive tree" with its root stock, the "cultivated olive tree." Paul cautions his gentile addressees against pride: "Do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you" (v. 18). In his reuse of Paul's allegory, Goethe has transformed the original's brilliantly dialectical thought into an approach that is dualistic and self-contradictory in its assumptions about history, faith, and Spirit. How does Goethe's theology of history understand the universal to emerge historically, when it quite literally has no roots or antecedents? Goethe's youthful Romanticism is essentially Marcionite in its dualistic theology.<sup>25</sup> It finds no vital connection between ritual and ethical, between particular and universal, between Old and New Testament, between Judaism and Christianity.<sup>26</sup> Given the logic of the

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24 The relation is noted, although the complete inversion of the terms is not, by Schottroff ("Goethe als Bibelwissenschaftler," 472n40); and by the editor of the Munich edition of "Zwo . . . biblische Fragen" (Goethe, *Der junge Goethe* [ed. G. Sauder], 851).

25 What motivates Wellhausen's appropriation of this model strikes me as primarily a Romantic yearning for originality and antiquity. In this model, creativity is equated with orality, such that textuality is deemed a secondary fossilization. The paradoxical goal of the literary method is to reach the preliterate stage assumed by the text. Following his change of chairs from Greifswald to Halle and then Marburg, the same spirit motivated Wellhausen's attempt to recover the oral poetry of the Arabic *Jāhiliyyah* [pre-Islamic, "pagan" period] and thus to penetrate beneath the alleged overlay of Islamic literate culture. As K. Rudolph observed: "there was no difference in the method which Wellhausen employed in the two fields of research [...]" (K. Rudolph, "Wellhausen as an Arabist," *Semeia* 25 [1982]: 111–55 [at 112]). In this way, I do not regard Wellhausen's brilliant scholarship as driven by simple antisemitism but as adhering primarily to Romantic assumptions about literature and culture.

26 In sharp contrast, Wellhausen used the same metaphor of grafting very differently. In accounting for his shift from Old Testament to Arabic studies, he stresses that the reconstruction of the *Stamm* is essential for understanding the growth of the *Reis*. Pre-Islamic Arabic culture provides the best way of gaining access to the original Semitic stock out of which Israelite religion developed:

Den Uebergang vom Alten Testament zu den Arabern habe ich gemacht in der Absicht, den Wildling kennen zu lernen, auf den von Priestern und Propheten das Reis der Thora Jahve's gepfropft ist. Denn ich zweifle nicht daran, dass von der ursprünglichen Ausstattung, mit der die

excluded middle, it is no wonder that the horticultural allegory of grafting should require something completely external to history as a way of accounting for the universal's coming into existence from a sterile *Stamm*. The allegory provides an all but supernatural, if hardly biblical, *edle Reis* [noble scion] *ex machina*.

The history of reception of Goethe's proposal raises further issues. In the pastor's letter, it is the cluster of theological assumptions that drives the textual analysis: the exegesis does not begin with the text.<sup>27</sup> But that textual proposal, now severed from its theological motivation, is what alone has entered the history of biblical scholarship, from Wellhausen to the most recent writers who cite young Goethe's essay, whether in agreement or in disagreement, while either overlooking or remaining silent about its non-textual rationale.

## Conclusions

Goethe's "*Zwo wichtige . . . biblische Fragen*" provides a useful case study to demonstrate the need to examine the work of earlier scholars to understand the biases of the past and to ensure that such issues are not blindly carried forward into present and future scholarship. Goethe's use of the Old Testament and his portrayal of Jews and Judaism works in the service of his construction of a myth about German cultural identity. Beginning from a prior ideological conviction that drives his reading of the Bible, Goethe does not so much exegete as eisegete the biblical text to further his own portrayal of Christianity as a "universal" religion that supersedes and is completely independent of the "particularistic" re-

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Hebräer in die Geschichte getreten sind, sich durch die Vergleichung des arabischen Altertums am ehesten eine Vorstellung gewinnen lässt.

See J. Wellhausen, ed. and trans., *Muhammed in Medina: Das ist Vakidi's Kitab alMaghazi in verkürzter deutscher Wiedergabe herausgegeben* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1882), 5. Note the valuable study by R. Smend, "Julius Wellhausen and his Prolegomena to the History of Israel," *Semeia* 25 (1982): 1–20, adducing this citation (p. 8). See further P. Machinist, "The Road Not Taken: Wellhausen and Assyriology," in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Buxenay Oded*, ed. G. Galil, M. Geller, and A. Millard (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 469–531 (510).

<sup>27</sup> In this regard, it is important to indicate that the concern of this investigation is only to address the intellectual history of the claim for the antiquity of Exodus 34. Clearly, this analysis does not necessarily mean that such claims are incorrect. Still less should this analysis be viewed, conversely, as defending the antiquity or originality either of the Decalogue of Exodus 20 or of the Sinai Pericope, whether in composition or in redaction.

ligion of Judaism. This portrayal entails his cultural construction of the Jew as “Other.” It equally advances an unreflected cultural construction of the German self as a universal that contradictorily can only be universal to the extent that it constructs and excludes that which is other.

The essay's afterlife also demonstrates the need to become conscious of how our unconscious prior assumptions can shape and control how we read texts, even against the grain. Even scholars, from whom we would normally expect greater methodological reflection and theoretical awareness, have significantly faltered here, both in the case of academic biblical scholarship and in the case of Germanistik. The romantic myth of the antiquity of Exodus 34 has had a very long influence upon biblical scholarship, through to the present. In the process, however, there has been a compartmentalization of Goethe's argument, whereby this essay has been recognized by biblicalists for its influence on Julius Wellhausen, while ignoring its problematic assumptions about the history of Israelite religion. Conversely, Germanists interested in tracing Goethe's biography have ignored its problematic cultural assumptions about the nature of German identity and the construction of a false universal (that expels Judaism as alien “Other”). The essay falls between the cracks, and the intellectual omission perpetuates antisemitic stereotypes that pass unchallenged and unreflected. This history of scholarly silence mandates a new look at Goethe's essay and a reevaluation of Exodus 34's place within the compositional history of the Pentateuch.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This study is part of the author's project to provide the first complete English translation of and commentary upon Goethe's essay: “Goethe's Construction of the Self as German and the Jew as Other: A Translation of and Commentary upon his *Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen* . . . [1773] and Its Setting in Intellectual History” (in progress). The present essay draws upon B. M. Levinson, “La scoperta goethiana della versione ‘originale’ dei Dieci Comandamenti e la sua influenza sulla critica biblica: Il mito del particolarismo ebraico e dell'universalismo tedesco,” in *Il rovetto ardente: Scritti sull'ebraismo Tedesco in memoria di Francesca Y. Albertini*, ed. Irene Kajon (Rome: Lithos Editrice, 2013), 71–90.

## Appendix 1

### The “Ethical” Decalogue of Exodus 20:2–17

BHS	Vs.	RSV
אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים:	2	I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עִלְפָּנַי:	3	You shall have no other gods before me.
לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל־תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמֶּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ:	4	You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;
לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַנָּאן פֶּקֶד עֵץ אָבֶת עַל־בָּנָיִם עַל־שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל־רְבַעִים לְשָׁנָאֵי:	5	you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,
וְעֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים לֹא־הָבִי וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי:	6	but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁוְא כִּי לֹא יִנְקֶה יְהוָה אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־יִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ לְשָׁוְא:	7	You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
זְכוֹר יְמֵי הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:	8	Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלַאכְתְּךָ:	9	Six days you shall labor, and do all your work;
יּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל־מְלָאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ־וּבִתְךָ עַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ וּבְהֵמָתְךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ:	10	but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates;
כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת־יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם וַיִּנַּח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל־כֵּן בֵּרַךְ יְהוָה אֶת־יּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ:	11	for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.
כַּבֵּד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ לְמַעַן יָאָרְכוּן יָמֶיךָ עַל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ:	12	Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.
לֹא תִרְצַח:	13	You shall not kill.
לֹא תִנְאָף:	14	You shall not commit adultery.
לֹא תִגְנוֹב:	15	You shall not steal.
לֹא־תַעֲנֶה בְרַעַד עַד שִׁקְרָה:	16	You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- 17 לא תחמד בית רֵעֶךָ לֹא־תחמד אִשֶׁת רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדּוֹ  
וְאִמָּתוֹ וְשׂוֹרוֹ וְחֲמֹרוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ: 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house;  
you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or  
his manservant, or his maidservant, or his  
ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neigh-  
bors.

## Appendix 2

### The “Ritual” (“Jewish”) Decalogue of Exodus 34:11–26

BHS	Vs.	RSV
שְׁמֹר־לְךָ אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם הַנְּגִיד גֵרֶשׁ מִפְּנֵי־ אֶת־הָאֲמֹרִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי:	11	Observe what I command you this day. Be- hold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
הִשָּׁמֵר לְךָ פְּרִי־תְכָרֶת בְּרִית לְיֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בֹא עֲלֶיהָ פְּרִי־הִיא לְמוֹקֵשׁ בְּקִרְבְּךָ:	12	Take heed to yourself, lest you make a cove- nant with the inhabitants of the land whither you go, lest it become a snare in the midst of you.
כִּי אֶת־מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם תִּהְיוּ וְאֶת־מִצְבֹּתֵיהֶם תִּשְׁבֹּר וְאֶת־אֲשֵׁרֵיהֶם תִּכְרֹתוּ:	13	You shall tear down their altars, and break their pillars, and cut down their Asherim
כִּי לֹא תִשָּׁתַחֲוהוּ לְאֵל אֲחֵר כִּי יְהוָה קַנָּא שְׁמוֹ אֵל קַנָּא הוּא:	14	(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),
פְּרִי־תְכָרֶת בְּרִית לְיֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ וְנָנוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְנָבְחוּ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְקָרָא לְךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם:	15	lest you make a covenant with the inhabi- tants of the land, and when they play the har- lot after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and one invites you, you eat of his sacrifice,
וְלָקַחְתָּ מִבְּנֹתֵיהֶם לְבָנֶיךָ וְנָנוּ בְּנֹתֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְהָנוּ אֶת־בְּנֵיךָ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:	16	and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters play the harlot after their gods and make your sons play the harlot after their gods.
אֱלֹהֵי מִסְכָּה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ: אֶת־חֵג הַמִּצּוֹת תִּשְׁמֹר שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצּוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתֶךָ לְמוֹעֵד חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב כִּי בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב יֵצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם:	17	You shall make for yourself no molten gods.
כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם לִי וְכָל־מִקְנֶה תִּזְכֹּר פֶּטֶר שׂוֹר וְשֵׂה: וּפֶטֶר חֲמוֹר תִּפְדֶּה בְּשֵׂה וְאִם־לֹא תִפְדֶּה וְעֵרְפָתוֹ כֹּל בְּכוֹר בְּנֵיךָ תִפְדֶּה וְלֹא־יֵרָאוּ פְּנֵי רִיקָם:	18	The feast of unleavened bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib; for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt.
	19	All that opens the womb is mine, all your male cattle, the firstlings of cow and sheep.
	20	The firstling of an ass you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the first-born of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall ap- pear before me empty.

- שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִשָּׁבֵת בְּחַרִישׁ  
וּבְקָצִיר תִּשָּׁבֵת:
- וְחַג שִׁבְעַת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ בְּכוֹרֵי קָצִיר חֹטִים וְחַג הָאֶסֶף  
תִּקְוֹת הַשָּׁנָה:
- שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָּל־זָכוֹרְךָ אֶת־פְּנֵי הָאֵדֶן  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
- כִּי־אֹרִישׁ גּוֹיִם מִפְּנֶיךָ וְהִרְחַבְתִּי אֶת־גְּבוּלְךָ וְלֹא־יִחַמַּד  
אִישׁ אֶת־אֶרְצְךָ בְּעֶלְתְּךָ לְרֹאוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה:
- לֹא־תִשְׁחַט עַל־חַמֶּץ דֶּם־זִבְחִי וְלֹא־יִלֵּן לְבַקֵּר זֶבֶח חַג  
הַפֶּסַח:
- רֵאשִׁית בְּכוֹרֵי אֲדָמָתְךָ תָּבִיא בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
לֹא־תִבְשֵׁל גְּדִי בְּחֶלֶב אִמּוֹ:
- 21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.
- 22 And you shall observe the feast of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.
- 23 Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel.
- 24 For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders; neither shall any man desire your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.
- 25 You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left until the morning.
- 26 The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

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Konrad Schmid

# The Interpretation of Second Temple Judaism as “Spätjudentum” in Christian Biblical Scholarship

The notion of “Spätjudentum” (i. e., “late Judaism”) as a term for Second Temple Judaism, or parts of it, was prominent in biblical scholarship from about 1870 to 1970.<sup>1</sup> It entailed the idea that Judaism as a theologically legitimate entity came to an end with the emergence of Christianity and openly expressed an antisemitic facet of Christian biblical scholarship. We will see, however, that the origins of this notion are also driven by a Kantian philosophy of history. In addition, the idea was also influenced by some common traits of modern antisemitism, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The notion of “Spätjudentum” is a partial mirror of how Western Christianity perceived Judaism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as expressed, for instance, by Friedrich Schleiermacher:

Der Judaismus ist schon lange eine tote Religion, und diejenigen, welche jetzt noch seine Farbe tragen, sitzen eigentlich klagend bei der unverweslichen Mumie.<sup>2</sup>

[Judaism has long been a dead religion, and those still wearing its colors are in fact sitting in lament next to the mummy which does not decay.]

Schleiermacher’s position may now seem clearly outdated, but it is helpful to remember the (still widespread) portrayal of Hebrew as a dead language developed by early modern philology, especially by people like Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791), who viewed Hebrew by analogy to Latin and Greek as if no contemporaneous, living Judaism existed.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Cf. U. Kusche, *Die unterlegene Religion: Das Judentum im Urteil deutscher Alttestamentler* (Berlin: Institut für Kirche und Judentum, 1991).

2 F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Studienausgabe; Zürich: TVZ, 2012), 237. On Schleiermacher and his position regarding the Hebrew Bible and Judaism, see R. Smend, “Schleiermachers Kritik am Alten Testament,” in *Epochen der Bibelkritik: Gesammelte Studien*, ed. R. Smend (Munich: Kaiser, 1991), 3:128–44; M. Blum, “Ich wäre ein Judenfeind?” *Zum Antijudaismus in Friedrich Schleiermachers Theologie und Pädagogik* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010).

3 Cf. M. C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

## 1 Terminology

Oddly enough, the German terms “Spätjudentum” and “Frühjudentum” [“early Judaism”] are designations for the same period, each applying with slight differentiation to the Second Temple period. If one looks up “Spätjudentum” in the *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, there is a cross-reference to “Frühjudentum,” so what formerly was addressed as “Spätjudentum” is now “Frühjudentum.”<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, in the *Historisches Wörterbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe* published between 1971 and 2007, there is an entry on “Spätjudentum” that does an excellent job reflecting on the category’s problems and shortcomings—but there is no entry on “Frühjudentum.”<sup>5</sup> The reason is not because the lexicon still prefers “Spätjudentum” over “Frühjudentum,” but because “Spätjudentum” is a loaded concept that has its own history.

The shift from “Frühjudentum” to “Spätjudentum” in twentieth-century scholarship is observable in the name of the book series “Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity,” published by Brill. The publisher’s current website informs us that the series began in 1976 as “Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums” [“Works on the History of Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity”]. But that is not the full truth. Despite being silenced by Brill’s website, the history of the series goes back even further to 1961. At that time, the name of the series was “Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums” [“Works on the History of Late Judaism and Early Christianity”]. In 1968, the title was changed to “Arbeiten zur Geschichte des späteren Judentums und des Urchristentums” [“Works on the History of Later Judaism and Early Christianity”]; in 1970, it was changed again to “Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums” [“Works on the History of Ancient Judaism”]; and finally in 2005, with a shift into English, it was changed to “Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity.” What is now termed “Ancient Judaism” was formerly called “Spätjudentum,” then “späteres Judentum,” and finally “antikes Judentum.”

In German-speaking contexts from the 1890s until the 1970s, “Spätjudentum” was a much more common term than “Frühjudentum,”<sup>6</sup> with very few ex-

<sup>4</sup> “Frühjudentum,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G. Krause and G. Müller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971–1983), 31:605.

<sup>5</sup> M. Ritter, “Spätjudentum,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter et al. (Basel: Schwabe, 1971–2007), 9:1312–15.

<sup>6</sup> The following observations are based on bibliographical search results of Google’s Ngram Viewer. A few randomly chosen examples include G. Kittel, *Die Probleme des palästinischen Spätjudentums und das Urchristentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926); G. Hölscher, *Urgemeinde und Spätjudentum* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1928); E. Gaugler, “Das Spätjudentum,” in *Mensch und Got-*

amples of the former appearing after 1970. Its occurrences after 1970 are in texts like this one that discuss the concept in the history of scholarship. Since the mid-twentieth century, both “Frühjudentum” and “Antikes Judentum” have been on the rise but in a more modest way.

In English-speaking contexts, “late Judaism” never managed to establish itself as a fully recognized term, being found only sparsely in the secondary literature.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the proposal by Gabriele Boccaccini to speak of “Middle Judaism” has not won the day.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the parallel terms in German scholarship, “ancient Judaism” is more common in English than “early Judaism,” but both terms are widely used and recognized.

In the same general timeframe of German discussed above, one sees in French-speaking contexts a widespread use of “judaïsme tardif,” but since the 1980s, the more common term has been “judaïsme ancien.” Quite a few appearances of “judaïsme tardif” are in texts that were translated from German.<sup>9</sup> French scholarship seems not to have produced an equivalent to “early Judaism.”

In Italian-speaking contexts, the picture is significantly different. Here there is widespread use of “tardo giudaismo,” which seems still to be the most common designation. While “antico giudaismo” is a possible formulation, it seems uncommon. Once again, it is striking that some occurrences of “tardo giudaismo” are in texts that have either been translated from German or have been motivated by German scholarship.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, we can confidently trace the origins of the term “late Judaism” back to the German-speaking realm, from which it spread into other languages.

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*theit in den Religionen: Kulturhistorische Vorlesung gehalten im Wintersemester* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1943), 277–313; H. Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1950); J. Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1,26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960).

7 See for instance T. L. Donaldson, “Levitical Messianology in Late Judaism: Origins, Development, and Decline,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 24 (1981): 193–207.

8 G. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

9 Cf. O. Cullmann, *Le milieu johannique: étude sur l'origine de l'évangile de Jean, sa place dans le judaïsme tardif, dans le cercle des disciples de Jésus et dans le christianisme primitif* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1976).

10 F. Parente, “Escatologia e politica nel tardo giudaismo e nel cristianesimo primitivo,” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 80 (1968): 234–96; L. Rosso Ubigli, “Alcuni aspetti della concezione della ‘porneia’ nel tardo giudaismo,” *Henoch* 1 (1979): 201–45; H. Ringgren, *Israele: i padri, l'epoca dei re, il giudaismo* (Milano: Edizione Jaca, 1987), 338: “Caratteristiche generali del tardo ebraismo. La legge.”

## 2 The Early Usage of the Term “Spätjudentum” for Designating Pre-Christian Judaism in the Late Eighteenth Century

The term “Spätjudentum” was coined by Karl Heinrich Ludwig Poelitz (1772–1838), who served as a professor of Ethics and History in Dresden. In his 1794 Latin dissertation from Leipzig, *De gravissimis theologiae seriorum Judaeorum decretis quorum vestigia in libris inde ab exilii aetate usque ad saeculi quarti post c.n. initia deprehenduntur*, he applied the term “seriores Judaei” (“later Jews”) to the period from the exile to the fourth century C.E. “Seriores Judaei” seems to be an original formulation of his. In previous literature, the main categories were “Judaei antiqui” and “Judaei recentiores.”<sup>11</sup> A year later, Poelitz published a book entitled *Pragmatische Uebersicht der Theologie der spätern Juden*,<sup>12</sup> which deals with the era of Judaism immediately prior to Christianity. On page xiv, Poelitz explains why he undertakes this project:

Doch dieses wichtige Zeitalter der jüdisch-religiösen Kultur interessiert uns auch deswegen, weil das Christentum [...] aus dieser Religion hervorging, und doch, wenn es die Bedürfnisse seiner Zeit befriedigen sollte, sich an die damals herrschenden Begriffe und Vorstellungen anschließen musste. [...] Aus diesem philosophischen Gesichtspuncte habe ich den nun die religiöse Kultur der spätern Juden zu fassen gesucht.

[This important era of Jewish-religious culture is therefore interesting for us, since Christianity [...] went forth from this religion [...]. Since it needed to satisfy the needs of its time, it had to connect to the concepts and ideas of that time [...]. Coming from this philosophical perspective, I analyzed the religious culture of the later Jews.]

Several elements of Poelitz’s motivation and approach become clear from this quote. Having been trained as a philosopher and not as a historian or Semitist, he approaches the subject in terms of a Kantian philosophy of history. And in order to understand the emergence of Christianity from this philosophical ap-

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. Morin de Blois, *Commentarius historicus de disciplina in administratione sacramenti Poenitentiae tredecim primis seculis in ecclesia occidentali*, ...Hic inserta sunt quae Judaei antiqui et recentiores tradunt de Poenitentia (Metelen: Frederici, 1682); Also A. Georg Wähner still uses this opposition in 1743 (*Antiquitates Ebraeorum de Israeliticae gentis* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1743], e.g., 134, 224).

<sup>12</sup> K. H. L. Poelitz, *Pragmatische Uebersicht der Theologie der spätern Juden* (Leipzig: Feind, 1795).

proach to history, he analyzes the concepts and ideas of Judaism from the preceding times. In his own words:

Diese pragmatische Darstellung der spätern jüdischen Theologie ist nun übrigens nicht zunächst deswegen begonnen und angestellt worden, um das eigentliche jüdische Lehrgebäude und ihre Dogmatik darzustellen (was uns als Christen izt in dem Zeitalter einer höhern Kultur wenig interessiren würde), sondern vorzüglich deswegen, um die in unserem Zeitaltern begonnene Revision der Dogmen zu erleichtern und vermittelt genauerer historischer, mit philosophischem Geist angestellter, Untersuchungen bis auf die Quelle mehrerer Dogmen selbst zurück gehen und bestimmen zu können, was im N.T. als eigentliche Lehre Jesu dargestellt wird.<sup>13</sup>

[This pragmatic presentation of late Jewish theology has been conducted (...) in order to facilitate the (presentation of the) revision of dogmas that began in our era (i. e., the Christian era).]

So far, we only have found the combination of “später” (i. e., “late”) and “jüdisch” or “Juden” (i. e., “Jews” or “Jewish”). But Poelitz uses the adjective “spätjüdisch” later on in his book, where he speaks of “spätjüdische Theologie” or “late-Jewish theology.”<sup>14</sup> Consider his wording on page 287:

die Spuren der spätjüdischen Theologie sowohl im N.T. als auch in der ersten christlichen Kirche [sind] nicht zu verkennen.

[the traces of late-Jewish theology are clearly recognizable in the NT and in the early Christian church.]

From these two quotes, it is evident that Poelitz indeed limits the “spätere Juden” or “later Jews” to the pre-Christian era. He explicitly states that the “later Jews” (“spätern Juden”) belong to the period “before the era of Jesus” (“die vor dem Zeitalter Jesu angetroffen wurde”), while describing the Jews after Christ as the “jüngern Juden nach Christo,” meaning the “later Jews after Christ.”<sup>15</sup> Christ thus demarks the boundary between the earlier “later Jews” and the later “earlier Jews.”

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<sup>13</sup> Poelitz, *Pragmatische Uebersicht*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, here 22 and 24.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 10.

### 3 Shifting Concepts of “Judentum” and its Internal History in the Nineteenth Century

Poelitz’s proposed designation of Second Temple Judaism as “späteres Judentum” was accepted in the early nineteenth century by, for instance, Heinrich Gottlieb Tzschirner, who adopted the term in his *Vorlesungen über die christliche Glaubenslehre* from 1829. Interestingly enough, the concept of “Spätjudentum” was even employed by Jewish thinkers of the nineteenth century. The rabbi of Braunschweig, Levi Herzfeld, used the adjective “spätjüdisch” to denote the era contemporaneous with Ezra in his *History of the People of Israel from the Destruction of the First Temple to the Installation of the Maccabee Shimon to the Office of High Priest and Ruler*. But the nineteenth century also saw some major general terminological shifts in the study of the history of Judaism. These shifts would be important for biblical scholarship. First, there is de Wette’s influential differentiation between Hebraism and Judaism:

Wir nennen sie in dieser [sc. der nachexilischen] Periode Juden, vorher Hebräer, und was der nachexilischen angehört, Judenthum, die vorexilische hingegen Hebraismus.<sup>16</sup>

[We call them in this (postexilic) period “Jews,” before that point, “Hebrews,” and what belonged to the postexilic (period), “Judaism,” whereas that which was preexilic was “Hebraism.”]

De Wette explains what he calls “Judaism” as follows:

Das Judenthum ist die verunglückte Wiederherstellung des Hebraismus und die Mischung der positiven Bestandtheile desselben mit fremden mythologische-metaphysischen Lehren, worin ein reflectirender Verstand, ohne lebendige Begeisterung des Gefühls, waltet: ein Chaos, welches eine neue Schöpfung erwartet. Die charakteristischen Merkmale sind:

- (1) Statt der sittlichen Richtung metaphysisches Nachdenken, und darin manche Fortschritte.
- (2) Neben der mißverstandenen Symbolik eine schriftliche Religionsquelle, ohne selbständige Hervorbringungskraft.
- (3) Während der Hebraismus Sache des Lebens und der Begeisterung war, ist das Judenthum Sache des Begriffs und des Buchstabenwesens.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> W. M. L. de Wette, *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmatik, in ihrer historischen Entwicklung dargestellt: 1. Theil: Biblische Dogmatik Alten und Neuen Testaments oder kritische Darstellung der Religionslehre des Hebraismus, des Judenthums und Urchristentums*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Reimer, 1831), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Wette, *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmatik*, 114.

[Judaism is the unsuccessful restoration of Hebraism, and the mix of its positive components with alien mythological-metaphysical teachings, in which a reflective understanding without living zeal of feeling presides: a chaos that waits for a new creation. The characteristic traits are:

1. In place of an ethical orientation, metaphysical reflection, and in this some improvements.
2. In addition to the misunderstood symbolism a written source of religion, without independent power to develop it.
3. While Hebraism was a matter of life and zeal, Judaism is a matter of concepts and literalism.]

As Ekkehard Stegemann has convincingly shown, de Wette's distinction was conducive to Christianity's adoption of the Old Testament as a product mainly of the "Hebrew" rather than the "Jewish" period of ancient Israel's history.<sup>18</sup> For present purposes, it is especially important to see that de Wette pushed the beginning of Judaism back to the postexilic period. Therefore, there was no need for him to speak of "later Judaism": pre-Christian Judaism per se was "late Judaism."

Scholarly literature often portrays Julius Wellhausen as the villain who introduced the notion of "Spätjudentum" into scholarship. But this tendency is doubly wrong. First, we have seen that the concept is considerably older, going back to Poelitz. Second, Wellhausen never uses the substantive "Spätjudentum" (there are a few instances of the adjective).

Nevertheless, Wellhausen is responsible for another highly problematic differentiation within "Judaism" that has become nearly as influential as de Wette's distinction between "Hebraism" and "Judaism."

In Wellhausen's *Israelitische und Jüdische Geschichte*, he wrote:

Seine erstickende Wirkung hat es [sc. das Gesetz] erst allmählich ausgeübt; es dauerte lange, bis der Kern hinter der Schale verholzte. Bis auf den Pharisäismus blieben die freien Triebe in lebendiger Kraft, die von den Propheten ausgegangen waren; das ältere Judentum ist die Vorstufe des Christentums.<sup>19</sup>

[(The Law) exerted its suffocating effect only after some time. It took some time, until the kernel beneath the peel petrified. Except for the Pharisees, the free forces remained in lively

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<sup>18</sup> E. Stegemann, "Die Halbierung der 'hebräischen' Religion: De Wettes Konstruktion von 'Hebraismus' und 'Judentum' zum Zwecke christlicher Aneignung des Alten Testaments," in *Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette: Ein Universaltheologe des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. H.-Peter Mathys and K. Seybold (Basel: Schwabe, 2001), 79–95.

<sup>19</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1904), 203.



vigour that had originated from the prophets. The more ancient Judaism is the predecessor of Christianity.]

The very last phrase of this quote is important for Wellhausen's inner differentiation of Judaism: The "more ancient" Judaism is the Judaism before the Pharisees. Vice versa this means that the era of the Pharisees is tantamount to "late Judaism" for him. But rather than the term "Spätjudentum," he uses the artificial German word "Judaismus" to denote what he conceives of as "late Judaism." In chapter 19 of his book, he describes "Die Ausbildung des Judaismus" or "The Formation of Judaism,"<sup>20</sup> which he differentiates from the "Judentum vor der makkabäischen Periode"<sup>21</sup> ["Judaism before the Maccabean period"] that, according to him, was "durchaus nicht so streng und ausschliesslich wie seitdem" ["not so strict and exclusive as from that point on"].

Wellhausen adopts de Wette's view of limiting Judaism ["Judentum"] to the postexilic period, but he differentiates the "more ancient Judaism" ["älteres Judentum"] during the pre-Maccabean period from the "Judaismus" of the later period, which was formative for the Pharisaic movement. However, he did not, or at least not prominently, speak of this period in terms of "Spätjudentum," even though he occasionally employed the adjective "spätjüdisch." It is not difficult to see how the New Testament's polemical view of the "Pharisees" shaped the concept into a cliché in German Protestant scholarship of Wellhausen's time. Yet in his book *Die Phariseer und die Sadducäer: eine Untersuchung zur inneren jüdischen Geschichte*, he tried to describe the Pharisees based on extrabiblical sources and mentioned the New Testament's distorted view of them.<sup>22</sup>

## 4 Bousset's Notion of "Spätjudentum"

The most prominent use of "Spätjudentum" appears in the era of the so-called "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule" ["History of Religions School"] at the turn of the twentieth century, especially in Göttingen.<sup>23</sup> One of its champions was Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920), who employed the term frequently and also ex-

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>22</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Die Phariseer und die Sadducäer: eine Untersuchung zur inneren jüdischen Geschichte* (Greifswald: Bamberg, 1974), 21.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. G. Lüdemann and A. Özen, "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 28:618–24.

plained how he understood it. He is most explicit about “Spätjudentum” in his *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum*:

Das Spätjudentum ist durchaus und ganz Pharisäismus und nichts weiter als Pharisäismus.<sup>24</sup>

[Spätjudentum is thoroughly and completely Pharisaism and nothing other than Pharisaism.]

It becomes immediately clear that Bousset links up with Wellhausen here. Equating “Spätjudentum” with “Phärisäismus” is exactly what Wellhausen does in his *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*. If one continues reading in the literature of the time, another new aspect of the notion of “Spätjudentum” becomes apparent.

Es kann niemand entgehen, wie innig sich das Spätjudentum und der mittelalterliche Katholizismus berühren: dieselbe Äußerlichkeit, Werkgerechtigkeit, dieselbe Verbindung von Theologie und Juristerei, dieselbe Kasuistik.<sup>25</sup>

[No one can miss how intimate the contact is between Spätjudentum and the Catholicism of the Middle Ages: the same formality, works righteousness, the same connection between theology and jurisprudence, the same casuistry.]

This quote is most remarkable because it shows that Protestant scholarship of the time was not only antisemitic in some respects, but also that what sometimes lay behind this antisemitism was hidden anti-Catholicism that only occasionally came to the surface.

The popularity of the term “Spätjudentum” in the early twentieth century becomes clear through its use even by Jewish scholars like Gershom Scholem, who spoke of “spätjüdische Apokalyptik” in a 1928 article.<sup>26</sup> In his later letters, he comments correctly that the term “Spätjudentum” is a “skandalöse und beleidigende Terminologie”<sup>27</sup> [“a scandalous and insulting terminology”], but he seems only to have made this assessment *ex post*.

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24 W. Bousset, *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892), 32.

25 E. von Dobschütz, *Probleme des apostolischen Zeitalters* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904), 125.

26 G. Scholem, “Zur Entstehung der Kabbala,” *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins zur Gründung und Erhaltung der Akademischen Wissenschaft des Judentums* 9 (1928): 8.

27 G. Scholem, *Briefe, Bd. 2: 1948–1970*, ed. T. Sparr (Munich: Beck, 1995), 121.

## 5 The Abandonment of the Concept

According to my investigation, unease regarding the notion of “Spätjudentum” appears first in Ernst Jacob’s review of a book by Albert Schweitzer:

Es soll nicht mit dem Verfasser [sc. Albert Schweitzer] darüber gerechnet werden, daß er dem schlechten Beispiel seiner Gewährsmänner folgt und das mit dem abwertenden Namen “Spätjudentum” benennt, was richtiger Frühjudentum heißen müßte.<sup>28</sup>

[We shall not dispute with the author (i. e., Albert Schweitzer) that he is following the bad example of his sources and pejoratively uses “Spätjudentum” for what would more correctly be called “Frühjudentum.”]

At this early point, Jacob notes the pejorative nature of the term “Spätjudentum” and proposes “Frühjudentum” as a substitute. But his protest remained unheeded for decades, probably in part because it was written in a Jewish journal. The most decisive invocation against the term and concept of “Spätjudentum” came from Vienna, from Kurt Schubert, who clearly criticized the use of the term in his article in the second edition of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* from 1964:

Spätjudentum ist eine unrichtige, wenn auch stark eingebürgerte Bezeichnung für das Judentum der ntl. und talmudischen Zeit.<sup>29</sup>

[Late Judaism is an incorrect albeit very common term for Judaism in the New Testament and Talmudic period.]

Given the position of Ernst von Dobschütz, it is not surprising that the most effective protest against “Spätjudentum” came first from a scholar in Jewish studies, then from a Catholic writing for a Catholic encyclopedia, and finally from outside of Germany. Since the late 1960s, the term has been abandoned nearly without explanation. There were some further reverberations with the term “spätisraelitisch” [“late Israelite”] instead of “spätjüdisch” [“late Jewish”]. This terminology was popular with Klaus Koch, Odil Hannes Steck, and Ina Willi-Plein, all of whom were “Professor für Altes Testament und spätisraelitische Religionsgeschichte” [“Professor for Old Testament and History of late Israelite Religion”] in Hamburg. Especially Martin Noth’s influence lay behind the description “spätisraelitisch” instead of “spätjüdisch.” Noth drew a link between the

<sup>28</sup> E. Jacob, “Neue Literatur über Paulus und das Urchristentum,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 75 (1931): 332.

<sup>29</sup> K. Schubert, “Spätjudentum,” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 9:949.

end of the history of Israel and the rejection of Christ in his “History of Israel” from 1950, titling chapter 34 “Die Ablehnung des Christus” [“The Rejection of the Christ”]<sup>30</sup> and stating at the end of the chapter that “Die Geschichte Israels eilte danach schnell ihrem Ende zu.” [“The history of Israel then hurried quickly to its end.”]<sup>31</sup> From this perspective, Judaism only began after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E.:

Was aus diesem Untergang “Israels” erwuchs, war jene Erscheinung, die wir als “Judentum” zu bezeichnen pflegen.<sup>32</sup>

[What grew out of this demise of “Israel” was the phenomenon that we call “Judentum.”]<sup>33</sup>

I do not think that there are any serious scholars left out there who would still share this position. In my view, it has become abundantly clear that the question “when did Judaism begin?” does require a differentiated answer. One of the most convincing answers to that question was given, in my opinion, by Marc Brettler, in his article about “ancient Israelite Religion” and “Judaism.”<sup>34</sup> His answer is a good one, because it is nuanced and differentiated. When did Judaism begin? It depends on how you define Judaism.<sup>35</sup> But 70 C.E. is certainly too late.

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**30** M. Noth, *Geschichte Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1950), 383–86.

**31** *Ibid.*, 386.

**32** *Ibid.*, 15.

**33** Noth clarified that after 70 C.E., Judaism relied on earlier developments: “Dies alles [sc. die Arbeit der Rabbinen] ist hier nur eben anzudeuten und nicht genauer auszuführen; denn es gehört schon nicht mehr zur Geschichte Israels. In diesen Vorgängen konstituierte sich die neue Erscheinung des Judentums, gewiß in Fortführung schon längst, vor allem in der Diaspora, angebahnter Entwicklungen, aber doch so, daß es jetzt erst in der veränderten Situation seine besondere und bleibende Gestalt gewann.” [All this (the work of the Rabbis) is only hinted at here and not explicated in detail because it does not belong to the history of Israel. In these events the new phenomenon of Judaism was constituted, certainly continuing elements long in development, especially in the Diaspora. Nonetheless, only in this altered situation did it take on its particular, lasting form.] *Ibid.*, 399.

**34** M. Brettler, “Judaism in the Hebrew Bible? The Transition from Ancient Israelite Religion to Judaism,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 429–47.

**35** Cf. the detailed discussion of S. Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 457–512. For the discussion on the historical and intellectual significance of 70 C.E., see D. R. Schwartz and Z. Weiss, eds., *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

*search*. His main publications include *Erzväter und Exodus: Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels in den Geschichtsbüchern des Alten Testaments* (1999), *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments: Eine Einführung* (2008), and *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (2019).

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Anders Gerdmar

# The National Socialist Bible: “Die Botschaft Gottes”: Theological Legitimation of Antisemitism

In Protestant Germany during the early decades of the twentieth century, the Bible held a strong position as a religious authority. But during the Third Reich it also functioned as a legitimator of various policies and strategies. Theology and church were important creators of value for the “German person.” Thus, as Adolf Hitler strategized his way to power, he knew that it was necessary for his antisemitic agenda to gain the support of the Church. Hitler himself looked up to the antisemitic Hofprediger Adolf Stoecker, admiring him for his success in making antisemitism a popular movement in the 1880s.<sup>1</sup> Biblical exe-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. Siegele-Wenschkewitz, *Nationalsozialismus und Kirchen: Religionspolitik von Partei und Staat bis 1935* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1974), 44–46; see also K. D. Schmidt, “Der Widerstand der Kirche im Dritten Reich,” *Lutherische Monatshefte* 1, no. 8 (1962): 366, on Hitler’s strategic propaganda to win the Christians, although in principle Hitler himself was at enmity with Christianity and the Church, which was kept secret during most of the Nazi period, see E. Wolgast, “Nationalsozialistische Hochschulpolitik und die evangelisch-theologischen Fakultäten,” in *Theologische Fakultäten im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. L. Siegele-Wenschkewitz and C. Nicolaisen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 49. Hitler took the trouble of going through the biography on Stoecker before publication, and, in the preface to his 1936 edition, the Nazi historiographer Walter Frank stresses the affinity between Stoecker and Hitler, cf. W. Frank, *Hofprediger Adolf Stoecker und die christlichsoziale Bewegung* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1935), 9–10. Stoecker wanted to rid the press, literature, culture, and banking of Jewish influence, and to exclude Jews from certain professions, cf. G. Brakelmann, “Stoecker, Adolf (1835–1909),” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Müller (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001). See also M. Ferrari Zumbini, *Die Wurzeln des Bösen: Gründerjahre des Antisemitismus: Von der Bismarckzeit zu Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2003), 151–65, for an overview of Stoecker’s role in the antisemitic movement.

The literature on antisemitism is vast, with bibliographies available in published form as well as on the internet. In book form, S. S. Cohen, ed., *Antisemitism: An Annotated Bibliography*, vol. 1–19 (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1984–2007) seems to be the most complete, at the time of writing, consisting of nineteen of the planned twenty-one volumes. This material is also available on the internet, see Hebrew University of Jerusalem, “SICSA The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism,” accessed July 9, 2007, <http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/bibsear.html>. See also H. A. Strauss, ed., *Bibliographie zum Antisemitismus: Die Bestände der Bibliothek des Zentrums für Antisemitismusforschung der Technischen Universität Berlin*, vol. 1–4 (München: Saur, 1989–1993), which describes the holdings of the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Technische Universität, Berlin.



genesis, as the mother of theological disciplines in a Protestant environment,<sup>2</sup> was of course an important area, and winning exegetes, as the respected New Testament professor at Tübingen and international expert on Judaism, Gerhard Kittel, was a trophy, as well as Kittel's former assistant Walter Grundmann.<sup>3</sup>

Grundmann, an early member of the National Socialist party, became a key figure in National Socialist theology and one of the leading ideologues of the "Deutsche Christen."<sup>4</sup> Grundmann was the academic director and the acting leader of the *Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben*<sup>5</sup> [*Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life*], hereinafter simply called "the Institute." In this paper, I focus on one major project of the Institute, which is a showcase of how theology and exegesis helped to legitimate the oppression and consequently the elimination of German Jews.<sup>6</sup>

Grundmann was the driving force behind this project. The *Volkstestament* (testament in the sense of Bible) was published as *Die Botschaft Gottes* [*The Mes-*

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2 This article focuses on Protestant theology. For the Roman Catholic Church and antisemitism, see, for example, O. Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); W. Altgeld, *Katholizismus, Protestantismus, Judentum: Über religiös begründete Gegensätze und nationalreligiöse Ideen in der Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1992) (discussing Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism) and a discussion of moral responsibility of the Church in D. J. Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

3 On these two scholars, see A. Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) with literature.

4 For Deutsche Christen, see D. L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

5 In the documents from the opening of the institute, the word *Beseitigung*, eradication, was there; see, for example, the program for its inauguration May 6, 1939, at Wartburg Castle (EZA 7/4166), a place chosen to refer to Luther and his Reformation, and W. Grundmann, *Die Entjudung des religiösen Lebens als Aufgabe deutscher Theologie und Kirche: Vortrag von Prof. Dr. W. Grundmann gehalten bei der feierlichen Eröffnungssitzung des 'Institutes zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben' in Eisenach* (Weimar: Verlag Deutsche Christen, 1939), a speech held at the inauguration, but later "und Beseitigung" was removed, see E. Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen: Ein Geleitwort zu der vom "Institut zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben" herausgegebenen Botschaft Gottes* (Weimar: Verlag Deutsche Christen, 1940).

6 For a definition of legitimation, see T. R. Tyler, "Introduction: Legitimizing Ideologies," *Social Justice Research* 18, no. 3 (2005): 211–15.

*sage of God*] as a whole in 1941.<sup>7</sup> Its first part, however, *Jesus der Heiland* [*Jesus, the Saviour*] was printed in 1940, with a print run of 150,000–200,000 copies.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Institute made a new hymnal, *Großer Gott wir loben Dich* [*Great God we worship you*], which was published that same year. These products were developed to merge theology and Third Reich ideology and to eradicate Jewish traits.<sup>9</sup> The list of the eighty-eight earliest collaborators with the Institute was long, featuring many bishops and other church leaders but also university professors and doctors of theology.<sup>10</sup> The Institute got off to a flying start, and later lists show that it grew in importance as more contributors were added to it.<sup>11</sup> The background is that by 1937, the Deutsche Christen had almost gained a monopoly in Germany's theological academia: all the deans, more than one-third of the professors, and half of the lecturers belonged to the Deutsche Christen.<sup>12</sup> The Institute counted several prominent New Testament professors, including Gerhard Delling, Herbert Preisker, Carl Schneider, Rudolf Meyer, Georg Bertram, and Grundmann himself.<sup>13</sup> Several of the academically most-merited members of the Institute were also involved in the German exegetical prestige project, the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.<sup>14</sup> In the areas of the New Testa-

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7 *Die Botschaft Gottes* (Weimar: Verlag Deutsche Christen, 1940). For an introduction to *Die Botschaft Gottes*, see B. Jerke, "Wie wurde das Neue Testament zu einem sogenannten Volkstestament 'entjudet'? Aus der Arbeit des Eisenacher 'Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben'," in *Christlicher Antijudaismus und Antisemitismus: Theologische und kirchliche Programme Deutscher Christen*, ed. L. Siegele-Wenschkewitz (Frankfurt am Main: Haag + Herchen, 1994), 201–34.

8 S. Heschel, "Transforming Jesus from Jew to Aryan: Theological Politics in Nazi Germany," *Dialog* 35 (1996): 184. Fromm notes that the first part, *Jesus der Heiland*, was sold in 150,000 copies, cf. Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, advert after page 62. Jerke, "Wie wurde das Neue Testament," 202, writes that there are mentions of a print run of 200,000.

9 On *Die Botschaft Gottes*, see Jerke, "Wie wurde das Neue Testament," and A. Gerdmar, "Ett nytt evangelium," *Dagens Nyheter*, December 21, 2003.

10 According to Jerke, "Wie wurde das Neue Testament," 234n73, 190 church leaders, pastors, and theologians were involved in the project. She also lists the province churches involved in the institute, 210.

11 See H. Prolingheuer, *Wir sind in die Irre gegangen: Die Schuld der Kirche unterm Hakenkreuz* (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1987).

12 S. Heschel, "Nazifying Christian Theology: Walter Grundmann and the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 63, no. 4 (1994): 589.

13 *Ibid.*, 595.

14 Kittel's edition was planned as a revision of Hermann Cremer's *Biblisches-Theologisches Wörterbuch der neutestamentlichen Gräzität*, a work begun by Julius Kögel. When the latter passed away, Kittel inherited the project, G. Kittel, "Lexicographia Sacra. Two Lectures on the Making of the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, delivered on October 20 and 21, 1937, in the

ment, the Institute's Organization for work (*Arbeitsgliederung*) states that they are to work with "investigation of the condition of the emergence of Christianity from a racial vantage point."<sup>15</sup> Thus, Third Reich Germany had succeeded in winning the main theological players for its purposes.

## 1 The Making of *Die Botschaft Gottes*

### 1.1 The Motivation for *Die Botschaft Gottes*

The purpose of the *Volkstestament* was to reach the "German person" with the Christian message. In a short presentation of the project, in all likelihood dated to 1939,<sup>16</sup> it is argued that the outbreak of war makes it even more important to publish this "*Feld- und Volks-Testament*" out of a *scholarly* and of a *Christian* responsibility. The war is the background, and therefore it is also a specific *German* responsibility: "Precisely in this struggle for existence, our German Volk needs personal religious strength," the pamphlet claims.<sup>17</sup> In his prolegomena to *Die Botschaft Gottes*, Erich Fromm notes:

These [...] could not explain and elucidate everything that could be said about of Germanization of the "Message of God," which we present as a contribution to our German people in the context of the great war events.<sup>18</sup>

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Divinity School, Cambridge," *Theology* *Occasional Papers* 7 (1938): 4. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* has been criticized from a methodological point of view by, inter alia, J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), see also the discussion in W. A. Meeks, "A Nazi New Testament Professor Reads his Bible: The Strange Case of Gerhard Kittel," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation. Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. H. Najman and J. H. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 536. Kittel's methodological remarks would by many present-day scholars be regarded as extremely theologically biased as well as linguistically dubious, see, for example, his presentation of a *Lexicographia Sacra* and *Philologia Sacra vere Theologica*, see "Lexicographia Sacra," 7–8.

<sup>15</sup> *Die Arbeitsgliederung des Institutes* (ZA 5066/05) EZA 7/ 4166, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv (N/A: 1939), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben, Presentation of "ein Feld- und Volks-Testament," 1939 (?), EZA 7/4166, 8640–39.  
<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> E. Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 49. Erich Fromm is of course another person than the famous Jewish psychoanalyst Erich (Seligmann) Fromm (1900–1980) who after the Nazi takeover fled Germany.

That is, *Die Botschaft Gottes* is directly related to the war events and is meant as a contribution to strengthening the people as a German people, providing them with a Germanized Bible. The authorities behind the project also saw this as a continuation of what the poet behind the great Old Saxon *Heliand* and later what Luther did. The former was written at the beginning of the ninth century, and Luther's in the sixteenth century. To the people behind *Die Botschaft Gottes*, it was important that both of these represent *German* Bible versions, and the purpose was again to connect the eternal "Message of God" and "the reality of a German spirit that is present in our blood."<sup>19</sup> The racial dimension of a specific German blood and therewith connected spirit was fundamental for the conception of *Die Botschaft Gottes*, and the purpose of this Germanization of the Christian message was to minister a German gospel that would fit this German people.

Methodologically, the work with the *Volkstestament* would be done using textual and literary criticism, Form Criticism<sup>20</sup> and *Sachkritik*, the latter a Bultmannian term for "content criticism."<sup>21</sup> This "refers to the interpreter's criticism of the formulation of the text in the light of what (he thinks) the subject matter (*die Sache*) to be; criticism of what is said by what is meant."<sup>22</sup> According to the team behind it, *Die Botschaft Gottes* was also using these methods, removing dogmatizing tendencies, especially those influenced by Judaism.<sup>23</sup> The main scholarly authority behind the project, Walter Grundmann, also stressed the problems with the Old Testament-Jewish materials in the Bible.<sup>24</sup> The Jewish aspects in the Old and New Testaments is an element that "blocks countless German people from access to the Bible."<sup>25</sup> The endeavor of Grundmann and the

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<sup>19</sup> Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 49–50.

<sup>20</sup> W. Grundmann, "Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament. Grundsätzliche Bemerkungen zu dem vom 'Institut zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben' herausgegebenen Volkstestament," *Verbandsmitteilungen* 1 (December 1939): 16. I use the notion of the Old Testament for the Hebrew Bible since this is how it is presented in the material studied.

<sup>21</sup> Rudolf Bultmann was a giant in German theology and church life as one of the main exegetes of the twentieth century, with his roots in liberal theology and radical demythologization, he was also most controversial in the opposite camp. For a fresh presentation of Bultmann's thought, see D. W. Congdon, *Rudolf Bultmann: A Companion to His Theology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> H. I. Marshall, "An Evangelical Approach to 'Theological Criticism,'" *Themelios* 13, no. 3 (1988): 2, quoting the definition by Robert Morgan.

<sup>23</sup> The same is stated in *Die Arbeitsgliederung des Institutes*, 2, III Praktische Massnahmen, to remove "die aus dem Judentum kommenden Umbildungen und Legenden."

<sup>24</sup> Grundmann, "Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament," 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*.

team was a scholarly and “evangelistic” one, and Grundmann spoke as if their research would be state of the art for the time. They had left the “clearly legendary” aside, for example, the miraculous catch of fish, and the widow’s son in Nain.<sup>26</sup> Regarding Jesus’ childhood and Easter stories, they weeded out some, including the Virgin birth, but kept such parts which were an important part of German culture,<sup>27</sup> even though lacking historical foundation. However, what was removed from the story of the birth of Jesus is the reference to Judean Bethlehem since it is a Davidic and thus a Jewish-Christian tradition.<sup>28</sup>

When discussing the Easter narratives, Grundmann accepts the Galilean appearances of Jesus after the resurrection but not the Judaeian, since they are characterized by a “typical Jewish-Christian dogmatic,”<sup>29</sup> as found in the Lukan version. Yet, the resurrection is not denied, but *Die Botschaft Gottes* had chosen to abstain from the interpretive stories of Mark, for example. The Messianic confession by Peter in Mark 8:29, “You are the Christ” (Christ being the mere Greek translation of the Messiah) is according to Grundmann opposed by Jesus. Peter, Grundmann argues, shared the idea of a Messiah with “the Palestinian Person,” but this was contrary to Jesus’ self-understanding.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the committee changed that part in *Die Botschaft Gottes* (page 75, line 3–15) so that what Jesus forbids is calling him Messiah (!):

*Die Botschaft Gottes’ version:*

Then Peter said: “You are the Messiah!” Then he forbade them strictly to spread this opinion [...] Then Peter took him aside and began to forbid such speech, since the Messiah, as he expected him, would not know any suffering. He said: May God protect you! Look after yourself, master (*Schone dich, Meister!*)! But Jesus turned around, looked at his disciples and threatened Peter: “You Satan! Get back into following me (*Zurück in meine Nachfolge!*)! Because you do not think God’s but man’s thoughts.”

*Mark’s version (Mark 8:28, 30, 32b, 33):*

Peter answered him: “You are the Christ.” And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him [...] And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

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<sup>26</sup> Grundmann, “Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament,” 13.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Note that in Mark, Jesus forbids “talking about him,” whereas in *Die Botschaft Gottes* Jesus forbids to “spread this opinion (viz., that Jesus is the Messiah).” This is also the focus of Jesus’ admonishment to Peter. Thus, avoiding describing Jesus with the Jewish term Messiah was of great importance.

In short, Grundmann was mostly reasoning in line with the liberal historical-critical exegesis of his time,<sup>31</sup> whereas for the resurrection, the book did not follow the most liberal path. But what seems to distinguish *Die Botschaft Gottes*’ version from other scholarship of the early twentieth century was the anti-Jewish-Christian “method,” meaning that whatever is considered Jewish-Christian is deemed secondary. This approach was different to that which one would expect from a liberal German exegete at this point in time.

The background and considerations behind *Die Botschaft Gottes* are explained in a programmatic *Geleitwort* (Preface), which is a separate booklet of 62 pages,<sup>32</sup> written by *Oberpfarrer* Erich Fromm in Altenburg. According to Fromm, the purpose for the new version is evangelistic and apologetic but in a very special way: the “German person” in National Socialist Germany needs a new kind of Bible in order to understand the Christian faith. Fromm is concerned that the “German person” should not be able to receive the Christian message so that they “in truth would accept the importance that Jesus Christ has for the faith of the German person, which also leads to an understanding of his *völkische* responsibility.”<sup>33</sup> The focus is very much on the *German* gospel for the “German person,” and both the personal relationship to the gospel and the political needs are highlighted. The project is born out of a *Bibelnot*, distress pertaining to the Bible, Fromm thinks. Luther’s German Bible with his German faith in Christ was the foundation of “our fathers,” but now, Fromm deliberated, so many cannot understand its message, being alien to church life, and thus to Jesus Christ.<sup>34</sup> The project thus put forward a certain connection to Luther’s translation into German in 1522, featuring as a motto Luther’s words about his translation:

Ich habe das Neue Testament verdeutscht auf mein bestes Vermögen und auf mein Gewissen. Ich habe damit niemand gezwungen, dass er es lese, sondern ich habe es frei gelassen und allein zu Dienst getan denen, die es nicht besser machen können. Es ist niemand ver-

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<sup>31</sup> Grundmann had developed theologically since his early Tübingen years from a conservative into a liberal stance, the latter in line with *Deutsche Christen*, see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism*, 592. See also *ibid.*, 396 on Karl Barth regarding a liberal stance as naturally connected to *Deutsche Christen*.

<sup>32</sup> Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–10.

boten, ein besseres zu machen [...] Es ist mein Testament und meine Dolmetschung und soll mein bleiben und sein.<sup>35</sup>

I have conscientiously translated the New Testament into German to the best of my ability, and that I have not compelled anyone to read it. Rather I have left that open, only doing the work as a service to those who could not do it better. No one is forbidden to do it better! [...] It is my Testament and my translation, and it shall remain mine.<sup>36</sup>

In his introduction to *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, Fromm draws heavily on what Luther did. Just as Luther at Wartburg had accomplished presenting the gospel in a real *German* way, and since that translation was no longer relevant to modern Germans, *Die Botschaft Gottes* was a way to once more do what Luther did,<sup>37</sup> as a response to this *Bibelnot*. The *Bibelnot* is not only a matter of language or culture, nor is it possible to solve it merely through a new literal translation of the original text, but the problem has a political-cultural dimension as well, and this was the new worldview of National Socialism:

It [the *Bibelnot*] depends on that a new understanding of the condition for life, in which we are standing, has grown in us. This has provided a formation which forges the whole people together into a unity in life in the worldview of National Socialism.<sup>38</sup>

Luther's Bible spoke to the sixteenth-century person, but that could not play the same role in this new reality, Fromm contended. He continued, explaining that the findings of the study of the History of Religions and contemporary historical study and the National Socialist worldview had opened our minds to a consciousness of being German and educated us (*erzogen*), as has "our decisive rejection of everything of a Jewish spirit."<sup>39</sup> Fromm thinks that the Bible closes the way for the "German person" to a real encounter with Christ if one holds the Bible as the only and inviolable norm for faith in Christ throughout all times. Moreover, the gospel is to a large extent also influenced by Jewish-Christian thought, and therefore one could always reproach Christianity for being Jewish in disguise.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Fromm wished to take advantage of the findings of German theological scholarship and untie the message of God from old historical thoughts and patterns, not least the Jewish ones.

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35 M. Luther, *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen*, 1530, W.A. XXX, 2:633.

36 Translation by M. D. Marlowe, Martin Luther, *An Open Letter on Translating (Sendbried vom Dolmetschen)* (1530).

37 Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 8–10.

38 *Ibid.*, 11.

39 *Idem.*

40 *Ibid.*, 12.

In the spirit of Luther, who removed or objected against the inclusion of the letters of James, Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation, the people behind *Die Botschaft Gottes* decided not only to put their thoughts in the foreword but to implement the changes in the very text, “having relieved the text” of such material, which they did not think was helpful to their people.<sup>41</sup> They accomplished this by moving, rewriting, and removing parts of the text.

*Die Botschaft Gottes* structures the message in four parts: firstly, *Jesus the Redeemer*, focusing on the Synoptics; secondly, *Jesus the Son of God*, dealing with the Gospel of John; thirdly, *Jesus the Lord*, using the materials of the Apostolic letters; and finally, the *Emergence of the Christ-fellowship (Christusgemeinde)*, which focused on Acts of the Apostles. Revelation was not included in *Die Botschaft Gottes*. Its themes hardly fit the National Socialist worldview, and perhaps all the eschatology needed was that of the Third Reich?<sup>42</sup>

## 1.2 Ridding the Message of anything Jewish

Even though the text of *Die Botschaft Gottes* looks like the New Testament in a new translation, the antisemitic twist is evident, since such a gospel presented in the Third Reich had to get rid of anything Jewish or Jewish-Christian. In Fromm’s presentation, the antisemitic dimension becomes increasingly evident. He contended that the German people are standing before the challenge to “eliminate (*ausschalten*) all those influences, which could lead to the superalienation (*Überfremdung*) or degeneration of German existence.”<sup>43</sup> This, however, goes deeper than mere linguistic changes: the work of Jesus happened among Jewish people and inside a Jewish community of religion, and this raises the question, whether this implies an essential connection between Christianity and Judaism, Jesus and Judaism. However, Fromm was positive: there is no such essential connection: “To the contrary: *there is an unbridgeable opposition between the message of Jesus [...] and the Jewish view of God and piety.*”<sup>44</sup>

The question of the Jewishness of Jesus was, of course, a vital one. If Jesus was considered Jewish, the whole de-Jewing project would be a risk. As Jerke notes: “For the work with the *Volkstestament* this meant that Jesus himself

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<sup>41</sup> Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 13–14.

<sup>42</sup> Birgit Jerke discusses this fact, rightly noting that the themes of Revelation hardly fit the “worldview of National Socialism.” Cf. Jerke, “Wie wurde das Neue Testament,” 204–5.

<sup>43</sup> Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 23, italics mine.



must be released from the Jewish context.”<sup>45</sup> Fromm writes: “Jesus himself is Galilean. As such he is most probably not a Jew.”<sup>46</sup> Thus Fromm argues in line with many other scholars, especially Walter Grundmann.<sup>47</sup> Grundmann had written his main opus about this topic, and Fromm’s argument summarizes the argument of Grundmann’s book.<sup>48</sup> Grundmann’s strategy in *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* was to sever Jesus from any Jewish or Old Testament background. Thus he contends that “the specifically Jewish and what is limited by the Old Testament, the concentration on Israel, the limitation of salvation to the last generation and the earthly character of salvation, as well as the legalism of living and acting, are not taken over by Jesus.”<sup>49</sup> Grundmann connects this with a racial argument: “When thus the Galilean pedigree of Jesus is, without doubt, it follows from the above that he most likely was not a Jew, but rather in a völkische sense belonged to one of the currents that were present in Galilee.”<sup>50</sup> To Grundmann, Jesus was in no way racially Jewish;<sup>51</sup> neither the mother, the father, nor the paternal grandfather of Jesus were of Jewish blood. Thus, the whole conception of Jesus as developed in the Institute and in Grundmann’s “research” is at the foundation of *Die Botschaft Gottes*.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the racial argument, their argument builds on what they considered to be the mentality

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45 Jerke, “Wie wurde das Neue Testament,” 211.

46 Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 24.

47 Grundmann’s spirit is clearly over the project, as Fromm presents it, and he finishes by referring to six words, among which three are by Grundmann, *ibid.*, 50–51. When Fromm presents his views about Jesus as Galilean and non-Jewish, he, in reality, summarizes Grundmann’s argument in W. Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum: Veröffentlichungen des Instituts zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1940).

48 Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum*. For this work by Grundmann, see R. Deines, “Jesus der Galiläer: Traditionsgeschichte und Genese eines antisemitischen Konstrukts bei Walter Grundmann,” in *Walter Grundmann: Ein Neutestamentler im Dritten Reich*, ed. R. Deines, V. Leppin, and K.-W. Niebuhr (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 43–132.

49 Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum*, 202.

50 *Ibid.*, 175.

51 See *ibid.*, and my discussion in Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism*, 565–72. For an overview, see also M. Leutzsch, “Der Mythos vom arischen Jesus,” in *Vergangenheitsbewältigung im französischen Katholizismus und deutschen Protestantismus*, ed. L. Scherzberg (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), 173–86; M. Leutzsch, “Karrieren des arischen Jesus zwischen 1918 und 1945,” in *Die völkisch-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Beziehungs- und Konfliktgeschichte*, ed. U. Puschner and C. Vollnhals (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 195–217.

52 I put Grundmann’s research within quotation marks, see my section of Grundmann and *Jesus der Galiläer*, which I regard to be quasi-research, lacking in empirical support.

and thought of Jesus. The overall view, the view of God, the Law, with its “Jewish casuistry” and Jewish piety, radically oppose the views of Jesus. For Fromm, Jesus is more like a Greek wisdom teacher than a Jewish rabbi, he was “a combatant, who attacks the whole Jewish nature at its roots,”<sup>53</sup> and he was more inspired by the Aryan idea of Parsism, which he might have encountered in Galilee.

Grundmann also argues that it was the Hellenists who took up the thinking of Jesus and became the first missionaries. Paul continues this Hellenist mission, and Fromm firstly describes his theology in very positive terms, but he also sees risks. Since Paul’s theology builds on Jewish presuppositions and since there is a strong connection between Lutheran theology and Pauline thinking, there is a risk that Lutheran Christianity furthers some Jewish thought into German Christianity.<sup>54</sup> Thoughts stemming from Jewish thought and opposing the Christian message would then prevail in German Christianity.

For Fromm, however, it is John’s Gospel that best brings forth the opposition between Jesus’s message and Judaism. The Gospel of John, he contended, clearly shows the opposition between Jesus and Judaism: “For the Gospel of John, the Jews very clearly are the downright representatives of the satanic countervailing force [...] therefore they are described as the children of the devil.”<sup>55</sup> Jesus, however, grants the fellowship with the Father, and Fromm argued that the thought of Jesus had Aryan origins.<sup>56</sup>

Fromm systematically tried to identify what is “Jewish” and argued that this is not the original story but that the Jewish-Christian elements are secondary. The only text that really passes the test is the Gospel of John in its main parts.<sup>57</sup>

### 1.3 The modus operandi of the Volkstestament

Describing the working model of the team behind *Die Botschaft Gottes*, Fromm emphasized that the goal is to find Jesus’s voice on the one hand, and to discern what is the result of the believing Church’s activity on the other: “out of its faith and its worship and under the pressure of its historical mission to create, form anew, change and interpret.”<sup>58</sup> This position was commonplace in much of exe-

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<sup>53</sup> Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 23.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> For this, see below.

<sup>58</sup> Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 36.

genesis, but Fromm and the team used this to dismiss Jewish traits as products of the church and thus as secondary Jewish-Christian material. For example, the team could use the Gospel of Matthew only with caution, due to the Jewish-Christian influence. However, Fromm purports not to have produced a mere picture of the “historical Jesus,” but a “faith picture” of the Jesus as the forming power behind the faith, “in its most inner opposition to everything of Jewish nature.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, instead of merely working historically to peel off any layer deemed un-historical, the team behind *Die Botschaft Gottes* used the opposition to Judaism as a guiding principle: “Thus we had the opportunity to—based on a scrupulous methodological analysis—weed passages, in which it is understood that Jewish-Christian thought has intruded.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, the “anti-Jewish-Christian” analysis becomes a main method of the project. Grundmann also explained that their method meant freeing the original gospel from something like a Jewish-Christian layer thus avoiding that misconceptions due to lack of understanding would emerge. He also proudly stressed that the work behind *Die Botschaft Gottes* builds on one hundred years of German exegetical research tradition and regarded the result as meeting thorough scholarly standards.<sup>61</sup>

The Gospel of John is basically included as a whole in the *Volkstestament*, but in Acts and the Apostolic letters, Jewish-Christian elements were weeded out, for example, such details in the Pauline epistles that would support a Jewish agenda. Examples of such negative influence in the Pauline letters are where Paul refers to Old Testament promises, about the true Israel, and Abrahamic descent. Thus, also in the section “Jesus the Lord,” the same principle is practiced as noted above.

To sum up, while purporting to draw from the current scholarship with an approach like that of the History-of-religions school and Form Criticism, the guiding principle of the analysis was not merely historical, but the purpose was to rid the Bible of anything Israelite-Jewish and of the Old Testament. Thus, the removal of the Jewish-Christian trumps the historical work which the team considered fundamental.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>61</sup> Grundmann, “Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament,” 18–19.

## 1.4 Weeding out the Supernatural

Fromm argued that miracle stories are incomprehensible to many Germans, as they think that what happens in nature follows certain laws of nature.<sup>62</sup> The church of the disciples expanded their experience of the greatness of Jesus into miracle stories, Fromm contended.<sup>63</sup> The healing stories, however, are retained in *Die Botschaft Gottes* but are interpreted as such healings that are dependent on the soul of the suffering person. The stories of Jesus' birth and childhood lack historical foundation, Fromm mentions especially the texts about Jesus as Son of David and son of a virgin, and the team had also weeded such references out,<sup>64</sup> as they also had taken away the connection to the childhood story of John the Baptist.

## 2 Some Observations on *Die Botschaft Gottes* and its overall Message

Before I focus on the Gospel of John, I will make a few general remarks about the form of *Die Botschaft Gottes*.

### 2.1 A Different Kind of Gospel Harmony

The text of *Die Botschaft Gottes* is a gospel harmony plus the other parts of the New Testament, which the members of the committee wanted to be included.<sup>65</sup> The committee did not feel bound to present the whole text.<sup>66</sup> Grundmann argued from what he regarded as the state of German (liberal) research, and as a result, the harmony was not only a harmony in the long tradition from Tatian's Diatessaron but a harmony customized to the theological and ideological agenda of Grundmann and the committee.

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<sup>62</sup> Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 41.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>65</sup> The first gospel harmony was that of Tatian (120–173 C.E.), a Syrian theologian who compiled parts of the four gospels into one narrative, the Diatessaron (Greek: “through four”).

<sup>66</sup> The members of the closest group were Professor Dr. Walter Grundmann, Oberpfarrer Erich Fromm, Pfarrer later Oberpfarrer Wilhelm Büchner, Pfarrer Dr. Heinz Hunger, and Pfarrer Heinrich Weinmann, cf. Jerke, “Wie wurde das Neue Testament,” 230n9.

The committee omitted such sections which were regarded as legendary,<sup>67</sup> as for example, about the raising of the widow's son in Nain, Peter's miraculous draught of fishes, Peter's walking on water, and other stories. Secondly, it was argued that they omitted stories, the core of which were so unclear that they do not make any sense, such as the Transfiguration, the healing of the Gadarenes, and parts of the story of the feeding of the 4,000,<sup>68</sup> and a range of stories which the committee regarded as having been imported traditional material, such as the rich man and Lazarus, as well as many of the parables, since they were deemed rabbinic, or put into the mouth of Jesus by the Palestinian *Urgemeinde*. According to the committee, Matthew especially contained much secondary material, due to his acting like a scribe. The fact that they omitted parables and were suspicious against the scribe Matthew was part of their antisemitic agenda, and also the Palestinian *Urgemeinde* was considered Jewish-Christian. Moreover, since Jesus, according to the committee, was quite sparing in talking about apocalyptic things, they regarded the rich apocalyptic material in Mark 13 par. as created by the church, and finally omitted some pericopes which convey the same thought.<sup>69</sup> The guiding principle for weeding out of texts, which were not included in *Die Botschaft Gottes*, was not merely scholarly but also served the hermeneutical and political purposes behind the project.

## 2.2 The Great Omission: Taking away the Hebrew Bible

As already noted, for Grundmann the "Jewish" elements in the Old and New Testaments were disturbing to the modern German.<sup>70</sup> For Fromm, any connection between the Old Testament and Jesus must be secondary: the purported "salvation history," connecting the Old Testament all the way to Jesus is "a disastrous consequence of Jewish religious arrogance."<sup>71</sup> Because of the view that the Old Testament is Jewish, it was omitted from being part of the National Socialist Bible, and as a result of the systematic removal of anything deemed Jewish-Christian, also anything reminiscent of the Old Testament was weeded out.

This omission is an important part of the strategy behind *Die Botschaft Gottes* in that the message of God should reach everyone "without the detour

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<sup>67</sup> Grundmann, "Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament," 13.

<sup>68</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 36.

[Umweg] over the Israelite history, without the Old Testament being necessary for salvation [*heilshotwendiges Altes Testament*].<sup>72</sup>

During National Socialism, the University of Jena was called the “Brown university.”<sup>73</sup> The Theological Faculty, where Grundmann was professor of New Testament and Völkische Theology, and to which the *Institut zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* was connected, was the first to decide to take away the Hebrew requirement from pastoral training programs. The students also petitioned to be delivered from studying such an unholy language.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the omission of the Old Testament was part of a greater tendency in National Socialist Germany.

## 2.3 The National Socialist “Politicolect” and the New Testament

As noted, the whole project of *Die Botschaft Gottes* aimed at merging National Socialism and the New Testament in order to make the New Testament relevant for National Socialist man. One feature which stands out is how the chapter headings in *Die Botschaft Gottes* play on “Mein Kampf” and other parts of National Socialist garb, which often is dramatic and oriented toward struggle and destiny.<sup>75</sup> Most obvious are the headings *Sein Kampf*<sup>76</sup> (His Struggle, 63), *Sein*

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72 Grundmann, “Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament,” 22.

73 For Jena during National Socialism, see S. Heschel, “The Theological Faculty of the University of Jena during the Third Reich,” accessed August 5, 2018, [www.oslo2000.uio.no/AIO/AIO16/group%208/Heschel.pdf](http://www.oslo2000.uio.no/AIO/AIO16/group%208/Heschel.pdf); U. Hoßfeld et al., eds., *“Im Dienst an Volk und Vaterland”: Die Jenaer Universität in der NS-Zeit* (Köln: Böhlau, 2005); U. Hoßfeld et al., eds., *“Kämpferische Wissenschaft”: Studien zur Universität Jena im Nationalsozialismus* (Köln: Böhlau, 2003); U. Hoßfeld, J. John, and R. Stutz, “Zum Profilwandel der Jenaer Universität in der NS-Zeit,” in *“Kämpferische Wissenschaft”: Studien zur Universität Jena im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. U. Hoßfeld et al. (Köln: Böhlau, 2003), 23–121.

74 See B. Levinson, “The ‘de-Jewing’ of the Old Testament under National Socialism: Gerhard von Rad’s Struggle against the Ideological Transformation of the Discipline,” in *The Betrayal of the Humanities: The University during the Third Reich*, ed. R. Ericksen and B. M. Levinson (forthcoming).

75 As noted in Jerke, “Wie wurde das Neue Testament,” 205. *Die Botschaft Gottes* and the texts from *Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* would be well worth studied in the spirit of Victor Klemperer’s famous linguistic study of *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, the language of the “Third Reich,” which analyses the specific National Socialist language, see for example, V. Klemperer, *An Annotated Edition of Victor Klemperer’s LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen. With English Notes and Commentary by Roderick H. Watt* (Lewiston:

*Sieg* (His Victory, 94 – *Sieg*, victory, being a keyword in National Socialist sociolect, e.g., *Sieg Heil*), *Sein Aufbruch* (His Breakup, 7), *Seine Botschaft* (His Message, 21). Other examples are *Die Entscheidung in Galiläa* (The Decision in Galilee, 112—the word *Entscheidung* often being used in National Socialist language during the war), *Der Kampf in Judäa* (The Struggle in Judaea, 118). Also subheadings surmise a reference to the political struggle that National Socialism and Germany were feeling: *Jesu Entscheidung* (The Decision of Jesus, 7), *Hart und entschlossen* (Hard and Resolute, 51), *Alle Ehre liegt im Dienst* (All Honour is in the Service, 58—*honour, Ehre*, being a key notion in National Socialist sociolect). *Die Botschaft Gottes* was conceived in the context of war, and many words indeed fit soldiers on their way into the battle for Germany. The struggle perspective is enhanced in the gospel harmony: *Die entscheidende Kampfansage* (The decisive challenge to fight/battle, 68), referring to the confrontation with the Pharisees in Matthew 23 but that could easily be transmitted to the Jews in general with whom the people behind *Die Botschaft Gottes* identified the Pharisees.

This part warrants further study and analysis, and it is true that these are mere suggestions that indicate a kind of sociolect, or “politicolect,” but a person familiar with National Socialist texts often recognizes certain words and motives like these, at this time in German history not least referring to struggle and war. This metalanguage undoubtedly helped the reader of *Die Botschaft Gottes* to situate the text into the current situation in Germany, or in the battlefield, where soldiers brought these field testaments.<sup>77</sup>

## 2.4 The Gospel of John in *Die Botschaft Gottes*

Remarkably enough, the Gospel of John seems to have a special role in *Die Botschaft Gottes* and in National Socialist exegesis. Fromm had an interesting idea about the Gospel of John, motivating the choice not to harmonize the Synoptics and John into a complete gospel harmony. For him, not only was this because the Fourth Gospel is different but “in this [the Fourth Gospel, A.G.] all the differ-

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Edwin Mellen, 1997); and V. Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI, lingua tertii imperii: A Philologist's Notebook*, trans. M. Brady (London: Continuum, 2006).

<sup>76</sup> Institut zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben, ed. *Die Botschaft Gottes* (Weimar: Verlag Deutsche Christen, 1940), 63.

<sup>77</sup> *Information from Das Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* (Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben, N/A), 1.

ent stories are subordinated to a leading idea, which wants to present the work and death of Jesus out of the *Greek-Aryan mentality*.”<sup>78</sup>

#### 2.4.1 Grundmann on the Fourth Gospel in *Die Botschaft Gottes*

Walter Grundmann discusses the Fourth Gospel separately and argues for its similarity to Mark and to other gospel traditions behind Luke. In support of the Gospel of John, Grundmann adds that later research (he mentions Lohmeyer and Ebeling) has shown its similarity to the Gospel of Mark, which would perhaps strengthen its value as a historical source.<sup>79</sup> Grundmann argues that the Fourth Gospel had been reworked and that considerable changes had been made, especially building on Bultmann’s then-new commentary, which Grundmann mentions with enthusiasm.<sup>80</sup> In structural terms, Grundmann thought that the whole section 15:1–17:26 is secondary, like chapter 21 but then also focused on different other changes.

The original author has de-apocalypticized the Fourth Gospel, Grundmann argues.<sup>81</sup> He thinks that before the redaction of the gospel, the *parousia* of Jesus was understood in a mystical sense, a sense which makes the Paraclete unnecessary.<sup>82</sup> Grundmann’s idea was that this gospel has an eschatology where Jesus is coming in a mystical sense, whereas the editor who added the apocalyptic material was an apocalypticist, wishing to connect the Fourth Gospel to the Apocalypse (to clarify this, the sayings that the committee regarded as secondary, they omitted from the very text and put them in a separate appendix<sup>83</sup>). Since apocalypticism is considered Jewish, this is a way of denying any Jewish-apocalyptic dimension of the gospel.

There are, according to Grundmann, more obvious de-Judaizing traces in the Fourth Gospel. That the gospel uses Israel and Israelite instead of Jew (e. g., in the story of Nathanael) shows that “Jew” is *eingedeutscht*<sup>84</sup> [germanized<sup>85</sup>] into “Israelite”! The same “Germanizing” strategy is used by the translators in the replacing “the Lamb of God” with “servant,” since the Aramaic word for lamb also

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78 Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 21.

79 Grundmann, “Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament,” 19.

80 *Ibid.*, 19–20.

81 *Ibid.*, 19.

82 *Ibid.*, 20.

83 *Die Botschaft Gottes*, 161–64.

84 Grundmann, “Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament,” 21.

85 *Idem.*



may mean servant. And since the Servant in Isaiah 53 is the Servant of God and the Servant in Isa 42:1 is a synonym to the “Chosen one of God,” the translators chose the translation: *Siehe der Erkorene Gottes, der die Schuld der Welt tilgt* [See the Chosen of God, who takes away the Guilt of the World].<sup>86</sup> By doing so, the translators avoid the Old Testament–Jewish sacrificial connotations.

However, the most surprising change or rather substitution is the concept of *logos* (Greek: word). Having dismissed the Gnostic and the Jewish-Hellenistic interpretations, the latter which would connect Wisdom to the Torah, Grundmann reports that the committee had decided to translate “*logos*” in favor of a German idea:

We have thus decided to put in the fundamental word (*Grundwort*) of the German world-view, which since the medieval days is will (*Wille*), which is clear by Luther, J. Böhme, Fichte, Schiller and—even though differently understood—Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. For us the eternal will of God has appeared in Jesus Christ: for us, salvation is the unity with the will of the Father just as sin is a conflict with the holy will of God.

However, Fromm comes to another conclusion, perhaps due to further discussions in the committee (his text is published one year after Grundmann’s). In the text of *Die Botschaft Gottes*, *logos* has been translated by *ewige Geist* [eternal spirit]. Fromm explains that this eternal Spirit has its messengers and witnesses in the great heralds and heroes, and is incarnated in the human appearance of Jesus Christ. Fromm had almost a pantheistic view of this eternal Spirit, being a creative power that gives meaning to all existence. Furthermore, Fromm argued that the use of Spirit here has a connection not to the Holy Spirit but to the great thought of our German poets and thinkers.<sup>87</sup>

Although the position Grundmann presented was slightly moderated, the final text was thus moved quite a bit from the original text talking about *logos*. *Geist* in German thought is a very broad concept and can mean many different things, for example that of Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. This is perhaps the most radical change of a central Johannine concept with the purpose to Germanize the gospel.

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<sup>86</sup> Grundmann, “Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament,” 21, and *Die Botschaft Gottes*, 102. It should also be noted that *Die Botschaft Gottes* translates the Greek word for sin, ἀμαρτία, as “guilt.”

<sup>87</sup> See below for how the Paraclete is dealt with in *Die Botschaft Gottes*. The terms “high Christology” and “low Christology” can be used to describe two basic approaches to the divinity of Jesus. Low Christology is then when Jesus’ divinity is denied or lessened, high Christology when it is emphasized.

### 2.4.2 Reading the National Socialist Gospel of John

Due to the special translation of *logos*, the gospel begins with the re-modeling of the message:

*Die Botschaft Gottes' version:*

From the *Ur*-beginning was the eternal Spirit and the eternal Spirit was in God and the eternal Spirit was divine. It existed from the *Ur*-beginning in God [...] and the eternal Spirit became a human being (*Mensch*).

*Original text in English translation:*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God [...] and the Word became flesh.

*Die Botschaft Gottes* boldly begins with a theologically radical step, turning the *logos* of the Fourth Gospel into the “eternal Spirit,” something which seemingly is an innovation in Christian dogmatic theology.

### 2.4.3 Omissions and Replacements

A reader well acquainted with the Fourth Gospel soon recognizes that the text is changed, but it is more difficult to exactly describe how. Sections and verses are omitted, removed or replaced, and the wording is sometimes new. Fortunately, *Die Botschaft Gottes* provides the reader with an index of which parts of the original texts are changed and where they are situated in the new version. A general observation is the degree of freedom the team has taken in this omission, replacement, and removal of the original text. Jesus’ statement in John 2:19: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” is simply moved to the synoptic section (*Die Botschaft Gottes* page 81, line 11–12), and sayings, which indicate high Christology, are removed, for example, John 1:15 and 2:21,<sup>88</sup> as are sayings about the Spirit (1:32; 7:37–39), and multiple texts about the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit). This is also true for the resurrection story. John 20:2–13 is considered secondary and placed after the section *Jesus der Gottessohn*, which is the Gospel of John in the *Die Botschaft Gottes* version; John 21:14 is omitted. The rationale behind some omissions are difficult to understand, such as the

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<sup>88</sup> Such changes are legio but are not highlighted in this study.

frequent omissions of the mentions of Judas who betrayed Jesus. The same is true for Jesus' commandment of love: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12; cf. v. 17)—perhaps it was disturbing to the view of Jesus held by the committee that Jesus, as described in a low-Christological fashion, would give a commandment. The same may be true for promises to answer prayers (John 15:16c); that Jesus would promise to answer to prayers implies that he regards himself as divine in some way. Seemingly arbitrary replacements are also common.<sup>89</sup>

Jesus' Jewishness is further diminished, when John 5:1 is deleted in *Die Botschaft Gottes*: "After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem," since it does not serve the purpose of the committee neither to talk about the feast nor that this was the reason that Jesus went.

The prophecy-fulfillment quotations from the Old Testament are often removed (e.g., 19:23–24; 35–27), since they support a continuity between the Hebrew Bible/Jews and Jesus, and they also support the supernatural dimension connected with Jesus. Connections with the Old Testament and Judaism are considered by the committee as Jewish-Christian and thus secondary.

#### 2.4.4 John 4: Deleting the Jewish Jesus and Salvation from the Jews

In addition to the overall de-Judaizing of the Johannine text by the committee, some significant changes in the original are made, the most important ones in John 4. These changes are made to further the political agenda of *Die Botschaft Gottes*, and in this respect the story of the Samaritan woman holds a special place since it removes two main obstacles in the Fourth Gospel: a Jewish Jesus and the statement that salvation comes from the Jews.

The first instance is when the woman according to the Greek text asks: "How can you, being a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" Here *Die Botschaft Gottes* changes the text to the following: "How can you, coming from Judaea ask for a drink from me?"<sup>90</sup> The next sentence in Greek is deleted altogether: "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Thus, *Die Botschaft Gottes* replaces the ethnic description "Jew" with simply stating from where Jesus came, and the next sentence that would support his Jewishness is deleted. As noted, this was key to the Institute and the main message of Grundmann's magnum

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<sup>89</sup> One example is when the disputed incident in the pericope with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:2–11) is simply removed to the synoptic section; the following verse is also replaced but inside the Fourth Gospel!

<sup>90</sup> *Die Botschaft Gottes*, 109, line 22, emphasis is mine.

opus *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum*.<sup>91</sup> To the committee behind *Die Botschaft Gottes*, Jesus was a Galilean and thus most probably not Jewish.

The next omission, John 4:22, is one of utmost consequence for the whole understanding of the Fourth Gospel and for the idea that the Fourth Gospel was an Aryan gospel. The Greek text says: “You are worshipping what you do not know; we are worshipping what we do know, for the salvation come from the Jews.” This verse is simply removed from the Gospel and is not even included in the section where the committee includes later redactions (*Die Botschaft Gottes* pages 161–64). John 4:22 not only indicates that Jesus is Jewish but also, even more importantly, holds a general theological statement on the Jews, which was absolutely contrary to the agenda of the Institute. Salvation is a key concept in Christian faith and to make salvation dependent on the Jews was unthinkable to an institute and a movement which had the eradication of everything Jewish as its main purpose.

However, *Die Botschaft Gottes* was not alone in this conclusion. One of the main exegetes of the day, Rudolf Bultmann, drew the same conclusion and simply omitted the statement in verse 22 in his famous commentary on John’s Gospel.<sup>92</sup> Grundmann mentioned it as an asset for the work with *Die Botschaft Gottes*: “and especially the commentary on the Fourth Gospel by Rudolf Bultmann to be published has created some clarity,” and he adds in a footnote: “In Meyer’s *Kommentarwerk*, Göttingen 1938 ff.—quite a remarkable work, behind which there is a whole life’s work.”<sup>93</sup> Thus the committee behind *Die Botschaft Gottes* could base their decisions on actual, and in Germany, highly respected scholarship. However, Bultmann also did not have a strong case. When he omitted this text that gives the Jews the role of God’s chosen people, he did this merely with the argumentation of why he considers it a gloss: “Jesus could not have said this.”<sup>94</sup> His position is understandable, even though it does not give any moral credit; in German exegesis of the late 1930s, few state-

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91 See Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum*; and Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism*, 565–72. For an overview concerning the problem of Jesus as an Aryan, see M. Leutzsch, “Karrieren des arischen Jesus.”

92 R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941), ad loc.

93 Grundmann, “Unsere Arbeit am Neuen Testament,” 20n25. The commentary had a long publication history, wherefore Grundmann’s description may be correct. It was a fruit of twenty years of work, from the contract in 1918 to its publication in seven consecutive parts from August 1937 to March 1941, see K. Hamman, *Rudolf Bultmann: Eine Biographie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 295–96.

94 Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 139n6. See my discussion in Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism*, 391–95.

ments could have been more provoking than that salvation comes from the Jews. *Die Botschaft Gottes* is at the peak of this development, but even a prominent scholar such as Bultmann chose to omit the disturbing statement.<sup>95</sup>

There is one more de-Judaizing change of wording in this pericope, in 4:25: “The woman said to him: ‘I know that the Promised one comes,’” whereas the Greek text has *Messias*.<sup>96</sup> By replacing Messiah with the Promised one in *Die Botschaft Gottes*, the committee removed another Jewish reference.

#### 2.4.5 John 8: “Children of God and Children of the Devil”

The pericope John 8:30–45 was of great interest to the committee and to National Socialist Germany since it was often referred to as telling that the Jews were the children of the devil.<sup>97</sup> This was no mere theological question, but the notion of Jews being children of the devil was prominent in public propaganda.

The first step the committee took was to remove John 8:30 from the text: “As he was saying these things, many believed in him,” indicating that in fact, many Jews came to faith (the aorist tense of “came to faith” indicates a punctual change) in Jesus.<sup>98</sup> Faith is central in the thought world of the Fourth Gospel, with those of faith being people of light,<sup>99</sup> and unbelievers being in darkness. Those who believe are the people of light and those who do not are the people who are walking in darkness. Thus, to the people behind *Die Botschaft Gottes*, Jews could not be people who believe, and they did not consider that according to the Fourth Gospel the people listening to Jesus were divided: some believed, some did not. Thus, *Die Botschaft Gottes* plays down the fact the Jews were divided in their view of Jesus.

Secondly, the whole section in *Die Botschaft Gottes* is moved from its original context where the people, listening to Jesus, are divided in their attitude toward him, some positive, some negative, into a context characterized by more conflict,

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<sup>95</sup> Bultmann is known to have been opposed to National Socialism. How is it possible that he nevertheless seems to give in to these anti-Jewish strategies? The question is too complex to discuss it in this context, but see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism*, 324–25 for the complexity: one can be anti-Jewish and anti-National Socialist at the same time.

<sup>96</sup> This is one of only two instances in the whole New Testament that has the word *Messias*, the other is John 1:41.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 238–44.

<sup>98</sup> Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 332ff. makes another arbitrary swap, moving 8:30 to after 12:32.

<sup>99</sup> The theme of light and darkness is prominent in the Fourth Gospel: John 1:4–5, 7–9; 3:19–21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9–10; 12:35–36, 46.

a dispute where the Pharisees rebuke the officers of the temple for not having brought him in (John 7:45–52). This raises the tension of the whole context, compared to the context of John 8:30–45, where Jesus is speaking about who he is and many believe.

Interesting details are that *Die Botschaft Gottes* does not use the concept “Abraham’s seed,” but “Abraham’s blood (8:33, 37),” giving a racial twist to the message. Moreover, in the text of *Die Botschaft Gottes*, the saying that they have the devil as their father is typographically highlighted, and it is evident that the passage was key to the committee.

That the pericope is difficult to interpret is evident from the perennial discussions in commentaries, articles, and books, and in fact, nothing in the original text indicates that Jews qua Jews are considered the children of the devil. But by choosing a context of conflict, by removing the (in part positive) statement in 8:30 and by highlighting “Den Teufel habt ihr zum Vater” (You have the devil as father), the pericope in *Die Botschaft Gottes* becomes a support for the idea that the devil indeed is the father of the Jews qua Jews. However, the text does not support the conclusion that the Jews as a collective or the Jews in the racist interpretation of National Socialist Germany have the devil as their father. Rather, it points to the matter of faith: “Since I speak the truth, you do not give faith to me” (*Die Botschaft Gottes*, page 126, line 21–22). Thus, without support from the text in the Fourth Gospel, *Die Botschaft Gottes* makes the Jews as a collective the children of the devil.

This interpretation is confirmed by Fromm in his basic presentation of *Die Botschaft Gottes*: “the Jews are representing that world, which fundamentally closes itself to and is opposed to the truth. They are the children of the devil.”<sup>100</sup> This also may build on or at least may be supported by Bultmann’s commentary. Under the heading *Die Teufelskindschaft der Juden* [*The Jews as children of the devil*], Bultmann discusses parts of John 8, the statement being a counterpart to having God as a father, which Bultmann also discusses in his commentary.<sup>101</sup> German theology, not only the overtly National Socialist one, did much to legitimate a marginalization and even oppression of Jews and Judaism.<sup>102</sup>

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**100** Fromm, *Das Volkstestament der Deutschen*, 45.

**101** See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism*, 393–95.

**102** This could be argued at length, but I refer to my study of German exegesis from 1750–1950, a study which shows that up until the Holocaust, there was a dark ecumenism in the otherwise divided German Protestantism, where both liberal and conservative theologians were directly or indirectly supporting anti-Jewish or antisemitic thoughts, see *idem*.

### 3 Concluding Reflections: Theological Legitimation of Antisemitism

According to Peter Berger, religious legitimation “legitimizes social institutions by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by locating them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference.”<sup>103</sup> This is precisely what the *Institut zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* and the team behind *Die Botschaft Gottes* did. The total revolution that Hitler and the National Socialists attempted, not least in creating a National Socialist worldview meant creating such a new “cosmic frame of reference.” In doing so, the religious legitimation was very important, in this case, getting Christian theology to legitimate the changes in worldview. This does not mean that Hitler and his ideologues considered Christianity to be of any value, but to win the theological professors, church leaders, and pastors was important for them. But not only to win them over for National Socialist ideas but also to have them customize German Christianity to make it fit the new order. This became especially important in wartime, when the German population would risk the lives of their children in battle.

The work of the Institute became an important legitimating force, both considering the broad support from academics and churches, and the impact of its work and publications. *Die Botschaft Gottes* could be considered the flagship of attempts to present a new National Socialist theology to the people. Firstly, the team wished to fulfill its *scholarly responsibility*. Using modern exegesis with its critical approach made it easier to form a new theology than it had been in more conservative circles, which defended the Hebrew Bible, Jesus’ Jewishness, and the integrity of the Bible. However, the developments in exegesis made it possible to develop a *völkische* variant of exegesis which thought it could identify and challenge the authenticity of different layers in the gospel texts, such as a purported secondary Jewish-Christian layer, to remove or replace parts of the biblical texts that were regarded as secondary, to weed out anything which was connected to the Old Testament or considered as Jewish, and to get rid of anything else that could put the “German person” off as supernatural elements, a high Christology, resurrection, and other things that could not be contained in everyday experience. Secondly, the team wanted to fulfill *Christian responsibility*, to make the sources of faith available to the people, a task which took a freeing

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103 P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 33.

of the Bible of Jewish elements and other things that could disturb the presentation of the material to the “German person.” Thirdly, the team wanted to fulfill a *German responsibility*, both in view of the existential struggle in which the war-time people were facing, and the need to connect the people to the sources of faith that had strengthened the fathers of Germany.

The result of the program was *Die Botschaft Gottes*, and we have especially studied how the Fourth Gospel was treated. Firstly, that Jesus is presented as non-Jewish is important: not a Jew but from Judaea, and not described with the title Messiah. This was necessary to be able to maintain the idea that the Fourth Gospel was the most Aryan gospel; such a gospel could not claim that salvation comes from the Jews! The highly controversial statement that “salvation comes from the Jews” is deleted, whereas that the Jews are the children of the devil is emphasized in the prolegomena and is highlighted in the *Die Botschaft Gottes*’ version of John 8:30–45. All of this is done to remove what was considered a threat to the National Socialist agenda, to fit to the new Germany, and to underline the “unbridgeable opposition between the message of Jesus and Judaism.”

The tools of religious legitimation were indeed used to a maximum. The new translation is presented as *Die Botschaft Gottes*, The Message of God, invoking the authority of being indeed a message of God. It is a Bible, and few laypeople could discern the changes made in relation to the Luther Bible, the text that at the time to most Germans was accepted as the Bible. Moreover, church and scholarship stood behind *Die Botschaft Gottes*, and this in a culture where the *Pfarrer* [pastor] and the theological professor were people of great credibility and influence. What is more, distribution of *Die Botschaft Gottes* was great, reaching hundreds of thousands of people with a Bible which now was free from anything Jewish and from anything else that was considered disturbing to the “German person” in the Third Reich.

The spirit of the Institute and *Die Botschaft Gottes* was the same as in the *Godesberger Erklärung* from March 29, 1939, a few months before the inauguration of the Institute. Here, a range of prominent German and Austrian Protestant church officials declared their views on National Socialism and antisemitism. Their statements include that they “serve the man that has led our people from slavery and misery to freedom and glorious dominion,” that is Adolf Hitler. They also stated that “the Christian faith is the unbridgeable opposite to Judaism.”<sup>104</sup>

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104 *Godesberger Erklärung* (Germany: 1939).



*Die Botschaft Gottes* thus may have been the tool with the greatest possible authority to the “German person,” in order to help to legitimate a Christianity without Judaism. In order to accomplish this, the team systematically violated the integrity of the original text, its form and message, conforming it to the demands of the political correctness of the day. But that “salvation comes from the Jews” is still there, and that the Christian Savior Jesus is a Jewish is still to some a disturbing truth, and just as it bothered the German theological elite then, it perhaps still is a stumbling block to a Christianity that has long since lost its Jewish roots. Had church and theology in Germany been aware that Christianity is inseparable from these roots, the Holocaust likely could not have happened in a culture where a Bible-based Christianity had a major influence. That is why the implementation of Hitler’s dreams required a de-Judaized Bible like *Die Botschaft Gottes*.

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Russell E. Fuller

# Christian Antisemitism in Biblical Studies: Two Examples

## I Introduction

I would like to start with the recent past. Fifty-three years ago, in October 1965, the Vatican released a document which marked the beginning of great changes between Judaism and the Catholic Church and later with Christianity as a whole. This document was, of course, *Nostra Aetate*. *Nostra Aetate* was of fundamental importance because it clearly rejected the most egregious and harmful Christian beliefs about Judaism. First, *Nostra Aetate* rejected the ancient Christian charge of deicide by stating, “his passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today.”<sup>1</sup>

Second, *Nostra Aetate* stated that “the Church [...] decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.”<sup>2</sup> These two statements were fundamentally important in beginning to formally change Christian attitudes and behaviors. But *Nostra Aetate*, although a marvelous starting point in changing Christian beliefs and attitudes, was nevertheless still permeated with the Christian belief that Jesus and the Church were the true goal of God’s long-standing plan of salvation and that Christianity therefore superseded Judaism. *Nostra Aetate* was still informed by this supersessionist understanding as this paragraph from the beginning of section 4 shows.

[...] the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God’s saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ—Abraham’s sons according to faith—are included in the same Patriarch’s call, and likewise that *the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people’s exodus from the land of bondage* (emphasis by author of this article). The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy concluded the ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild

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1 Pope Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration On The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions*, October 28, 1965, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html), 3.

2 Idem.

shoots, the Gentiles. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.<sup>3</sup>

In this paragraph Supersessionism is assumed. And this is an idea which has contributed to negative attitudes and actions against Jews and Judaism for two thousand years.

That Supersessionism is still at the heart of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is also shown by this passage from the statement “The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable,” which was released by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews in October 2015, on the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.<sup>4</sup> In section five of that document we find,

The theory that there may be two different paths to salvation, the Jewish path without Christ and the path with the Christ, whom Christians believe is Jesus of Nazareth, would in fact endanger the foundations of Christian faith. Confessing the universal and therefore also the exclusive mediation of salvation through Jesus Christ belongs to the core of Christian faith.<sup>5</sup>

Later in that same section of the document we find this statement,

That the Jews are participants in God’s salvation is theologically unquestionable, but how that can be possible without professing Christ explicitly, is and remains an unfathomable divine mystery.<sup>6</sup>

Half a century after the release of *Nostra Aetate*, this document, for all of the positive contributions it makes and documents, also points to a central issue. From the perspective of the Catholic Church, salvation comes only through Christ. There is only one path to salvation. And this then assumes that Christianity replaces Judaism. Nevertheless, the salvation of the Jews is strongly maintained. This is what the document labels as a divine mystery. Supersessionism continues as one aspect of the relationship between Jews and Christians.

This paper is primarily an examination and analysis of continuing antisemitic tendencies in the academic study of the Hebrew Bible/*Tanakh*. I will examine

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3 Pope Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

4 Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, “‘The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable’ (Rom 11:29): A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic–Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ‘Nostra Aetate’ (No. 4),” issued December 10, 2015, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20151210\\_ebraismo-nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20151210_ebraismo-nostra-aetate_en.html).

5 Ibid., 13.

6 Idem.

two examples of Supersessionism in the academic study of the Bible. In the first example, I will trace a supersessionistic/typological reading of the Hebrew Bible from its origin beginning in the New Testament looking at examples of the persistence of this type of reading down through the centuries and into the present. The second example will also look at a supersessionistic interpretation of a passage from the Hebrew Bible which once again first appears in the New Testament.

Let me begin with some definitions. Supersessionism is the belief which originated in earliest Christianity that Christianity has replaced or superseded Judaism. In one of its most blatant forms in the New Testament, it appears in the Epistle to the Hebrews which cites the well-known passage on the New Covenant from the book of the prophet Jeremiah (Heb 8:1–13; 10:15–17; Jer 31:31–4). This fundamental Christian belief is most easily illustrated in the terms used to designate the two parts of the Christian Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament, expressions which go back to Melito of Sardis (d. ca. 180 C.E.).<sup>7</sup>

The examples discussed in this paper involve the study of a passage from the text of the Hebrew Bible and quotations of the Hebrew Bible found in the New Testament. These and other quotations of and allusions to the Hebrew Bible in Jewish Writings of the last two centuries B.C.E. and the first two centuries C.E. have been the focus of detailed research in recent years.<sup>8</sup>

## II Example One—Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15

In Christianity, from the time of the New Testament, typology has been both a theory describing the relationship between the two parts of the Christian Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, and a reading strategy for reading the Old Testament in relation to the events in the life of Jesus Christ and the early church. Typology understands events, persons, etc. in the Old Testament as types which prefigure and anticipate their fulfillment or antitypes in the person of Jesus, in the events of his life and especially in his death, and in the history of the church. The antitype in the New Testament is understood to supersede and/or replace the type which it fulfills. The full meaning of any

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. A. Lange, “1.1.2.2 The History of the Christian Old Testament Canon,” in *Textual History of the Bible*, ed. A. Lange and E. Tov (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1 A, 49. See also E. L. Gallagher and J. D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 78–83. Eusebius, 387–88/386–89.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, A. Lange and M. Weigold, *Biblical Quotations and Allusions in Second Temple Jewish Literature* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).



event in the Old Testament is found in its antitype in the New Testament. A frequent example of this typological way of reading the text of the Old Testament is found in the figure of Jonah. In the story of Jonah in the Old Testament, the prophet is swallowed by a whale and remains in its belly for three days. After this experience, he emerges again into the land of the living (the dry land). Jonah is understood typologically as a type of Christ. Like Jonah, Christ is in the tomb for three days and afterwards emerges into the land of the living through resurrection. Jonah's emergence from the whale points forward to and is fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus. This is a creative and clever way to preserve the Jewish scriptures which the early church inherited and to fill them with meaning for Christians. A Christian typological reading of the Old Testament understands the central purpose and meaning of that text to point forward to the culmination of God's plan for humanity which is Jesus and his followers, Christianity. Typological readings are therefore inherently supersessionistic. Christian Supersessionism assumes that that which is superseded, the old, is obsolete and will therefore disappear, replaced by the new. Judaism will disappear and be replaced by Christianity, the true goal of God's plan from the beginning. This is problematic since, as the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, "In speaking of a 'new covenant,' he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear" (Heb 8:13). This idea, that Judaism should disappear, gains force and deadly influence in Christian Europe from the time of Constantine through to the twentieth century. It leads directly to the systematic denigration of Jews and Judaism and becomes central to Christian antisemitism. This is why typological readings of the Old Testament which begin in the New Testament and continue in some Christian circles today are so important to recognize and to combat. This paper is a small contribution to that effort.

My first example begins with the quotation of Hos 11:1 in the Gospel according to Matthew.

**Hos 11:1:** When Israel was a child, I loved him, *and out of Egypt I called my son.* (NRSV, emphasis by the author of this article)

In the original setting in the book of Hosea in the mid to late eighth century B.C.E., the writer is referring to the tradition of the Exodus from Egypt at the time of Moses. This passage is used by the writer of Matthew's Gospel as follows.

**Matt 2:13–5:** Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."<sup>14</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt,<sup>15</sup> and remained there until the

death of Herod. *This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”*<sup>9</sup> (NRSV, emphasis by the author of this article)

The citation of Hos 11:1 is found in Matt 2:15 at the end of the section of Matthew’s story of the young Jesus when his parents flee to Egypt to escape the threat of Herod to the child Jesus. The citation of Hosea continues the writer’s use of quotations from the Hebrew Bible to present the story of Jesus and his family as fulfillment of the divine plan as preserved in the Jewish Scriptures. The citation of Hos 11:1 is one of the so-called formula or fulfillment citations which are found most frequently in Matthew’s Gospel with several concentrated in Matthew 1–2.<sup>10</sup>

There has been much discussion over the meaning of the writer’s use of the so-called “Fulfillment Quotations” which are introduced with some variation of the formula seen in Matt 2:15:

ἵνα πληρωθῆ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος (*hina plērōthē to rhēthen hypo kyriou dia prophētou legontos*)

“This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet [...]”

The Greek form, πληρωθῆ (*plērōthē*), is usually translated in English with a form of the verb “to fulfill.” The discussion has centered on the meaning for the gospel writer of this form as well as its contemporary meaning. It seems most likely that for the gospel writer the understanding was typological, that is, the passage from Hos 11:1 received a fuller meaning beyond the original meaning in its original context. In the case of the quotation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15, the passage in Hosea referred to the Exodus event in Israel’s past. It was part of the writer of Hosea’s attempt to persuade their audience to give their loyalty to Yahweh/God. To this original meaning, the writer of Matthew’s Gospel adds a linkage to God calling Jesus and his family out of Egypt. The passage from Hosea then acquires a sort of additional layer of meaning in the Gospel context. It amounts

<sup>9</sup> ἔξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου / *ex Aigyptou ekalesa ton huion mou*.

<sup>10</sup> Matt 1:23; 2:6, 2:15, 2:18, 2:23, 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 13:35, 21:4, 27:9; The fulfillment quotations in Matthew’s Gospel seem to be intended by the gospel writer (or the redactor) to portray events in the life of Jesus as both predicted by and events known from the Hebrew Bible and to fulfill the meaning of those events, in effect, adding a layer of meaning to the original event; they are thus typological readings and are inherently, supersessionistic. See B. D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 4th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 105–6. See also K. Stendahl, *The School of Saint Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968).

to a sort of echo of the original Exodus event which was referred to in Hosea. The result is that this is a typological reading of the passage. This way of reading the Hebrew Bible is inherently supersessionist, and this typological and supersessionist reading sets a pattern for later Christian writers/scholars when studying, not only Matthew's Gospel, but also when studying the book of the prophet Hosea by itself. I will illustrate this effect with a series of examples for Christian readings of Hos 11:1 beginning with two early Christian scholars of the Bible, Origen, active in the third century C.E. and Jerome, active between the fourth and fifth centuries C.E.

In the following section of the paper, all of the scholars discussed are engaged in the study and explication of the text of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. This close study of the text often concerns itself with the wording of the text and attempts to ensure the correct wording of the text. This sort of close study of the text of the Bible is called textual criticism. The reasons for the necessity for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and the complexity of this field of study are nicely summarized in the following quote.

The biblical text has been transmitted in many ancient and medieval sources that are known to us from modern editions in different languages: We possess fragments of leather and papyrus scrolls that are at least two thousand years old in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, as well as manuscripts in Hebrew and other languages from the Middle Ages. These sources shed light on and witness to the biblical text, hence their name: "textual witnesses." All these textual witnesses differ from one another to a greater or lesser extent. Since no textual source contains what could be called *the* biblical text, a serious involvement in biblical studies necessitates the study of all sources, which necessarily involves study of the differences between them. The comparison and analysis of these textual differences thus holds a central place within textual criticism.<sup>11</sup>

Already in the time of early Christianity, it was recognized that the ancient Greek translation of the Bible, known as the Septuagint and referred to usually with the Roman numerals LXX, differed in many ways and in many passages from the traditional Hebrew text of the Bible. Since it was this Greek version, the LXX, which was used by the early church, but early Judaism used the Hebrew text or other early Greek translations, it was recognized that in order for Christians to be able to dispute with Jewish scholars about the meaning of biblical passages a knowledge of the Bible in both Greek and Hebrew was necessary. However, since most Christians were unfamiliar with Hebrew, this required the creation of a special edition of the Bible showing all of the Greek translations as well as the Hebrew text side by side so that they could be easily compared and differ-

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11 E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 3.

ences seen at a glance. This special, multivolume and multicolumn edition of the Bible was produced by the early Christian scholar Origen and was known as the *Hexapla*.

Differences between the Hebrew and Greek forms of the Biblical text were especially important where the Old Testament was quoted in the New Testament. If there was a difference in the Greek version of an Old Testament passage which was quoted in the New Testament from the Hebrew version and the quotation involved a typological reading or a point of Christian belief or doctrine, then it became crucial that the difference could be explained.

## Origen and Jerome

Origen (ca. 184–ca. 254 C.E.) was perhaps the greatest biblical scholar and textual critic of the early church. He is known especially for his project to produce a massive, multi-column, multi-volume edition of the Greek and Origen was motivated to compose it by his awareness of the discrepancies between the various Greek versions, especially the Septuagint, and the Hebrew text of the Bible.

This quotation from his Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew sums up his awareness of discrepancies and disagreements among the various copies of the Greek text. It also shows his method for correcting the Greek text on the basis of the Hebrew text.

But it is clear that the differences between the copies have become numerous, either from the shoddy work of copyists, or from the wicked recklessness of some either in neglecting to correct what is written, or even in adding or removing things based on their own opinions when they do correct. We discovered that the disagreements between copies of the old covenant are cleared up, if God grants it, when we use the other versions as a criterion. By using the other versions to make decisions regarding passages which were ambiguous in the Septuagint because the copies disagreed, we preserved accord among them. We marked some passages with an obelus since they do not appear in the Hebrew text. We were not so audacious as to remove them altogether. We added other passages and marked them with asterisks that it might be clear that they do not appear in the Septuagint but were added by us from the other translations in agreement with the Hebrew text. The person who wishes may agree with them, and the person they offend may do what he wishes concerning their acceptance or rejection.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Origen, *The Commentary of Origen on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, ed. R. E. Heine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1:204. See also, M. F. Wiles, “Origen as Biblical Scholar,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 457.

Although Origen wrote a commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, unfortunately the section of the commentary on chapter 2 has not survived so we cannot know for sure how he would have understood the text. We do however, have a comment from one of his homilies on the book of Numbers in which he refers to the quotation of Hos 11:1, “out of Egypt I have called my son.” His statement there is terse, but the meaning seems clear. He states simply, “After that, it is still about Christ.” That is, he seems to have understood the passage from Hosea typologically just as the gospel writer did. As we will see, the first use of the quotation of this passage from Hosea in Matthew’s Gospel will have a long-lasting impact on the understanding of other Christian scholars even if they are working centuries later and are engaged not in the study of the Gospel of Matthew but rather in the study of the book of Hosea from a critical and historical perspective.

What we also have from Origen which pertains to this quotation of Hos 11:1 and its understanding in early Christianity, is a portion of the *Hexapla* which was preserved as a marginal quotation in an early Greek manuscript of the Minor Prophets. This is of interest because it documents early Christian interest in the text of Hosea which is quoted in Matthew’s gospel and which is not the usual Greek version of the Septuagint.

The citations in Matt 2 are adapted to the context of the gospel story. This is especially the case for the citation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15 where the writer departs from the LXX version and is very close to the Jewish Greek revisions, known to us primarily through Origen’s *Hexapla*, and thus to the proto-Masoretic Text which was extant in the first century C.E. Unfortunately, there are no direct ancient witnesses to this text in Hebrew, only the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.<sup>13</sup> Field transcribed these three textual versions of Hos 11:1 in his edition of Hexaplaric materials.<sup>14</sup>

This indicates, that at least as early as the time of Origen (ca. third century C.E.), there was a deep interest in the reading of Hos 11:1 as well as an awareness of the variation between the LXX and the other Greek versions including the text

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**13** Utschneider may be correct that the writer of Matthew’s Gospel has utilized a “so-called proto-Theodotonic form of the text of the Twelve which is partially preserved in 8HevXIIgr,” cf. H. Utschneider, “Flourishing Bones—The Minor Prophets in the New Testament,” in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 273–92. I would not rule out the possibility that the gospel writer made their own adaptation of the passage from Hos 11:1 to fit the new context in the story in Matthew 2. On this view, see R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 93–94.

**14** F. Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt sive veterum interpretum graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), 957.

of Matt 2:15.<sup>15</sup> This interest was, of course, probably generated by the use of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15.

The next early Christian scholar whose work we can examine is Jerome (ca. 347–420 C.E.). Jerome, like Origen before him, was a renowned scholar of the text of the Bible and famous for his Latin translation of the Bible which became known as the Vulgate, the Latin version which became normative for western, Latin-speaking Christians. The authority of the Vulgate was confirmed during the council of Trent in the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Jerome was also aware of the differences between the text of the citation in Matt 2:15 and the LXX reading which he discusses in his commentary on Hosea.

Where we said, Out of Egypt I called my son [singular], the Septuagint translated, “Out of Egypt I called my sons [plural],” which is not in the Hebrew, and it is clear that Matthew took his testimony from this passage according to the Hebraic truth.<sup>17</sup>

Jerome then goes on in this section of his commentary on Hosea to explain how typology is to be understood:

It remains that we should say that what precedes typologically in other respects applies in truth and in its fulfillment to Christ, which we knew the apostle did in [describing] the two mountains, Sinai and Zion, and Sarah and Hagar. And it is not true that, because the apostle Paul referred these things to the two covenants, Sinai or Zion is not a mountain or that there was no Sarah or Hagar. *Therefore, what is thus written, “Israel was a very little one, and I loved him,” and out of Egypt I called my son, is said indeed about the people of Israel, who are called out of Egypt, who are loved, who were called in the time after the error of their idolatry something like an “infant” and a “very little one”; but in its completion [this] is referred to Christ.* For Isaac, too, was a type of Christ because he himself carried the wood of his future death, and Jacob because he had Leah, whose eyes were sore, and Rachel, a beautiful wife. In Leah, who was older, we discern the blindness of the synagogue, in Rachel the beauty of the church, and although they were types of our Lord and Savior in part, not everything that they are said to have done should be believed to have been done as a type of him. For a type indicates a part, but if the whole comes beforehand in the type, then it is no longer a type but should be called the truth of history.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The variations in the verb are also interesting: Α εκαλεσα [*ekalesa*]—“I called,” Σ κεκληται [*keklētai*]—“he was called,” Θ εκαλεσα [*ekalesa*]; note that LXX reads μετεκαλεσα [*metekalesa*]—“I recalled.” I was unable to find the accented text except for LXX.

<sup>16</sup> For a convenient English translation of the decree concerning the Canonical Scriptures (4<sup>th</sup> session, April 1546), see J. Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent* (London: Burns and Oates, 1848), 17–21.

<sup>17</sup> Th. P. Scheck, ed., *Commentaries on the Twelve Prophets* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 2:234.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 234–35, emphasis by the author of this article.

Jerome not only understood the citation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15 typologically, he also went on to explain how typology works. He acknowledges that the passage from Hosea does indeed have a real and meaningful referent, the people of Israel at the time they were called out of Egypt, but he then goes on to clarify that, “[...] in its completion [this] is referred to Christ.”<sup>19</sup> His final comment in this section explains that there is an apparently chronological sequence between type and anti-type or completion, “For a type indicates a part, but if the whole comes beforehand in the type, then it is no longer a type but should be called the truth of history.”<sup>20</sup>

Jerome’s discussion of typological interpretation may be extended by reference to the discussion/exploration of early Christian figural or phenomenal prophecy by Erich Auerbach in his essay, “Figura,”<sup>21</sup> in his discussion of the Latin church father Tertullian (ca. 155–240 C.E.). Figural or phenomenal prophecy is a term introduced by Auerbach but is equivalent to or overlaps in meaning with typology. Auerbach’s essay begins with a discussion of the Latin term *figura* and the development of its meaning and usage. He includes a significant discussion of figural interpretation or figural prophecy in early Christianity. Origen and Jerome are among the earliest Christian scholars to use this approach. Because of the use of the term *figura* in Latin writers like Tertullian, Auerbach prefers the expression figural or phenomenal prophecy to refer to what I have been calling typological interpretation.<sup>22</sup> According to Auerbach, commenting on Tertullian,

[...] *figura* is something real and historical which announces something else that is also real and historical. The relation between the two events is revealed by an accord or similarity.<sup>23</sup>

This understanding of figural/phenomenal prophecy or typological reading in Tertullian is exactly what we see in Jerome’s understanding of the quotation of Hos 11:1 in Matthew’s Gospel which we saw above. This is not an allegorical reading of the prophetic text. Both of the elements involved, the *figura*, and the fulfillment, are real and historical in their own right. I think it is fair to describe this way of reading the text as a sort of layering on of meaning onto the *figura* which is supplied by the fulfillment. They are linked to each other, as Auerbach observed, by similarity. And for Jerome, the way of understanding

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19 Ibid., 235.

20 Ibid.

21 E. Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11–76, 229–37.

22 See his brief remarks about *typos* on page 18.

23 Auerbach, “Figura,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, 29.

the text is dictated by the context and the way of interpreting it found in Matthew's Gospel. The gospel writer's use and understanding of the passage from Hos 11:1 and its relation/similarity to the life story of Jesus is what determines the final layer of meaning for that passage. It is the writer of Matthew's Gospel who first creates the trajectory of interpretation from which later Christian scholars are unable to depart. The approach in the gospel imposes constraints on the possible understandings of Hos 11:1 in the context of Matthew's Gospel.

The crucial point here is that figural/phenomenal prophecy or typological readings of this sort assume not just a similarity between *figura* and fulfillment, but also, as we saw in Jerome's comments, a sequence. The fulfillment naturally follows and completes or fulfills the *figura*. Thus, typology is inherently supersessionistic.

With Jerome we clearly have a typological reading of the passage from the Hebrew Bible. But the typological reading in Jerome is perhaps reasonably understood as based on or inspired by the typological reading found first in the Gospel of Matthew. We do see in Origen and to a lesser extent in Jerome, a clear interest in the text of the quotation of Hos 11:1 which is found in Matthew's Greek text. This is because Matthew's Greek text differed from the Septuagint version, as noted also by Jerome, and this was the version of the Bible that remained normative in Christianity in the West until after the time of Jerome, and continued as normative in the East. Origen therefore in his *Hexapla* noted the various Greek version of Hos 11:1 as well as giving the Hebrew text current in his time which was identical to the consonants of the later Masoretic Text.<sup>24</sup>

Leaving early Christianity, our next illustrative example comes from one of the most careful textual scholars of the time of the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin.

## John Calvin (1509–1564)

Calvin provides an interesting example of early humanist Christian interpretation in the sixteenth century. Calvin was strongly influenced by humanist ideals and so was one of the more careful scholars of the reformation period when it came to the attention to Scripture in the original languages with a focus on the so-called literal sense. His commentary on Hosea, collected with his com-

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<sup>24</sup> For an example of the continuing focus on these hermeneutical issues in evangelical Christianity which focus on Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15, see the discussion in G. Smith, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 131–36.



mentaries on the Minor Prophets, originated in lecture notes taken by students which were later compiled and published.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Hos 11:1, Calvin read the text first in its literal/historical sense as naturally referring to the Israelites at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. In this he seems to have proceeded in much the same way as Jerome before him. The literal sense of the passage he establishes very clearly. However, he also cannot ignore the citation of this passage in the Gospel according to Matthew, which he freely acknowledges raises a problem:

But here arises a difficult question; for Matthew, accommodates this passage to the person of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, although he first interprets the literal/historical meaning of the text he then cannot ignore the fact that it is understood differently in the Gospel according to Matthew. Eventually he argues that this is not a mere comparison, apparently as argued by some, but rather is typological.

God, when he formerly redeemed his people from Egypt, only showed by a certain prelude the redemption which he deferred till the coming of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

Thus although he begins with the literal/historical sense, he reverts to a typological reading because of the context of the Hosea citation in Matthew's Gospel. He is unable to avoid a typological reading because of the New Testament precedent. Calvin differs from his contemporaries in that he pays attention to the literal/historical dimension of the text first. Many of the other protestant interpreters simply ignore the literal sense and focus only on a typological reading.

## Wilhelm Rudolph (d. 1987)

The next scholar to examine in this first example moves us into the twentieth century. I will briefly discuss the work of the German biblical scholar Wilhelm Rudolph. Rudolph wrote a large number of commentaries on various books of the Hebrew Bible. It is his commentary on the book of Hosea which is of interest to us here.

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<sup>25</sup> J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans. J. Owen (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1846).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

Rudolph's commentary on Hosea was published in 1966, one year after the release of *Nostra Aetate* which moved the Catholic Church officially away from a supersessionist stance, although as we have seen, the view of *Nostra Aetate* is mixed at best.<sup>28</sup> Although Rudolph's commentary is on the book of Hosea, when he examines Hos 11:1 he has a short discussion of the quotation of this passage in Matthew's Gospel.

In Mt 2:15, v. 1b appears as a prophetic prediction on the return of the child Jesus from Egypt after the flight from Herod. That this is not textually obvious: it is not a prophecy, but a historical retrospect, and the Son is the people of Israel. But the Jewish writers of the Scriptures never let themselves be disturbed by the context in such proofs: the canon was everywhere the word of God, and therefore every passage so to speak "directly to God," so that one did not have to worry about the context of the text. Old Christianity were pushed aside by the desire to find an Old Testament reference for as many details as possible from the life of Jesus, all these exegetical reservations were put aside, if they existed at all. But it can also be that the evangelist wants to understand the troublesome spot from which perhaps the entire narrative of flight and return is spun out only typologically (1 Cor 10:11): *Jesus of Nazareth, according to God's plan the endpoint and goal of the history of Israel, should in his life also repeat its beginning.*<sup>29</sup>

Rudolph clearly continues the typological/supersessionistic trajectory of Christian reading /understanding of this passage from Hosea. It is remarkable that from the time of Jerome onward, every scholar begins with the historical/literary sense of the text followed by a typological reading. With Jerome, Calvin, and Rudolph, they are all commenting on the meaning of the text of Hosea, but all of them also discuss the quotation of this passage in the Gospel of Matthew. In each case, the typological reading is triggered by the initial Christian typological reading in the

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**28** Wilhelm Rudolph, *Hosea* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966).

**29** *Ibid.*, 214: "In Mt 2:15 erscheint v. 1b als prophetische Vorausweisung auf die Rückkehr des Jesuskindes aus Ägypten nach der Flucht vor Herodes. Dass das nicht textgemäß ist, liegt auf der Hand: es geht hier ja nicht um eine Weissagung, sondern um einen geschichtlichen Rückblick, und der Sohn ist das Volk Israel. Aber schon die jüdischen Schriftgelehrten haben sich bei solchen Schriftbeweisen nie durch den Zusammenhang stören lassen: der Kanon war ja überall Gottes Wort und deshalb jede Stelle sozusagen 'unmittelbar zu Gott', so dass man sich um den Textzusammenhang nicht zu kümmern brauchte, und in der alten Christenheit wurden durch den Wunsch, für möglichst viele Einzelheiten aus dem Leben Jesu einen alttestamentlichen Hinweis zu finden, alle solche exegetischen Bedenken beiseite geschoben, falls sie überhaupt bestanden. Es kann aber auch sein, dass der Evangelist die Hoseastelle, aus der vielleicht die ganze Erzählung von Flucht und Rückkehr herausgesponnen ist<sup>9</sup>, nur typologisch (1 Cor 10:11) verstanden wissen will: *Jesus von Nazareth, nach Gottes Ratschluss Endpunkt und Ziel der Geschichte Israels, soll in seinem Leben auch deren Anfang wiederholen.*" (emphasis by the author of this article)

Gospel. The reading in Matthew's Gospel seems to provide an irresistible attraction to a typological reading, even on the part of a modern, historical-critical scholar like Rudolph.

## Andrew A. Macintosh

The last scholar we will briefly examine in this first example is Andrew A. Macintosh who is a Fellow at St. John's College Cambridge. Macintosh, like Rudolph, published a highly regarded commentary on the book of Hosea.<sup>30</sup> Also like Rudolph in the section where he discusses Hosea chapter 11, he has a short section on the quotation of Hos 11:1 in the Gospel of Matthew, he quotes with apparent approval Rudolph's typological reading of Hos 11:1.

[...] for Jerome, [a type] reveals a part of the truth; if the totality were to have been realized in the type, then that would no longer be type but historical fact. See further Rudolph's similar conclusions, "Jesus, according to God's plan, the goal and consummation of Israel's history should in his life recapitulate its beginning."<sup>31</sup>

Macintosh apparently agrees with Rudolph and quotes him with approval. The final statement is clearly supersessionistic through a typological reading. Further in commenting on the divergent readings of the Hebrew and Greek texts of Hos 11:1 "my son," that is,

לְבָנֵי MT || LXX τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ 'his children' (Jerome translates "his sons"), cf. Targ. בנין and OL<sup>s</sup>.

He notes that Rudolph supposes that the readings of the LXX and Targum arise from the desire to avoid the possibility of Christological interpretation. This final comment is also apparently quoted with approval.

## Summary

In this first example, I have traced the trajectory of a supersessionistic/typological reading of the quotation of Hos 11:1 in the Gospel of Matthew on the part of

<sup>30</sup> A. A. Macintosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

Christian writers and scholars. This trajectory stretches from the first century C.E. in the Gospel of Matthew to the twentieth century in the modern critical commentaries of Rudolph and Macintosh. Given its precarious early history in the Roman Empire, when Christianity struggled to justify its legitimacy vis-à-vis Judaism, it is perhaps understandable to find a typological reading of the Hebrew Bible in early Christianity. Likewise, the continuation of supersessionistic or typological readings is also understandable in the church fathers like Origen and Jerome and in the early protestant reformers. Rudolph's commentary on Hosea, however was published in 1966, a year after the release of the Second Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate* which moved the Catholic church officially away from a supersessionistic stance vis-à-vis Judaism. Although Rudolph was a protestant scholar, the ideas in this seminal document would have become known very quickly and were also very influential. Perhaps Rudolph's commentary was already in press when that document was released and so it could have no impact on his commentary. The commentary of Macintosh, however, was published in 1997 so the apparent approval of the supersessionistic comments of Rudolph can only be a deliberate choice on the part of the author. Although it is unclear whether or not Rudolph and Macintosh intended to be antisemitic in their commentaries, nevertheless, they both reproduce and authorize older theological antisemitic ideas which is dangerous in and of itself. The preceding section of the paper has only examined one example of the continuation of typological readings of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible in Christian scholarship. The examples could be multiplied many times over. Part of the problem is the continuing influence of this sort of reading and the Supersessionism it embodies. Students at all levels are exposed to these ideas in the context of authoritative scholarship from leading scholars. This cannot help but have an impact. Through the influence of the works of these scholars the dangerous older antisemitic theological ideas continue to spread and contribute to contemporary antisemitism.

### III Example Two

My second example of supersessionist (Christian) academic readings of the Hebrew Bible is somewhat more complex than the first example. I will briefly review a recent publication of a highly respected senior scholar whose work in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible and the textual history of the Bible is widely known, respected, and widely used. I preface my discussion of this scholar's work with the disclaimer that I intend no disrespect to my senior colleague in the Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, rather I use his work as an example of

how, even with the best intentions, it is easy for Christian scholars to reflect supersessionistic and other antisemitic ideas and assumptions.

## Adrian Schenker<sup>32</sup>

Adrian Schenker is emeritus professor in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Fribourg. He is well known in academic circles for his scholarship on the Hebrew Bible and especially in the study of the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible and the history of the text in both Hebrew and Greek. He is active, at the highest levels, in the production of the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* almost certainly the most widely used critical edition of the Hebrew Bible.

In 2006, Schenker published a little book with a very long title: *Das Neue am neuen Bund und das Alte am alten: Jer 31 in der hebräischen und griechischen Bibel, von der Textgeschichte zu Theologie, Synagoge und Kirche*, which might be translated as: *The New in the New Covenant and the Old in the Old (Covenant): Jer 31 in the Hebrew and Greek Bible: From Textual History to Theology, Synagogue, and Church*.<sup>33</sup> Schenker's goal in this little book was to utilize the current scholarly understanding of the history and development of the text of the Jewish Bible in both Hebrew and Greek during the course of the second temple period, roughly fifth century B.C.E. to first century C.E., and especially the relationships between the Greek and Hebrew versions, the Septuagint or Old Greek and the emerging proto-Masoretic text.

The major focus in the book is Jer 31:31–4 (= LXX 38:31–4):

31 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (NRSV)

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**32** See also the article by H.-J. Stipp, “Die Perikope vom Neuen Bund (Jer 31,31–34) im masoretischen und alexandrinischen Jeremiabuch. Zu Adrian Schenkers These von der ‘Theologie der drei Bundesschlüsse’,” *JNSL* 35 (2009): 1–25. Stipp is also critical of Schenker's understanding of the passage in Jeremiah 31.

**33** A. Schenker, *Das Neue am neuen Bund und das Alte am alten: Jer 31 in der hebräischen und griechischen Bibel, von der Textgeschichte zu Theologie, Synagoge und Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

This passage is quoted verbatim in the New Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews 8:8–12 (cf. Heb 10:16–7) in the context of an argument of the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus over that of the ongoing Jewish priesthood and of the superiority of the new covenant over the old.

**The Letter to the Hebrews 8:8–13:** 8 God finds fault with them when he says: “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; 9 not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I had no concern for them, says the Lord. 10 This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 11 And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” 13 In speaking of “a new covenant,” he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear. (NRSV)

This passage in Hebrews is a classical locus for Christian Supersessionism. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, writing in Greek, naturally quotes the text of Jer 31:31–4 in the traditional Greek version of the text, the Septuagint. The Septuagint version of the text of Jer 31 differs from the Hebrew version of the text in a few ways. This however is not really the center of Schenker’s argument although he does address these differences. Rather, what is new in Schenker’s presentation is that he attempts to integrate into the discussion our contemporary understanding of the general development of the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Jewish Bible during this time period. To summarize briefly, because of the discovery of biblical manuscripts in both Hebrew and Greek from the second temple period, we now know that when the Hebrew and Greek versions differ from each other, it is quite likely that the Greek version reflects an older form of the text than the Hebrew version. This is especially the case with the manuscript evidence for the book of Jeremiah. As is well known, the book of Jeremiah is dramatically different between the Hebrew and Greek versions of the book. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts of Jeremiah, scholars have shown that some of the oldest Hebrew manuscripts of Jeremiah agree with the Greek text of Jeremiah in both order of material and in content.<sup>34</sup> This means, in the current majority understanding, that generally the Greek form of the book of Jeremiah is an older form of the book, a first edition, and that the Hebrew Masoretic

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<sup>34</sup> For further reading, see R. D. Weis, “Textual History of Jeremiah,” in *Textual History of the Bible*, ed. A. Lange and E. Tov (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1B: 495–513.

form of Jeremiah preserves a longer, revised second edition of the book. That is, the Greek Septuagint of Jeremiah is a translation of a lost Hebrew *Vorlage* which is older than the Hebrew Masoretic Text of Jeremiah. It is this general scholarly understanding of the history of the text of Jeremiah which Schenker attempts to integrate into a discussion of the theological dimensions and implications of the Christian use of the passage from Jer 31, not just historically, but also for present Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Schenker's starting point is the fact that there are two forms of the text of Jer 31:31–4, the Promise of a New Covenant, the Greek LXX form of the text and the Hebrew MT form of the text. These two forms of the text differ from each other in small but significant ways.

#### Masoretic Text

**Jer 31:31** The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, *though I was their husband*, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put *my law (torati)* within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (NRSV)

#### Greek Septuagint

**Jer 38:31** Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not abide in my covenant, *and I was unconcerned for them*, says the Lord, <sup>33</sup> because this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. Giving I will give *my laws (nomous mou)* in their mind, and I will write them on their hearts, and I will become a god to them, and they shall become a people to me. <sup>34</sup> And they shall not teach, each his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” because they shall all know me, from their small even to their great, because I will be gracious regarding their injustices, and remember their sins no more. (NETS)

The left-hand column is the translation taken from the NRSV and is based on the Hebrew Masoretic text. The right-hand column is taken from the New English Translation of the Septuagint and is thus based on the Greek text of Jeremiah. The small differences between the two versions which are important in Schenker's book are highlighted above. Jeremiah 31:32 contains the significant differences. In the Hebrew form of this verse we have the phrase, “though I was their husband,” (ואנכי בעלתי בם, *va-'anoki ba'alti bam*), which implies a continuity to the relationship even though the Israelites “broke the covenant.” The Greek

form of this verse has the phrase, “and I was unconcerned for them,” which implies, according to some, that Yahweh no longer had any concern for the Israelites, the covenant was over. In addition, another small difference has been seen as significant. In the Hebrew version of Jer 31:33, we find the phrase, “my law,” (תורתִי, *torati*), that is “my Torah.” But the Greek version has, “my laws” in the plural (νομους μου, *nomous mou*), which is understood to imply different laws than the singular Torah of Moses.<sup>35</sup>

As I mentioned above, it is the Greek form of this passage which is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews and which together with other passages in the New Testament forms the basis of early Christian Supersessionism. Where Schenker’s work attempts to change the discussion of this passage is when he argues for the antiquity and originality of the Greek form of the Jeremiah passage as part of the first edition of the book of Jeremiah and also significantly for the topic of this paper, when he argues for the lateness of the Hebrew form of the passage, dating it after the time of the Greek translation and thus presenting it as an intentional response to the form preserved in the Greek version. I will not go into the technical details of the argument in this discussion, but it is important to point out that Schenker’s understanding of the dating of the early Hebrew Jeremiah manuscripts from the Judean Desert, which underlies his argument, is not accepted by the leading experts in the field. In the view of most scholars, the Hebrew proto-Masoretic form of the text and the Hebrew form of the text on which the Greek translation was based co-existed for several centuries in ancient Israel. The proto-Masoretic version of Jeremiah was not created as late as the Greek translation in the second century B.C.E. as is assumed by Schenker.<sup>36</sup>

Schenker understands the LXX form of Jer 31(38) to reflect an underlying Hebrew *Vorlage*, which he thinks may go back to Jeremiah himself, although he does not emphasize this idea and it is not essential for his arguments.

The LXX text form reflects the understanding that the Older Covenant has been terminated. Schenker stresses that this termination of the Older Covenant

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<sup>35</sup> There are of course many scholarly disputes about the meaning of these expressions in both Hebrew and Greek. See for example the article of Stipp referred to above.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 288n12; Schenker, *Das Neue am neuen Bund*, 95; A. Lange, “Jeremiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Elsewhere: The Textual History of Jeremiah in the Light of its Quotations,” paper presented at The Fifteenth International Orion Symposium in conjunction with the University of Vienna Institute for Jewish Studies and the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies “The Texts of the Bible from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Biblical Manuscripts of the Vienna Papyrus Collection,” Jerusalem, Israel, April 10–13, 2016; A. Aejmelaeus, “Jeremiah at the Turning-Point of History: The Function of Jer. XXV 1–14 in the Book of Jeremiah,” *Vetus Testamentum* 52 (2002): 459–82.



does not mean that the loyalty of God to Israel, “from God’s side” has been terminated. Indeed, he states that although Israel and Judah presently stand in no covenant with God they nevertheless have the “certain entitlement” to the coming covenant. There can be no talk of the Church having replaced Israel in the New Covenant.<sup>37</sup>

He seems to blend perspectives in the “*Gesamtergebnis*” of his little book. That is, sometimes he writes as a textual critic explaining the variant text forms of LXX and MT Jer 31, and sometimes he writes of the theological implications from a Christian perspective. And sometimes he blends these two perspectives.

Schenker is trying to integrate our understanding of the textual history of the book of Jeremiah, the two editions of Jeremiah reflected in the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the text, with the citations of the text of Jeremiah in the New Testament, especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Schenker is trying to show that there was an early and therefore legitimate understanding in the early (or original?) text of Jeremiah 31, that is, the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX, that the covenant had been terminated. He argues that this form of the text of Jeremiah 31, which lies behind the LXX, was inherited as scripture by the early church and that the understanding of the termination of the covenant is therefore legitimate.

In his view, the MT form of Jeremiah 31 is revising what he, Schenker, understands to be the older form of the text which we know through the LXX and that the meaning of the MT form of Jeremiah 31 is that the covenant was *not* terminated and that the Torah continues in validity. And the same Torah will continue in the promised new covenant.

Although Schenker carefully argues that Israel and Judah continue in relationship to God as God’s people, he also argues that from a Christian perspective, the older covenant has been terminated and that they, Israel and Judah, no longer stand in covenant with God, until the promised new covenant is given. Even though Schenker has carefully argued that Israel remains the people of God, nevertheless, by also maintaining that from a Christian perspective the old covenant has been terminated, he is indeed maintaining the heart of the older supersessionist theology and with it comes all of the dangers, which this pernicious theology has spread down through the centuries, starting at least as early as Augustine and continuing into the time of the National Socialists

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37 A. Schenker, *Das Neue am neuen Bund*, 94.

and beyond.<sup>38</sup> Let me be clear, I would not describe Schenker as an “antisemite.” Far from it. It is certainly not his *intention* to perpetuate the theology of Supersessionism and intention is important here.

Schenker is to be commended for taking what we know of the textual history of the Greek and Hebrew forms of the Bible and attempting to integrate them in a revised understanding of some of the theological implications. However, he does not seem to understand that in trying to revise the supersessionist understanding of the new covenant he has unfortunately given it, at least potentially, new life.

## IV Conclusions

In both of the examples I have presented in this brief paper, the issue of Christian Supersessionism has been at the center of the discussion. Supersessionism begins in earliest Christianity and persists to this day. It is fundamental to Christian identity and although official church documents like *Nostra Aetate* and similar documents and statements from other churches which move Christianity away from a supersessionistic self-understanding, Supersessionism nevertheless continues to pervade Christian academic study of the Hebrew Bible as well as liturgical and instructional materials. The 1992 Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church is permeated with statements which reflect a supersessionistic understanding of the relationship between the church and Judaism.<sup>39</sup> This occurs at the same time that some statements repudiate this pernicious ideology. It is important to raise awareness of the continuing pervasiveness of supersession in Christianity because as has long been recognized, Supersessionism is a part of the teaching of contempt which over the centuries contributed to and exacerbated antisemitic beliefs and actions. In this time when antisemitism is once again on the rise, we cannot afford to ignore this ancient contributing factor.

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<sup>38</sup> One could perhaps argue that the supersessionist theology is attested at least as early as Melito of Sardis (d. ca. 180 C.E.) since he was the first to use the term “old testament.”

<sup>39</sup> See M. C. Boys, “The Covenant in Contemporary Ecclesial Documents,” in *Two Faiths, One Covenant? Jewish and Christian Identity in the Presence of the Other*, ed. E. B. Korn and J. T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 81–110.

If I could be so bold to emend the strong statement of support from Pope Francis which was read to this conference in the opening session on Sunday evening,<sup>40</sup> I would add the following:

“[...] we (Christians) walk hand in hand with our Jewish brothers and sisters, our heads down as we remember our own responsibility for the darkness of the past [...]”

In my opinion, we must remember and fully acknowledge our responsibility for all of the beliefs and attitudes which have contributed to and continue to contribute to antisemitism. One of those contributing beliefs is Supersessionism which in my view must be rooted out of all areas of Christian belief, teaching and practice.

Let me close with these words from Paula Frederickson’s review of Robert Chazan’s book, *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism*:

The roots of Christianity may lie deep in Judaism, but the roots of anti-Semitism, alas, lie deep in Christianity.<sup>41</sup>

One of the deepest and most firmly planted of those roots is Supersessionism. In my view, Supersessionism must be rooted out from every area of Christianity so that it does not continue to exert its pernicious influence.

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**40** Pope Francis, “Greetings,” in *An End to Antisemitism! A Catalogue of Policies to Combat Antisemitism*, ed. A. Lange, A. Muzicant, D. Porat, L. H. Schiffman, and M. Weitzman (Brussels: European Jewish Congress, 2018), 11–12.

**41** P. Frederiksen, “Review of *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism: Ancient and Medieval Christian Constructions of Jewish History*, by Robert Chazan,” *Review of Biblical Literature* 2 (2018): 4.

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Israel Shrenzel

# Against the Mainstream: Muhammad Abduh's Reading of Q1:7 and its Implications for Current Muslim-Jewish Relations

## Abduh and the *Tafsir al-Manar*

Egyptian scholar Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) is of course a well-known figure in Muslim circles and beyond.<sup>1</sup> It suffices to mention that he is considered the founding father of Islamic Modernism, the school of thought that preached a deep reform of the dominant attitudes of Muslims, in order to narrow significantly the gap between Islamic values and Western thought. This led to his readiness to borrow ideas and practices from the West, like democracy, rule of law, educational reform, free thought and research, improving the status of women, and relations with believers from other faiths.

He was an al-Azhar graduate and then a senior teacher at that institute, and in his last years, he was also the Mufti of Egypt. An important pillar of his project was to prove that all these changes are authorized and even mandated by Islamic sources—the Qur'an, Hadith, and the models of behavior exemplified by the Salaf—the ancient fathers of Islam, roughly, the first three generations after the Prophet. Those sources are to go through a process of Ijtihad, a re-interpretation; thus, they will be totally competent to deal with the challenges confronting Muslims in the modern era.

The main tool used by Abduh to spread his views was the periodical *al-Manar* [*The Lighthouse*] established by his disciple Rashid Rida in 1898. After Abduh's death, *al-Manar* continued its regular publication until Rida's death, in

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1 Abduh's Ideas and impact are discussed in almost every book on modern Islam. The only biography dedicated to him is M. Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), where there is only a brief mention of his exegetical contribution. This is discussed, also briefly, in R. Wielandt, "Exegesis: Modern," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2:124–40. For another assessment of Abduh's contributions and an interesting correspondence between him and Leo Tolstoy, see my review of Sedgwick's book, I. Shrenzel, "Haadam ba laolam kdei le-hatzmiah yeda" ["Man Came to the World to Create Knowledge"], *Haaretz*, January 13, 2012. <http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/safrut/print/1.1616379> [Hebrew].

1935. Rida, as is well known, came to be a very important scholar on his own merit.

From time to time, *al-Manar* also contained Abduh's lectures on the first four Suras of the Qur'an. He presented them orally to a group of his students almost every week, and they were transformed into a written version by Rida, which in some cases added his remarks, clearly distinguishable from Abduh's words. After Abduh's death, Rida continued the *Tafsir*, namely exegesis, now well known as *Tafsir al-Manar* in 12 tomes, through Sura 12.

In line with his life-long project, described briefly above, the preface to the *Tafsir* states:

This is the only *Tafsir* that combines tradition and rational thought ... that clarifies that the Qur'an is the guide for Humanity at all times, and evaluates the situation of the Muslims in current times, including their deviation from the rightful guidance of the Qur'an.<sup>2</sup>

Abduh's ideas were not fully accepted even by those who saw him as their mentor, or wished to portray him as such. Actually, two trends can be traced among them: One that adopted a very pro-Western, even secular approach, and another, most prominent among its supporters are Rida himself, and the "Muslim Brothers," that preached a very suspicious attitude towards Western values, rejected what they perceived as the "Western cultural invasion" and prioritized the Jihad against colonialism and Zionism, over internal reforms and changes. In recent years, in the background of the tremendous ideological and political turmoil in the Arab and Muslim world, and more than one hundred years after his passing away, we witness a certain measure of revival regarding Abduh's acceptance. There is now a growing readiness to reconsider his moderate ideas, as will be demonstrated later. Because the core issue of the article is Abduh's attitude of a "Jewish" verse from the Qur'an, we shall present now the basic attitudes of the Qur'an toward the Jews.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Abduh and R. Rida, *Tafsir al-Manar*, 12 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Marifa), 1:1.

## Some Verses regarding the Jews and Short Remarks on these Verses<sup>3</sup>

When the Qur'an relates explicitly to the Jews, the reference to them is divided into three terms: Children of Israel ("Banu Israil"), the Jews ("al-Yahud"), and "the People of the Book," a term that relates to Jews and Christians alike. The first category deals with the biblical Israelites and almost always echoes the biblical story, in many cases adding materials from the vast Jewish literature of interpretations and legends that do not appear in the Bible, mostly from the Midrash.

The vast majority of the verses are utterly pejorative, and it is easy to understand why and how they were used to justify antisemitic Muslim attitudes, past and present. In the first category, the stories stress the severe sins of the Israelites, mainly their disobedience of God and their prophets, and the harsh punishments that were their share throughout their long history of suffering. Some of the punishments are about to haunt them forever, according to some verses. The tales are shaped so that a similarity is maintained between the fate of the biblical Prophets and the situation of Muhammad vis-à-vis the heathen Arabs and the Jews that rejected him. This setting puts Muhammad on equal footing with Moses and Jesus, for example, and also provides him with a divine promise that in spite of all obstacles, his way and message would finally prevail.

In the second and third categories, harsh allegations are directed against the Jews who confronted Muhammad and refused to join his new religion. These are basically verses of bitter polemic regarding the beliefs and actions of those Jews. We have scant information about the nature of the Jews in Arabia at the time, but the most-accepted assumption is that they were mainstream Rabbinical Jews who refused to admit that Muhammad could be a true prophet, because the firm Jewish tradition is that Prophecy stopped completely in the era of the Second Temple. More than that, even if Muhammad were to be a prophet for the Arabs, why should it oblige the Jews to convert and join his community? So the most frequent guilt of the Jews of that time is the intentional falsification of their own Scriptures, thus denying the mission of Muhammad that is allegedly mentioned there.

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<sup>3</sup> This section is based mostly on U. Rubin, "Jews and Judaism," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 3:21–34, and on M. Lecker, *Muhammad ve Hayehudim [Muhammad and the Jews]* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tzvi, 2014) [Hebrew]. This book is a very comprehensive, detailed, and updated analysis of the actual reality and events in the framework of Muhammad's relations with the Jews of al-Madina and its vicinity. It proves, inter alia, how important the social and economic reasons were for the animosity between the two parties. An English version will be published, hopefully, in the near future.



As a rule, the Qur'an lacks any mention of the specific context of the revelation. Nevertheless, the "Jewish" verses usually conform to the basic historical sequence created by Muslim tradition and widely accepted today by Western scholarship. So, roughly speaking, we find a few tolerant verses, dating probably to the period when Muhammad still hoped to gain the support of the Jews and/or lacked the power to act directly against them, using violent means. They are relevant also to the period when he wished to convince his own Meccan tribe that he was God's Messenger. Even then, and also in further stages, negative verses regarding the Israelites are included. The polemical verses date mainly to the years after the Hijra to al-Medina in 622, when he encountered in the city and its surroundings a tangible Jewish, Arabicized communities or tribes. Gradually, Muhammad lost hope to gain Jewish support and paved the way to the expulsion of many Jewish communities, to the looting of their land and properties and to the slaughter committed against the males of the tribe of Quraiza. The main pretext for these measures was the claim that the Jews did not live up to the obligations they took upon themselves in the treaties they had signed with the Arab tribes, who now became loyal allies of Muhammad. Hence, some verses easily fit with the actual siege and fight by the Muslims against the Jews and stress the divine encouragement to their anti-Jewish military campaigns.

In what follows there is a small selection of relevant verses.

## Anti-Jewish Verses<sup>4</sup>

The people of Moses took to them, after him, of their ornaments a Calf—a mere body that lowed. Did they not see it spoke not to them, neither guided them upon any way? Yet they took it to them, and were evildoers. (7:145–146)

So, for their breaking the compact, and disbelieving in the signs of God, and slaying the Prophets without right, and for their saying, "Our hearts are uncircumcised"—nay, but God sealed them for their unbelief, so they believe not, except a few. (4:154–155)

And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Book: "You shall do corruption in the earth twice." ...

So, when the promise of the first of these came to pass, We sent against you servants of Ours, men of great might, and they went through the habitations, and it was a promise performed.

Then We gave back to you the turn to prevail over them....

Then, when the promise of the second came to pass, We sent against you Our servants to discountenance you, and to enter the Temple, as they entered it the first time. (17:4–7)

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<sup>4</sup> All Quranic verses are from A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

People of the Book, now there has come to you Our Messenger, making clear to you many things you have been concealing of the Book, and effacing many things. (5:19)

The Jews say, “Ezra is the Son of God”; the Christians say, “The Messiah is the Son of God.”  
... God assail them! How they are perverted!

They have taken their rabbis and their monks as Lords apart from God. (9:30–31)

Thou wilt surely find the most hostile of men to the believers are the Jews and the idolaters. (5:85)

Say: “People of the Book, do you blame us for any other cause than that we believe in God, and what has, been sent down to us, and what was sent down before, and that most of you are ungodly?” ...

Whomsoever God has cursed, and with whom He is wroth, and made some of them apes and swine, and worshippers of idols—they are worse situated, and have gone further astray from the right way. (5:64–65)

And He brought down those of the People of the Book who supported them from their fortresses and cast terror in their hearts; some you slew, some you made captive. And He bequeathed upon you their lands, their habitations, and their possessions, and a land you never trod. God is powerful over everything. (33:26)

## Tolerant Verses

The number of these kinds of verses is significantly lower than the hostile verses, mentioned above. Many classical Muslim scholars and jurists in the Middle Ages used to undermine their importance and claimed that most of these verses were abrogated by the more militant ones. Nevertheless, they do form part of the Holy Scripture. As is well known, modern Muslim thinkers and commentators revive their status and validity. Those intellectuals call for adhering to these moderate verses, provided that they are suitable to the current needs of the Muslims. Here is a selection of relevant verses.

If God had willed, He would have made you one nation; but that He may try you in what has come to you. So be you forward in good works; unto God shall you return. (5:54)

No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in God, has laid hold of the most firm handle, unbreaking. (2:257)

Say: “O unbelievers, I serve not what you serve  
And you are not serving what I serve,  
Nor am I serving what you have served,  
Neither are you serving what I serve  
To you your religion. and to me my religion!” (109:1–5)

## *Surat al-Fatiha*—Main Features

As we shall deal now with Abduh's interpretation of the first chapter of the Qur'an, we present first its translation and some of its main features.

### The Opening

- 1 In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
- 2 Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being
- 3 The All-merciful, the All-compassionate
- 4 The Master of Day of Doom
- 5 Thee only we serve, to thee only alone we pray for succor
- 6 Guide us in the straight path
- 7 The path of those whom Thou art blessed, not of those against whom Thou art wrathful, nor of those who are astray

Centuries of analysis, both Islamic and non-Islamic, pointed to the unique characteristics of this Sura. The Suras are largely organized from longest to shortest, save some minor exceptions, but *al-Fatiha*, though very short, is the first one. It is actually a prayer to God, while the belief that the whole Qur'an is God's word is a basic pillar in Islamic doctrine. Hence, the obligatory Muslim explanation that it reflects God's command to Muslims how to pray to Him in the proper way. Because Muslims do not have a prayer book, like *Sidur* or *Mahzor* in Judaism, *al-Fatiha* is the main part of the Muslim daily prayer and is also recited on many other occasions in individual and community life, from cradle to grave.

Regarding its content, the first six verses are quite clear. They are a direct speech to God, praising him and asking for His help and guidance to the straight path. As already noted by many, the Sura contains some expressions that are similar to Biblical ones, has no mention of the Prophet, and can be easily integrated to the traditional Jewish *Sidur*, an idea already raised by Jews who are active in Jewish-Muslim dialogue.<sup>5</sup>

The main exegetical task is concerned with v. 7—who are the three groups that are mentioned there? The majority of Muslim exegetics, beginning from *Tafsir al-Tabari* in the tenth century, the most esteemed in Muslim tradition, going through the short and most popular *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* in the fifteenth century, adopt the following categorization: the “blessed ones” are the Muslims; those

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<sup>5</sup> For a quite detailed analysis of the first Sura, see W. Graham, “Fatiha,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2:188–92.

who suffered God's wrath are the Jews; and those who are astray are the Christians.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, every Muslim begs God to enjoy his grace that is allocated specifically to Muslims and to differentiate him sharply from the past and future of Jewish and Christian history and destiny. As noted recently by the Israeli scholar Avi Elqayam in his comprehensive essay on *al-Fatiha*, this line of explanation is popular among modern scholars as well, especially those who belong to the fundamentalist-radical circles, most prominent among them is Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), widely considered the “Spiritual Father” of all Jihadist movements, including al-Qaida and IS.<sup>7</sup>

More than that, it is obvious that if we ask the ordinary Muslim for the meaning of the verse, it is likely that he/she will cite the meaning just presented. Admittedly, this understanding of the verse is in line with the spirit and content of most, though not all, Qur'anic attitudes to the Jews, as will be presented in the appendix to this article. No doubt, this common, almost intuitive understanding contributed its share to Muslim antisemitism, old and new.

On the other hand, Elqayam also proves that in classical Islam, the non-exclusive and non-self-praising explanation of the verse was clearly in the minority but not absent altogether. Especially in Sufi circles, well exemplified in the writings of Abu-Hamed al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1260), a more universal, ecumenical approach is adopted. It is probable that these scholars and their likes had significant influence on Abduh's attitude.<sup>8</sup>

## Abduh's Commentary of 1:7

Abduh begins by presenting the popular explanation of the verse and then asserts that this Sura was the first of God's revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. He bases this analysis on a tradition attributed to Ali, the cousin of Muhammad, and later his son-in-law. Abduh knew of course that it is not the mainstream view that usually considers Sura 96 as the first one, but this assertion is critical to the core of his argument: it was revealed in the very early stage in the development of Islam, so it is impossible that the prayer is ordered to ask God to lead him to the Muslim path. At that time, the Muslim path was doing its first and hesitant

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<sup>6</sup> J. al-Din al-Mahalli and J. al-Din al-Suyuyti, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (Cairo: Dar al-Nashr, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> A. Elqayam, “al-Fatiha-Kriot Kuraniyot” [“Al-Fatiha-Quranic Readings”], in *Hamizrah kotev at atzmo* [*The East Writes Itself*], ed. H. Pdayah (Tel Aviv: Gomeh, 2015), 209 [Hebrew].

<sup>8</sup> Elqayam, “al-Fatiha,” 183–87.

steps, and of course very far from being coherent, since it would be crystallized only later, after many revelations yet to happen.<sup>9</sup>

So it is clear, says Abduh, that the “blessed ones” are not the Muslims; indeed the verse refers to the “prophets, righteous men, and the martyrs from previous nations, that preceded Islam.” He mentions that three quarters of the Qur’an are dedicated to stories that relate to these nations, so studying carefully their beliefs and heresies would lead to the straight path. Therefore, those who suffered God’s wrath and those who went astray are to be identified with individuals from “previous nations” but not with large collective groups. Or in other words—they might be Jews and Christians but not the Jews and the Christians as unified, collective entities.

On this point, Abduh pauses his main thesis by inserting a “modernist” passage regarding an educational issue that was very dear to him—the importance of learning history. Mentioning it in his commentary of the first Sura reflects his long fight for including history in the curriculum of all levels of education and especially in al-Azhar:

[E]mbarrassment and bewilderment will be the share of those who hear that many of the clergies of a nation that this is her Book, use religious claims to block the study of history and assert falsely that there is no need to do that. They raise these claims while the Qur’an states that knowledge of the situation of the nations is among the most important issues that this religion calls for.

Then he goes back to the core of his commentary and poses the following crucial question:

How could it be that God commands us to follow the way of those who preceded us, while we have now legal commands and guidelines that they did not have, and therefore our laws should be considered more perfect and more suitable to our times than theirs?

And his answer is very clear:

[T]he Qur’an himself relates to that question by explicitly stating that the religion of God is one in all nations, and that the legal commands change from one religion to another only in detail, according to the change of times, but there is no change in the foundations, in the basic principles—belief in God and in the Prophets, in rejecting evil, and striving towards the best of virtues is similar in all religions.

And the resulting conclusion is clear:

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<sup>9</sup> For the complete text of Abduh regarding this verse, see Abduh, *al-Manar*, 1:66–68.

God ordered us to look carefully at the history of these people, the “blessed ones,” and to imitate them upon the principles of the Good. The details of their general commands are to be learnt from our law and from our prophet.

It is worth noting which Qur’anic verses Abduh presents to corroborate his arguments. The first one is a divine command to speak directly to the Jews and to the Christians:

Say, People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lords apart from God (3:56).

The second one contains the most detailed list, in one verse, of biblical figures, considered by the Qur’an as prophets and messengers:

We have revealed to Thee as We have revealed to Noah, and the Prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah and Aaron and Solomon and we gave David the Psalms, and Messengers we have already told Thee of before, and Messengers we have not told Thee of (4:162).

The choice of both verses speaks for itself: it combines a very positive attitude towards previous prophets, because they are probably according to the author the “blessed ones” mentioned in Sura 1 and a plea for a common denominator with the other monotheistic faiths, a notion considered by Abduh to be relevant also to his own times.

The measure of the innovation in Abduh’s commentary is clear when we notice that Rida added a correction some thirty pages after Abduh’s words. He claims that there are several credible Hadiths that confirm the traditional categorization.<sup>10</sup>

## More Examples of Abduh’s Attitude

A full analysis of Abduh’s “Jewish” attitudes in the *Tafsir* and in his other writings is a task yet to be fulfilled. But still, reviewing even a portion of his written corpus traces a clear similarity to his ideas presented above.

A good example is Abduh’s commentary to the following verse:

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<sup>10</sup> Abduh, *al-Manar*, 1:97–98.

You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honor and forbidding dishonor, and believing in God. (3:106)

He strives to confine the prestigious title of “best nation” to the prophet and his followers that were active with him in his presence. Actually, he stresses the nuance that those who converted to Islam in an early stage, but did not meet the Prophet in person, are not included in that group.<sup>11</sup> This explanation contradicts of course a much more comprehensive definition adopted by *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* that says that “the Nation of Muhammad,” apparently in general, merits this epithet.<sup>12</sup>

Another characteristic of Abduh’s commentary is to understand the term Islam not as the established concrete religion but to stick to its literal meaning—“submission of the soul and the practical adherence to the orders of God.” This is clear from his understanding of 3:17 that says: “The true religion with God is Islam.”<sup>13</sup>

In one of his famous essays, Abduh mentions “Friendship with those who Differ in Faith” as one of the basic principles of Islam that his co-Muslims should adopt. He mentions there the legal permission for a Muslim to marry a Jewish or Christian woman, even if she did not convert.<sup>14</sup> In his popular Fatwa, known as the Transwaal Fatwa, he allowed South African Muslims to wear a Western styled hat, as long as it does not lead to heresy and also to eat meat slaughtered by Jews or Christians, even when the traditional Basmala, usually considered obligatory, was not recited during the act of slaughtering.<sup>15</sup>

## Abduh’s Presence in the Current Religious Debate in Egypt

The one-hundredth anniversary of Abduh’s death in 2005 had gone almost entirely unnoticed, even in his homeland of Egypt. But he and his ideas came back to the public sphere, after the Arab Spring of 2011, and specifically in Egypt, after Abd-al-Fattah al-Sisi took over in 2013. One of al-Sisi’s slogans

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11 Abduh, *al-Manar*, 4:57–59.

12 *al-Jalalayn*, *Tafsir*.

13 Abduh, *al-Manar*, 3:257–59.

14 M. Abduh, *Al-Islam Din al-Ilm wa al-Madaniya* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aala Lishuun al-Islamiya, 1964), 109–11.

15 Sedgwick, *Abduh*, 97–99.

and activities after consolidating his power was “The Renewal of Religious Discourse” [“Tajdid al-Hitab al-Dini”]. In the framework of a very intensive campaign to uproot the Muslim Brothers and their ideology that is conceived very pejoratively by the regime, al-Sisi and his aides recruited Abduh’s moderate approach on a variety of issues as an alternative model. It is premature and indeed out of the scope of this paper, to evaluate the success of these relentless efforts. Seemingly the jury is still out.

Curiously enough, the very issue of Abduh’s commentary on Sura 1 surfaced in the Egyptian popular media during 2017. Some prominent journalists noted that booklets distributed regularly at funerals and mourning gatherings contained the *al-Fatiha* with the traditional interpretation of the verses discussed here. More than that, it is stipulated in the preface that al-Azhar authorized these booklets. These journalists did not hide their harsh opinions against these booklets, and they also criticized al-Azhar for its authorization and mentioned that even past scholars and deans of the Institute voiced their reservations about the traditional, exclusivist frame of mind, regarding those verses. They also urged the adoption of Abduh’s interpretation as the correct one and as the most suitable for the modern era, namely, that people will be judged according to the quality of their deeds and not according to their religious affiliation. One of the writers asked, for example, whether it is not more appropriate to understand the verse as promising that God’s wrath would be directed against Muslims who burn churches, or indulge in drinking and gambling. “Why do we dismiss ideas of light and openness in favor of extreme and dark ones?” asked another article. The following saying sums up the spirit of the debate:

All religions should lead to the purpose for which they were revealed: to foster peace, compassion, co-existence and acceptance of the other.<sup>16</sup>

Another example of Abduh’s re-emergence in Egyptian discourse is his recurrent mention, combined usually with his photo, in the pages of the monthly *al-Hilal*, one the most important Egyptian intellectual organizations, for the last 125 years. In several articles in 2017, he is portrayed as a symbol of a scholar and clergy that should be imitated in our times, in stark contradiction with the Muslim Brothers and other “extremists” that are severely denounced, including the accusation that Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Brothers, was of Jewish ori-

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<sup>16</sup> For a detailed discussion of this debate, see “Bikoret Bemitzrayim” [“Criticism in Egypt”], MEMRI, 2017, <http://www.memeri.org.il/cgi-webaxy/item?4481> [Hebrew].



gins, God Forbid. In one issue, he is on the cover, together with a few others, all of them entitled the “Knights of Thought,” or “Knights of Consciousness.”<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

As we have seen before, the majority of the Qur’anic verses dealing with Jews are pejorative ones. And likewise more Muslim Scholars, even since the eighth century, endorse their relevant and valid interpretation as hostile to the Jews. The same goes for the reading of the seventh verse of *al-Fatiha*: the more popular reading perceives the Jews to be mentioned there in a negative manner. Abduh in this regard was among the first in modern times to challenge the accepted view and to offer a much more universalist approach to this verse and consequently a much more positive attitude toward the Jews. It is still a minority view today, but it seems to gain some traction among various audiences. This author is hopeful that together with the growing interest in Abduh’s ideas and philosophy, also his specific reading of a major Qur’anic verse, would attract more and more supporters among Muslims.

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Eileen M. Schuller

# The Dead Sea Scrolls and Antisemitism: Past Results and Future Possibilities

Just over seventy years before the date of the international conference “An End to Antisemitism!” sometime in the early months of 1947 (perhaps this same month of February), a Bedouin shepherd boy threw a stone into a cave on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea and literally struck the clay jars containing the artifacts that came to be hailed as “the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times!”<sup>1</sup> Between 1947 and 1956, in ten more caves in this desert region, the remains of approximately nine-hundred ancient manuscripts were found, Jewish religious writings, copied between the mid-second century B.C.E and the first century C.E. Most of the material was in very damaged condition, just small fragments with much of the text lost forever to time, rain, mice, and bats. The publication of these Dead Sea Scrolls—as the collection came to be called—was a long and complicated process: the official and scholarly series of forty volumes, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, from Oxford Press was not completed until 2009, though popular and accessible translations of some texts had been available since the late 1950s.<sup>2</sup>

There is a general agreement about the content and fundamental importance of this find: (1) over two hundred of these manuscripts, most very fragmentary, are copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible (except for the book of Esther), copies almost a millennium earlier than the oldest medieval copies; (2) there are copies of certain Jewish works from Second Temple period that previously had been known only from later Christian translation (books such as Enoch and Jubilees); and (3) the largest group of manuscripts, almost two-thirds, are texts not

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**Note:** I wish to express my thanks to the organizers of this conference, especially to Dr. Lawrence Schiffman, for the invitation to attend and to present this paper which challenged me to think about the issues raised here specifically within the context of this event.

1 The much quoted words of W. F. Albright, from a letter to John Trever in Jerusalem, dated March 15, 1948, when he saw for the first time some of the earliest photographs; quoted by W. W. Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Full History* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 76. Fields’s monograph gives a full account of early years, 1947–1960; a subsequent volume is promised that will cover the history after 1960. For an abbreviated account, including a timeline that goes up to 2006, cf. W. W. Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

2 For a concise overview of the complex process of publication, see J. J. Collins, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), especially 16–20 and 213–42.

previously known at all (rules of life [*serekim*], legal rulings, prayers, biblical commentaries, and biblical rewritings) from a pious sect/group of Jews (whether these are the Essenes described by the classical authors Philo, Josephus, and Pliny, or a related group is still much debated<sup>3</sup>). All this is material that can contribute to, and indeed radically refashion, our understanding of Judaism in the Second Temple period. Contrary to initial speculation and hopes, no texts were discovered that spoke of Jesus or the early Christian church per se, though there was much—from ideas about messianism and eschatology to practical details of community organization—that pointed to some type of relationship between this group and the beginnings of Christianity (again, the precise relationship and links are still much debated).

Over the past fifty-plus years, the impact of the discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls on fields of scholarship such as Old Testament Studies, New Testament Studies, Jewish Studies (in particular, the development of Jewish liturgy and halakah), textual criticism, issues of canon and the formation of the Bible, and Hebrew and Aramaic linguistic studies has been acknowledged and frequently discussed. But there has been little reflection from the specific perspective of this conference, that is, how the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has made an impact on relations between Christians and Jews and on the issue of antisemitism specifically.<sup>4</sup> Of course, the Scrolls were discovered at an especially sensitive moment in history (1947–1956). The impact and trauma of the post-World War II and post-holocaust context in general and the unstable political situation in the Middle East area are obvious, but this was also a time of recovery and the beginnings of a new dialogue. One of the first post-war meetings of Jews and Christians, officially called the “International Emergency Conference on Anti-Semitism,” was held in the Swiss village of Seelisberg, in August 1947, just months after the first public announcements of the finds in the Judean desert.<sup>5</sup>

I think we can agree that there is an overall sense, in both academic and popular circles, that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was “good for” Jewish-Christian relations. Indeed, the American biblical scholar quoted earlier, W. F. Albright, is said to have once made the statement that “had the Dead Sea

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<sup>3</sup> For a survey of the material and various theories, see Collins, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 33–66.

<sup>4</sup> I first considered this topic at the conference held at the Gregorian University in Rome on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate* and published a short article, cf. E. Schuller, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in *From Judaism to Christianity Tradition and Transition: A Festschrift for Thomas H. Tobin*, ed. P. Walters (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 48–58.

<sup>5</sup> The “Ten Points of Seelisberg” produced by this conference are recognized as foundational guidelines for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Scrolls been found but a few years earlier the Holocaust could have been averted.” Like any apocryphal statement, this one is virtually impossible to trace; Lawrence Schiffman claimed that he had heard the Albright quote from Samuel Iwry, a student of Albright, a Holocaust survivor, and the author of one of the first (perhaps *the* first) dissertation on the Scrolls.<sup>6</sup> Schiffman himself has written,

Behind this exaggeration, however, was a prescient observation. By showing us the extent to which Christianity is based on Jewish roots, the scrolls call for greater understanding between Jews and Christians in the modern world [...] We do have a wonderful new treasure, one which can illuminate the history of Judaism and the background of Christianity, and one which, when studied properly, has the power to help us to heal the wounds of two millennia.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, not everything has been positive. Issues around the Dead Sea Scrolls have both reflected, and at times intensified, tension between Jews and Christians on the individual and the collective level. We need only recall the twenty years (1948–1967) when Jewish and Christian scholars worked on the Scrolls in isolation from each other on different sides of the Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem. And, the traumatic days and months in the fall of 1990 when explicit charges of antisemitism were made after a newspaper interview that was given by John Strugnell, then editor-in-chief of the Scrolls project charges that were part of his dismissal as editor and his replacement by Emanuel Tov of Hebrew University as the first Jewish editor-in-chief. We can also acknowledge the more subtle tensions and agendas implicit in the ongoing debates about the “ownership” of the Scrolls: ownership on one level, in the claim that is a need to “reclaim” the Scrolls as Jewish texts because they had been expropriated and Christianized,<sup>8</sup> and ownership on a more concrete, physical level, as played out as very recently in the cancellation in January 2018 of a planned exhibit of the Scrolls in Frankfurt, when the German Foreign Ministry would/could not guarantee their return to Israel.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Personal correspondence, August 2005.

<sup>7</sup> L. H. Schiffman, “The Scrolls and the Search for the Secret Gospel,” in *Jewish World*, April 16–23 (1993), 18–19.

<sup>8</sup> L. H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994); L. H. Schiffman, “Confessionalism and the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Jewish Studies: Forum of the World Union of Jewish Studies* 31 (1991): 3–14.

<sup>9</sup> In January 2010, when there was a Scrolls exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada, Jordan filed a complaint with UNESCO after Canada refused to take custody of the frag-

I will limit my remarks to three different areas where the Scrolls have had a tangible impact: (1) the role of the Scrolls in the academic study of early Judaism and early Christianity; (2) their role in formal Jewish-Christian dialogues and official dialogue statements; (3) and the more nebulous, but equally important, realm of influence on the level of personal experience and in the public (non-academic) domain.

## The Academic Study of Early Judaism and Early Christianity

With regards to the influence of the Scrolls on the academic study of early Judaism and early Christianity, I can be very brief.<sup>10</sup> Let me just give one quotation, taken from the preface to an influential collection of essays that stemmed from a joint conference between Princeton and Oxford Universities in 2003; there Annette Reed and Adam Becker wrote:

Postwar developments also paved the way for the new rapprochement between Christian scholars and Jewish scholars [...]. In this, another contributing factor was the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which helped to open a space in which much needed interdisciplinary dialogue could flourish. In the library of the Qumran community, experts in Second Temple Judaism, early Christianity, and Rabbinics alike have found sources that shed new light on key issues and debates in their respective fields. Furthermore, these newly unearthed sources have exposed the dazzling diversity of Second Temple Judaism and the profound continuities that connect it with *both* rabbinic Judaism *and* early Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

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ments that were on display and turn them over to Jordan who claimed ownership. In the previous months, the Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad had made an official request to the Canadian government to seize the materials on exhibit and hand them over to the Palestinian Authority.

**10** For further reading, see A. Lange and M. L. Grossman, “Jews and Judaism between Bedevilement and Source of Salvation: Christianity as a Cause of and a Cure against Antisemitism,” in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of “*An End to Antisemitism!*” ed. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 133–64; L. H. Schiffman, “Scrolls, Testament and Talmud: Issues of Antisemitism in the Study of Ancient Judaism,” in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of “*An End to Antisemitism!*” ed. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 193–208.

**11** A. Yoshiko Reed and A. H. Becker, “Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions,” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. A. Yoshiko Reed and A. H. Becker (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 14–15. Italics original.

Many similar statements from academic books and articles could be quoted. Each of the components of this statement (1) that Judaism in the Second Temple period was a vital, rich, diverse, and complex reality; (2) that Jesus and the early Christian community are to be situated firmly within the Judaism of the time and cannot be understood apart from that environment; (3) that the Dead Sea Scrolls have played a singular and unique role in this profound and radical reconfigurations of earlier scholarly understandings—such conclusions have become a given in contemporary academic study, and I need not belabor the point.

Let me add three nuances to how the Scrolls have “opened up a space” in academic discussion. First, in attempting to trace out lines of influence, there is always the danger of falling into a simplistic pan-Qumranica.<sup>12</sup> It was not *only* the discovery of the Scrolls that brought about the radical rethinking of Second Temple Judaism. Other finds and texts were, and are, important. In the past five decades, there has been a comparable and significant, even dramatic, revival of interest in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the Septuagint and the Targums—though the impetus for a revitalized study of these long-known materials has often been triggered precisely by new questions raised by the Scrolls.

Secondly, in the early years, it often seemed as if the Dead Sea Scrolls were most important for Christian scholars and those studying Christian origins and theology,<sup>13</sup> and that they could be ignored or at least treated as peripheral by Jews and for Jewish Studies since they were judged to represent “some digression which turned into a cul-de-sac” and ultimately “a dead end.”<sup>14</sup> This slant-toward-Christianity was the case, at least on the popular level, even in Israel where much of the familiarity with the Scrolls in the early years came via the popular talks by David Flusser on the Israel Army Raid in the 1960s and 1970s where he presented the Scrolls mainly as pre-Christian documents.<sup>15</sup> It was

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<sup>12</sup> For a cautionary and salutary warning about the limitations of what the Scrolls can contribute, see R. Alter, “How Important are the Dead Sea Scrolls?” *Commentary* 93, no. 2 (1992): 34–41; J. Kugel, “What the Dead Sea Scrolls Do Not Tell,” *Commentary* 106, no. 5 (1998): 49–53.

<sup>13</sup> For example, K. Stendahl, ed., *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York: Harper, 1957); P. Benoit and J. Murphy O’Connor, eds., *Paul and Qumran: Studies in New Testament Exegesis* (London: G. Chapman, 1968). It was not until around 1975 that a survey of the impact on Jewish Studies first appeared, cf. G. Vermes, “The Impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls on Jewish Studies in the Last Twenty-Five Years,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 26, no. 1–2 (1975): 1–14.

<sup>14</sup> S. Sandmel, *The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity: Certainties and Uncertainties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 85.

<sup>15</sup> For Israeli scholarship on the Scrolls, cf. E. Tov, “Israeli Scholarship on the Texts from Judaea Desert,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Fifty: Proceedings of the 1997 Society of Biblical Literature Qumran Section Meetings*, ed. R. A. Kugler and E. M. Schuller (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 123–27; the series of articles “Dead Sea Scrolls Scholarship in Israel,” in *The Dead Sea*



only post-1990, when the bulk of the legal materials were finally published (most notably, 4QMMT, the legal sections of the Damascus Document, and the DJD volume XXV on *Halakhic Texts*) by scholars with specialized training in halakha and rabbinics that the full import of the Scrolls for Jewish Studies became clear. Even more recently has come the recognition of the significance of the over two-hundred prayers and poetic texts for an understanding of the development of Jewish liturgical traditions and fixed statutory prayers.<sup>16</sup>

And thirdly, given that the complex and painstaking technical work of editing manuscripts for first publication as scholarly editions in the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series is complete, the field of Dead Sea Scrolls studies and the key players are changing. Philologists, paleographers, linguists, and text critics are being replaced by literary critics, social scientists, and those trained in cognitive psychology. These are new voices, many of whom do not identify with, or are basically uninterested in, the traditional concerns of either the Jewish or Christian tradition. How this will impact on the field in the years to come remains to be seen.

## Jewish-Christian Dialogues and Statements

Although in academia the role of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in precipitating major changes in scholarly assumptions and paradigms has been explicitly acknowledged and documented, it is more complex—and less well documented—to understand how the Scrolls have or have not been influential in relation to official and semi-official Jewish-Christian dialogues and the documents produced within that framework. As noted above, there is a chronological correspondence between the discovery of the Scrolls and some of the very earliest post-war dialogue statements, yet over the years, points of contact seem minimal and rather insignificant. In a standard reference work such as *Lexikon der Jüdische-Christlichen Begabung*, there is only a brief entry on the Scrolls, and the author, Clemens Thoma, concludes with a summary evaluation “für den Di-

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*Scrolls in Scholarly Perspective: A History of Research*, ed. D. Dimant (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 237–402.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, E. G. Chazon, “Shifting Perspectives on Liturgy at Qumran and in Second Temple Judaism,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures*, ed. E. Tov, A. Lange, M. Weigold (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 513–31; E. G. Chazon, “Liturgy Before and After the Temple’s Destruction: Change or Continuity?” in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. D. R. Schwartz and Z. Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 371–92.

alog zwischen Christen und Juden ist Qumran von untergeordneter Bedeutung.”<sup>17</sup> The more recent *Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* from the Cambridge Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations commissioned only a very short article on the Scrolls, not written by a specialist in the field.<sup>18</sup> On the basis of a random survey (not complete but fairly extensive) of books and collections of essays about Jewish-Christian relations, I observe that that the topic is rarely treated explicitly or in any depth.<sup>19</sup>

In official documents, there are very few references to the Dead Sea Scrolls (I give only a very few examples, drawn from Catholic sources, although likely the same observation could be made about statements from Protestant sources). At the Second Vatican Council, the foundational document *Nostra Aetate, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (1965) spoke only in general terms of “the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews.”<sup>20</sup> The 1974 *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate*, prepared by the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, is somewhat more expansive, “Judaism in the time of Christ and Apostles was a complex reality, embracing many different trends, many spiritual, religious, and social values” (Section III).<sup>21</sup> I assume that the authors of this document had in mind the distinctive worldview and apocalyptic piety of the community at Qumran as one of these different trends, but this is not named explicitly. In a 1988 document from United States Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, *God’s Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching*, there is encouragement for Catholics “to draw on Jewish sources (rabbinic, medieval and modern) in expounding the meaning of the Hebrew Scrip-

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17 J. J. Petuchowski and C. Thoma, *Lexikon der Jüdisch-Christlichen Begegnung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 322–23.

18 E. Kessler and N. Wenborn, eds., *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122.

19 One welcome exception is the essay by L. H. Schiffman “Judaism and Early Christianity in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Jewish-Christian Encounters over the Centuries: Symbiosis, Prejudice, Holocaust, Dialogue*, ed. M. Perry and F. M. Schweitzer (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 27–44.

20 Pope Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration On The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions*, issued October 28, 1965 (accessed July 17, 2018, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat\\_ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat_ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html)), 4.

21 Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate*, issued December 1, 1974 (accessed July 17, 2018, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19741201\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19741201_nostra-aetate_en.html)), III.

tures and apostolic writings” (Section 30 i<sup>22</sup>), but there is no mention of how the more contemporary texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls (both sectarian texts such as *pesharim* and other types of biblical interpretation as the “rewritten Bible” in *Genesis Apocryphon*) could contribute to our understanding of how Jews were interpreting the Bible at the time of the Gospels. We need to turn to documents prepared by the Pontifical Biblical Commission to find explicit mention of the scrolls.<sup>23</sup> In 1984, in *Instruction on Scripture and Christology*, the need to study “the literature from Qumran” along with the Palestinian Targum is acknowledged in a single sentence (Section 1.1.5.1). In a 1993 document, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, “the manifold research stimulated by the discoveries at Qumran” is noted, particularly the *Genesis Apocryphon* as an example of “the abundance and variety of interpretations of the Scriptures themselves;” special note is taken of the quotations of the Old Testament in Qumran “since the New Testament often quoted the Old Testament in a similar fashion” (Section 1.C.2). In the 2002 document, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, a section is devoted to “Exegesis at Qumran and in the New Testament” (2.13) that acknowledges that “with regard to form and method, the New Testament, particularly the Gospels, presents striking resemblances to Qumran in its use of Scripture;” however no mention is made of the very important halakhic and liturgical materials in the Scrolls that had been recently published.

There are probably multiple reasons why there is so little attention paid to the Scrolls. Some have to do with the very nature and genre of such dialogue documents: they are usually short statements, written in non-academic language, to be accessible for the general public. A primary focus is usually on presenting to Christians a revised understanding of the Pharisees whom they encounter regularly in the Gospel readings (whereas the Essenes and Qumran community are not mentioned). I suspect that many of those involved in authoring dialogue statements (or the Jewish colleagues whom they consulted) are more at home in traditional rabbinic studies than in what is still often perceived as the peripheral and specialized field of Dead Sea Scrolls studies. And where there is explicit discussion about Qumran and the Scrolls, these sections have

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<sup>22</sup> Bishop’s Committee on the Liturgy, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *God’s Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching*, issued September 1988 (accessed July 17, 2018, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/jewish/upload/God-s-Mercy-Endures-Forever-Guidelines-on-the-Presentation-of-Jews-and-Judaism-in-Catholic-Preaching-1988.pdf>), 11.

<sup>23</sup> Documents from the Pontifical Biblical Commission can be found at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb\\_index.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_index.html).

evoked varied reactions: approval in that they introduce a much richer and more nuanced presentation of Second Temple Judaism but also concern that undue attention may be being given to establishing a relationship between Qumran and Christianity, especially if this can be perceived as a subtle way of avoiding links between Christian origins and “real” (rabbinic) Judaism or Judaism of today.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the question has been raised whether focusing on the Dead Sea Scrolls can be a convenient way for Christian scholars to avoid having to come to know and to deal with the abundance and complexity of rabbinic/Talmudic literature.<sup>25</sup>

## Impact on the Personal Level and in the Public Domain

In this third part of my paper, I want to reflect on some ways in which the Dead Sea Scrolls have made a contribution to Jewish-Christian relations and reducing anti-Semitism in what I will call (for want of a better term) “the realm of lived experience.” This can be on a personal level. For instance, one of the great pioneers in Jewish-Christian relations, the Swedish theologian, New Testament scholar, and Church of Sweden Bishop, Krister Stendahl always credited what he called “my life-long quest for a better way to understand Jewish-Christian interplay” to a seminar that he took on the Dead Sea Scrolls with André Dupont-Sommer back in 1951.<sup>26</sup> Many others could give a similar testimony about how work on Scrolls was for them personally a determinative factor in establishing life-long values and priorities. Indeed it would be extremely valuable and instructive to collect some of these testimonies while the “second generation” of Scrolls scholars are here to speak; we have already lost most of the “first generation” and such personal recollections.

Jewish-Christian dialogue statements have frequently called for “fraternal [sic] dialogue” (*Nostra Aetate*, Section 4) and “collaboration with Jewish schol-

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<sup>24</sup> Such concerns have been raised by A.-J. Levine, “Roland Murphy, The Pontifical Biblical Commission, Jews, and the Bible,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 33, no. 3 (2003): 105; A.-J. Levine, “The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scripture in the Christian Bible: A Jewish Reading of the Document,” *The Bible Today* 41, no. 3 (2003): 167–72.

<sup>25</sup> See D. Satran, “Qumran and Christian Origins,” in *The Scrolls of the Judaean Desert, Forty Years of Research*, ed. M. Broshi, S. Japhet, D. R. Schwartz, and Sh. Talmon (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and the Israel Exploration Society, 1992), 152–59 [Hebrew].

<sup>26</sup> K. Stendahl, “Qumran and Supersessionism—And the Road Not Taken,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 19 (1998): 134–42.

ars” (*Guidelines and Suggestions*, Section III). But even in today’s increasingly pluralistic and diverse world, whether for academics, religious leaders or “ordinary folk,” concrete situations that actually bring together Jews and Christian in a meaningful way (beyond superficial and professional interactions) are still often few and far between. I would suggest that it is the Dead Sea Scrolls that have provided, and can continue to provide, unique and perhaps hitherto fore unrecognized opportunities for interaction and collaboration.

As early as the 1950s, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were still very new, Cardinal Tisserant, the Dean of the College of Cardinals in the Vatican, wrote a famous letter to Msgr. John Oesterreicher, one of the pioneers in Jewish-Christian dialogue at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, expressing his hope that “the findings of Qumran will open a new field of studies where Christians and Jews will be able to collaborate.”<sup>27</sup> As already noted, collaboration has not always been the norm. There were the twenty years, 1948–1967, of physical separation between Jewish scholars who had access only to the seven scrolls at Hebrew University and then in the Shrine of the Book in West Jerusalem, and the International Team, put together under the auspices of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the École Biblique, who worked at the Palestine Archaeological Museum/Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem. Yet the barriers have not only been geographic and political but also linguistic—even until today. Much important Israeli scholarship (most notably the early commentaries of Jacob Licht on the *Hodayot* and the Rule Scroll<sup>28</sup>) was in Modern Hebrew, and thus often inaccessible and ignored, though this is slowly changing as more non-Israeli scholars become fluent in Modern Hebrew. In addition, the isolation of Jewish and Christian scholars in the early years must be situated within the norms and practices of the times with regard to ecumenical and interreligious relations of any sort. In the 1950s, the International Team was considered radical and even suspect because Protestants and Catholics were sitting at the same table to work on biblical texts—at that time, it was hard to imagine that Jews might join the table.

Since the late 1980s, however, the publication of the Scrolls has brought together Jewish and Christian scholars in shared endeavors at a level and with an intensity that had little precedence or comparison. Cooperation in editing, translation, and publishing has yielded concrete results, most notably, the co-edited

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27 This letter is quoted in “A Word of Thanks,” in *The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaean-Christian studies*, ed. J. M. Oesterreicher (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), 2:9.

28 J. Licht, *Megilat ha-hodayot mimegilot midbar Yehuda* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1957); J. Licht, *Megilat ha-serakhim mimegilot midbar Yehuda* (Jerusalem: Moda Bialik, 1965).

major reference work, the *Encyclopedia of Dead Sea Scrolls*.<sup>29</sup> The level of trust and commitment that allowed and called forth such endeavors did not come about by chance. I am convinced that the decades of separation and the intense emotion and mutual suspicion that was generated in the late 1980s around issues of accessibility and rights could not have been overcome without intense experiences of sustained personal contact. In particular, the decade between 1987 and 1997 (the year of the fiftieth anniversary of discovery) saw a remarkable series of international conferences held almost annually around the world (in Oxford, New York, Haifa, Groningen, Mogilany to name just some major conferences).<sup>30</sup> Of particular import was the Congress held in 1991 at the University of Salamanca and at El Escorial palace in Madrid, at the invitation of the king and queen of Spain, where for five intense days, Jewish and Christian Scrolls scholars, many of whom had not met personally before, shared not only formal academic meetings but lived and traveled together. I suggest that the experience of these years merits consideration as a case-study of what is required to pass from intense antagonism and suspicion to mutual trust and real collaboration; I suspect that there are lessons about the primacy and indispensability of personal contact in that process that are applicable to broader issues of dialogue. This experience can alert us to what is needed in terms of personal interaction with scholars from Jordan and elsewhere in the Arabic world who are only now beginning to venture into Scrolls study.

But in addition to scholarly interaction in publication, conferences and joint projects, it is also important to name what is and has been happening for decades now at the local level, involving “ordinary folk.” The remarkably persistent and virtually unprecedented popular interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided unique opportunities for Jewish-Christian contact.<sup>31</sup> Because activities on this

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**29** L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam, *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). A few scroll manuscripts were assigned for co-publication to a Jew and Christian; for example, 4Q371–373, Narrative and Poetic Composition, was assigned jointly to Moshe Bernstein of Yeshiva University and myself in *Wadi Daliyeh II: The Samaria Papyri from Wadi Daliyeh and Qumran Cave 4: Miscellanea, Part 2* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 151–204.

**30** The papers from most of these conferences were published quickly in conference proceedings, usually by E. J. Brill in the series *Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah*. Often these conferences were the occasion for presenting preliminary editions of previously unpublished texts, so that in these years much material was actually being circulated and shared among “Qumran specialists” before it was formally published.

**31** The widespread interest in the Scrolls has itself become an object of study from the point of view of popular culture, communication studies, and media analysis. See the series of papers in the thematic issue, C. Murphy and M. Grossman, “Introduction: The Dead Sea Scrolls in the Popular Imagination,” in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 12, no. 1 (2005): 1–5.

level are so often local and spontaneous, much is undocumented. From my own experience and talking to colleagues, I know so many examples where a talk on the Dead Sea Scrolls has been the first occasion for a Christian church to invite a rabbi or a Jewish speaker, or for a synagogue to have a Christian scholar speak in a study session or as part of a Friday night service. For many participants this may be the first—and only—experience of Jewish-Christian interaction.

Equally significant are events that do not draw primarily upon the synagogue/church crowd but are in the “secular” domain: talks held in public libraries, retirement clubs, television interviews, and above all, public exhibitions of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These public exhibitions merit more explicit attention and reflection than they have generally received.<sup>32</sup> There have been over one hundred exhibits since 1949, especially in the last decades, in major cities around the world attracting literally hundreds of thousands of viewers.<sup>33</sup> While some attendees certainly belong to local churches and synagogues, many are from other religions (at the 2009 exhibit in Toronto, the third largest number of organized groups to register for lectures and educational tours were Muslim). A significant number of attendees would be “nones” (those with no religious affiliation). A public exhibition of the Scrolls might well be the only place where such people would be confronted in a serious way with fundamental questions of the origins of Judaism and Christianity and how the two religions are related. Although there is much to be critical about how the media has sensationalized and exploited the worst of bizarre theories and esoteric speculations, popular interest in the Scrolls is not to be scorned, and perhaps we, who are part of this conference, could be thinking more creatively about how to tap into this interest as an entry point to questions of Jewish-Christian relations and the elimination of stereotypes.

Given that we were asked to make concrete suggestions, I will close with one small but specific proposal: the promotion and formation of study groups that actually read and discuss the Scrolls. Such groups could be formed jointly by a church and synagogue from their members, or, more challenging, could seek to attract a more diverse clientele if advertised via social media, adult education networks or broadly based community channels. Precisely because the group

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<sup>32</sup> A. D. Roitman, “Exhibiting the Dead Sea Scrolls: Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations,” in *Archaeology and Society in the 21st Century: The Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Case Studies*, ed. N. A. Silberman and E. S. Frerichs (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2001), 46–66.

<sup>33</sup> For a comprehensive list of all exhibits, see J. Kalman, “Out of the Caves and Under Glass: The Politics of Exhibiting the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *To Fix Torah in Their Hearts: Essays in Jewish Studies and Biblical Interpretation in Honor of B. Barry Levy*, ed. J. S. du Toit et al. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2018), 431–82.



would be reading texts that are not “canonical” or “Scriptures” for any of the participants, I suspect that these texts could be a vehicle for “opening up” discussion about content and concepts (love and hate of the enemy, “end of times” expectations) and about group identity (how we deal competing claims to authenticity: is stringency in legal interpretation the most effective means of ensuring survival?). In such a shared reading, it may be possible to move beyond the level of ideas to explore what the discovery of these ancient texts have meant on an emotional and personal level: why some Jews/Israelis find “something symbolic in the discovery of the scrolls and their acquisition at the moment of the creation of the state of Israel;”<sup>34</sup> why some Christians get so excited and inspired about scraps of material from the time and place of Jesus; why some people continue to look to the Scrolls for secret wisdom and access to hidden mysteries preserved apart from either Jewish or Christian tradition. The shared reading and discussion of actual Dead Sea Scrolls passages, using the translation and study aids now readily available, might just be one small way these ancient texts could contribute to the aims of this conference in promoting dialogue and eliminating antisemitism.

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34 Y. Yadin, *The Message of the Scrolls* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 14.



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### **III Confronting Antisemitic Traditions in Contemporary Christianity and Islam**



Wolfgang Treitler

# Antisemitism, Christianity, and the Churches in Europe

## 1 The Church Father's Struggle against Jews and Judaism

One of the most powerful Church Fathers of the second century was Justin Martyr. As a gentile Christian, he had contact with Jews, which in turn made him familiar with considerable parts of Jewish tradition and thinking.<sup>1</sup> Within the last fifteen years of his life (d. 166 C.E.), Justin wrote his main works, two so-called *Apologies* and the *Dialogue with Trypho*. Both documents had a decisive effect on the fact that Christianity turned pagan and, therefore, shared the pagan aversion against Jews, who were considered barbaric.<sup>2</sup> While Justin argued in the *Dialogue* that Jews had lost God's promise because they did not believe in Christ, it was especially the *First Apology*, dedicated to the Emperor Hadrian, that pushed the pagan-Christian reluctance against Jews in general. In this way, Justin offensively accomplished the tendencies of the gospel tradition to exculpate the Romans from the killing of Christ and instead imposed his death on the Jews as collective guilt. The main point is that Justin even came to justify the extinction of Jerusalem during the Bar Kokhba revolt and the Emperor's measures against Jews, forbidding them under penalty of death to return to Jerusalem. The theological background was striking insofar as Justin turned Christ into a pagan figure and argued that all the stories about Christ should be read and understood in a pagan way: When Christians say that Christ has

been fathered without any intercourse, and that the logos is Jesus Christ, our teacher who was crucified, died, resurrected, and ascended to heaven, we do not refer to something strange in comparison with the sons of Zeus. You know very well how many sons of Zeus are listed by the poets you admire... And what about the Emperors among you who have been dying off, while you always believed them to be among the immortals, and in

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1 O. Skarsaune, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in Greek and Latin Patristic Literature," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 505–67, esp. 510–14.

2 A. Schalit, *König Herodes: Der Mann und sein Werk* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 747 f.; J. G. Herdler, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, ed. H. D. Irmischer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1989), 109 f.

fact you had someone at your hand who swore that he saw the Emperor burned on a stake ascending up to heaven? (*1 Apol.* 21)<sup>3</sup>

Justin turned even the cross of Christ—a very Greek and Roman way to execute dangerous criminals—into a religious and political symbol of Hadrian’s world and connected it to the idea of divinization: “Even the images representing your rulers who have died are built in this form [i. e., of a cross; W.T.], and you call them gods in the inscriptions” (*1 Apol.* 55).<sup>4</sup>

At that level of paganizing Christ, Justin argued in favor of the Emperor’s measures against Jews and backed these measures by referring to the prophets as witnesses of the extinction of Jews—a method as audacious as usual since then:

Now listen to what has been proclaimed by the prophets about the devastation of the Jewish land. These words are put in the mouth of the other peoples in a way that they are astonished about the event [i. e., the devastation; W.T.] as if it had already happened... You know quite well that Jerusalem has been devastated, as it has been announced as if it had already happened... And you know quite well, too, that you take care about that; no Jew is permitted to reside there, and if any Jew is to live there and he is caught up, he would be subject to death penalty. (*1 Apol.* 47)<sup>5</sup>

Justin’s paganization of Christ prepared the upcoming strong connection between Christianity and the Empire; the basis of the connection was a strong

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3 G. Rauschen, “Des heiligen Justins des Philosophen und Märtyrers zwei Apologien. Aus dem Griechischen übersetzt von Dr. Gerhard Rauschen,” in *Frühchristliche Apologeten und Märtyrerakten. Aus dem Griechischen und Lateinischen übersetzt. 1. Band* (Kempten-München: Kösel, 1913), 11–84 (First Apology) and 85–101 (Second Apology), 87 f.: “Wenn wir aber weiterhin behaupten, der Logos, welcher Gottes erste Hervorbringung ist, sei ohne Beiwohnung gezeugt worden, nämlich Jesus Christus, unser Lehrer, und er sei gekreuzigt worden, gestorben, wieder auferstanden und in den Himmel aufgestiegen, so bringen wir im Vergleich mit euren Zeussöhnen nichts Befremdliches von. Denn wie viele Zeussöhne die bei euch hochgeschätzten Schriftsteller aufführen, wißt ihr wohl . . . Und was von den unter euch dahinsterbenden Herrschern, die ihr immer für wert haltet, unter die Unsterblichen versetzt zu werden, so daß ihr einen vorführt, der schwört, er habe den verbrannten Kaiser vom Scheiterhaufen zum Himmel auffahren sehen?”

4 *Ibid.*, 124: “Auch die Bildnisse der bei euch verstorbenen Herrscher stellt ihr in dieser Form dar und benennt sie noch in Inschriften als Götter.”

5 *Ibid.*, 114: “Vernehmet nun, was vom prophetischen Geiste auch über die Verwüstung des Judenlandes vorhergesagt worden ist. Die Worte sind andern Völkern in den Mund gelegt derart, daß diese sich über das schon eingetretene Ereignis wundern . . . Daß nun Jerusalem, wie es hier als schon geschehen vorherverkündet worden ist, verwüstet worden ist, das wißt ihr wohl . . . Daß aber von euch gewacht wird, damit kein Jude dort sich aufhalte, und daß für jeden Juden, der es betritt und ertappt wird, die Todesstrafe bestimmt ist, das ist euch wohlbekannt.”

anti-Jewish aversion in both entities and the de-Judaization of Christ as the immediate effect of his paganization. Justin turned his Christ into a Roman hero demanding more and more radical steps against Jews.

## 2 The Nicene Creed: Christ Stripped of his Jewishness

Justin's paganization of Christ was an important step in cleansing Christ from any Jewish stain. About one and a half centuries later, no one really missed anything when the First Council of Nicaea in the year 325 defined a binding Creed that did not mention anything Jewish when dealing with Christ. Christ had become "the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father."<sup>6</sup> One may argue that the topics of the Creed referred to severe conflicts within *Christian* communities that did not deal any longer with Christ's Jewish ancestry but with philosophical ideas about his relation to God. That may be so. But it still proves that this kind of pagan Christianity became indifferent and, as a result, unaware of the relevance of Christ's Jewish background. Christ's Jewishness did not count any longer; it was simply abandoned.

The Jews have turned into the "others" with whom pagan Christians did not share any common ground. The Council of Nicaea enforced Christ being stripped of his Jewishness and turned him into a deity fulfilling pagan traditions and safeguarding the Roman Empire. Therefore, Christianity was fixed as a religion that created the Jewish community as its opposite that had to be combatted and eventually erased.

## 3 Self-description of European Christianity Based on anti-Jewish Hatred

Nevertheless, the Jewish communities remained alive. This was not only due to Augustine's acquiescence of Jews that he did not want them to be killed. Augustine did not reflect on Jews in this way because he was in favor of them; it was

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<sup>6</sup> "The Nicene Creed of 325 and the 1975 ecumenical version, widely in use today," accessed May 30, 2018, <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~rfrey/166NiceneCreed.htm>.



because they were part of Christian consolidation, as the Church Father made clear:

[N]ot by bodily death shall the ungodly race of carnal Jews perish... So to the end of the seven days of time [i. e., of the creation] the continued preservation of the Jews will be a proof to believing Christians of the subjection by those who ... put the Lord to death.<sup>7</sup>

The survival of Jews was also due to antique societies as such. Hardly ever was it possible to enforce decisions and decrees Empire-wide; too many different interests interfered and fueled corruption. For this reason, the church renewed the attempts to get hold of Jews and in doing so, getting rid of them before the seventh day of time.

In the High Middle Ages and at the beginning of modern era, the Christian hatred of Jews aggravated; it was especially the official teachers and synods of the European Christian communities who maintained hatred against Jews as a vehicle to enforce Christian topics.

This was the case when Pope Innocent III called the Fathers to the Lateran in 1215. He wanted to set up a kind of Christian cosmos of Christian world order. To implement this intention, it was necessary to draw strict boundaries or “border lines” between “us” and “them.”<sup>8</sup> The Council discussed and voted on texts written by the Pope before it started in November 1215. Most striking was the fact that the Council agreed on singling out those who were not considered to be part of the Christian world, in other words, those who belonged to “them.” Them—they were more than anyone else Jews. For the first time in European history, Jews were forced to wear special signs on their clothes to prevent faithful Christians from intermingling with Jews, as Canon 67 has it:

In order to prevent all the excesses of mixing (between Jews and Christians) that we do have to condemn ... we determine: Jews and Saracens of both genders must differ in every province and at any time from other peoples by the kind of their clothing in public, because even Moses imposed this rule on them, as it can be read. On the days of Lament and of the Passion of the Lord they are not allowed to appear in public anyway.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Augustine, quoted by D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The History of a Way of Thinking* (London: Head of Zeus, 2015), 130.

<sup>8</sup> D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 1–33.

<sup>9</sup> J. Wohlmuth, ed., *Dekrete der ökumenischen Konzilien. Band 2: Konzilien des Mittelalters. Vom ersten Laterankonzil (1123) bis zum fünften Laterankonzil (1512–1517)* (Paderborn et al.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000), 266: “Damit die Auswüchse dieser Vermischung, die man nur verurteilen kann, unter dem Deckmantel eines solchen Versehens kein Schlupfloch der Entschuldigung mehr finden können, bestimmen wir: Die Juden und Sarazenen beiderlei Geschlechts müssen

Again as in ancient days, the Council refers to the Old Testament in an attempt to prove that Jews were simply outdated and, therefore, illegitimate. If they were living according to their own Scripture, they would not be Jews any longer but Christians. The Council did exactly what had been the hermeneutical method of Christian exegesis since the days of the Greek Church Fathers: they “hijacked not only the Old Testament but the New Testament as well,”<sup>10</sup> and they turned it into a pagan text serving the Christian hatred and measures against Jews. In this way, long before the Nazis developed the practice of forcing Jews to wear signs on their clothes, Pope Innocent III had visibly turned the Jews to total outcasts that were to be persecuted because they did not believe in the mysteries of Christianity, especially in the mystery of bread and wine transmuted to body and blood of the redeemer.

The fire of antisemitism was refueled by the great and notorious Martin Luther who founded the Lutheran Church in Germany. Especially at the end of his life, Luther thought that he was living in apocalyptic times. And one thing he had in mind—ever since his struggle with the Roman Church—was what Paul had been sure of: at the end of times, Jews would repent and become Christians. Therefore, in his work *Dass Christus geborener Jude sei* [*Christ was born as a Jew*<sup>11</sup>] published in the year 1523, Luther wanted to offer good reasons for Jews converting to Christianity; he wanted to invite them to become Christians.<sup>12</sup> But his intention failed to wipe out Judaism through conversion. Twenty years later, he poured out his hatred against the stubborn Jews in a writing called *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen* [*On the Jews and their Lies*]; in the final parts of this work, he listed ten measures against the Jews, a kind of Christian Decalogue, demanding expropriation and expulsion of Jews and the destruction of Jewish synagogues and property. Jews had become the target of hatred of Christians ready to take action against them. Luther’s measures were quite clear:

Set on fire their synagogues and schools and cover with earth what does not burn so that no man ever will see any stone or slag from it forever... Destruct their houses and destroy them. For in their houses, they do the same things as they do in their synagogues... Do away

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sich in jeder christlichen Provinz und zu allen Zeiten durch die Art ihrer Kleidung in der Öffentlichkeit von den anderen Völkern unterschieden; denn schon durch Mose ist ihnen dies, wie zu lesen ist, auferlegt worden. An den Tagen der Klagen und der Passion des Herrn dürfen sie überhaupt nicht in der Öffentlichkeit erscheinen.”

**10** D. Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 157.

**11** As far as I know, there is no English translation of this book available.

**12** Th. Kaufmann, *Luthers Juden* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015), 64–74; H.-M. Kirn, “Luther und die Juden,” in *Luther Handbuch*, ed. A. Beutel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 217–24.

with all their prayer books and Talmudic teachers. All of that kind teaches them idolization, lies, curses, and blasphemy... Ban each and every teaching of the Rabbis, and ban it with all means... Suspend safe conduct of Jews and their right to walk on streets... Forbid them their usury and take away all their money and their bijou of Silver and Gold... because everything they own they have stolen and robbed with their usury that is their only way of making a living... Give to the young, strong Jews threshing flails, axes, hoes, spades, distaffs, and mandrels and force them to work.<sup>13</sup>

For Luther, Jews were total strangers in a Christian world he dreamt of. He did not accept at all that Jews were still living among Christians, wondering

which devil has brought them [i. e., the Jews; W.T.] into our land; we did not call them from Jerusalem. Furthermore, nobody holds them back; land and roads are open to them. May they go down to their land, if they like to, and we will gladly give them gifts to get rid of them, because they are a burden weighing heavily on us; it is as if a plague, a pestilence, and a vain disaster is in our land.<sup>14</sup>

This kind of antisemitic rhetoric was a refiguration and a model of the eventual antisemitic rhetoric of the National Socialist Party in the twentieth century.

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**13** M. Luther, *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen: Neu bearbeitet und kommentiert von Matthias Morgenstern* (Wiesbaden: Berlin University Press, 2016), 195–201: “Erstens, dass man ihre Synagogen oder Schulen mit Feuer anstecke und, was nicht brennen will, mit Erde überhäufe und zuschütte, damit kein Mensch mehr davon in Ewigkeit einen Stein oder einen Schlacke sehen kann . . . Zweitens, dass man auch ihre Häuser zerbreche und zerstöre. Denn in ihnen treiben sie eben dasselbe, wie sie es in ihren Schulen treiben . . . Drittens, dass man ihnen alle ihre Betbüchlein und Talmudisten wegnehme, in denen diese Abgöttereien, die Lügen, der Fluch und die Lästerung gelehrt werden . . . Viertens, dass man ihren Rabbinen [unter Androhung der Strafe des Verlusts] von Leib und Leben verbiete, weiterhin zu lehren . . . Fünftens, dass man den Juden das [freie] Geleit und [das Recht zur Benutzung der] Straße ganz und gar aufhebe . . . Sechstens, dass man ihnen den Wucher verbiete und ihnen alle Barschaft und Kleinodien an Silber und Gold wegnehme und es beseitige, um es zu verwahren. Und dies ist die Begründung dafür: Alles, was sie haben (wie oben gesagt), haben sie uns gestohlen und durch ihren Wucher geraubt weil sie sonst keinen anderen Lebensunterhalt haben . . . Siebtens, dass man den jungen, starken Juden und Jüdinnen Dreschflegel, Axt, Hacke, Spaten, Spinnrocken, Spindel in die Hand gebe und lasse sie im Schweiß ihres Angesichts ihr Brot verdienen, wie Adams Kindern auferlegt (Genesis 3,19).”

**14** *Ibid.*, 190.

## 4 Collaboration of National Socialism and Lutheran and Catholic Leaders

Joachim Hossenfelder was one of the most prominent leaders of a Lutheran movement that eventually was named “Deutsche Christen” (German Christians). In 1933, he published a book, and its title referred directly to Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf*: it was called *Unser Kampf*. Hossenfelder propagated a fundamental interest of both the German Christians and the Hitler movement to keep the German people clear from any external influence, because

a nation... is a community of those sharing the same blood and the same history. It was one of the most meaningful events that God created a people... And this creation has God operated by Adolf Hitler who can be confidently called the greatest man after Martin Luther. Now we have a German people, and based on faith, we can say that this German people is according to God’s will and order.<sup>15</sup>

The German Christians warmly appreciated Hitler’s action against the Jews and were sure that the measures against Jews, which harmed them more and more, were according to Christian tradition and to God’s will.

The same type of thinking could be found in Catholic scholars such as Michael Schmaus, who was a highly valued theologian during the time of Hitler and afterwards. In 1933, he was appointed professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Muenster. There he held his inaugural lecture in front of the clergy, the administration of the university, and many students. The title of his lecture was programmatic: *Begegnungen zwischen katholischem Christentum und nationalsozialistischer Weltanschauung* (*Encounters Between Catholic Faith and National Socialist Worldview*). It was published in a series called *Reich und Kirche* (*Reich and Church*) that aimed to be “totally German and totally Catholic.”<sup>16</sup> When Schmaus reflected on his motivation to print his lecture, he wrote an unambiguous statement: it was out of the “consideration that is not only a self-evident demand of the time to align oneself wholeheartedly with the new

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<sup>15</sup> Hossenfelder, quoted in: M. Gailus, “‘Nationalsozialistische Christen’ und ‘christliche Nationalsozialisten’: Anmerkungen zur Vielfalt synkretistischer Gläubigkeiten im ‘Dritten Reich’,” in *Nationalprotestantische Mentalitäten in Deutschland (1870–1970): Konturen, Entwicklungslinien und Umbrüche eines Weltbildes*, ed. M. Gailus and H. Lehmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 223–62, esp. 228.

<sup>16</sup> Text printed on the backside of the cover of the book: M. Schmaus, *Begegnungen zwischen katholischem Christentum und nationalsozialistischer Weltanschauung* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1933).

state, but also to praise the intellectual foundation of the National Socialist worldview.”<sup>17</sup> He did exactly that without any reservation, and he did it on the basis of a dogmatic view of God’s history that defined the Jewish community as dead.

The gifts of God do not find any barrier in human particularity, and they are not bound to any people. Once, there was a people that believed that God’s revelation was bound to its nation. It had to atone for its delusion by being rejected by God. It is the Jewish people.<sup>18</sup>

It was Pope Pius XII who renewed the blame against Jews for having killed God in his preaching before an assembly of cardinals on December 24, 1942, when the mass extermination had already been underway for one year.<sup>19</sup> He must have known that. By referring to this kind of Christian ideology that had always been fueling Christian hatred against Jews, the pope gave way to Christian consent in what was called “Endlösung der Judenfrage” [“the Final Solution”], which did not erupt like a volcano but was enforced gradually by a process that was ongoing since 1941.<sup>20</sup>

## 5 *Nostra Aetate* 4 as a Compromise Document

In 1965, almost at the end of the Second Vatican Council, a short text was enacted dealing with the Catholic Church’s relation to Judaism, chapter 4 of *Nostra Aetate*. It was a turnaround with respect to the relation of the Catholic Church to Judaism. It stated that Mary, Jesus, and his followers were Jews and that God never revoked the covenant with Israel. At the end of chapter 4, although not explicitly condemning antisemitism, it was at least decried:

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gos-

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17 Ibid., 3: “Erwägung, daß es nicht nur eine selbstverständliche Forderung der Zeit ist, sich rückhaltlos in den neuen Staat einzuordnen, sondern auch die geistigen Grundlagen der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung zu würdigen.”

18 Ibid., 33f: “Dieses Geben Gottes kennt keine Schranke menschlicher Eigenart, ist also auch nicht gebunden an irgendein Volk. Es gab einmal ein Volk, das glaubte, die Offenbarung sei an seine Nationalität gebunden. Es musste diesen Wahn mit der Verwerfung büßen. Es ist das jüdische Volk.”

19 S. Friedlander, *Pius XII. und das Dritte Reich: Eine Dokumentation* (Munich: Beck, 2001), 225.

20 I. Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 254–57.

pel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.<sup>21</sup>

The Popes John Paul II and Francis continued this path. And it was Francis who made clear during his visit in Yad Vashem in May 2014 that when confronted with the mass extermination of Jews, Christian traditions could not offer anything helpful. In his reflection that was something like a prayer—maybe it was a prayer—he did not quote anything stemming from Christian tradition.<sup>22</sup>

## 6 The Commanding Voice of Auschwitz within Christianity: Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt of the Reformed Church

What Pope Francis said in Yad Vashem sounded like an administration of the will of a Protestant theologian (Francis surely was not aware of this) who passed away in 2002, Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt. Marquardt made a clear statement:

Whatever Auschwitz may be for Jews today or any day, for Christians it is the end of every theological rationalization. This is: If we really want to face Auschwitz it can only mean to do away with every apologia of Christianity and Christian theology. Face to face with Auschwitz there is no justifying faith, no defense of our actions or omissions, of our confidence or our mistrust. No defense of the Christian dogma, even not of the New Testament. Since our commitment to the New Testament and to the dogma did not force ourselves to resist to Auschwitz, our referring to them could never defend ourselves today. Face to face with Auschwitz, they lost their legitimation. Rather, all our grief is upon them, since both the New Testament and the teaching of the church turned into sources of legitimizing the desire to murder. Instead of defending them, we are compelled—if Auschwitz ever touches us—to fight for a new land of the Bible and of the dogma that perished in Auschwitz.<sup>23</sup>

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21 Pope Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration On The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions*, issued October 28, 1965, accessed May 30, 2018, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html), 4.

22 Pope Francis, "Address of Pope Francis at Yad Vashem," issued May 26, 2014, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://www.yadvashem.org/pope-visits/francis/speech.html>.

23 F.-W. Marquardt, *Von Elend und Heimsuchung der Theologie: Prolegomena zur Dogmatik* (Munich: Kaiser, 1992), 139: "Auschwitz ist, was immer es heute oder eines Tages für Juden bedeuten mag, für Christen das Ende aller theologischen Rationalisierungen. Das heißt: Wollen wir Auschwitz entsprechen, kann das nur bedeuten: Weg mit aller Apologie, Verteidigung des Christentums und seiner Theologie. Angesichts von Auschwitz gibt es keinen rechtfertigenden Glauben, keine Verteidigung unseres Handelns oder Unterlassens, unseres Vertrauens oder unseres Mißtrauens. Keine Verteidigung des christlichen Dogmas, nicht einmal des Neuen Testaments. Denn

This is a commanding voice of a Christian, referring not least to Emil Fackenheim's book *To Mend the World* and the section "The Commanding Voice of Auschwitz," and I regret that hardly any Christian or theologian has ever really been touched by Marquardt's clear, honest, and essential words. Moreover, Marquardt has been criticized for them once in a while.

## 7 Four Suggestions

Finally, at the end of this article, I suggest following Marquardt's points that are helpful and demanding in order to at least begin to overcome the Christian hatred of Jews that is implicitly still present in systematic Christian theology:

1. Christians must learn to read not only the Old Testament (which is in fact the First Testament<sup>24</sup>) but also the New Testament as a collection of Jewish texts (except for Luke). Reading them as Jewish texts requires at least a methodical suspension of dogmatic hermeneutics of the Bible, as Christian tradition has it, and learn from different Jewish approaches to the Holy Scripture. Therefore, theological studies should be complemented by some Judaic studies.
2. Moreover, Christians studying theology must go beyond both Bible and dogma and turn to Jewish-Christian sources that had been suppressed and partly destroyed by Gentile-Christian movements. These sources provide a glimpse of Jesus' Jewish faith and practice as well as Jewish claims within the Jesus movement, and furthermore, they help to overcome Jesus' paganization that has always been one of the main sources of Christian anti-Jewish and antisemitic hatred.
3. In this way, Christians should become courageous enough to turn their backs to claims that have turned out to produce hatred against Jews or indifference to their fate. This goes for dogmatic claims, too.
4. Becoming courageous and educated is not a matter of a short term but a life-long road. It is no problem to take action and get started, even though it

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wie wenig unsere Bindung an Neues Testament und Dogma in uns zu Lebensstatsachen wurden, die uns in Widerstand gegen Auschwitz getrieben haben, so wenig könnte eine Berufung auf sie uns heute verteidigen. Vor Auschwitz haben auch sie nichts mehr zu sagen. Eher schlägt unser ganzer Kummer auf sie zurück, weil sie Quellen für den Legitimationsdurst von Mördern sein konnten. Und statt sie verteidigen zu können, sind wir, wenn uns denn Auschwitz berührt, hineingerissen in einen Kampf um Neugewinnung von Land aus Bibel und Dogma, das uns in Auschwitz versunken ist. Wer weiß, wo wir einst stehen werden?"

24 E. Zenger, *Das Erste Testament: Die jüdische Bibel und die Christen* (Stuttgart: Patmos, 1994).

might be late, very late. Will we succeed? I hope so. At least, Christians must do their share to keep the “commanding voice of Auschwitz” alive and to help “to mend the world.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> E. L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 299.



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Petra Heldt

# Antisemitism and Protestant Churches: A Quest for Reform

## I A Troubling Question

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) published this working definition for antisemitism in 2016:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

The first by-line of the definition clarifies that “manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity.”<sup>1</sup>

By now it is a common place that modern antisemitism includes, if not targets, the State of Israel. Antisemitism presents itself as a global movement with international support for the boycott of the Jewish State. The BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) is one of the center pieces in the attempt of delegitimizing the Jewish State. Having been initiated in Iran in 2000, BDS went global with the United Nations’ World Conference against Racism 2001 in Durban, South Africa. Since then, BDS receives its finance and workforce through secular NGOs and its cultural acceptance through religious church institutions. Churches provide BDS educational tools. Those instructions include the antisemitic Kairos-Palestine Document, the Israel-maligining volunteer programs like EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel) with its various off-shoots, and the antisemitic Palestinian Liberation “Theologies” produced by, for example, Naim Ateek and Mitri Raheb. Those socio-religious projects are sponsored by the World Council of Churches and financed by a number of its affiliated Protestant church leadership in-groups.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, “Working Definition of Antisemitism,” issued May 26, 2016, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/news-archive/working-definition-antisemitism>.

<sup>2</sup> For references, see the research database of NGO-Monitor, <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/ngos/>.

The term “Protestant church leadership in-groups” distinguishes that faction in the Protestant churches from regular Protestant church leaders and their flocks who are often innocent of the in-group’s activities. Current research<sup>3</sup> shows that Protestant church service forces, elected or tenured, who are involved in those activities, veil their antisemitic intentions and mislead the church and the public at large. Those church officials put a veneer of morality on the steady stream of disinformation about the State of Israel and the Palestinian areas. While often referring to church documents that show respect for Jews and Judaism, those church in-groups can, simultaneously, show actions and publications that malign Israel’s vigilance against terrorism<sup>4</sup> and undermine her efforts in building a democratic state in the face of war and terrorism. The discourse of such officials appears to be manipulative because known information is often hidden from the public. The aim seems to be the calculated control over public opinion regarding Israel.

Currently, Christian and Jewish scholars and clergy are frequently sidelined and delegitimized<sup>5</sup> when wanting to publish and speak about the complex reality of the Jewish State in Protestant churches. The exclusion of alternative information is an attempt by some in-groups to protect their false narrative of an invented history of Israel. The church publications of EAPPI, the Kairos-Palestine Document, and Raheb’s Palestine narrative are cases in point.<sup>6</sup> Each one of them

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**3** Cf. P. Heldt, “Christen im Nahen Osten: Orientierungspunkt Israel,” *Kirche und Israel: Neukirchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 32, no. 2 (2017): 153–65; P. Heldt, “Mitri Raheb: Glaube unter imperialer Macht. Eine palästinensische Theologie der Hoffnung,” *Kirche und Israel: Neukirchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 31, no. 2 (2016): 134–48; articles by M. Lowe at *Gatestone Institute*, see <https://de.gatestoneinstitute.org/author/Malcolm+Lowe> and the articles by D. van Zile in *CAMERA*, see <https://www.camera.org/camera-author/dexter-van-zile/>.

**4** Cf. my presentation at the NGO-Monitor Conference on EAPPI in Jerusalem in 2016, and Malcolm Lowe’s exposé at that conference on the WCC, cf. P. Heldt, “World Council of Churches Favors Nationalism and Anti-Semitism: The Kairos Palestine Document and Alternative Tourism,” *Gatestone Institute*, issued January 22, 2017, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9800/wcc-kairos-antisemitism>; M. Lowe, “World Council of Churches Struggles with the Truth—Again,” *Gatestone Institute*, issued March 6, 2016, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7565/world-council-of-churches-water>.

**5** A case in point is NGO-Monitor and its scholars. I was told that analytical evidence published by NGO-Monitor is unacceptable in scholarly discourse since it is, as it were, biased in favor of the State of Israel and thus untrustworthy. Cf. also a case regarding Facebook which points to similar techniques, presented by Phyllis Chesler, “How I Was Rejected by Facebook—and Won,” *Arutz Sheva*, September 13, 2018, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/22729>.

**6** Cf. the numerous *Gatestone* articles on those subjects, especially those authored by Malcolm Lowe, <https://de.gatestoneinstitute.org/author/Malcolm+Lowe>. Also cf. my article “Fortpflan-

guards over the false claim that the Palestinian people were an ancient people that lived since time immemorial in a land called Palestine. Widely distributed by some Protestant church officials in Europe and the US<sup>7</sup>, none of those imaginary stories refer to the documented history that, for example, the Roman Empire punished the people of Israel for defending its land, Eretz Israel, in the Bar Kokhba uprising in 135 C.E. by replacing the name of Israel with that of Palestine. The re-naming had no lasting effect until three twentieth-century attempts applied the Roman-invented name to the land. Some Lutheran antisemitic replacement theologians called Israel “Palestine”; the British Mandate renamed Eretz Israel as “Palestine”; the Muslim leader Yasser Arafat propagated a Muslim state of Palestine in the Land of Israel. BDS activists feed on a history of the land as “Palestine” that starts with the PLO leader Arafat in 1968.

The in-groups’ manipulative discourse thrives on purposefully selected memory on the one hand, and on narratives that contest, marginalize, and suppress alternative views by ignoring, labeling, and smearing opposing voices on the other. The result makes the church look like it is developing Protestant church-sponsored antisemitic hegemony over Israel. The method of the manipulative discourse is social bullying. That unethical misconduct in the church makes a church appear like a pseudo Christian sect, that intends to change the social fabric of a society at large and is set to cause harm to Israel.

## II Research Context

The perception of manipulation of discourse by Protestant church in-groups with the aim of nurturing and sustaining antisemitism in the public sphere is best placed within two interconnected research areas, (1) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and (2) biblical hermeneutics.

### (1) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Teun van Dijk,<sup>8</sup> an acclaimed CDA scholar at the University of Barcelona, shows that the manipulation of discourse<sup>9</sup> is a social aberration based on a three-angu-

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zung einer Mentalität,” *Kirche und Israel: Neukirchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 33, no. 1 (2018): 5–15.

<sup>7</sup> In addition, cf. material distributed by the Lutheran World Federation in Jerusalem, such as flags, posters, and pamphlets that show Palestine in all of the State of Israel.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. T. A. van Dijk, “Discourse and Manipulation,” *Discourse & Society* 17, no. 3 (2006): 359–83.

lar approach: (a) “a form of social power abuse”; (b) “a form of cognitive mind control”; (c) “a form of discursive interaction.”<sup>10</sup> All three forms will be identified within Protestant church in-group leadership that promotes antisemitism.

(a) Van Dijk’s research shows that, as a social phenomenon, manipulation of discourse works through “*social power abuse*.” Unlike democratic state institutions, Protestant churches lack independent checks and balances of appointed or tenured office holders. Checks and balances identify and eradicate manipulation of discourse.<sup>11</sup> Lacking mechanisms to correct irregularities, such as antisemitism, church adherents have two choices: either, implicitly, to stay away from the church, or, explicitly, to resign from it. At the time of Nazi Germany when the majority of German Protestant clergy followed, nurtured, and sustained antisemitism in church and state, dismayed church members stayed away from church. Today, church members often explicitly resign from the church when they realize their impotence in fighting church-affiliated antisemitism.

Recently, Malcolm Lowe<sup>12</sup> investigated the current decline of membership numbers in Protestant churches and suggested that the current huge wave of Protestant church-leavers is more prominent in those Protestant churches that present antisemitic hegemony over the State of Israel. Lowe’s assumption is that lying about Israel in a church is a symptom for other wrong-doings of that institution. Where a Protestant church presents Israel falsely as an apartheid state with illegitimate domination and social inequity, as if being a pariah state killing Arab children or poisoning Arab wells, it might have few moral stops in lying about other things in other areas, such as sexual or financial abuse, too.

(b) As a “*cognitive phenomenon*,” according to van Dijk, the manipulative discourse of certain Protestant church circles interferes with the process of understanding Israel in its historic and present-day reality. For the antisemitic purpose of such Protestant church in-groups that means that they manipulate the minds of congregations, pilgrims, and students with biased models and social representations, that is, as if Israel steals the land and the history of a Palestinian people. This form of manipulative discourse in the church is interlinked with the study of biblical hermeneutics which will be discussed further on.

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<sup>9</sup> As the boundaries between illegitimate manipulation and legitimate persuasion can become blurred, van Dijk assumes that “the crucial criteria are that people are being acted upon against their fully conscious will and interests, and that manipulation is in the best interests of the manipulator,” van Dijk, “Discourse and Manipulation,” 361.

<sup>10</sup> van Dijk, “Discourse and Manipulation,” 359.

<sup>11</sup> See the US debate about possible manipulations of the public by a so-called “deep-state.”

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M. Lowe, “Anti-israélisme, symptôme de crise des institutions,” *Le Christianisme au XXe Siecle* 10 (1994): 60–62.

(c) As a “*discursive interaction*,” as per van Dijk, manipulation is exercised through *texts, talks, and visual messages*. Antisemitic church in-groups employ *texts* that describe Israel in negative language, as, for instance, in the widely distributed and church-promoted antisemitic literature of Palestinian liberation “theology.” That ideology falsifies the history of the State of Israel and caricatures the democratic Jewish State as an apartheid state.

*Talks* also reiterate the negative image of Israel. For example, mass *fora*, like regional, national or international church gatherings, are employed by such in-groups for re-stating the false image of Israel. To this end, the same known antisemitic speakers tend to be invited to deliver that message, year after year.

The *visual message* is yet another tool for the manipulation of discourse. Examples are the controlled pilgrimages to “Palestine”<sup>13</sup> or films that purport antisemitic narratives, such as “The Occupation of the American Mind.” The film, shown in November 2017, at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Marblehead, Massachusetts, USA, posits that Israel has “infiltrated” American media to the extent that all US media coverage on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is biased and anti-Palestinian.<sup>14</sup>

Summing up CDA research input for the problem at hand, discursive interaction emphasizes forms and formats like *our good things* versus *their bad things*. Such manipulation by church in-groups entrenches the label on the State of Israel as, for instance, being an alleged human rights abuser while presenting an image of certain Protestant churches and WCC-controlled pilgrims as the justice-and-peace-good-doers who uphold human rights.

Van Dijk’s analytical tool shows the (re)production of power abuse in the church by some in-groups through manipulative discourse which, consequently, paints Israel and its proponents as being socially unequal by the standards of the church.

However, there is a twofold question. Why do numerous other church servants and church members abstain from such antisemitic discourse? And why do they do not enough to stop the disturbing in-groups? The answer to the latter refers to the hierarchical structure of the Protestant churches. As in most churches, the superior directs the affairs. Among the clergy, contradiction gets reprimand, like-mindedness and yes-saying get promotion. While the laity has

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. the brochure issued by Brot für die Welt – Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, *Kommt und seht! Reisen und Pilgern im Heiligen Land*, issued May 2016. [https://shop.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/images/2016-06-28\\_pilgern\\_2016.pdf](https://shop.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/images/2016-06-28_pilgern_2016.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. D. Berrini Leblang, “Area Jews Ask: Why Would a Church Show an anti-Semitic Movie?” *Jewish Journal*, November 2, 2017, <https://jewishjournal.org/2017/11/02/area-jews-ask-why-would-a-church-show-an-anti-semitic-movie/>.

some few democratic tools, such as the community councils, it faces the fact that its rights have often been manipulated and abused in favor of the in-groups' positions. Currently, Israel-friendly Protestant church voices are frequently sidelined or even maligned. Yet such voices exist numerously. For instance, they are leading abundant Protestant church pilgrim tours with the precise aim to visit Israel and to learn about the reality of the State of Israel. There are Israel-minded church leaders, even if removed from the church center, who show overtly, in word and deed, that their Christian faith is informed by a positive and central image of Israel. They remain unimpressed by antisemitic manipulations of their colleagues. What does make the one tick and the other not?

## (2) Biblical Hermeneutics

While human decency is a strong antidote to any form of antisemitism, there is also the study of biblical hermeneutics that makes or fails resistance of church-connected antisemitic manipulation. The key concept of hermeneutics is the art of understanding. Hermeneutics and discourse studies are methodically interlinked. While discourse studies involve the strategic processing of texts and the constructing of mental models, hermeneutics show the contexts that influence the text.<sup>15</sup>

Hermeneutics in contemporary Protestant churches follow the rival conception of Israel as a real historic place and as an abstract spiritual ideal in the mind. Two opposing contexts influence the understanding of Israel in the biblical text.

Hermeneutics that read the biblical account from the perspective of historic realism understand a reference to Israel to mean Israel. In such reading, Israel is a land given to the people of Israel after their return from Egypt under Moses, marking the beginning of the history of Eretz Israel. Also, the seven divine covenants with Israel since Abraham, never revoked, have here a ring of historic realism. They are covenants, namely moral commitments, not contracts pursuing self-interests and profits.

In contrast, hermeneutics that read the biblical account as an abstract spiritual ideal in the mind will treat Israel, or any other biblical notion, such as the covenants, as a metaphor that can be replaced. If abstract, then any secular post-modern subject like racial equality, Palestine, or any other item in liberal Prot-

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. T. A. van Dijk, "Discourse Studies and Hermeneutics," *Discourse Studies* 13, no. 5 (2011): 609–21.

estantism can take obsession and become the focus of the attention and activity. If the biblical account is read in a spiritual way, replacement becomes the key. Furthermore, if free from the historic real context of the faith all the subjects are worthy in themselves. Yet the question is, whether the faith continues to be gripping; or if it is not more than any of the various secular ideas in a religious terminology.

For the impact of reading the Bible in the context of historic realism the current US-American Israel policy is of interest. Vice President Mike Pence, as reported,<sup>16</sup> appreciates a sentence from the book of Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, said the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end.” With historic realism, the Protestant Christian Pence reads the “you” as referring to Israel. In the abstract reading, the “you” is to be replaced by something else, such as “me,” or “Palestine.” In the historic reading, divinely inspired compassion for Israel is in place. In the abstract reading, divine peace and hope has nothing to do with Israel but with the subject of the liberal reader’s passion.

Commonly, post-modern Bible preachers substitute the reality of the Bible with the image of their minds. Thus the reaction to Pence’s Bible reading by former Lutheran Palestinian Bishop Munib Younan comes to no surprise when claiming that he is not afraid of Islamists but of the Americans.<sup>17</sup> A pastor of the Disciples of Christ church, Rebecca Littlejohn, stated: “I find very little [...] in Mike Pence’s religion that looks like Christianity to me.”<sup>18</sup> Division, indeed, and exclusion follow when abstract readings of the Bible meet historic realism.

In fact, such division in Protestant churches existed since John Calvin and Martin Luther. Calvin in Switzerland promoted biblical hermeneutics of historic realism while Luther in central Germany preferred the spiritual reading. For John Calvin and his followers, the primary reading text was the Hebrew Bible with esteem for the divine covenants with Israel. Such reading informed Calvinists in their building of political and social structures. Thus they employed the biblical concept of covenant for international affairs but the contract for business. Covenantal theology enlightened the politics of Switzerland, the Netherlands, Scot-

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. C. Ong, “U.S. Vice President Mike Pence Reveals the Bible Verse that Hangs above his Mantle,” *Christian Today*, February 4, 2017, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/vice-president-mike-pence-reveals-the-bible-verse-thats-hangs-above-his-mantle/104411.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. D. van Zile, “CNN Errs in Relying On Anti-Israel Collaborator For Commentary About Israel,” *Camera*, January 17, 2018, <https://www.camera.org/article/cnn-errs-in-relying-on-anti-israel-collaborator-for-commentary-about-israel/>.

<sup>18</sup> “Palestinian Christians Slam Pence’s pro-Israel Faith.” *Ynet News*, January 22, 2018, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5074816,00.html>.



land, Cromwell's England, and the Pilgrim Fathers in North America. Precisely those countries developed any number of expressions for *ahavat Zion* (love of Zion). The Balfour Declaration of 1917 in the United Kingdom derives from such a context. Pence follows that path of old.

Luther and his followers, in contrast, found the key biblical texts in the epistles of Paul, reading them with a spiritual emphasis. In that reading strategy, the biblical covenants became nebulous notions and Israel was replaced by the church. Following the period of the Reformation, the Enlightenment transformed the replacement reading of the Bible even further. Now, Israel was not any longer replaced by the church alone but by any abstract idea of the mind. Israel could now be replaced by whichever subject captured the mind of Lutheran leadership in-groups. Nazism is one of the more prominent replacements. In Luther-inspired countries, their connection to the State of Israel and the Jews remained vague. In the case of Younan and Littlejohn, the replacement of Israel with Palestinians and the identification of evil with America follows the old Lutheran spiritual currency.

Unlike Protestant churches, most other churches in Israel show a synthesis between the historic realism of the Bible in the place of Israel in which they live and the spiritual worship in liturgy by which they express their hopes of the faith, often in abstract and spiritual terms. The latest expression of such synthesis can be found in the establishment of Christian Empowerment Groups in Israel (CEG). CEG enable young Christians, men and women alike, who wish to join the Israel Defense Forces to do so. CEG are organized by orthodox Christians in the North of Israel. CEG express a Christian faith that is grounded in biblical realism. This includes the understanding that Christians have no other safe home in the Middle East but Israel and that that home needs to be protected. In the meantime, CEG are supported by Protestant church communities in Austria and Germany. Biblical hermeneutics that follow historic realism have no less impact on social action than reading strategies that follow spiritual-abstract notions.

### III Recommendations

- (1) The analysis shows the aberration of small but influential in-groups in Protestant church structures that promote antisemitism in church and society by enabling BDS. It is made obvious that there is a lack of external evaluation of church work performed by elected and tenured church servants. There also seems to be a lack of external legal options to stop immoral church behavior, such as antisemitism. The church system needs checks and balances.

Suggestion: To establish a commission of (Jewish and Christian) strategists with the task to review Protestant ecclesiastical establishments for transparency.

- (2) The investigation shows that there is a systemic public exclusion of theologians, theologians, and church leaders who see Israel favorably.

Suggestion: To establish Protestant church *fora* that promote Christian theologians and theologians which oppose antisemitism within the Protestant churches. Such *fora* would support the tasks of the Protestant churches.

- (3) Replacement theology is an aggressive component in spreading antisemitism and BDS. It derives from the hermeneutics of the abstract spiritual ideal in the mind, the preferred reading strategy of liberal and post-modern intellectuals. Falsely labeled as being primitive and fundamentalist, hermeneutics of relative literalism and historic realism, precisely, enable the reduction and prevention of antisemitism.

Suggestion: To develop curricula that advance studies of hermeneutics with historic realism. Such curricula should endorse the traditional Mediterranean ethno-religious policy characterized by the fourfold unit of land, state, religion, and language.

- (4) The study introduces the historic consciousness of Middle Eastern churches in view of Israel and the Muslim world.

Suggestion: Protestant churches establish studies with Israel and churches in Israel and in (former) Muslim countries, including Eastern and Southern Europe. Educational cooperation between West and East could become a key in fighting antisemitism in Protestant church settings.

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Yaakov Ariel

# American Christianity, Jews and Israel: Antisemitism and Faith

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love. For love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

Nelson Mandela<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

On August 11–12, 2017, armed white supremacists, white nationalists, neo-Confederates, Klansmen, neo-Nazis, and other racist and antisemitic groups marched in Charlottesville, Virginia. Carrying Nazi-like banners, chanting antisemitic, as well as anti-Muslim and anti-black slogans, they clashed violently with counter demonstrators.<sup>2</sup> The magnitude of the event, its militancy, and the venom it unleashed against Jews and others shocked many Americans, who had viewed such groups as fringe, small, and lacking in influence and importance. Since the 1960s, and even more so the 1980s, American writers and activists thought that White Christian antisemitic groups have weakened and declined, moving into the shadows, having lost their legitimacy and much of their base of support.<sup>3</sup> This, they now discovered, was not quite true.<sup>4</sup> Racist, virulently antisemitic Christian groups have not taken over American society, and they weakened since their heyday in the 1920s and 1930s. Such groups, however, returned with much vigor to the limelight, complete with Nazi-like regalia and arms in their hands, carving a more visible niche in the American public

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1 N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 542.

2 Cf. M. Astor, Ch. Caron, and D. Victor, “A Guide to the Charlottesville Aftermath,” *The New York Times*, August 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/13/us/charlottesville-virginia-overview.html>.

3 Cf. Ch. E. Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and their Lives Today* (New York: Summit Books, 1985).

4 Cf. D. E. Lipstadt, *Antisemitism: Here and Now* (New York: Schocken Books, 2018).

arena.<sup>5</sup> According to one source, the number of hate groups in America increased by more than 50 percent since the year 2000.<sup>6</sup>

Clinging to a prevailing ethos, Jews and others have tended to see America as a country that, at least ideally, provides its inhabitants with unprecedented privileges and opportunities while respecting their heritages and faiths.<sup>7</sup> This almost utopian picture did not always correspond to the ethnic and religious realities of American life. In actuality, the United States has been mostly a Christian country, both in its vision and its demography.<sup>8</sup> Non-Christians, and, at times, even non-Protestants, had to struggle for acceptance and equal standing. Even when legislatures offered Jews full civil standing at the turn of the nineteenth century, Jews still confronted restrictions in housing, education, and employment.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, older European images and stereotypes of Jews persisted in America, even if the country proved more hospitable to Jews than Europe.

Following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s–1960s, the cultural transformation of the 1960s–1980s, and the interfaith movement of the 1960s–1970s, most Jews became reassured that America has indeed turned into the pluralistic and inclusive nation they had hoped and struggled for, and that antisemitism, while not disappearing completely, had declined sharply and moved to the margins.<sup>10</sup> Those margins, it now seems, have been broader than many have assumed. Christian Americans, as well as their Canadian neighbors, inherited theological and cultural opinions on Jews that had circulated in Western societies for many centuries. While one can point to considerable improvements in American Christian attitudes toward Jews in the last two generations, pockets of antagonism and negative stereotypes have persisted. Even before the recent virulent outbursts, there have been many reminders that for many Christians, the Jews have been an “other,” and for some the “other,” as many Christians do not relate

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5 Southern Poverty Law Center has tracked 1,020 hate groups in the United States in 2018. Cf. “Hate Map,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed September 4, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>.

6 Cf. “The Anne Frank Center USA Proudly Presents ‘Lashon Hara: On the Consequences of Hate Speech,’” Cision PRWeb, November 19, 2014, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/11/prweb12336281.htm>.

7 Cf. A. Libman Lebeson, *Pilgrim People* (New York: Harper & Brother, 1950).

8 See R. T. Handy’s classical work, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

9 Cf. L. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

10 Cf. Silberman, *A Certain People*; Y. Ariel, “Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. C. Cornille (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 205–23.

to Jews in the same manner they interact with Christians, including those who affiliate with different groups than their own.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, while Christian American attitudes toward the Jews have mostly improved since the 1960s, American Christianity is particularly diverse and one cannot point to one cohesive attitude on its part. Even within the same Christian denominations, different groups and members have voiced varied opinions.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, attitudes have not been static. In some quarters of American Christianity, there have been considerable changes in the perception of Jews, while in others traditional, supersessionist opinions have remained the norm. In many quarters, attitudes toward the Jews are ambivalent and complex. One element that has stirred strong and diverse reactions, at the same time enhancing antisemitic language, has been the rise of the State of Israel and, since 1967, its occupation of territories with Palestinian majorities.<sup>13</sup>

In order to assess American Christian attitudes, we will therefore need to examine a large spectrum of groups and movements. These range from progressive Christians on the left to regressive non-inclusive groups on the far right. Only then can we reach broader generalizations. Christian attitudes toward Jews often derive from the groups' tenets of faith and the social and cultural atmosphere and political standings of the different Christian groups, and one needs to examine opinions toward the Jews within these contexts.

## Liberal and Mainline Christians

The terms mainline and liberal Christians relate mostly to historical denominations that have not chosen the conservative evangelical road, or walked away from it.<sup>14</sup> Many of the mainline Protestant churches, including American Baptists, the Presbyterian Church USA, and the United Methodist Church, have taken liberal, egalitarian, inclusive, gay-friendly choices in the last decades, but they also hold conservative wings in their midst. In Canada, Protestant de-

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. L. B. Spitzer, *Baptists, Jews, and the Holocaust: The Hand of Sincere Friendship* (Valley Forge: Judson, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. P. Merkley, *Christian Attitudes towards the State of Israel* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2001); Y. Ariel, "Contemporary Christianity and Israel," in *Essential Israel: Essays for the 21st Century*, ed. S. I. Troen and R. Fish (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 280–311.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. M. E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, vols. 1–4 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986–1998).

nominations organized somewhat differently than in the United States. A number of the larger mainline Protestant churches amalgamated in 1925 to form the United Church of Canada, which became and remained the largest in the country. In America, mainline churches were indeed the mainline until the 1970s. In the last decades, they have declined in numbers and lost members, while conservative churches gained more ground.<sup>15</sup>

In relation to the Jews, there have been, in the last half a century, dual trends on the part of liberal and mainline Protestants, while Catholic trends have been somewhat more cohesive. Since the 1960s, both Catholics and liberal Protestants have, in principle, accepted as legitimate, at least in theory, the existence of a Jewish religious tradition and community outside of the confines of Christianity. Open supersessionist attitudes have dwindled among mainline Christians, although they have not disappeared completely.<sup>16</sup>

A number of developments contributed to the change of mind. One of them had been the realization on the part of Christian thinkers that the horrors of the Holocaust ultimately resulted from Christianity's antagonistic and demeaning attitudes toward Judaism and Jews.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the de-legitimation of the Nazi regime and its ideology brought about a taboo in polite society on Nazi-like opinions and rhetoric. If before World War II, writers, politicians, and celebrities felt confident when expressing antisemitic opinions, they now have to tune down, disguise, or repress their feelings or prejudices. Incidents, in which American Christian leaders and ministers make anti-Jewish remarks, or slips of the tongue, have occurred numerous times, often resulting in apologies.<sup>18</sup> Such exclamations had become "politically incorrect" even before Americans invented the term at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Mainline American Christian's official standing toward Judaism and Jews changed considerably in concurrence with and following the declarations and theological pronouncements that the movement of interfaith dialogue of the 1960s and 1970s spelled out. The new atmosphere, which promoted more accept-

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15 Cf. D. W. Lotz, ed., *Altered Landscapes: Christianity in America, 1935–1985* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

16 Cf. Y. Ariel, "Protestant Attitudes to Jews and Judaism during the Last Fifty Years," in *Terms of Survival: The Jewish World Since 1945*, ed. R. S. Wistrich (London: Routledge, 1995), 332–48.

17 Cf. Ariel, "Jewish Christian Dialogue."

18 Cf. Y. Ariel, *Philosemites or Antisemites? Evangelical Christian Attitudes towards the Jews* (Jerusalem: Vidal Sasson Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002).

ance and recognition, brought about momentous changes.<sup>19</sup> Christian thinkers began following in the footsteps of the Christian Realist theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who pioneered already in the 1920s–1930s the idea that Jews were not in need of the Christian gospel and had a vital religious tradition of their own to sustain them.<sup>20</sup> Interfaith dialogue progressed in the decades between the two world wars, alongside unprecedented low points in many Christian quarters in their treatment of Jews. Paradoxically, the rise of more radical ethnic hatred in the 1920s–1930s stirred liberal religious activists to interfaith activity and enhanced the development of more systematic dialogue. Liberal Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish thinkers offered each other a greater amount of recognition and appreciation, and there were advances in more systematic and institutionalized forms of dialogue. The movement advanced considerably in the years after World War II, reaching a “golden age” in the late 1960s and 1970s, when a momentum for reconciliation and dialogue flourished in Europe, America, Israel, and other countries. Although the movement of interfaith dialogue has since witnessed setbacks and lost much of its momentum, it has nonetheless made a profound impact on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, bringing about great improvements in the manner the different communities of faith relate to each other.

Christian missionary activity had caused much resentment among Jewish leaders, who viewed the missions as a demonstration of contempt toward Judaism and Jews. During the 1950s–1960s, pro-dialogue groups within mainline churches, such as the Presbyterian Church USA or the United Methodist Church, gained the upper hand, and a growing number of Protestant denominations decided that they had no more interest in allocating money and human resources to evangelizing Jews.<sup>21</sup> The Catholic Church as well as mainline churches came out with a series of historical decisions.<sup>22</sup> They exonerated the Jews from long

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**19** On the movement of interfaith reconciliation and the changes in brought about see the following collections: H. Croner, ed., *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations: An Unabridged Collection of Christian Documents* (New York: Stimulus Books, 1977); H. Croner, and L. Klenicki, eds., *Issues in the Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Jewish Perspectives on Covenant, Mission and Witness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); H. Croner, ed., *More Stepping Stones to Jewish-Christian Relations: An Unabridged Collection of Christian Documents, 1975–1983* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

**20** On Reinhold Niebuhr, social justice, and the Jews, see E. Naveh, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Non-utopian Liberalism: Beyond Illusion and Despair* (Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2002).

**21** Cf. Y. Ariel, “Eschatology, Evangelism, and Dialogue: The Presbyterian Mission to the Jews, 1920–1960,” *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 75, no. 1 (1997): 29–42.

**22** Cf. Croner, *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations*.



held accusations, such as *Deicide*, the idea that Jews, in every generation, are responsible for the suffering and death of Jesus.

Jewish thinkers have noticed and appreciated the transformation.<sup>23</sup> A number of Jewish leaders have pointed out that the change had not been complete, expressing concern that instead of disappearing, antisemitism has become more subtle and disguised. For example, anti-Israel attitudes have replaced, at least partially, anti-Jewish ones.<sup>24</sup> The June 1967 war, in which Israel had overtaken Jordanian, Egyptian, and Syrian territories, worked to alter the image of Israel even among those mainline Christians who previously approved of Israel's existence. Christian liberal opinions have often been committed to Arabs in the Middle East, to political justice, and to protecting Third World nations. In later years, liberal Christians have also come to put high premium on dialogue with Muslims and on establishing cordial relations with the Muslim communities worldwide. A development that demonstrated the sharp change in attitudes was the depiction of Israel in the progressive Protestant publication *Christianity and Crisis*, which Reinhold Niebuhr founded, and where he published a number of pro-Zionist essays.<sup>25</sup> One of the most influential American theologian of the twentieth century, the socially progressive Niebuhr advocated, in addition to a new approach toward the Jewish people, a pro-Zionist outlook. After the periodical took an anti-Israel twist in the 1970s, Niebuhr's widow, Ursula, requested that the editors remove her late husband's name from the publication. The change was symbolic. Progressive Protestants have come to take exception to Israeli policies, and, often, to the entire Israeli project. Liberal Protestant views have often been harsher than Catholic ones. The Catholic Church has tried to walk a fine line between friendly and sympathetic attitudes toward Israelis and Palestinians, while many liberal Protestants have affirmed their commitment to the Palestinian cause.

While the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories could account for some, or even much, of the criticism, both Jews and Christians have noticed that the recriminations and sanctions directed toward Israel have been outstanding in their magnitude and intensity. Liberal Christians have disproportionately directed negative attention and boycotts against Israel in the last two de-

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23 "Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity," National Jewish Scholars Project, issued July 4, 2002, accessed September 4, 2019, [http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru\\_Emet\\_A\\_Jewish\\_Statement\\_on\\_Christians\\_and\\_Christianity.2395.0.html](http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html).

24 Cf. M. Lerner, *The Socialism of Fools: Antisemitism on the Left* (Oakland: Tikkun Books, 1992).

25 On Reinhold Niebuhr's theological, social, and political career, see P. Merkley, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Political Account* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1975); R. W. Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

cares, while overlooking compatible or worse violations in other nations. In fact, the same Christians blaming Israel have not reacted with the same passion toward countries with deadly breaches of human rights, such as Sudan or Sri Lanka. It seems that many Christians view a Jewish state with uneasiness and are more apprehensive about its moves and actions.

For Christian groups and thinkers, attitudes toward Israel have also become a measure of their positions on a variety of issues, including the appropriate manner of reading the Christian sacred scriptures and their standing on political and moral affairs. Relating to Israel often touched on sensitive nerves, corresponding to Christian self-understanding of their own role and place in the history of redemption. Liberal Christians established cordial relationships with Palestinian as well as with Israeli and Jewish activists who have voiced highly critical understandings of Israeli policies and even the Israeli experience at large. Cooperating with such Jewish activists has offered legitimation to anti-Israel activists since it validates liberal Christian critique and exonerate Christians who blame Israel. One element that did not endear Israel to progressive Christians has been the fact that their rivals in the Christian camp, the evangelicals, have landed support to Israel on behalf of a Messianic interpretation, with which they do not agree, of the biblical text.<sup>26</sup>

## Evangelical Christians

When assessing the opinions and actions of evangelical Christians, it is important to remember that evangelical Christianity is a diverse movement, with hundreds of denominations, thousands of churches, and numerous missionary and educational institutions that are independent of denominational control. Taken as a whole, evangelicals have also expressed diverse, variegated, and often ambivalent views about Jews and Judaism, as well as on other topics. Evangelicals, as a rule, have not joined the interfaith movement, which has remained mostly associated with liberal, mainline, or national churches, and have remained firmly committed to evangelism. While differing on various theological, liturgical, and ecclesiastical components, almost all evangelicals uphold certain principles or attitudes. Almost all evangelicals insist that only women and men who undergo a conversion experience, “establish a personal relationship with Jesus,” or are

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<sup>26</sup> On the contemporary liberal-evangelical divide, please see J. K. Wellman, *Evangelical vs. Liberal: The Clash of Christian Cultures in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

“born again in Christ,” are justified and saved. As long as the Jews as individuals and a people have not accepted Jesus, they have not secured their personal salvation and collective redemption. Without Jesus, they also lack a firm moral compass and often follow wrong teachings and movements.<sup>27</sup> As a rule, evangelicals hold the Christian Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, to be God’s message to humanity and have tended to read the sacred Christian scriptures more literally than their liberal counterparts. Their understanding of the Bible as an historical and Messianic message has strongly influenced evangelical attitudes toward the Jews and Israel.

While not all evangelicals subscribe to a premillennialist Messianic faith, many in this camp in Christianity, including leading evangelists, have accepted and propagated the idea that Jesus is about to return to earth and that the Jewish people are going to play an important role in the unfolding of the Messianic era.<sup>28</sup> Evangelicals who adhere to a Messianic faith in the imminent return of Jesus to earth have come to recognize the Jewish people as heirs and continuers of historical Israel and as the object of biblical prophecies about a restored Davidic kingdom in the messianic era.<sup>29</sup> Many of them have come to view the Jews as important partners along the road that leads to the materialization of the kingdom of God on earth. They have looked upon a Jewish state in Palestine as a legitimate, even desirable, albeit temporary commonwealth, a stepping-stone on the road to the Messianic kingdom.

The Arab-Israeli war in 1967, in which Israel took over the historical parts of Jerusalem, had a very different effect on evangelical-Jewish relations than on liberal Christians. The dramatic Israeli victory, and the territorial gains it brought with it, strengthened the evangelical Messianic convictions and the idea that Israel was to play an important role in the developments that were to precede the arrival of the Messiah.<sup>30</sup> During the 1970s–2010s, conservative evangelicals became Israel’s most ardent supporters in the American public arena, with their positive views of Israel gradually affecting their opinions on the Jews.<sup>31</sup> Previous-

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27 Cf. Y. Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880–2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

28 Cf. B. Graham, *World Aflame* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

29 Cf. T. P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875–1925* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983); T. P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals became Israel’s Best Friends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

30 See, for example, the numerous references to Israel in Hal Lindsey’s best-selling book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

31 Cf. Y. Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

ly, evangelical opinions on Jews were more skeptical and resentful. They could accept the idea that the Jews were to occupy an important role in the events of the Messianic era, but at the same time, they expressed prevailing stereotypical images of Jews as greedy in business or as advocates of social revolutions.

An example of such bigoted exchanges took place in the White House in 1972 between President Richard Nixon and Billy Graham, America's most respectable evangelist in the second half of the twentieth century. The content of the audio-cassette shocked many Americans. The transcripts revealed that Graham and Nixon expressed negative opinions of Jews, blaming them for the ills of the age and echoing stereotypical images of Jews as subversive liberals whose aim was to undermine Christian values and institutions.<sup>32</sup> Many had already been aware of Nixon's prejudices against Jews but were surprised that Graham shared so wholeheartedly the president's opinions. Remarkably, Graham's conversation with Nixon took place in the same year that the evangelist produced a movie, *His Land*, that portrayed the State of Israel in very favorable terms. Israel's prime minister at the time, Golda Meir, was a guest of honor at the film's opening night. The movie was not an isolated endeavor. Graham spoke and wrote many times in favor of Israel, viewing it as playing a significant role in the unfolding of prophecy as well as regarding it as an ally in the global war against the Soviet bloc.<sup>33</sup> In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, American Jewry supported Israel almost unanimously and judged pro-Israeli stands as indications of friendliness toward the Jewish people. In addition to his expressed pro-Israel sympathies, Graham spoke about Jews and Christians as overcoming prejudices together, a gesture that Jewish organizations appreciated.<sup>34</sup> Until the recording became public, Jewish leaders generally looked upon Graham as a devoted friend. In 1969, the Anti-Defamation League, one of the central Jewish organizations in America, awarded Graham the Torch of Liberty Plaque; and in 1977, the American Jewish Committee, another major Jewish group, awarded him its first Inter-Religious Award. Yet, it was the same Billy Graham who spoke so negatively about Jews and promoted the importance of Israel at the same time.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. D. Vest, "They Don't Know How I Really Feel: Billy Graham, Tangled Up in Tape," *Counter Punch*, March 5, 2002, [www.counterpunch.org/vestgraham.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/vestgraham.html); "A Statement by Evangelist Billy Graham on Intolerance and Prejudice following Release of Nixon White House Tapes," Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, issued March 16, 2002, accessed September 5, 2019, <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/175.htm>.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. B. Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), esp. 353–55.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. "Billy Graham and the Jews," Beliefnet, accessed September 5, 2019, [www.beliefnet.com/story/102/story\\_10204\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/102/story_10204_1.html).

Graham's opinions were quite typical for his group cohorts. A survey the Anti-Defamation League sponsored in the early 1960s found rampant prejudices among American evangelical Christians.<sup>35</sup> However, a similar survey, conducted twenty years later, pointed to huge improvements in evangelical standing on Jews. In the years following the 1967 war, evangelicals encountered a growing body of information about Jews, Judaism, and Israel, which helped familiarize and humanize the Jews. Evangelicals have also come to interact more with Jews, in Israel and America, and many evangelicals adopted Jewish symbols and holidays, including the celebration of Passover. Evangelical Christians have modified their End Times scenarios in order to reassure their Jewish friends that they consider them positive players in their vision of the End Times. In evangelical publications of the 1990s–2010s, authors gave up on the idea that the Antichrist would be a Jew, coming up with other options.<sup>36</sup>

Non-Messianic, especially anti-premillennialist, evangelicals do not regard the Jews as the chosen people. They have little use for Israel, and many do not see merit in Jewish celebrations, holidays, or symbols. Occasionally one can hear such evangelicals expressing unfavorable views on Judaism and Jews as well as on their fellow evangelicals who have been enchanted with Jews and Israel. However, the most open and persistent attacks on Jews come mostly from more radical quarters in Christian American society.

## Radical White Christians

Open antisemitism and the promotion of conspiracy theories involving Jews had been evident among mainline and evangelical Protestants in previous generations. In recent decades, such rhetoric signals its owners as acting outside the respectable mainstream. In the 1920s, for example, the rich and powerful Henry Ford Sr. sponsored the publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* on the pages of the *Dearborn Independent*.<sup>37</sup> Focused on blaming the Jews for the ills of the days, Ford's antisemitic newspaper appeared between 1920 and 1927, fully subsidized by the car manufacturer. Ford was the major producer of cars in America and beyond, with his T-Model selling by the millions, and he

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ch. Glock and R. Stark, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

<sup>36</sup> For example, T. LaHaye and J. B. Jenkins, *Left Behind* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> On Henry Ford and his incitement against Jews, see A. Lee, *Henry Ford and the Jews* (New York: Stein & Day, 1980); N. Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

knew how to promote ideas and products. Dedicated to his anti-Jewish campaign, he instructed every Ford branch in the country to distribute free copies of the paper to customers, workers, and inquirers. Believing in “Consumerism” as a global means to promote peace, Ford’s need to sell cars brought him at one time to halt his antisemitic activity in consideration of Jewish clients. However, his anti-Jewish attacks caused long-lasting damage to Jews and their civil standing. Ford and his lieutenants turned a collection of the articles that they had printed in the *Dearborn Independent* into a best-selling book, *The International Jew*.<sup>38</sup> *The International Jew* enjoyed global circulation, appearing in numerous languages, in millions of copies. In Germany during the 1920s and 1930s, Ford’s writings enjoyed popularity in antisemitic circles, with Adolf Hitler and other Nazis enamored by them, citing them, and deriving legitimacy from their pages for their racist views. Baldur von Schirach, leader of the *Hitlerjugend*, the Nazi Youth movement, confessed after the Nazi defeat that he became an antisemitic racist and a convinced Nazi when reading *the International Jew*.<sup>39</sup> In 1938 as a chancellor of Germany, Hitler awarded Ford the *Verdienstkreuz Deutscher Adler*, a medal the German government offered foreign dignitaries, whom it wished to honor. The relationship between American White Christian antisemitism and Nazi ideology is worth noticing.<sup>40</sup>

Contemporary White American groups advocate Nazi-like ideologies and maneuvers, complete with Nazi flags, uniforms, insignia, and slogans. However, it is important to remember that the influences have been in both directions, and, in fact, American racism served as a model for German Nazi antisemitism. Ford and his cronies were successful in spreading, enhancing, or offering reasoning for virulent antisemitic opinions and hate way beyond the American orbit.

Ford’s anti-Jewish writings continue to circulate, influencing and reinforcing conspiracy theories directed against the Jews. In a number of countries, they are still in print. In the 1990s and 2000s, when the internet turned into a venue that

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. L. Ribuffo, “Henry Ford and *The International Jew*,” *Dearborn Independent* 69, no. 4 (1980): 437–77.

<sup>39</sup> On Baldur von Schirach and his Nazi career, see “Baldur von Schirach and the ‘Mission of the Younger Generation’,” in *The Face of the Third Reich*, ed. J. Fest (New York: Penguin, 1979), 332–54.

<sup>40</sup> In recent years, historians and journalists have begun taking notice of the connection between American racism and Nazism. Cf., for example, J. Q. Whitman, *Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

circulates conspiracy theories and antisemitic incitements, *The International Jew* found a home there as well.<sup>41</sup>

A number of white Protestant and Catholic leaders and activists agreed with Ford, utilizing his writings and coming up with ideas of their own.<sup>42</sup> The preacher Gerald L. K. Smith, also a sympathizer of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, has served as a link between antisemitic activity in America before World War II and after.<sup>43</sup> Smith started his public career in association with Huey Long, governor of Louisiana until Long's murder in 1935, but unlike the populist Long, he took a decisive racist and conservative Christian outlook. "Share Our Wealth" started as a populist movement, but under Smith's leadership turned into a Christian White Supremacist group. Smith moved to establish the "Nationalist Christian Crusade," which has foreshadowed many of the current White Supremacy groups that openly incite hatred against Jews.

Matters changed during and after World War II. Granted, preachers and activists who amalgamate racist convictions and Christian exclusivist theological preaching when blaming the Jews have not disappeared. However, advocating blatant racist ideas became politically incorrect, even before the term appeared in cultural discourse. Christian social elites, even when harboring anger at Jews, have made an effort to refrain from embracing racist theories. Such teachings became almost obsolete in mainstream society following the war on the Nazis, and uttering such expressions in polite Christian society decreased enormously, although it continued under the current and occasionally popped up above it as well.<sup>44</sup> Since the 1960s–1970s, such accusations stood against the civic, cultural, and religious consensus in America. Instead, they went underground, or moved to the margins, finding a home among white supremacist groups, such as the Aryan Nation, or the KKK, who have not enjoyed the respectability that Henry Ford possessed. Such groups do not represent, as a rule, the political elites, although occasionally one can find influential voices partial to such groups, as the recent example of Steve Bannon has indicated. Gerald L. K. Smith, for his part, continued his ministry well into the 1970s, demonstrating resourcefulness and innovative spirit, with many supporting his ministry. His ability—and the ability

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41 H. Ford Sr, *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*, [http://www.magtudin.org/Henry\\_Ford\\_The\\_International\\_Jew.pdf](http://www.magtudin.org/Henry_Ford_The_International_Jew.pdf).

42 Cf. R. Lord Roy, *Apostles of Discord: A Study of Organized Bigotry and Disruption on the Fringes of Protestantism* (Boston: Beacon, 1953).

43 Cf. G. Jeansonne, *Gerald L. K. Smith: Minister of Hate* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1991).

44 Cf. Glock and Stark, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism*.



of others like him—to reach and influence American society at large eroded but did not fully disappear.

While conspiracy theories involving Jews have been rampant in Christian circles for generations, there are some novel features relating to contemporary groups. One of the salient among them is the centrality of the internet. Antisemitic groups appear on thousands of sites on the internet. When the internet started as an open access medium in the early 1990s, such groups were still rare, but by the late 1990s, they became rampant.<sup>45</sup> One can study therefore the thoughts, ideas, and plans of such groups by examining their websites. Many of the groups hold to a Messianic faith that predicts a bloody apocalyptic End Times. The apocalyptic Messianic scenarios often combine confrontational, anti-establishment notions, with xenophobia and virulent antisemitism.

Another salient feature of white supremacist antisemitic groups is that they are Holocaust deniers. Holocaust denying is central to their position. Acknowledging the Holocaust would have forced them to restrain their virulent bigotry and conspiracy theories. It would also have to confront the fact that they are following in the footsteps of mass murderers. Not just declared “Nazis,” or neo-Nazis, but other racist and antisemitic groups too have adopted Nazi symbols and paraphernalia. Holocaust denying, not surprisingly, is rampant, since it clarifies the Nazis from atrocities that had placed them, and those looking up to them, in the wrong side of history.<sup>46</sup>

Older groups of white extremists did not always relate to Israel as a pivotal entity in world politics. Israel was not there before the late 1940s, and when it was established, it did not seem at first important enough. Current extremist groups often place Israel at the center of their conspiracy theories and claim that Zionists rule America. A number of neo-Nazi or white supremacist groups have militated against the alleged Jewish or Zionist control of America. This was a prominent theme for the demonstrators in Charlottesville. The Zionists-controlling-America myth has been one symptom of the frustrations of members of the groups, who are mostly white, male, born in America, Christians. Many of them feel that ethnic and cultural elements, for which they do not care, have usurped their rightful place in the nation. Another feature of contemporary groups relates to Christian pluralism. In contrast to previous generations, in which white supremacist groups were almost exclusively Protestants, and

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45 Cf. F. Diep, “How Social Media Helped Organize and Radicalize America’s White Supremacists,” *Pacific Standard*, August 15, 2017, <https://psmag.com/social-justice/how-social-media-helped-organize-and-radicalize-americas-newest-white-supremacists>.

46 Cf. S. Miller, “Denial of the Holocaust,” *Social Education* 59 (October 1995): 342–45, <http://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/publications/se/5906/590607.html>.



often included anti-Catholic rhetoric in their list of groups they wished to exclude, a number of the current groups have removed Catholics from their lists of dangerous intruders. They have left Jews high on that list.

For the most part, Jews and white supremacists do not rub shoulders, and the latter know very little about Judaism and Jews. Since the 1960s, most Jews have been members of middle-class America, holding excess to good educational and professional opportunities. Radical racism and antisemitism often gives expression to those parts of America that feel that they have been short-changed economically, politically, and culturally and that their place in society has been on the decline.<sup>47</sup> Their resentment against the Jews, and other groups, reflect larger socio-economic dissatisfactions as well as distrust of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society. Confronting such groups demands social and economic action, coupled with better educational opportunities, as well as some measure of compassion.

It also calls for introducing Judaism and making it available to the larger public. As the evangelical example shows, actual interaction with Jews and Israel brings with it greater respect. The more Christians encounter Jews, Jewish practices, and Jewish history, and become aware of Jewish struggles and dilemmas, the more accepting of Jews and Judaism they become. Anti-Jewish sentiments, subtle and brutal alike, call for dissemination of information about Jews and Judaism. Almost all cultural, religious, social, and even ethnic, groups in America engage in outreach, presenting themselves to larger audiences, and trying to gain appreciation, sympathy, interest, and support. In recent decades, Jews have started to engage, rather hesitantly, in various programs of outreach. One rather outstanding venue, the Holocaust museum in Washington, proved very successful, making a long-lasting impression on its visitors. There are a few other such venues, but they cannot refute all conspiracy theories directed at Jews.

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. M. Berbrier, "The Victim Ideology of White Supremacists and White Separatists in the United States," *Sociological Focus* 33, no. 2 (2000): 175–91.

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Raimund Fastenbauer

# Islamic Antisemitism: Jews in the Qur'an, Reflections of European Antisemitism, Political Anti-Zionism: Common Codes and Differences

## Introduction

Antisemitism in today's political and academic discourse very often is limited to discussions regarding the racial extreme right-wing antisemitism arising out of Christian anti-Judaism. This is only part of the story. The Jewish communities in Europe and the State of Israel are confronted with an antisemitism from three directions, however connected with each other: the extreme right, the extreme left, and political Islam. This essay focuses on Islamic antisemitism.

There is a discourse about the extent to which there is a connection between Islam as religion, political Islam, and anti-Jewish or antisemitic orientation. A closer look at the Qur'an is necessary to understand the complexity, even more so given that such old motifs are ignored and Islamic antisemitism is downplayed.

Other motifs, however, seem to be a result of the export of European antisemitism into the Middle East in colonial times and later, especially in the 1930s, as nationalist anti-British and anti-French sentiment developed. This development is called "*Islamised Antisemitism*."<sup>1</sup> A good example and modern denier of a religious original Islamic antisemitism is Sadik J. al-Azm. He only considers Islamic antisemitism as "*Islamised Antisemitism*," as a reflection of Christian antisemitism and as a perception of the ideology of National Socialism in the 1930s. The answer is not an *either or* but a *both and* with respect to the source of antisemitic motifs and codes.

Since the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hasan al-Banna<sup>2</sup> and the further development under the influence of Sayyid Qutb<sup>3</sup> and later Qaradawi,<sup>4</sup>

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1 W. Benz, ed., *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008–2013), 3:133 ff.

2 See A. Rahnema, ed., *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (London: Zed Books, 2005).

3 See F. Hafez, *Islamisch-politische Denker: Eine Einführung in islamisch-politische Ideengeschichte* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015); he is not mentioning the antisemitic pamphlet of Qutb's "Ma'rakatuna ma' a al-yahud—Our struggle with Jews" (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1989).

there is indeed a strong connection between Islamic anti-Jewish traditions in the Qur'an and European antisemitic ideas like the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

Moreover, the existence of Islamic antisemitism in the Arab world is often denied entirely, and its manifestations are explained as simple political polemic arising out of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. On the other hand, the policy of Israel has been equated with the policy of the Nazis, and there is talk about a Holocaust of the Palestinian people. Therefore, I want to take a closer look at the mentioned anti-Jewish traditions already in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an polemicizes against the Jews as does the New Testament but for other reasons than early Christianity, and in particular in its later Suras, after the Jewish tribes on the Arab peninsula did not join Mohammed and were defeated in battle conflicts. Two Jewish tribes were expelled from Medina, and the third, the Jewish tribe of Banu Kureiza in Medina, was completely destroyed and the surviving women enslaved.

Similar to the Gentile Christians who were disappointed about the majority of Jews refusing to join them, Mohammed and his followers experienced a similar disappointment, which resulted in anti-Jewish polemic. However, this polemic did not emerge from the accusation of killing of the son of god as it did with the Christians. Nevertheless, we can also find accusations of murder of the prophet.

The Hadith collection of al-Bukhari reports that Mohammed was lying in bed with a high temperature, claiming that a Jewish woman had given him poisoned lamb to eat. Similar to early Christianity and also to Martin Luther, we can separate two periods in the life of Mohammed regarding the relationship to the Jews: first, it was a positive one, but after the hopes for conversion had been disappointed, it became negative. Eventually, Islam also changed the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca. As it is the case with the New Testament, the Qur'an also includes Suras with positive content regarding the Jews, for example, Sura 5:20 – 21:

And when Musa (Moses) said to his people: "Oh, my people, remember Allah's favour upon you when He appointed Prophets amongst you and made you kings, and granted to you what He had not granted to anyone else in the world. Oh, my people, enter the holy land which Allah has ordained for you; and do not turn back for then you will return as losers."

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4 See Y. Al-Qaradawi, *Approaching the Sunnah: Comprehension and Controversy*, trans. J. Qureshi (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2007).

In Sura 109:6, it says: “To the ‘Kafirin’ [the unbelievers]: For you is your religion, and for me is my religion,” in Sura 5:69, a similar sentiment is conveyed. These statements are contradicted by negative statements of a later date, after the armed conflicts with the Jewish tribes.

Sura 3:85 displays exactly the opposite of tolerance:

And whoever desires other than Islam as religion, it will never be accepted from him. And he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.

And Bukhari, in book two, Hadith 18, states the following:

Narrated Ibn ‘Umar: Allah’s Messenger said: “I have been ordered (by Allah) to fight against the people until they testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger, and offer the prayers perfectly and give the obligatory charity, so if they perform that, then they save their lives and property from me except for Islamic laws and then their reckoning (accounts) will be done by Allah.”

This includes descriptions of Jews as those who “kill the prophets” (Sura 3:20–1), “Jews as cursed by Allah” (Sura 4:46), “Jews as descendants of apes and pigs” (Sura 2:65, 5:59–60, 7:166–8)—I will show some examples of this motif later on—“Jews as the worst enemies of the believers” (Sura 5:82), “the land of the Jews will belong to the Muslims” (Sura 33:27), “fight against them until they are humbled and will give the tribute” (Sura 9:29), and “they are the enemy, so be aware of them” (Sura 63:6). The religious relationship between Muslims and Jews that followed, alternated and was marked by highs and lows. Even in good periods, the Jews as people of a different faith were regarded, similar to the Christians, however, not as a group having equal rights. Instead they were tolerated “Dhimmis,” who had to pay a special tax. Nevertheless, there have repeatedly been pogroms.

Today, there is often simple Holocaust denial, because Holocaust remembrance would legitimate the State of Israel. This is the case with the Palestinian Authority as well as with the Iran, where international conferences of Holocaust deniers take place. Islamism means using the Islamic tradition in the Qur’an and the Hadiths for the establishment of a social order that is based on these principles. Antisemitism is one of the constant factors of political Islam, Islamism, characterised by the following elements: only the divine right is applicable, unity of religion and politics, dichotomy of believers and unbelievers, more militant Jihad, and differentiation of the world into characters of the “House of Islam” and the “House of War.”

The founding of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hassan al-Banna brought a revitalization of anti-Jewish ideas and a new interpretation of the term “Jihad” in

the direction of “Holy war against the unbelievers.” It includes also a glorification of the love of death. This Islamic Sunni theology, and subsequently also the Shiite theology, indicate a regression towards a theology of fighting similar to the initial period of Islam. Believing in the return of the lost twelfth imam as Mahdi is part of the eschatological visions of representatives of the regime of Iran.

At the same time, the profane Baath party has been founded, which came to power in Iraq and Syria, and which, however, emphasizes the priority of the “nation” over the “religion.” Thus, it also represented Christians such as the founder Michel Aflaq. In Lebanon, the largely Christian Falange Party was founded. Both were influenced by the fascist parties of Europe. Robert Wistrich explains the “NS impregnated terminology” of the Arabian region as follows:

Its roots are lying in the various ideological-political alliances between the German Nazis, prominent Arab nationalists, Islamic fundamentalists, and European fascists between 1933 and 1945.<sup>5</sup>

There is an Arab slogan that fits here: “Bala misyu, bala mister fi-l-sama Allah, wa'l-ard Hitler”—“No more Monsieur, no more Mister, God in Heaven, and on earth Hitler.”<sup>6</sup>

The antisemitism of the Muslim Brothers was further developed by Sayyid Qutb. Of great influence was his essay “Our battle with the Jews,” which he wrote in 1950. In his opus “Milestones”<sup>7</sup> from 1964, he connected European and Islamic antisemitism. He declared the “World Judaism” as being the main enemy. The Mufti of Jerusalem, Al-Husseini, was the most prominent representative of political Islam in Palestine. He became an ally of the Muslim Brothers. He combined sympathy for German National Socialism, Italian fascism, and anti-British Arab nationalism:

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<sup>5</sup> R. Wistrich, *Der antisemitische Wahn: Von Hitler bis zum Heiligen Krieg gegen Israel* (Berlin: Edition Critic, 2015), 7. The original German reads: “Ihre Wurzeln hatte sie in den diversen ideologisch-politischen Allianzen zwischen den deutschen Nazis, prominenten arabischen Nationalisten, islamischen Fundamentalisten und europäischen Faschisten zwischen 1933 und 1945.” Translation by the author of this article.

<sup>6</sup> R. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 679.

<sup>7</sup> *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, also *Ma'alim fi'l-tareeq*, or *Milestones*, first published in 1964, is a short book in which he lays out a plan and makes a call to action to re-create the Muslim world on strictly Qur'anic grounds, casting off what Qutb calls *Jahiliyyah*.

The antisemitic passages of the Qur'an were combined with the antisemitic forms of battle of the Third Reich, and the hatred toward Jews was acted out as Jihad.<sup>8</sup>

The killing of Mohammed and the expulsion of the Jews from Medina is used as a good example for a religious legitimation of the killing. In 1943, al-Husseini said on the occasion of the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration:

Germany is also fighting against the common enemy, who was oppressing the Arabs and Mohammedans in their various countries. It recognized the Jews properly and decided to find a definite solution for the Jewish threat, which will settle the harm they are doing in the world.<sup>9</sup>

Bernard Lewis was one of the first Islamic scientists who at the beginning of the 1980s spoke for the first time of a “new” Islamic antisemitism in his book *Semites and Antisemites*.<sup>10</sup> The described image of Israel and Palestine led to a rejection of peace talks. This was already indicated in the charter where the exclusive self-conception is outlined.

The Statute of the Palestinian organization of the Muslim Brothers, Hamas, reads as follows:

The Islamic resistance movement is a distinct Palestinian movement which owes its loyalty to Allah. It derives from Islam its way of life. And it strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.<sup>11</sup>

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**8** M. Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass: Über den neuen antijüdischen Krieg* (Freiburg: Ça Ira, 2003), 9. See also S. Grigat, “Nicht konsequent bekämpft,” interview by V. Dolna, *Die FURCHE*, February 5, 2015, <https://www.furche.at/religion/nicht-konsequent-bekaempft-1192762>.

**9** A. Feuerherdt, “Der Mufti, die Deutschen und die Shoa,” issued October 29, 2015, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://lizaswelt.net/2015/10/29/der-mufti-die-deutschen-und-die-shoa/>. The original German reads: “Auch Deutschland kämpft gegen den gemeinsamen Feind, der Araber und Mohammedaner in ihren jeweiligen Ländern unterdrückt. Es hat die Juden sehr klar als das erkannt, was sie sind und beschlossen, eine Endlösung für die jüdische Gefahr zu finden, die die Geißel der Welt, die die Juden sind, beseitigen wird.” Translation by the author of the article.

**10** See B. Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (New York: Norton, 1986).

**11** Hamas, “The Charter of Allah: The Platform of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas),” translated and annotated by R. Israeli (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, Harry Truman Research Institute), article 6; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Antisemitismus und Antizionismus in der Charta der Hamas,” issued July 4, 2011, accessed January 2, 2016, <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/islamismus/36358/antisemitismus-in-der-charta-der-hamas?p=all>.



In context of these views, you can also repeatedly find a call for “Jihad” in the text, whereby this is meant as a call for a violent battle. Thus, it says for example:

The Islamic resistance movement regards Nationalism as part and parcel of its religious faith. Nothing is stronger or deeper in Nationalism than an enemy who sets foot on the land of the Muslims and mistreats it. Thus, it becomes an individual duty binding on every Muslim man and woman to confront the enemy with Jihad.<sup>12</sup>

The above-mentioned views and quotations are by no means just anti-Zionist against Israel (compare with article 7, remark by the author of this article). They are clearly antisemitic and directed towards the Jews. The first indication appears already in the choice of words, since the text calls the hostile actors clearly not “Israelis” and almost never “Zionists.” The expression “Jews” for the respective enemy is predominant.

The Deputy Minister for Religious foundations of Hamas, Abdallah Jabru, expressed this on February 28, 2010, with the following words:

Jews are like strange bacteria, they are microbes without precedent in this world. Allah shall destroy the dirty Jewish people, because they have no religion and no conscience! I condemn everyone who thinks that a normal relationship with Jews would be possible, everyone who sits together with Jews, everyone who thinks that Jews would be humans! Jews are not humans, they are no people. They have no religion, no conscience, no moral values!<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, it reads as follows: “By its Jewish character and Jewish citizens, Israel is provoking Islam and the Muslims.” Direct calls for use of violence in the text of the Hamas charter also reveal its antisemitic character:

The prophet [...] said: The time will come when Muslims will fight the Jews and kill them until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, which will cry: O Muslim, o servant of Allah, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him! This will not apply to the Gharqad, which is a Jewish tree!<sup>14</sup>

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**12** Hamas, “The Charter of Allah.”

**13** “On Al-Aqsa TV, Hamas Deputy Minister of Religious Endowments Calls for Jews to be Annihilated, Saying They Are Bacteria, Not Human Beings; Following President Obama’s Election, Said in Friday Sermon: We Must ‘First Check if His Heart is Black or White.’” MEMRI, Special Dispatch no. 2858, issued March 15, 2010, <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-aqsa-tv-hamas-deputy-minister-religious-endowments-calls-jews-be-annihilated-saying-they>.

**14** Hamas, “The Charter of Allah,” article 7.

Article 22 of the charter speaks about the Jews controlling the world media, and article 28 of the secret organizations of the Jews like Rotary, Lions, etc.

Apart from anti-Israeli polemics, it includes almost all antisemitic religious, political, and social stereotypes with regard to the Jews. Muslim representatives—also in Austria—try to create a different picture, the image of Muslim as a victim in Europe. Thus, Farid Hafez calls Islamophobia “a projection surface of tabooed anti-Semitism”<sup>15</sup> in his comment. As counter-proof of Islamic antisemitism, he mentions that Mohammed had married a Jewish woman. He also takes a stand against representatives of the Euro-Islam, like Bassam Tibi.

In all of this, there is no mention of the fact that Safiyya bint Huyayy, the eleventh wife of the prophet, was a descendent from the Jewish Banu Nadir tribe, which suffered a crushing defeat by the prophet in which the men were killed and the women enslaved. This systematic belittlement can also be seen in a sermon of the Viennese imam Adnan Ibrahim in the Shura mosque in Vienna-Praterstern:

Exactly as Sheikh al Gazali said: Allah said of the Jews: “We have cursed them and hardened their hearts: They distort the meaning of words from their right place.” They played with their religion, and who do you think did it? The scholars of the Jews. Do you think that someone of the crowd is able to do this? No. It has to be done by someone who is entrusted with the religion to the highest degree: the rabbis, the religious leaders, the scholars. They are the ones who manipulated the words of G’d and changed them. This is why they are cursed, because they violated the regulations of G’d and misused their religious duties. They broke the covenant with G’d. And it is not as some of you may think, that G’d is punishing such people immediately. No. But they have been cursed, their hearts hardened, so that they changed the words of G’d.<sup>16</sup>

Since the first Gulf war in 1990/91, we can notice a re-Islamization, especially in the second and third generations of Muslims in Europe. This is a development of a transnational religious identity as part of the Ummah, the community of all Muslims, and an identification with Muslim victims of the West or Russia (Bosnia, Chechenya, Afghanistan, Iran, Palestine). Israel is identified with the “perpetrators.” With taking sides for Palestine, Muslims try to express their own victim role in Europe.

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<sup>15</sup> M. Sterkl, “Hafez: ‘Der Islam ist in Europa schon lange keine Religion mehr’,” *Der Standard*, January 12, 2015, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000010249228/hafez-der-islam-ist-in-europa-schon-lange-keine-religion>.

<sup>16</sup> I. Adnan, “The Signs of a False Muslim Preacher,” April 8, 2013, video, 3:53, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUvjUjaEedU>, starting min. 1:20.

The contemporary Jihad propagandist Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who reaches millions of Muslims in the Orient and Europe every day by using TV channels and the internet, is thanking Hitler for the Holocaust. Due to his equation of antisemitism and Islamophobia on one hand, and for denying Muslim antisemitism on the other hand, some academics like Wolfgang Benz finds himself exposed to ever-stronger criticism for some time:

For a few years, Benz claims that the so called Islamophobia has similar dimensions as Antisemitism. Schroeder, director of the Research Association on the SED state at Freie Universität Berlin, told the 'Frankfurter Rundschau' [...] "This is practically absurd if you look at the recent protests against Israel and the Jews."<sup>17</sup>

At the same time after polemics by right-wing politicians in Europe against Muslim Immigrants a polemic around the term "Islamophobia" started.

The term "Islamophobia" was first used by Ayatollah Khomeini and applied against non-religious Muslims, especially unveiled women. In the European area, it was first used by the British anti-racist Runnymede Trust in 1994. The term should outline unfounded fears about Islam or Muslims. Political practice, however, uses it as an ideological battle cry to suppress criticism of Islam.

Firm rejection against equating Islamophobia with antisemitism, as Wolfgang Benz does, comes from Julius Schöps, who argues that Islamophobia lacks motifs such as ritual murder or a Jewish world conspiracy (which conversely do exist in Islamic antisemitism, remark by the author of this article).

Michael Ley polemicizes against equating antisemitism and anti-Islamism as follows:

An amazing amount of weak characters in Europe proclaim loud and clear [...] that an alarming anti-Semitism is prevalent in this place. And anti-Islamism would be the new an-

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17 "Klaus Schroeder: Antisemitismus unter Moslems wird tabuisiert," *Junge Freiheit*, July 25, 2014, <https://jungefreiheit.de/politik/deutschland/2014/klaus-schroeder-antisemitismus-unter-moselms-wird-tabuisiert/>. The original German reads: "Benz behauptet schon seit einigen Jahren, daß die so genannte Islamophobie eine ähnliche Dimension wie der Antisemitismus habe," kritisierte der Leiter des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat an der Freien Universität Berlin. Dies sei nach den jüngsten Protesten gegen Israel und die Juden geradezu 'absurd'." Translation by the author of this article. Cf. also K. Schroeder, "Ich sehe keine neue Qualität," interview by M. Decker, *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, July 22, 2014, <https://www.ksta.de/interview-ich-sehe-keine-neue-qualitaet-3867994>; M. Frischberg, "Das Konzept 'Islamophobie' als Abwehr westlicher Zumutungen: Zur Genese eines Kampfbegriffes," in *Feindaufklärung und Reeducation: Kritische Theorie gegen Postnazismus und Islamismus*, ed. S. Grigat (Freiburg: Ça Ira, 2006), 155–72; J. Bunzl, and A. Senfft, eds., *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Islamophobie: Vorurteile und Projektionen in Europa und Nahost* (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 2008).

tisemitism. As the Jews experienced the baseless insinuation of having plans of world supremacy, the same happens now to the Muslims.<sup>18</sup>

Subsequently, he tries to prove that this time, however, the “insinuation” is based on a situational analysis.

In March 2002, the EUMC, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, carried out a study on antisemitism in the countries of the European Union, when the severity of the Muslim antisemitism came to light. However, publication was delayed for ten months, because it may promote “Islamophobia” in Europe.

In connection with current criticism on the discrimination of immigrants on the one hand and Muslim antisemitism on the other hand, we should take a closer look at the relationship between “antisemitism” and “Islamophobia.” The often-used equation is not correct. There is a substantial difference in the fact that antisemitism has an “eliminary character,” meaning that it wants to destroy the Jewish people. Its reasons and history of development are much more complex than is the case with Islamophobia. These eliminary ideas are also true for the Shiite Islam in Iran and its threat of destruction that is directed towards Israel. Islamophobia in Europe is a form of xenophobia that has been populistically stirred up by the extreme right wing. The same extreme right wing is, however, not fundamentally Islamophobic but particularly critical about the State of Israel.

The extreme right wing severely criticized the populist parties that have a critical view of the European Union, however, do support Israel:

Mister Strache, Mölzer, Kabas and Lasare as well as Madame Sabaditsch-Wolff (not Sabbatic) have been invited by a certain Mister Elias Cohen, ex-general and ex-Member of Knesset. There was talk of “sincere hospitality” and “active dialogue.” It all sounds great, but why not meet with the enslaved Palestinians of the West Bank [...] And then they adopted a from a national point of view unspeakable “Declaration of Jerusalem,” in which they pretend to be “in the frontline of the battle for the Western community of values,” which means for the world order of Obama, Sarkozy, Merkel & Co.! Islam has been stigmatized as a “totalitarian system” and thus displayed as the enemy image [...] and with the Islamophobic Madame Sabaditsch-Wolff, who was proving her own incompetence by unspeakable tirades against

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**18** M. Ley, *Der Selbstmord des Abendlandes: Die Islamisierung Europas* (Osnabrück: Hintergrund, 2015), 11. The original German reads: “Eine erstaunliche Anzahl der schwachen Charaktere in Europa behauptet lauthals [...] bei uns grassiere ein bedenklicher Antisemitismus. Und Antisemitismus sei der neue Antisemitismus. Wie einst den Juden grundlos Weltherschaftspläne unterstellt wurden, so jetzt den Moslems.” Translation by the author of this article.

Islam and Muslims [...] the pilgrimage to the Western Wall and Yad Vashem was perhaps the first kowtow with regard to an intended participation in the government?<sup>19</sup>

They have no problems with Muslims outside the German-speaking area, if applicable, there is even solidarity in antisemitism:

Criticism of the right wing and the extreme right wing may, however, not lead to the slightest belittlement of Antisemitism of certain Muslims and Arabs in Germany, Europe and the Middle East. This is not only about the fact that “Mein Kampf” is a bestseller [...] in Turkey and that there has been a historical close relationship between the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem [...] and the Nazis and the Holocaust. What matters here and now is that the green (colour of the Islamists, remark by the author of this article) Nazis are behaving the same way as the “bio-German” Nazis, they [...] are hunting pro-Israeli demonstrators, [...] are beating Jews.<sup>20</sup>

Antisemitism of the Palestinians is not limited to the Islamist groups of Hamas. The President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, has written a thesis including typical secondary antisemitism by equating National Socialism with Zionism, and indicating the number of Jews that have been killed by the Nazis

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**19** *Die Umwelt* 1 (2011). See also *Die AULA* (April 2011 and July/August 2011: 29). The original German reads: “Die Herren Strache, Mölzer, Kabas und Lasar sowie Madame Sabaditsch-Wolff (nicht Sabbatisch) waren von einem gewissen Herrn Elias Cohen, Ex-General und Ex-Knesset-Abgeordneter, eingeladen worden. Man sprach von ‘ehrlicher Gastfreundschaft’ und einem ‘aktiven Dialog.’ Klingt alles wunderbar, doch warum traf man nicht die geknechteten Palästinenser im Westjordanland [...]. Und dann verabschiedete man die aus nationaler Sicht unsägliche ‘Jerusalem Erklärung’ worin man ‘an vordester Front des Kampfes für die westliche Wertegemeinschaft’ zu stehen vorgibt, also für die Weltordnung der Obamas, Sarkosys, Merkels & Co.! Der Islam wird als ‘totalitäres System’ gebrandmarkt und damit zum Feindbild gemacht [...] und mit der islamophoben Madame Sabaditsch-Wolff, diedurch unsägliche Tiraden gegen den Islam und Moslems ihre eigene Inkompetenz bewies [...]. War die Pilgerreise an die Klagemauer und nach Yad Vaschem vielleicht der erste Kotau in Hinblick auf die beabsichtigte Regierungsbeilegung?” Translation by the author of this article.

**20** C. Henri, “Grüne Nazis?—Antisemitische Pogromstimmung in Europa,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, August 7, 2014, <http://alt.juedischerundschau.de/gruene-nazis-antisemitische-pogromstimmung-europa/>. The original German reads: “Die Kritik an Rechten und extremen Rechten darf aber nicht dazu führen, den Antisemitismus von manchen Muslimen und Arabern in Deutschland, Europa und dem Nahen Osten auch nur im Geringsten zu verharmlosen. Es geht nicht nur darum, dass “Mein Kampf” in der Türkei [...] ein Bestseller ist und dass es eine historische enge Beziehung des Großmufti von Jerusalem [...] zu den Nazis und zum Holocaust gab. [...] Es geht hier und heute darum, dass sich die grünen Nazis verhalten wie “biodeutsche” Nazis: sie [...] jagen pro-israelische Demonstranten, [...] schlagen Juden, [...]” Translation by the author of this article.

with 890,000. Then, discourse about Islamophobia makes possible a victimisation of Muslim society endangering necessary criticism and self-criticism.

The magazine AULA, pointing out a statement of the Malaysian prime minister Mahatir Mohamad, who at a conference of Islamic states on October 17, 2003, spoke of a “Jewish world supremacy,” is an interesting example for Islamic antisemitism and its absorption into extreme right-wing groups.<sup>21</sup>

The participants of the EU-summit, which was taking place at the same time, avoided a condemnation of Mahatir’s remarks due to the instigation of French president Chirac.

The word “Jew” is generally an insult in Arab groups. Islamists as well as their opponents insult leaders for being of Jewish descent, as for example the Muslim Brothers did with the Egyptian president Sissi.

This defamation, however, has its tradition. Vice versa, the same has been said of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, and of ISIS leaders and al-Qa’ida related organizations. Using the word “Jew” as an insult in Europe has also become part of the colloquial language of young people of Arab origin. It is part of a “cultural code.” Teachers in Germany ignore this insult with certain resignation,

because they prefer to not interpret the insult “Jew” as anti-Semitic, but as an insult, that is to be understood completely detached from its historic context.<sup>22</sup>

In the Islamic world, pointing out that a political opponent might assumingly have a Jewish background is also used as a political weapon for defamation. Islamic antisemitism is often underestimated. One reason for this is that it is merely regarded as polemic in connection with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as also mentioned. Another reason is that it appears often in Arab or Muslim media, and although their messages are transmitted to Europe via television and internet and are spread by preachers of hate in mosques, they remain unnoticed here, because in English programs or in interviews with Islamic politicians, they use a different vocabulary. On the other hand, when it comes to pointing out antise-

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<sup>21</sup> “Mahathir verteidigt Äußerungen über Juden,” *Der Standard*, October 18, 2003, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/1453552/mahathir-verteidigt-aeusserungen-ueber-juden>.

<sup>22</sup> G. M. Hafner and E. Shapira, *Israel ist an allem schuld: Warum der Judenstaat so gehasst wird* (Cologne: Eichborn, 2015), 91, and P. Gessler, *Der neue Antisemitismus: Hinter den Kulissen der Normalität* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004). The original German reads: “[...] weil sie ‘Jude’ als Schimpfwort lieber nicht antisemitisch deuten, sondern als Schimpfwort, das völlig losgelöst von seinem historischen Kontext zu verstehen sei.” Translation by the author of this article.

mitic agitation, they question the correct translation. This corresponds to the religious principle of “taqvia” [fear, caution] as per Sura 3:28.

Views on the relationship between Judaism and Islam are controversial. The Moorish Spain is often presented as a perfect example for Jewish-Islamic coexistence—especially at a time of the medieval Christian persecution of the Jews and the crusades—whereby mentioning on the other hand, that even in such periods, Jews (and Christians) only had the status of a tolerated minority and were subject to special regulations is omitted.

The fact that an Islamic (in particular Arab) antisemitism exists, has also for a long time been kept in the dark by Israeli scientists. The well-known Israeli historian Harkabi, for example, ignored this phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, this can be explained by the fact that the state of Israel has been founded precisely because of the wish to escape (European) antisemitism, and on the other hand, scientists, who are close to the left political spectrum, do not want to point out Islamic antisemitism out of fear that they would strengthen the right wing in Israel. Zionism brought no end of antisemitism.

I have in my work studied five motifs found in the media that will be discussed in the following:

1. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth
2. Jews as animals
3. Jews and murder
4. Conspiracy: The Protocols of Zion
5. Jews and money

## 1 An Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth: An anti-Jewish Motif of Christian and European Origin

The pure motif “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” can almost exclusively be found in the European area. If mentioned in the Islamic-Arab areas, then it might as well only be understood as a copy and paste echo of the European media polemic. In any case, using the motif “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” fits perfectly for the post-Nazi secondary antisemitism that strives for a reversion of guilt or at least a compensation of guilt. Thus, the secondary post-Nazi antisemitism is turning around the antisemitic motive of the murder of Jews into “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” With this form of relieving antisemitism,

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<sup>23</sup> See Y. Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972).

it not only stands *quasi pari*, because the Jews are also murderers with regard to the Palestinians but even more than that: by relativizing the Holocaust, the Jews remain the only actual murderers.

Different from the European secondary post-Nazi antisemitism that searches for a release from the historic responsibility and attempts a reversal of perpetrator and victim, the Holocaust denial or relativization in the Islamic area serves to free Zionism from its foundation myth. In doing so, the Holocaust is regarded as a cause for the foundation of the State of Israel. It was because of the Holocaust that the international community gave Israel to the Jewish people—which leaves out the previous Zionist history—and the true victims of the Holocaust would be the Palestinians. Would there have been no Holocaust or would it only be an invention of the Zionists, the establishment of the State of Israel would have happened without justification.

In the areas of the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and Fatah especially insinuate that Zionists have taken part in the Holocaust or on the contrary brought the Holocaust on the Palestinian people. In a television program of the Palestinian Authority from March 25, 2004, the narrator says:

They (the Jews) are the ones who committed the Holocaust, their knives are cutting in length and width into our flesh [...] they opened ovens for baking human beings [...] and if an oven is not burning any more, they light a hundred more. Their hands are covered with the blood of our children.

In the official newspaper of the Palestinian Authority Al-Hayat Al-Jadida from April 18, 2015, you can read that the actual amount of the murdered people is not six million, as the Zionists claim, but only about one or two million. Furthermore, the Zionists have been working together with the Nazis to force the Jews to emigrate to Palestine. Hitler himself is glorified among others in one of the children's magazines.

Holocaust denial or relativization is especially manifest in Islamic schoolbooks, particularly in the areas of the Palestinian authorities.

## 2 Jews as Animals: Apes, Pigs, etc.

The examined second motif of “Jews as animals (i. e., descendant from apes and pigs)” can primarily be found in Muslim antisemitism today but also in earlier and Medieval Christianity. It is not reflected in the “new anti-Zionist antisemitism” in Europe but only in the Islamic antisemitism.



## 2.1 Origin of the Motif

According to the Jewish religious teaching, pigs belong to the unclean animals. According to Lev 11:7 and Deut 14:8, they are excluded from the food that may be eaten. Under the Seleucid emperor Antiochus IV (175–164 B.C.E.), the people tried to force Jews to sacrifice pigs and eat them.

Already in 2 Pet 2:22, it says referring to Jewish Christians, who turned away from their new faith and back to Judaism: “They encountered the proverb: the dog is eating again what he spewed out; the pig, after defecating, wallows in its excrements.” John Chrysostom used the reference to the pig with regard to the Jewish religious service in the synagogue.

In the Qur’an, we can find many sections that Islamist circles have used for antisemitic agitation against Jews, especially Sura 2:65, 5:59–60, referring to a violation of the Shabbat rules, as well as 7:166–168, where Jews are generally called “sons of apes and pigs” or “apes and pigs.” Sura 5:59–60 mentions this as a punishment for ahl al-kitab (the people of the book, referring to Christians and Jews), because they do not adopt the true religious belief; the other two sections deal primarily with the punishment for violating Shabbat.

In a different section, in connection with the battle against the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qurayza, the prophet himself calls the Jews “brothers of apes.” Theologically, there are two different opinions in Islam about the meaning of these Qur’an Suras:

There are two opinions among the Ulama in this regard: The first is that the Jews, whom Allah transformed and turned into pigs, remained in that state until they died, without producing descendants. The other opinion is that the Jews who turned into pigs multiplied and produced descendants, and their line continues to this day.

## 2.2 History of the Motif

The animal depiction “Judensau” only dates back to the Middle Ages and is a picture motif of anti-Jewish Christian art. Judaism was portrayed as a creature similar to pigs for the first time in Brandenburg in 1230. Subsequently, antisemitic insults in variations such as “Saujude” or “Judenschwein” developed apart from the term “Judensau.”

## 3 Jews and Murder

Another common motif is the killing motif, from ritual murder all the way to organ robbery. By being partly profaned, motifs from religious sources turn into accusations of organ robbery.

### 3.1 Origin of the Motif

In the history of the nations, the motif of the ritual murder legend is quite frequent and probably recalls the human sacrifices of the early period. It can be found as an accusation against the indigenous people in China, or as an accusation of the Romans against the Christians, and of the Christians against the Gnostics.

Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac, which God did not accept, shows, as did also the sacrifice ritual of animals in the Temple of Jerusalem, that people in Judaism had overcome human sacrifices. Christianity connects the motif of the sacrifice of Isaac to the self-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

### 3.2 History of the Motif

The accusation with reference to the Jews appears for the first time in ancient Rome in texts of the Greek-Egyptian poet Apion, who claimed that the Jews would sacrifice Greeks in their temple. This accusation became known through the reply statement of Josephus.

The Damascus affair of 1840—an accusation of ritual murder brought by a priest of a Christian Order against the Jews of Damascus, after a Father and his servant had been murdered—potently introduced the motif for the first time in the Arab world respectively, in the Ottoman Empire, and it reverberated to Europe. However, in the previous years, there had already been accusations of ritual murder in Beirut in 1824, in Antakya in 1826, and in Hame in 1829. In the years after 1840, there had been a series of further ritual murder legends in Syria.

Today, it is frequently found in the media of the Islamic world. It seems that the European Christian myth of the ritual murder had been transferred to the Middle East and had been absorbed there combined with the Passover story. A contemporary transmutation of the motif can also be found in the claim about organ theft with killed Palestinians, not only in fundamentalist groups like the Hamas, but also in the less religious Fatah and the Palestinian Authority.

## 4 Conspiracy, Protocols of the Elders of Zion, Jewish World Supremacy

Another common motif is the historically not very old motif of the “Protocols of the elders of Zion” and of Jewish world supremacy.

### 4.1 Origin of the Motif

The “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” is an alleged conspiracy of the Jews. Leaders of the international Jewry supposedly met at the cemetery of Prague to cunningly prepare for reaching world supremacy. The novel *Biarritz*, published by Hermann Ottomar Friedrich Goedsche under the pseudonym “Sir John Retcliffe,” served as a template. It included a chapter according to which the leaders of the twelve tribes meet at the Jewish cemetery of Prague every hundred years.

Historically, the Protocols are a forgery done by the Russian tsarist secret service and edited by Sergej Nilius. They were first published in 1903 by the antisemitic print media of Russia. The first non-Russian edition was published in 1919 by the publisher “Verband gegen die Überhebung des Judentums e.V.” (Association against the arrogance of Jewry, later called “Deutsch-Völkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund”—German Nationalist Protection and Defiance Federation). In 1921, *The Times* in London was the first to detect that the Protocols were a forgery. This was also the result of a court case in Switzerland.

### 4.2 History of the Motif

After World War I, German-folkish circles disseminated the Protocols in the German language area, and the Nazi propaganda tool “Der Stürmer” frequently picked up the stereotype of a Jewish world conspiracy.

Adolf Hitler wrote on this topic in “Mein Kampf”:

What many Jews might do unknowingly, is knowingly clarified here. And this is what matters. No matter in which Jewish mind these revelations are rooted, it is of crucial matter that they reveal with almost terrifying certainty the nature and the activity of the Jewish people.

Also after the Shoah, world conspiracy phantasies of a Jewish Lobby that is thus silencing its critics have been used in the political discourse, for example in the Möllemann affair.

Since around 1925, after the first translation into Arabic, they often have been used as part of the anti-Jewish polemic to prove that with this conspiracy, the Jews strive for reaching world supremacy. Deeply rooted stereotypes of the Jews helped absorb the idea of the Protocols in Islamic societies. Even in the rather secular Turkey, the “Protocols” were published 97 times. Sixty different editions exist in the Arab world.

Conspiracy can already be found in the disputes between the prophet Mohammed and the Jews of Medina.

First, Mohammed was by treaty bound with the Jews of Medina, however, he broke the contract. But according to the Islamic tradition, the Jewish side caused the breach. Mohammed reported a vision with the angel Gabriel who warned him that the Jews from the Banu Nadhir tribe would conspire to strike him dead with a rock. In Sura 59, we read:

When Allah’s Messenger immigrated to Al-Madinah, he concluded a contract with the Jews, which stated that he will not fight against them and they would not fight against him. They soon violated the treaty that they had made with Allah’s messenger. This is why Allah sent them to torture. It can never be staved off and the destiny that He decided reached them. He can never be resisted. The Prophet forced them to leave and give up their strong fortifications of which the Moslems would have never thought that they would control them once. The Jews thought that their fortifications would keep them safe from Allah’s torture, but not a bit did they help them against Allah. Thus came what they did not expect from Allah to them, and Allah’s Messenger forced them to leave Al-Madinah... “Leave my country and do not live with me. You have planned betrayal.”

In consequence, the tribe was chased away from the city and the property was confiscated. Next, the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qurayza was combated and defeated, the men were killed and the women and children enslaved. A tradition exists also, according to which a Jewish woman tried to poison the prophet.

The motif of the conspiratorial Jews was also transferred into being the cause of the schism between the Sunnis and the Shiites.

Another root lies in the figure of the Dajjal, a fraudulent character of the Islamic eschatology that is believed to appear at the end of days similar to the “Antichrist.” According to the tradition, he will ride on a white donkey, accompanied by 70,000 men from Isfahan. These men will come from Jewish circles.

Also the Nazi propaganda among the Moslems attempted this equation with the Jews.

Contemporary Islamist circles see the idea of the Dajjal in connection with freemasons, Zionism, the Rothschilds and globalization.

## 5 Jews and Money (from Judas to Rothschild, ATTAC and Occupy Wall Street)

### 5.1 Origin of the Motif

In the New Testament, Judas Iscariot is one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. According to Mark 3:19, with his betrayal he helped to capture Jesus, and in return he received thirty pieces of silver (Matt 26:15) from the high priest.

Based on the negative characterizations by Tertullian and Origen, the character of Judas has since the Middle Ages become a popular object of hatred in antisemitic passion plays. And the racial antisemitism of the Nazis picked up the Judas motif on the basis of Luther's characterization of Judas.

He became the prototype of the Jew greedy for money. This image was solidified after the Fourth Lateran council in 1215 with the Jews specializing in moneylending—since the Jews had no access to the Christian guilds, and since it was out of religious reasons forbidden for Christians to take interest from Christians (and for Jews when it came to Jews).

The motif finds its continuation in Shylock, which is the name of the Jewish usurer in Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock represented usury and hatred towards Christians. Such characterizations existed before, including Christopher Marlow's play "The Jew of Malta" from 1591. At the time when *The Merchant of Venice* was written, there were no Jews in England.

### 5.2 History of the Motif

Rothschild is the name of a family of Jewish bankers from Frankfurt. The founder Mayer Amschel Rothschild was born in 1744. His son Nathan Mayer Rothschild immigrated to England in 1799. In the nineteenth century, the focus of the business was on international bond business, and a company group with five autonomous branches was established. From the onset of their influence on Europe's economic life, the Rothschilds were targets for partly antisemitic attacks.

## Summary

The fact that the "New anti-Zionist antisemitism" is concentrated especially in Western Europe, can also be explained by the fact that—after nationalism has driven Europe into two World Wars and the Holocaust, and after the emergence

of nation states in Europe such as Germany, Italy, or the Slavic states in Eastern Europe—it was a united Europe, in which the states of Europe saw the possibility of overcoming nationalism arising from national states.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, they are critical of political Zionism, which is seen as a delayed Jewish national movement. National ideas are only accepted in Third World countries and the Arab world, often because of a bad conscience regarding the colonial times. Since the Jews have been part of Europe's history, they are measured by "European standards," which again gives reason to point out the applied "double standards" and secondary antisemitism. The commemoration of the Shoah mingles with anti-Zionist criticism of Israel.

Several anti-Jewish motifs of Christian or European origin were—after experiencing a parallel development—reinforced in Islamist antisemitism (such as "Jews and murder/conspiracy" and "Jews and money." Thus, Islamic antisemitism reinforces a European motif, which was initially used in Christian antisemitism and later in racial antisemitism and connects it with the conspiracy motive that also exists in Islam.

The motif of connecting Jews with animals is basically only part of Islamic antisemitism. When it comes to "New anti-Zionist antisemitism," the motifs are open or in a coded way combined with leftist antisemitism and anti-imperialist criticism of capitalism, which is especially visible in the money motif as social criticism of "financial capital," compounded by the post-Nazi secondary antisemitism with its motive of "an eye for an eye" and the "reversal or equation of perpetrator and victim" with reference to Israel.

The "New anti-Zionist antisemitism" thus includes partly open, partly *coded* antisemitic motifs often of religious origin, which date back a long time, such as an eye for an eye, conspiracy, and blood libel, and which are often underestimated in the research on antisemitism. This work is meant as a contribution for a correct assessment.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. B. Tibi, "Migration aus der Welt des Islam und die Wiedereinführung von Judenhass und Antisemitismus nach Europa," in *Die Zukunft Europas und das Judentum: Impulse zu einem gesellschaftlichen Diskurs*, ed. O. Deutsch (Wien: Böhlau, 2017), 163–84.

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Meir Litvak

## Modern Antisemitism in Iran: Old Themes and New Trends

The “Jewish people are the greatest enemy of Islam” and Jews are the “most corrupt” and “the most seditious group among all human beings” are but a few among the many harsh statements raised against the Jews and Judaism in the post-1979 Shi‘i discourse.<sup>1</sup> The prevalence of anti-Jewish statements and the extensive preoccupation with the Jews, particularly their supposed enmity towards [Shi‘i] Islam, reflect the role of anti-Judaism alongside anti-Zionism as an important pillar in the ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the same time, Jews are one among a group of external enemies of the Islamic Republic, and it is not always clear whether they are the number one enemy or they stand on equal footing with the West and other enemies.

The current anti-Jewish discourse constitutes both continuity and departure from past Shi‘i attitudes towards Jews. Pre-modern Shi‘ism espoused a dual approach towards the Jews. Like the Sunnis, the Shi‘is blamed the Jews for rejecting the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad, for distorting and falsifying the true scriptures given to them by Moses, and for a host of immoral activities. Unlike the Sunnis, and most likely due to the survival in Iran of pre-Islamic Zoroastrian concepts of ritual purity, Shi‘i doctrine regarded the Jews as ritually “unclean.”<sup>2</sup>

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1 “Qawm-e yahud ra behtar beshenasim,” issued June 16, 2013, <http://article.tebyan.net/248084>, see also “In a speech given to the Revolutionary Guards, Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi, Ahmadinejad’s spiritual mentor, accused the Jews and the Zionist of corruption and fanning resistance against the regime as part of their effort to ‘take over the world and destroy Islam’,” *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, issued January 25, 2010, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/18156>; M. Ta‘eb et al. *Tibar-e enheraf: pazhuheshi dar dushman shenasi-ye ta’rikhi* (Qom: mu‘assasah-ye farhangi vala‘-e muntazar, 2011), 1:8; S. ‘Ali Hosseini Qurtani, “Yahud ra behtar beshenasim,” issued May 27, 2012, <http://rasekhoon.net/article/print/213036/>; “Yahudiy-an, sarsakhtarin-e doshmanan,” issued June 13, 2014, <http://mouood.org/component/k2/item/20369/>; “Bozurgtarin-e dushman-e idiuluzhik-e Islam, amrika ast, ya inglis, ya vahabiyan va-salafiy-an,” issued 2014, <http://www.islamquest.net/fa/archive/question/fa29589>. The number of books and articles dedicated to the discussion of Jewish enmity toward Islam and Shi‘ism in particular is too vast to be enumerated here.

2 On the transfer of such themes from Zoroastrianism to Shi‘ism, see S. S. Soroudi, “The Concept of Jewish Impurity and its Reflection in Persian and Judeo-Persian Traditions,” *Irano Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages III* (1994): 142–70. On Jewish impurity in Shi‘i law, see Daniel Tsadik, *Between Foreigners and Shi‘is: Nineteenth-Century Iran and its Jewish Minority* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 17–21.

Conversely, early Shi'i traditions often equated Shi'ism with the biblical "Children of Israel" or more moderately saw the Jews as a prototype of Shi'ism.<sup>3</sup>

However, following the unification of Iran by the Safavids in 1501 and the transformation of Shi'ism into the religion of state, attitudes towards Jews worsened significantly. One reason for Shi'i intolerance towards the Jews was Sunni polemics against Shi'ism, which pointed to parallels between the Shi'i and Jewish doctrines and culminated in the maxim "the *rafida* (Shi'is) are the Jews of our umma."<sup>4</sup> Conceivably, one way to refute such accusations was to take a stronger anti-Jewish position. Consequently, the Jews of Iran suffered greater discrimination and persecution than any other Jewish community in the Middle East, culminating in forced conversions and even pogroms well into the nineteenth century.

By contrast, the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah (1941–1979) was the "Golden era" of Iranian Jewry, which reached unprecedented achievements both intellectually and materially. It was also a period of extensive Iranian-Israeli economic, military, and strategic cooperation. Concurrently, various clerics and pro-Islamist intellectuals propagated strong anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish views.<sup>5</sup>

It was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder and leader of the Islamic Republic, who made antisemitism a central component of Iran's Islamic ideology. Already in the first page of his major ideological work, *Velayat-e Faqih: Hukumat-e Eslami [The Governance of the Jurist: Islamic Government]*, Khomeini charged "from the very beginning" Islam "was afflicted by the Jews, for it was they who established anti-Islamic propaganda and engaged in various stratagems" against the Muslims. As proof of the wickedness of the Jews, Khomeini often quoted passages from the Qur'an describing the Jews as immersed in sin and as being constantly reprimanded by God for their evil doings. Following their ancestors during the Prophet's time, the Jews and Christians, according to Khomeini, conspired against Islam in the modern period as well, seeking to undermine the most important feature of Islam as a comprehensive and total system of law

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3 For an analysis of this dualism, see M. Barasher, "Les fils d'Israël, prototypes de la Chi'a: notes sur quelques traditions exégétiques du chi'isme duodécimain," *Perspectives: Revue de l'Université Hébraïque de Jérusalem* 9 (2002): 125–37; S. Wasserstrom, "Shi'ite and Jew between History and Myth," in *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 93–135.

4 For an analysis of these parallels and of the cultural implications of this maxim, see Wasserstrom, "Shi'ite and Jew between History and Myth."

5 D. Menashri, "The Jews of Iran: Between the Shah and Khomeini," in *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*, ed. S. Gilman and S. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 353–71; M. Ahouie, "Iranian Anti-Zionism and the Holocaust: A Long Discourse Dismissed," *Radical History Review* 105 (2009): 58–78.

that governs society and state. In order to achieve their objective, the Jews joined hands with other groups that were “more satanic than they” in order to facilitate the imperialist penetration of the Muslim countries. Their main goal was the “extirpation of Islam” in addition to sowing doubt and confusion in the hearts of Muslims, since “Islam and its ordinances” was the “main obstacle in the path of their materialistic ambitions.” In addition, the West, consisting of Jewish and Christian elements, resists the righteous cause of Islam to expand to the “four corners of the globe.”<sup>6</sup> The Jews, “may God curse them,” Khomeini adds, “are opposed to the very foundations of Islam and wish to establish Jewish domination throughout the world.” They “meddle with the text of the Qur’an” and disseminate false translations that distort its meaning in order to slander Islam. Like other Islamic thinkers, Khomeini sometimes describes the Jews as fifth columnists in the world of Islam and as agents of the West, and at other times as the real power that stands behind the West in its offensive against Islam. Linking Judaism and Zionism, Khomeini maintained that the most overt manifestation of the Jewish-Christian conspiracy against Islam was the establishment of Israel by Western imperialism in order to oppress the Muslims. Both Khomeini and his successor as supreme leader, Ayatollah ‘Ali Khamene’i, stated that “the occupation of Palestine [by the Jews] is part of a satanic design by the world domineering powers, [...] to weaken the solidarity of the Islamic world, and to sow the seeds of disunity among Muslims.”<sup>7</sup>

After assuming power in 1979, the new Iranian leaders sought to render their anti-Jewish animosity more presentable. In addition, as jurists they may have wanted to portray Iran as a model for Islamic states policy towards religious minorities.

Consequently, spokesmen of the Islamic regime claimed to distinguish between Zionists, whom they vehemently opposed, and Jews, who should be treated with tolerance.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Islamic constitution allocated one seat in parliament to a representative of the Jewish community, who always backs the regime’s anti-Zionist line. Under the Islamic regime Iranian Jews enjoy tolerance,

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6 R. Khomeini, *al-hukuma al-islamiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali’a, 1979), 7; *ibid.*, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. H. Algar (Berkeley: Mizan, 1981), 27, 47, 109, 127; H. Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 426.

7 Reuters, issued December 22, 2000; Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), issued April 24, 2001.

8 Cf. R. Khomeini, *Al-qādiyya al-filastiniyya fi kalam al-imam Khomeini* (Beirut: Dar al-wasila, 1996), 47–51; ‘A. Akbar Velayati, *Iran wa-falastin (1867–1937), judhur al-‘alaqa wa-taqalubat al-siyasa* (Beirut: Dar al-Haqq, 1997), 14.

though not full equality. This attitude presumably seeks to demonstrate that under the benevolent rule of Islam, Jews can live peacefully as a protected subordinated minority, and therefore there is no justification for Jewish statehood.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, as far as ideology and religious discourse towards the Jews as a historical or cultural collective are concerned, there is hardly any distinction between Judaism and Zionism. Anti-Jewish expressions and motifs appear in the writings and statements of senior and mid-level clerics, in scholarly books, and journal articles published by the Qom learning complex, in scholarly TV programs and in hundreds of semi-official websites.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Israel has often been referred to as “the Jewish entity,” as a “bunch of Jews,” or as the “Jewish nation,” while at other times the Jews in the diaspora and Jews in pre-modern periods were referred to as Zionists.<sup>11</sup>

The two most blatant expressions of the confluence between anti-Zionism and anti-Judaism in Iran are the widespread dissemination of the notorious antisemitic tract the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and of Holocaust denial.<sup>12</sup> The popularity of the Protocols world-wide and particularly in Iran was partly due to the inclination towards conspiracy theories of societies in crisis as they simplify a complex and often perplexing reality by attributing every development to the intended machination of a group of individuals.<sup>13</sup> In recent years, the Protocols have been cited widely by numerous clerics and other writers in Iran as an au-

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**9** There are some exceptions to this approach. Ayatollah Ruhollah Qarahi, for example, accuses the Iranian Jews of serving Israel and Zionism, cf. “Yahud shenasi az negahi-ye ostad Qarahi,” issued December 14, 2011, <http://qarahi.andishvaran.ir/fa/showinterview.html?DataID=1062&ReturnPageID=79>.

**10** To cite one example, the Institute for Applied Historical Research, an active promotor of the anti-Jewish discourse, in October 2017 listed fifteen PhD dissertations dedicated to Jewish negative involvement in Islamic history, cf. [shorturl.at/ahDNZ](http://shorturl.at/ahDNZ).

**11** *Kayhan*, issued June 13, 2002; *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, issued May 20, 2003.

**12** Cf. “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: An Iranian Perspective,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series, no. 98, June 7, 2000, <https://www.memri.org/reports/protocols-elders-zion-iranian-perspective>; “Iranian TV Series Based on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and the Jewish Control of Hollywood,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series, no. 705, April 30, 2004, <https://www.memri.org/reports/iranian-tv-series-based-protocols-elders-zion-and-jewish-control-hollywood>. For Holocaust denial in Iran, see M. Litvak, “Iranian Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust,” in *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, ed. A. McElligott and J. Herf (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 205–29; M. Küntzel, “Judeophobia and the Denial of the Holocaust in Iran,” in *Holocaust Denial: The Politics of Perfidy*, ed. R. Wistrich (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 235–54.

**13** For the popularity and spread of conspiracy theories in modern Iranian political culture, see A. Ashraf, “Conspiracy Theories,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 6, Fasc 2. 138–47, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/conspiracy-theories>.

thentic historical document exposing Jewish machinations. In the words of Basij writer Keyvan Majidi, if the Jews claim that the Protocols are a forgery, how do they explain the fact that everything that has been written in them has eventually taken place?<sup>14</sup> There is no need to elaborate here on the antisemitic meaning of Holocaust denial.

Significantly, most Shi'i writers while speaking of Jewish-Muslim, and particularly Jewish-Shi'i conflict, refer to the Jews as a "people" [*qawm*], and explain that Jewish identity is based on genealogical continuity and not on religious belief. The usage of the term *qawm* probably stems from the emphasis on the continued Jewish identity and mode of action of those Jews who had converted to Islam but allegedly harmed Islam from within as part of the Jewish scheme.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Jewishness was and is an immutable attribute, regardless of conversion to other religions. This designation differs from the dominant Arab terminology that refuses to recognize Jewish peoplehood and insists that Jews only share a religious belief. This discourse is different from racist European antisemitism since it focuses on the religious and cultural conflict and the idiom of speech is religious. Yet, considering the widespread resort to themes and vocabulary borrowed from modern western antisemitism, the current Iranian case fits the category of modern antisemitism more than the traditional pre-modern phenomenon of anti-Judaism.<sup>16</sup>

The subject or target of present-day Shi'i anti-Judaism is the Jews as a collective and as a concept as well as Jewish culture and history. The post-1979 discourse conflates them with other modern perceived threats and challenges of [Shi'i] Islam and of Iran be they the West in its various manifestations from the Free Masons to capitalism and rock music all the way to Wahhabism and radical Sunni Jihadi Salafism.<sup>17</sup>

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14 K. Majidi, "Vaki'iyat-e yahud setizi: protocol-ha-ye zu'ama-ye sahyun," issued January 8, 2011, <http://basij-ganjnameh.persianblog.ir/post/84/>.

15 See for example, S. Mohammad Taqi Zahedi in "dar hamayeshi-ye takhassosi-ye 'din-e zaw' barresi shod," issued December 13, 2013, <http://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/270442>.

16 On the difference between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, see G. Langmuir, *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), particularly 57–99; S. Heschel, "Historiography of Antisemitism versus Anti-Judaism: A Response to Robert Morgan," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 3 (2011): 257–79.

17 Cf., for example, Salman Qasemi, *Yahudiyān bani Isra'īl va-faramasoneri* (Isfahan: Kiyarad, 1391/2012); H. Yahya, "Dastan-e haqiqi-ye Qabala," *Mawoud* 62 (Farvardin 1385/April 2006), 34–39; "Asrar-e faramasonha: yahudiyān faramason chegune jahan re idara mikonand?" issued June 8, 2017, <http://www.historywonders.ir/2017/06/08/>; "Faramasonery farzand-e khwande namashru'-e yahud," <http://masoner.persianblog.ir/post/7/>; "Nemadha-ye faramasoneri va-yahud," <http://www.gehraz.ir/1393/10/21/>; "Iritbat faramasoneri ba sahyunism va-shaytan para-

The Shi'i anti-Jewish discourse harbors many similarities to the Sunni Islamist one and is influenced by it. But, in recent years, distinct Shi'i features are emerging as well. Some of them are rooted in earlier Shi'i traditions, but they seem to have attained greater scope and power than before, and more importantly, they are articulated as part of a more comprehensive vision of Islamic history.

This phenomenon is best explained by two insights. The first, formulated by Esther Webman, is the evolution of the Jew into a metaphor for evil. Put differently, the "Jew" is being constructed as a functional metaphor, an all-purpose villain, to explain the changing circumstances and catastrophes that have befallen Arab societies.<sup>18</sup> The second is David Nirenberg's definition of "Judaism" and "anti-Judaism." "Judaism" is not only the religion of specific people with specific beliefs but also a category, a set of ideas and attributes, with which non-Jews can make sense of and criticize their world. Hence, "anti-Judaism" is not simply an attitude toward Jews and their religion but "a powerful theoretical framework for making sense of the world." Accordingly, anti-Judaism puts old ideas about Judaism to new kinds of work in thinking about the world, it engaged the past and transformed it, and reshaped the possibilities for thought in the future." In other words, it repeatedly invoked the threat of Judaism to make critical sense of its cosmos.<sup>19</sup>

Nirenberg's observation is particularly helpful in explaining the Shi'i Iranian case, with the Jews serving as the explanation and source of many of the misfortunes that have befallen upon the Shi'is in history and they are associated with the perceived modern threats to the correct Shi'i-Islamic way of life. A case in point is Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani's argument that the slogan "fewer children, better life," that had originally promoted birth control, is Jewish when it identifies modern westernized lifestyle as Jewish and as a threat to Islam.<sup>20</sup>

The central theme in the anti-Judaism discourse in Iran constitutes an almost classic case of psychological projection by the depiction of the Jews as historical yet active enemies, who are motivated by hatred against Islam and the

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sti," issued December 16, 2014, <http://www.adyannet.com/fa/news/14930>. The Masonic conspiracy was invented by right-wing groups in Europe already in the eighteenth century and became a popular theme in both antisemitic and anti-enlightenment literature ever since. See "Freemasonry," Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed September 27, 2019, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007186>.

18 Cf. E. Webman "The 'Jew' as a Metaphor for Evil in Arab Public Discourse," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 6, nos. 3–4 (2015): 275–92.

19 D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 3, 5, 169, 464.

20 Cf. "Ayatollah Sobhani: farzand-e kamtar zendegi behtar, shi'ari yahudi va-bar khelaf-e Islam ast," issued June 15, 2010, <http://www.irna.ir/fa/NewsPrint.aspx?ID=2000621401>.

Muslims, especially the Shi'is.<sup>21</sup> If the West is the greatest threat to Islam at present, then the Jews are portrayed as Islam's greatest enemy from its inception, and they merge with the West in the modern age. Moreover, the Jews, according to this narrative, play a key role in disseminating Islamophobia all over the world.

The reasons for the Jews' enmity towards Islam are ingrained in their inherent negative traits, which are enumerated in the Qur'an and which had been revealed by their conduct throughout history. The most important among these are disobedience and defiance of God; brutality and the shedding of blood like animals; aggression and rancor against all others, greed and hostility towards reason. They are cunning, manipulative, and lack any conscience; they are morally corrupt and as such they threaten the morality of the family, the bastion of Muslim society. Thus in discussing Jewish conspiracies against Iranian youth, one writer explains that the "rootless jazz music" had borrowed heavily from Yiddish music so that the "Jewish Michael Jackson overcame church music."<sup>22</sup> Some polemicists go further and describe the Jews as "enemies of religion" and of humanity as a whole. In addition, Jews were notorious for their greed and dubious financial and economic practices, from money lending to playing a major role in the American slave trade. Still, while describing the Jews as the greatest enemy during the formative Islamic period, the semi-official islamquest.net conceded that in recent centuries, the imperialism of Christian countries did not commit fewer crimes against Islam and the Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

All of these traits, which are associated with western capitalism, stand in complete contrast to the ideals and essence of Shi'i Islam. The unanimous view in the Shi'i discourse is that Islam, particularly Shi'ism, by its very essence

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<sup>21</sup> Psychological projection denotes a shift of the border between the self and the world in favor of the self, attributing to the "other" those repulsive or harmful aspects of the self.

<sup>22</sup> Qurtani, "Yahud ra behtar beshenasim"; 'A. M. Shirazi, *Donya bazicheh dast-e yahud*, cited in <http://montazer-mousa.blogfa.com/post/14>; "'Ellal va-'avamel-e dushmani-ye yahud bar Islam"; "Goftegu-ye 'Ali Khalil Isma'il ba dustan-e javan dar masjid Imam-e Sajjad 'alayhi al-salam," <http://atm.parsiblog.com/Posts/119/>; 'Ali Akbar Ra'ifi-Pur, "Va'qi'iyat-e yahdud setizi 1," issued February 12, 2009, <http://antisemitism.blogfa.com/post/1>; "Towti'eh-ye yahud baraye javanan-e Irani," [shorturl.at/cgxT5](http://shorturl.at/cgxT5); Kayhan, June 30, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Tabataba'i, "Naqsh-e jarayan-e masihi-yahudi dar tarbiyat-e yazid"; "'Ellat-e dushmani-ye yahudi ba Islam: nezhad parasti," <http://mastoor.ir/content/view/7996/1>; "Falsafeah-ye ekhtelaf-e yahudiyān ba Shi'iyān"; "'Ellal va-'avamel-e dushmani-ye yahud bar Islam"; "Naqsh-e yahudiyān dar Karbala chist?," <https://hammihan.com/answer/27316>; "Revayat-e Hojjat al-Islam Taeb az naqsh-e yahud dar dastgah-e khilafat-e Mu'awiya," <http://www.farsnews.com/news/text.php?nn=13911021000692>.



rejects and fights these negative Jewish attributes and conduct. Therefore, it has become the main target of Jewish enmity from its inception.

Concurrently, quite a few writers reject the charges of antisemitism hurled against Iran. Some deny this allegation as a malicious ploy in the psychological warfare, which the Zionists use in order to justify their illegitimate presence in Palestine. Others describe it as a fiction created by Jewish historians in order to portray the Jews as innocent victims and hide their own malicious policies. One writer, for instance, who denies the existence of antisemitism, explains that “Jewishness” [*yahudiyat*] in itself is the problem. Being Jewish is essentially embracing both a sense of superiority over other people and deep fears and paranoia from them. Or in his words, Judaism is neither race nor religion but a “mental disease” [*bimar-e ravani*]. The only solution for the Jews to cure this disease is to reject and deny Judaism.<sup>24</sup>

In this paper, I would like to focus on one aspect of contemporary Iranian antisemitism, which is the supposed Jewish role and responsibility for the series of historical events, following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, to the detriment and misfortune of the Shi’a. The main point is the key Jewish role in the usurpation of the Prophet’s succession from his rightful heir, his cousin and son-in-law ‘Ali. This event is the root cause, in the Shi’i worldview, of the distortion that Islam had suffered from and its divergence from its correct path and is therefore source of many of the ills that afflicted Islam ever since.

This approach is partly a response to Sunni charges that Jewish converts to Islam were responsible for the birth of Shi’ism. Countering these accusations by Judaizing Sunni Islam would have been too provocative for the Shi’i minority. Therefore, the Shi’is responded by presenting themselves as the victims of Jewish enmity, much more than the Sunnis, and by highlighting direct Jewish role or indirect influence in all crucial events in Islamic history that harmed the Shi’a. Such claims, while not absolving the Sunnis from any wrong doing, softened Shi’i criticism against them by portraying ordinary Sunnis as unwise victims of the Jews and of few truly evil and unscrupulous Muslims. Thus, a common bond with broad strata of Sunnis remained possible by turning against the common enemy, the Jews.

At the same time, such claims serve to portray Shi’ism not only as a victim of manipulation by the Jews but also as their absolute opposite. Consequently, if the Jews are first and foremost the enemies of Shi’ism, and if they represent

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<sup>24</sup> “Himayat bi qayd va-shart az yahudiayn tahdidi ‘aleyh-e javame’-e bashari,” issued April 12, 2010, <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8901211582>. It was disseminated in other blogs and websites dedicated to fight Zionism, for example, <http://zionistregime.blogfa.com/post/43> and <http://4palestine.blogfa.com/post-65.aspx>.

evil, then Shi'ism must be the symbol of virtue. Moreover, Shi'ism, being the correct and pure Islam, has never been affected by the Jews,<sup>25</sup> unlike Sunni Islam, which has been contaminated and distorted by the Jews, and therefore the dichotomy between Sunni Islam and Judaism is not as strong as it is in Shi'ism. The sharp contrast between Judaism and Shi'ism is manifested in Grand Ayatollah Nuri Hamedani's explanation that Jewish enmity, together with the Muslims' neglect of their social obligations, was the reason for the failure to implement the governance of the jurist [*Velayat-e faqih*] and Islamic government since the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam in 941 C.E. In other words, Jewish enmity was a major factor in preventing Shi'ism from attaining self-fulfillment prior to the 1979 Revolution.<sup>26</sup>

Formerly, a common Muslim contention against the Jews was the distortion of the true message that God had conveyed to them through Moses. The present narrative goes further by speaking of a comprehensive Jewish plot to falsify Islam and divert it from its correct doctrinal, moral, and historical path. According to this narrative, the Jews have sought throughout history to corrupt the beliefs of other peoples by penetrating them from within and by implanting their own false beliefs and ideas.<sup>27</sup> Thus they sought to destroy Islam immediately following the death of Prophet. Among the measures they employed was the dissemination of the "Torah and Jewish ideas," among the Muslims. By spreading these "poisonous ideas" they succeeded in contaminating the pure beliefs of Islam, thereby facilitating the distortion of this divine religion and bringing it to the same state as Judaism and Christianity. Equally important, the Jews were very active in fomenting seditions among the Muslims.

The perpetrators of these plots had been "Jews in Muslim garbs," that is Jews, who converted to Islam outwardly but remained Jewish in their soul and mind, and who sought to distort and corrupt Islam from within. These converts exerted efforts to falsify if not replace whole passages from the Qur'an. They disseminated false exegeses and interpretations of the Qur'an, fabricated numerous

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25 See for instance a sermon by Ayatollah Qarahi where he explains that the secret of guarding oneself from Jewish influence is adherence to the Shi'i Imams, "Velayat; kelid-e usul-e din/ramz-e masvaniyat-e i'tiqadat az nufudh-e yahud chist?," issued October 18, 2015, <http://www.mehrnews.com/news/2942890/>.

26 "Dushmani-ye yahud va-bi towjhi-ye mosلمانان beh takalif-e ijtimai'. Ba'eth-e 'adam-e tashkil-e hokumat-e Islami dar dowreh-ye ghaybat ast," issued October 25, 2015, [shorturl.at/bquwE](http://shorturl.at/bquwE); "Ta'eb: Mashai Abu Bakr-e zaman va-nofuzi-ye yahud ast," July 4, 2016, <http://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/30644>.

27 See for instance the assertion that many Jews "dressed as Christians," assumed leadership of the Church and spread corruption in its ranks in "Yahudiyan-e makhfi," [shorturl.at/dzNX1](http://shorturl.at/dzNX1).

oral traditions designed primarily to harm 'Ali's cause and falsified Islamic history.<sup>28</sup>

The suspicious attitude towards these converts was not unique to Shi'ism, and it is also prevalent in Sunni Islam under the category of *Isra'iliyat*, that is Judeo-Christian traditions that entered Islamic exegesis and distorted it.<sup>29</sup> Yet, several points regarding these converts seem to be unique to the Shi'a and deserve elaboration: First is the attribution of a significant role and impact to them, and through them to the Jews as a whole on key events, which were detrimental to the Shi'a. Second, they did not act as individuals for personal reasons, but they were motivated solely by their Jewish identity or nature, and they operated as part of the broader Jewish organization and conspiracy against Islam. Thus, their actions or those of any other Jew project upon all Jews at all times. Third is the association of these early converts with modern Jewish converts to Islam in Iran, and even more importantly to Baha'ism as a proof of a continuous Jewish effort to harm Islam from within. Fourth is the equation of the alleged impact of the early converts on Sunni Islam with the supposed Jewish penetration of Christianity and its distortion by the Jews, particularly the role of Christian apostle Paul (d. 67 C.E.), as both brought about the separation of religion from politics and promoted obedience to the powers that be. In other words, the errors of Sunni Islam are products of the Jews.<sup>30</sup>

A major issue that Shi'i historiography and polemics have grappled with was the need to explain the turning of the majority of the Companions of the Prophet

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**28** Cf., for example, "Yahudiyani ke idi'ay-ye muslmani mikonnad," issued June 13, 2014, <https://www.mouood.org/component/k2/item/20370>; H. Ilahi, 'A. Yazdani, H. Kazemzadeh, *Mahar-e Enheraf: Bazgavi-ye havadeth pas az rihlat-e piyambar akram (s)* (Qom: mo'assaseh-ye ta'rikh-e tatbiqi, 2014), 117–18, 123–26; "Siyasatha-ye saze-man-e nafaq baraye nabudi-ye Islam pas az piyambar (s)," [shorturl.at/osHQ8](http://shorturl.at/osHQ8); A. M. Amini Golestani, "Intiqam-e yahudiyan az Imam 'Ali (A)," [shorturl.at/dfwGT](http://shorturl.at/dfwGT); al-Ta'i, *Fada'ih Yahud mutalabbisun bil-Islam*; "Asib shenasi-ye ta'rikh-e Islam va-naqsh-e yahud dar an," <http://analytichistory.blogfa.com/post-3.aspx>.

**29** For a Shi'i view of *Isra'iliyyat*, see G. Vajda, "Isra'iliyyat," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 4:211–12; Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Medical Israiliyyat? Ancient Islamic Medical Traditions Transcribed into the Hebrew Alphabet," *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* 6, no. 1 (2006): 373–98. A. J. Sobhani, "moshkel-e Isra'iliyyat dar hadith, bekhater-e bid'atha-ye sadr Islam ast," issued July 18, 2011, [shorturl.at/jIP47](http://shorturl.at/jIP47).

**30** Cf. "Paulus va-'amaliyat-e yahud baraye takhrib-e masihiyat," in *Tibar-e enheraf: pezhaheshi dar dushman'shinasi-i tarikh*, ed. M. Ta'eb, 191–92; "Yahudiyan-e makhfi," issued September 14, 2014, [shorturl.at/mxDPX](http://shorturl.at/mxDPX); *Mahar-e Enheraf*, 163; "Yahudi makhfi ya anusi," issued January 1, 2013, <http://afshin1939.persianblog.ir/post/633>; "Yahudi zadegan musalman nema (bakhsh-e payani)," [shorturl.at/lzEI2](http://shorturl.at/lzEI2). The Institute for Applied Historical Research convened on September 26, 2016, a special seminar on the "Jewish distortion (*enherafgari*) in Christianity (messianic Zionism) from Paul to Martin Luther," cf. <http://fa.tarikh.org/index.php/en/news/item/1669>.

against 'Ali, the Prophet's cousin, son-in-law and rightful heir according to Shi'i belief immediately after the Prophet's death. For centuries, Shi'is blamed several companions, led by 'Umar bin al-Khattab and Abu Bakr, for the usurpation of the Prophet's succession from 'Ali's and his later tribulations.<sup>31</sup> While not exonerating these persons, the new approach highlights the role of the Jews in these tragic events. Who else but the "Zionist Jews" could have connived such a conspiracy?, they maintain. It is only logical that they had been the mastermind behind these seditions considering their continuous clashes with the Prophet and the numerous warnings against them in the Qur'an.<sup>32</sup>

Jewish actions are explained in three complementary ways: Jewish enmity towards the Prophet's household and against 'Ali in particular; Allegations of close friendship and collaboration between the Jews and those Companions, who had played the most harmful role in the conspiracies against 'Ali and Fatima; and the attribution of Jewish ancestry to many of these Companions.

Alleged Jewish enmity towards 'Ali was attributed to several reasons: First, due to their evil nature, the Jews had always opposed true men of God. Therefore, just as they had persecuted Jesus and Muhammad and tried to kill Muhammad several times, they fought against 'Ali. Various Shi'i sources trace Jewish animosity towards 'Ali to his actions in the battle against the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza where he had killed many Jews and to his central role in the conquest of the Jewish oasis of al-Khaybar. Concurrently, 'Ali was among the very few who had always distrusted the Jewish converts to Islam.<sup>33</sup> Jewish enmity to the Prophet's household reached new low by their role in poisoning Fatima, the Prophet's daughter and 'Ali's wife, and all other ten Imams, that is the descendants of 'Ali and the only legitimate rulers according to Shi'i doctrine.<sup>34</sup>

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31 For Shi'i criticism of the Companions as hypocrites and even as apostates, see E. Kohlberg, "Some Imami Shi'i Views on the Sahaba," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984): 143–75.

32 "Saqifat bani Isra'il," <http://intiqam.blogfa.com/post-23.aspx>; "Gozaresh-e Fars az neshest-e 'naqsh-e yahud dar vaqi'ah-ye khunin-e Karbala (2)," issued November 17, 2012, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13910826000113>; M. M. Hamidi, *Dushmanan-e mahdaviyat chera? Va-cheguneh?* (Qom: Markaz-e tahqiqat-e rayaneh-ye qa'imiyeh Isfahan, 2008), 96–98; "Jarayan shenasi ta'rikhi-ye nufudh ba tamarkoz bar yahud."

33 "Naqsh-e yahud dar shahadat-e Imaman," <http://www.ahbab14.blogfa.com/post/26>; "Umar wal-yahud: dirasa nafsiyya fi khalfiyat 'Umar al-diniyya," [shorturl.at/BQW27](http://shorturl.at/BQW27); "al-Radd al-sarim 'ala a'da' al-Imam al-qa'im," issued May 4, 2016, [shorturl.at/bgyN2](http://shorturl.at/bgyN2); M. Dashti, *Rahavard-e mobarazat-e hazrat-e Zahra 'alayha al-slam* (Isfahan: Markaz tahqiqat-e rayanha-ye qa'imiyeh-ye Isfahan, n.d.), 19; "Yahudi zadegan musalman nema."

34 "Naqsh-e yahud dar vaqaye'-e ta'rikh-e Islam"; "Yahudi zadegan musalman nema"; "Naqsh-e yahud dar shahadat-e Imaman"; "Naqsh-e yahud dar shahadat-e ahl-e beit," [shorturl.at/](http://shorturl.at/)

The Jewish connection is particularly strong in the case of the second Caliph ‘Umar, who had been a subject of Shi‘i vilification for centuries, who is described as the “Jewish Fifth column” in the early Islamic community. Few Shi‘i writers even gave a pro-Jewish twist to ‘Umar’s expulsion of the Jews from the Arabian Peninsula. Accordingly, it was not expulsion but a supportive measure toward fulfilling the Jewish-Zionist dream to return to their holy land.<sup>35</sup>

The third component in explaining Jewish enmity to Shi‘ism is the attribution of Jewish ancestry to leading Sunni figures. This practice was widespread among Muslims (Sunnis and Shi‘is) and Christians during the medieval period. It reflects the notion of Jews as a metaphor of evil but also served as a mechanism of self-defense by presenting the accuser as innocent of that charge.<sup>36</sup>

A prominent example of this practice is the attribution of Jewish ancestry to the Umayyad dynasty, the arch villains in Shi‘i worldview, who fought ‘Ali when he finally became Caliph and seized power in the Arab empire. The modern sources expanded the Umayyad-Jewish connection beyond genealogy into broad collaboration. Accordingly, the ideological distortions that the Jews had fomented paved the way for Umayyad rule. In a significant twist of the ranking of evil and change between pre-modern and contemporary priorities, a writer of the Mowoud organization in Qom explained that “the link of the Umayyads with the Party of Satan [the Jews]” is “the greatest proof of the satanic essence of the Umayyad family.”<sup>37</sup>

In a special seminar dedicated to the Jewish role in the tragedy of Karbala held by the Mowoud Center in November 2012, the various speakers placed the Karbala event within the broader theme of Jewish conspiracies against Islam. Significantly, they highlighted the importance of cursing the Jews as part of the ‘Ashura ceremonies, as the mourners are required to curse the enemies of Islam, and the Qur’an places the Jews above all other enemies. Not surprisingly, Hojjat al-Islam Mohammad Ibrahim-niya concluded that the elimina-

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jCH12; Hamidi, *Dushmanan-e Mahdaviyat chera va-chegune*, 125, 128, 147; M. Ibrahim-niya, “Naqsh-e yahud dar shahadat-e hazrat-e Zahra’ salam Allah ‘alayha,” <http://intiqam.blogfa.com/post/24>; “Enqelabim, sarbaz rahbarim,” issued July 26, 2016, <https://www.pictaramsite.com/post/BIYE7yuDAdR>; “Baznegari naqsh-e yahud dar masa’ib ahl-e bayt ‘alayhim al-salam,” <https://hammihan.com/post/9001251>.

<sup>35</sup> “‘Umar wal-yahud/Yahudiyat ‘Umar b. al-Khattab wa-ta’amorihi ma’a al-yahud,” <http://marwan1433143.blogspot.co.il/2014/10/blog-post.html>; “Dawr al-yahud fi al-mu’amara.”

<sup>36</sup> Cf. D. Nirenberg, “The Extinction of Spain’s Jews and the Birth of Its Inquisition,” in *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, 217–45.

<sup>37</sup> “Bani Umayya va-yahud,” issued July 15, 2016, <http://www.mouood.org/component/k2/item/36944>.

tion of the State of Israel would be the proper revenge [*intiqa*m] for the Karbala tragedy.<sup>38</sup>

Jewish animosity, conspiracies, and activities against Shi'ism culminate in their efforts to prevent the future rise of the Mahdi or Messiah and to fight him once he appears. Not surprisingly, Grand Ayatollah Nuri Hamedani, who explained the grave danger which the Jews pose to the Iranian people and to the Muslims as a whole, drew the conclusion that "one should fight the Jews and vanquish them so that the conditions for the advent of the Hidden Imam would be met."<sup>39</sup> The significance of the clash between the Mahdi and the Jews and his expected revenge upon them led various writers to associate it with the Qur'anic passage (Sura 17 verse 5) regarding the corruption in the land that the Jews will cause twice and their expected final punishment.

Still, the Shi'i sources, both traditional and modern, are not unanimous about the punishment and fate of the Jews after the Mahdi establishes his just rule on earth. Three different views can be traced in pre-modern Shi'ism.<sup>40</sup> Few senior conservative clerics endorse a moderate view saying that most non-Muslims would accept Islam voluntarily, but the few Jews who will not, will be allowed to live as a protected minority paying the poll tax under the Mahdi's rule.<sup>41</sup> Others reiterate the traditional approach of mass or total Jewish con-

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38 "Imam Hossein va-ifsha kardan naqsh-e yahud dar vaqi'ah-ye 'Ashura"; "Naqsh-e yahud dar vaqi'eh-ye khunin karbala"; "Barresi-ye naqsh-e yahud dar vaqi'eh-ye khunin karbala," <http://www.598.ir/fa/news/93309>: "Naqsh-e yahud dar vaqi'ah-ye ashura' va-shahadat-e Sayyid al-Shuhada' 'alayhi al-salam."

39 "Ayatollah Nouri-Hamedani: 'Fight the Jews and Vanquish Them so as to Hasten the Coming of the Hidden Imam'," MEMRI, Special Dispatch no. 897, April 22, 2005, <https://www.memri.org/reports/ayatollah-nouri-hamedani-%E2%80%98fight-jews-and-vanquish-them-so-hasten-coming-hidden-imam%E2%80%99>.

40 Um al-Banin Haydari and F. Asgarpur, "Yahud va-yahudiayn dar 'asr-e zuhur," issued September 16, 2017, <http://www.hawzah.net/fa/Article/View/95371> and M. R. Aqajani Qonad, "Hoquq-e aqaliyatha-ye dini dar 'asr-e zuhur," in *Majmu'ah-ye athar-e Sovomin-e hamayash-e beyne almilali doktrin-e mahdaviyat ba nuyekard siyasi va-huquqi* (Qom: Mo'assasah-ye ayande roshan, 2008), 303–52, which review four different approaches and show that each relies on hadiths to support it.

41 N. Makarem Shirazi, *Hokumat-e jahani-ye Mahdi* (Qom: Entesharat-e nisl javan, 2001), 288; "Doctrin-e mahdaviyat va-hokumat-e jahani-ye mahdavi az nazar 'Ayatollah Makarem," issued May 23, 2016; A. Qonad, "Hoquq-e aqaliyatha-ye dini dar 'asr-e zuhur," 338; "Aya Imam-e mahdi (aj) hangam-e zuhuresh ba masihiyan va-yahudiyān sulh mikonad va-ba 'Arabha mijangad?," <http://hajj.ir/34/12383>.

version to Shi'i Islam.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, quite a few mid-ranking hardline clerics and lay writers conclude that following the battle between the Mahdi and his Jewish-western enemies, the fate of the Jews will be annihilation [*nabudi, qatl tam*] as the Mahdi “will purify the world from the filth of their existence [*lowth-e vujude-shan*].”<sup>43</sup>

Finally, a recent development in the antisemitic discourse in Iran, which presents the Jews as enemies against Iran and the Iranians as a nation, deserves attention and discussion. Apparently, this new trend seeks to appeal to mostly young people who are less attracted to religion but are Iranian patriots by heart. One such example is the modification of the biblical story of Esther into a tale of a Jewish genocide perpetrated against the Iranian people. Early references to the story on the official website of the Qom seminaries were relatively neutral describing Purim as a holiday which the Jews celebrate to mark their rescue from a massacre. However, since the beginning of the new century, a change took place. Dr. Hasan 'Abbasi, who served as a representative of Supreme Leader Khamenei's office in the Revolutionary Guards, launched the new version when he accused the Jews of massacring more than 70,000 Persians following the fall of Haman, as an example of Jewish brutality and enmity towards Iran, which continues to the present day.<sup>44</sup> Other writers took on the story and magnified it into a broader tale of Jewish conspiracy against Iran culminating in what they termed “the Iranian Holocaust.” Significantly, the Mashreq news agency, which is affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards and a scholarly journal published in Qom, took over the story. In other words, it moved from the margins of the religious-nationalist discourse to its center. Accordingly, within three gen-

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<sup>42</sup> M. Sadeq al-Sadr, *Ta'rikh ma ba'd al-zuhur*, 530; “Aya yahudiyan dar dowran-e zuhur nabud mishavand?,” issued February 13, 2015, <http://www.farsnews.com/printable.php?nn=13931121000429>; K. Sulayman, *Ruzegar-e Rahhayi* (Tehran, 2008), 1:297–300, 378.

<sup>43</sup> Haydari and Fatemeh Asgarpur, “Yahud va-yahudiayn dar 'asr-e zuhur”; “Nabudi-ye qawm-e yahud dar dowran-e akhar al-zaman”; Kurani, “Asr al-Zuhur, 23–24; “Sufyani, *avalin-e neshaneh-ye hatmi-ye zuhur-w Imam-e Mahdi*,” issued June 2, 2015, <http://www.rajanews.com/news/213604>; “Ma'arakat al-Imam al-mahdi 'alayhi al-salam ma'a al-yahud,” [shorturl.at/ervR6](http://shorturl.at/ervR6), <http://endtimeworld.blogspot.com/1392/03/19/post-1199/>; Raja'i, *Asrar Yahud va-akhar-e zaman*, 669. Various writers cite the hadith of “the promise of the stones and trees” as an indication of the fate awaiting the Jews, cf., for example, H. Shahidi, “Sar-nevesht-e yahud maghrur,” I. Shafi'l Servestani cited in <http://www.lamia.blogspot.com/1392/11/01/post-211>; “Yahud va-akhar al-zaman 1,” <http://alhadid.blogfa.com/post-55.aspx>; “Ma'arakat al-Imam al-mahdi 'alayhi al-salam ma'a al-yahud.”

<sup>44</sup> “Nazar-e doktor Hasan 'Abbasi dar mowred-e hakhmanshiyan,” [shorturl.at/eDNow](http://shorturl.at/eDNow); <http://yahood-mir.blogfa.com/post-10.aspx>, [http://www.bachehayeghalam.ir/articles/cat\\_05/009070.php](http://www.bachehayeghalam.ir/articles/cat_05/009070.php), and <http://h-1.persianblog.ir/post/94/>.



erations after Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire had liberated the Jews and Iran gave them refuge, the Jews had acquired great influence over the Iranian economy and the court. Whereas queen Vashti was the model of chastity and modesty typical of Iranian women, Esther was the prime example of the Jews using sexual temptation and prostitution to attain their sinister goals and a model to all Jewish women who served as spies in high political circles in various countries.<sup>45</sup> The Iranian public resented the “power-hungry conduct of the Mordechai band” and wanted to curb it. The grand vizier Hamman, who was a true patriot, wanted the Jews to obey the law of the land and pay the taxes they owed. He sought to drive out the Jewish conspirators from the court and punish the criminals among them. However, Hamman’s plans reached the “Jewish council,” which employed Esther to have him killed.<sup>46</sup> Following his fall, the Jews gave vent to their hatred of the Iranians and massacred 74,000 of them. Other writers, who purported to rely on authentic Persian documentary evidence, inflate the number of the Iranian victims to 170,000 or over 500,000 claiming that the Jewish genocide destroyed over 50 percent of Iran’s population at the time.<sup>47</sup> While the day of 13 Farvardin (2 April) is a day of mourning for Iranians, who therefore leave their homes and go to the desert to commemorate the massacre, the Jews all over the world celebrate each year the massacre of the Iranians as a manifestation of their hatred of Iran. The biggest celebrations take place in Israel where the practice of drinking blood-like red wine symbolizes the Zionist thirst for blood. Many of the pictures added to these items showed ultra-orthodox Jews who are either dancing or drinking wine. Thus, these pictures demonstrate the

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45 “Purim jashn-e irani koshi-ye yahudiyan,” [shorturl.at/ezHLT](http://shorturl.at/ezHLT); “Jashn-e purim; raqs-e yahud dar holokast-e iranian, ‘sizdah bedar’ ruz-e jashn-e yahud beh monsebat-e koshtar-e 500 hezारे irani,” April 1, 2013, <http://www.mashregnews.ir/news/148648>.

46 “Holocast-e irani tavassot-e yahud,” <http://anasr121.mihanblog.com/post/1918>; “Sokhnan-e ostad-e Ra’ifi-pur dar barah-ye purim va-qatl ‘am iranian,” <http://rozegarrahae.blogfa.com/post/30>; “Jashn-e purim; holokast-e iranian beh dast-e sahyunist-ha,” April 2, 2016, <http://tnews.ir/news/0d3160056199.html>; “Davazdah saniyh ta behesht, fahishe-ye yahudi sikandar koshti siyasat,” <http://zolfaghar12.blogfa.com/post/72>; “Jashn-e purim; raqs-e yahud dar holokast-e iranian.”

47 “Iranian Political Analyst Dr. Majid Goudarzi: The Book of Esther Describes Jewish Genocide Against Iranians,” MEMRI TV clip no. 1005, January 4, 2006, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iranian-political-analyst-dr-majid-goudarzi-book-esther-describes-jewish-genocide-against/transcript>; “Purim jashn-e irani koshi-ye yahudiyan”; “Jashn-e purim; raqs-e yahud dar holokast-e iranian”; “Qatili beh nam-e ester (holokast-e irani),” issued December 12, 2010, <https://ya-mahdi313.blogspot.com/1389/09/21/post-39/>. The story of Esther is not mentioned in any non-Jewish source, leading various scholars to regard it as a symbolic myth rather than a real historical event.



confluence between Zionism and Judaism but also associate the Jews with unruly conduct, which pious Muslims should abhor.<sup>48</sup>

The new story contains many of the themes and tropes that are typical of traditional and modern European antisemitism. Among them are Jewish shady financial conduct; central semi-secretive all-powerful leadership; the use of sex for the attainment of criminal goals; sharp contrast in moral character and conduct with the indigenous and patriotic people of the land, and finally unbridled Jewish enmity to the indigenous people.

Prior to the 1979 Revolution, the Shi'i clergy had opposed the monarchy's glorification of the pre-Islamic Achaemenid dynasty, since the pre-Islamic past served as an alternative to Islamic identity.<sup>49</sup> With the partial rehabilitation of the pre-Islamic past in Iran by centrist clerics and populists like then president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, various hardliners used the new story to vilify the Achaemenids as servile allies if not puppets of the Jews. Accordingly, the name Achaemenid appeared after King Darius, together with his Jewish wife Esther and his Jewish grand Vizier, seized control of the empire and the brutal massacre of the opponents of Jews throughout the empire. The defeated and patriotic people of Iran named the dynasty Hacham Menashe (Rabbi Menashe), to denote their servility to the Jewish Rabbi, and the name later evolved into Achaemenid.<sup>50</sup> Few writers, who spoke of Esther's marriage to Xerxes, pointed to the proximity of the Purim story to the Persian failure in the battle of Thermopylae (480 B.C.E.) in Greece, alluding to her potential role in the defeat.<sup>51</sup> As was the case with other manifestations of Iranian antisemitism, the past and present are conflated. Thus, some writers give Esther's intrigues a Zionist slant, when they claim that she wanted her son to be the Shah of Iran, so that he would save the Jews from their dispersion and help them return to Palestine. Others describe the perpetrators of the alleged genocide as Zionists, or claim that the whole story was written in the service of "the money landers who had dominated the world

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48 "Hadiyat-e netanyahu beh Obama: sanad-e qatl-e 'am deh-hv hezar-e irani dar 13 farvardin," March 18, 2012, <http://www.rajanews.com/news/103775>; "Jashn-e purim; raqs-e yahud dar holokast-e iranian"; "Holokast-e Iranian tavasot-e yahud." The thirteenth of Farvardin marks the end of the Nowruz (New Year) holidays in Iran, during which people spend time picnicking outdoors.

49 A. Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 166–68, 222–23; M. Merhavi, "National Historical Awareness during the Reign of Muhammad Reza Shah" (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 2013).

50 "Sizdah badr ya holocast-e irani koshi tavasot-e yahud," issued June 5, 2008, [http://www.aftabir.com/articles/view/politics/world/c1c1212644796\\_holocast\\_p1.php](http://www.aftabir.com/articles/view/politics/world/c1c1212644796_holocast_p1.php); "Sokhnan-e ostad-e Ra'ifi-pur dar barah-ye purim va-qatl 'am Iranian."

51 "Falsafa-ye 13 badr – holocast-e irani," <http://dusttorbati.blogfa.com/page/purim>.

that is the Zionists and Free Masons.”<sup>52</sup> The story uses the modern language of nationalism with the frequent references to the Iranian people and Iranian patriotism in pre-Islamic antiquity and contrasts them with age old Jewish nationalism. It magnifies the nationalist dichotomy by presenting the Jews as harboring hatred, rancor, and disdain towards Iranian culture and identity from antiquity to the present.<sup>53</sup>

The title, Iranian Holocaust, which was given to the concocted story, was not coincidental. It reflected two broader phenomena in modern culture. First, the evolution of the Holocaust into a metaphor and criterion of absolute evil, even by those who seek to underscore only the universal humanistic aspects of the Holocaust and belittle if not totally ignore its Jewish dimension. Sadly or ironically, it also seems to have borrowed from the evolving “culture of victimhood” in the West, especially since the 1980s and 1990s, as part of ethnic and national identity and collective memory that involves the recognition and rectification of past evils. In this competition for victimhood, having suffered a holocaust in the past is perceived as the ultimate proof and winning card.

To conclude, modern Shi'i discourse on Judaism represents both continuity and change from earlier periods. Unlike the pre-modern discourse, the modern Shi'i discourse is predominantly if not wholly hostile. It is based on the early hostility, but it also draws from contemporary Sunni Islamism and from Western antisemitism. In addition, it has become much more politicized as it discarded the issue of Jewish impurity but associates the Jews and Zionism with the Western cultural challenge and threat to Islam. Another cause for this politicization is the attempt to find a common ground with mainstream Sunnis against the common enemy in order to ease sectarian animosities within Islam.

Two major traits that typify the pre-modern Islamic approach can be found in modern antisemitism as well. The first is the timelessness of Jewish motivations, character, and modes of action, which continue unchanged from the distant past to the present. The second trait presents the Jews as a calculating and organized monolith, motivated solely by their Jewish character or collective aspirations.

A major issue in this context is the measure of acceptance of the anti-Jewish motifs among larger sections of the population. Studies of intellectual history or

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52 'A. al-Hossen Ibrahim, “Haqayqi dar bara-ye yahudiyat,” *Ma'aref* 74 (February 2004): 57–65, <http://www.hawzah.net/fa/Article/View/89528>; “Sokhnan-e ostad-e Ra'ifi-pur dar barah-ye purim va-qatl 'am iranian.”

53 See the article linking current Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu with the past Jewish hatred, in “Hadiyat-e netanyahu beh Obama: sanad-e qatl-e 'am deh ha-ye hezar-e irani dar 13 farvardin,” issued March 18, 2012, <http://www.rajanews.com/news/103775>.

public discourse in the Middle East face a serious methodological problem of ascertaining reception due to the difficulty of acquiring data on public opinion particularly among the “silent classes.” In view of the political situation in the Middle East, the ordinary Shi’i consumer of religious or political literature is hardly exposed to alternative attitudes towards Jews, other than the dominant discourse. Several factors seem to facilitate broad acceptance of anti-Jewish arguments: the widespread dissemination of such themes in a wide variety of media may serve as an indication of their popularity; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and sympathy for the Palestinians further help popular readiness to believe hostile charges against Jews; the resort to themes that are deeply rooted in religious tradition makes such dissemination and absorption easier; and finally the linkage of the Jews with other enemies of Shi’ism, from the West to the Wahhabis justifies their perception as the metaphor for evil and as an explanation for other threats. Conversely, those who are disillusioned by the Iranian government’s official ideology may be less inclined to accept the anti-Jewish propaganda.

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Nesya Rubinstein-Shemer

# “If the Scorpion Comes back, We will Wait for it with a Shoe”: Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī’s Theo-Political Response to Trump’s Jerusalem Declaration

## Introduction

Trump’s announcement on December 6, 2017, that the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and that he had decided to transfer the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem led to a wave of condemnation from the Arab world. One of the most prominent figures denouncing Trump’s statement was Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī. Al-Qaraḏāwī posted on Facebook, Twitter, and in a number of publications on his official website where he called on Muslims to fight for the liberation of Jerusalem through resistance and *jihād*. Sheikh al-Qaraḏāwī also uploaded a series of publications dealing with the characteristics of the Jews and their right to the land onto his website. This article will discuss al-Qaraḏāwī’s view on the legitimacy of Jewish rule in Palestine in light of the publications and statements issued after Trump’s declaration. This article will focus on an analysis of a theological article written by al-Qaraḏāwī entitled, “The Verses of the Corruption of the Children of Israel and their Interpretation,” which sheds light on his deep motivation to fight Israel’s existence.

## After Trump’s Declaration: Jews and Zionists in al-Qaraḏāwī’s Writings

Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī (b. 1926) is an extremely popular Egyptian-Qatari Muslim legal authority who wields great influence upon large segments of the Muslim public. Many scholars regard him as the most influential Muslim scholar and preacher of our time.<sup>1</sup> Al-Qaraḏāwī owes his popularity and influence mainly to the successful use of the media, namely television, internet, and the circulation of his books. His weekly program on the *Al-Jazeera* network, “Islamic Law and

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, B. Gräf and J. Skovgaard-Petersen, eds., *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), ix.

Life” (*Al-Sharī‘a wal-Ḥayāt*), attracts approximately sixty million Muslims worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Al-Qaraḍāwī has thus become the topic of numerous studies by Western scholars.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Qaraḍāwī often discusses the subject of the Jews and Israel in his writings. This is for two major reasons: The first reason is that the Islamic sources themselves, namely the Qur’ān and the Hadīth, deal with the Jews. About two-thirds of the Qur’ān deals with biblical stories and the relations between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina. Al-Qaraḍāwī, as a Muslim scholar, refers to the stories about the Jews as part of the holy sources of Islam. A second reason is al-Qaraḍāwī’s view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Al-Qaraḍāwī is considered the spiritual leader of the Hamas movement, and he categorically denies Israel’s existence as a legitimate state.<sup>4</sup> Due to his dedication to the Palestinian struggle against Israel and by virtue of being the spiritual leader of the Hamas movement, al-Qaraḍāwī has devoted many sermons, articles, and television programs to this topic.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Qaraḍāwī’s writings on the Jews are characterized by his failure to distinguish between Jews and Zionists. As far as he is concerned, the children of Israel, the Jews of Medina, and the Israelis are all one large Jewish tribe. One of his favorite examples in this regard is the story of the first president of the State of Israel, which, from his viewpoint, proves that in every Jew hides a concealed Zionist: Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), the great chemist discovered a method for producing acetone from corn flour during World War I. Acetone was used for the production of explosives in bullets and cannon balls. Weizmann sold his patent to the Allied forces that desperately needed it. When asked what he wanted in exchange, Weizman did not request anything for himself but asked

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2 On al-Qaraḍāwī’s successful use of the media, see B. Gräf, *Medien-Fatwas@Yusuf al-Qaradawi: Die Popularisierung des islamischen Rechts* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 177–374.

3 For an updated state of research on al-Qaraḍāwī, see Sh. Bartal and N. Rubinstein-Shemer, *Hamas and Ideology: Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī on the Jews, Zionism and Israel* (London: Routledge, 2018), 1–6.

4 *Ibid.*, for Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī’s view on Israel and his role as the spiritual leader of Hamas.

5 The following are some of the titles of al-Qaraḍāwī’s major works on *jihād* in Palestine: *Fiḥ al-Jihād* (“Laws of Jihad”); *Al-Quds Qaḍīyyat kull Muslim* (“Jerusalem: The Problem of Every Muslim”); *A‘dā’ al-Ḥall al-Islāmi* (“Enemies of the Islamic Solution”); *Dars al-Nakba al-Thāniya* (“Lessons about the Second Nakba”), the fifth volume of his series of sermons entitled, *Khuṭab al-Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī* (“Sermons of Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī”); *Fatāwā min ajli filastīn* (“Religious Rulings for Palestine”), and additional writings.

Britain for the Balfour Declaration regarding a Jewish National Home in Palestine.<sup>6</sup>

In light of the confusion in Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī’s writing on Judaism and Zionism, an important question is to be asked here: what are the characteristics of his writing on the line between antisemitism and anti-Zionism? In another article of mine, which examined exactly this question, I discussed the characteristics of modern antisemitism and whether they are to be found in the writing of Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī. While the twentieth century was characterized by classic antisemitism—hating Jews as individuals, the twenty-first century is characterized by the “New Antisemitism” where it is the State of Israel which is turned into an object of hate. My research has revealed that of the nine characteristics of modern antisemitism, the writing of Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī is characterized by eight. According to Western definitions of modern antisemitism, al-Qaraḍāwī is, without a doubt, antisemitic.<sup>7</sup>

Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī’s view, that Zionism is based on Judaism and that there is no difference between a Jew and a Zionist, is a common feature of Islamist thought. According to the Islamists, even though the leaders of the Zionist movement such as Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, and Moshe Dayan were not religious, their writings are saturated with references to the Jewish religion and its principles.<sup>8</sup> If the Jewish religion is the axis upon which the Zionist movement is based, then the Arab-Israeli conflict becomes a Jewish-Muslim conflict. The Islamization of the conflict is a pretext for religious recruitment of Muslims around the world. An example of this is the book written by al-Qaraḍāwī on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, called “Jerusalem: The Problem of Every Muslim” (*Al-Quds Qaḍīyyat kull Muslim*). The title of the book shows its purpose: Presenting the conflict as a religious war between Judaism and Islam and not as a national territorial struggle between Israelis and Palestinians. The issue of Jerusalem is an Islamic problem that is to be addressed to every Muslim throughout the world, not just to the Palestinians.

On December 6, 2017, the day that Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, al-Qaraḍāwī tweeted:

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6 Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Quds Qaḍīyyat kull Muslim*, 93–94; K. Al-Sa’d, *Khutab al-Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2003), 5:178.

7 N. Rubinstein-Shemer, “Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī: anti-Zionist or anti-Semite?” *Israel Affairs* 23, no. 5 (2017): 794–807.

8 U. Shavit and O. Winter, *Zionism in Arab Discourses* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 94.



What is the meaning of Palestine without Jerusalem, where are the Muslims, where is the Islamic world, where is the Islamic nation all over the world? There is no other choice than to resist this matter and to say “no” unequivocally.<sup>9</sup>

In an article entitled, “We Will Not Accept Any Concessions on Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa,” al-Qaraḍāwī stressed that the issue of Jerusalem is an issue that concerns all Muslims in the world and not only the Palestinians:

It is a sin to think that concessions will advance us toward a just solution.... Since the Arabs began to negotiate with the Zionists, they have only given up and given up. And in the end, they will have to give up everything. It is a mistake to think that peace is the only solution and we are in great error if we think that Israel is an invincible force, a pillar that cannot be broken and therefore we must surrender to it and to fawn upon it.<sup>10</sup>

The following day (December 7, 2017), al-Qaraḍāwī tweeted again, calling for *jihād* by the Muslims for the sake of Jerusalem and implicitly criticized Arabs who were not fighting for Jerusalem or who were working for normalization with Israel. He wrote:

Jerusalem is in danger from the Zionist enemy who has perfectly executed its plan to swallow and Judaize it, so I want to draw the attention of the people who do not pay attention, to the people who are afraid, to strengthen those who hesitate, to expose the traitors, to strengthen the hands of the *jihād* fighters and liberate the nation from [the situation of] weakness. May we live strong or we will die as martyrs!

At the bottom of the post appeared the cover photo of al-Qaraḍāwī’s book, “Jerusalem: The Problem of Every Muslim.”<sup>11</sup>

On December 10, 2017, he tweeted:

I wish I could respond to the call of the first prayer direction [i.e., Jerusalem] and participate in some form in the *jihād* for Jerusalem and the beloved Al-Aqsa Mosque and to receive the honor of martyrdom on the blessed land.<sup>12</sup>

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**9** Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), “What is the meaning of Palestine without Jerusalem? [Arabic],” Twitter, December 6, 2017, <https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/938407697975824384>.

**10** “Al-Qaraḍāwī: lā nuqbil tanāzulan ‘an al-Quds wa-’lmasjīd al-Aqsā,” <https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/42>, accessed January 1, 2018.

**11** Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), “Jerusalem is in danger from the Zionist enemy [Arabic],” Twitter, December 7, 2017, <https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/938754976901300232>.

**12** Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), “I wish I could respond to the call [Arabic],” Twitter, December 10, 2017, <https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/939918929882779648>.

He also published a video in which he appeared giving the Friday sermon. In the middle of his speech, he began to cry and shouted out several times, “Al-Aqsa!” Then he added that he wished they could take him even in a wheelchair to fight in Palestine so that his head would separate from his body and he would be a martyr.<sup>13</sup>

On December 13, the president of Turkey, Tayyip Erdogan, convened an Islamic Leadership Conference to discuss Trump’s announcement. The conference was attended by Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas, Hamas’ representative Khaled Mashal, Iranian President Rohani, and presidents of other countries as well. Although al-Qaraḍāwī did not attend the conference personally, he uploaded a letter to his official site from the International Union of Muslim Scholars (where he serves as president) to representatives of the countries participating in the conference. In the letter, he called on the leaders of the Muslim countries to work for the unification of the Islamic nation as a necessary condition for the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He also called on the Muslim countries to contribute funds to continue the *jihad* in Palestine and to strengthen the organizations that fight Israel, such as Hamas and the *Murabiṭūn*. He emphasized the importance of the struggle for Jerusalem:

Jerusalem and Palestine are places where the prophets lived. They are a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of the Arab states. Our nation cannot liberate Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian and Arab lands without first consolidating and strengthening our own countries and without God being pleased with them. It is already 70 years since the occupation of Palestine and half a century since the loss of Jerusalem and a quarter of a century of failed negotiations in order to achieve peace with the occupation state, clearly indicating the failure of the Arab concession policy on the issue of Palestine.<sup>14</sup>

On December 20, 2017, al-Qaraḍāwī wrote on his Twitter account that *jihad* for the sake of liberating Jerusalem was a religious duty imposed on all Muslims:

The *jihad* [to protect the land] is a personal [religious] obligation on its inhabitants. Islam does not allow Muslims to give up [even] a piece of the land of Islam, and if this land is Jerusalem, then the *jihad* for its liberation is the most glorious and honorable.<sup>15</sup>

The day after, he tweeted again stating that the only solution is to fight Israel, because this is the only language Israelis know:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/40> m, accessed January 1, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), “The jihad [Arabic],” Twitter, December 20, 2017, <https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/943390513238966273>.

Reality has taught us that our enemies do not know the power of logic but only the logic of power because they took the land from its owners and by force they fulfilled the dream of their national homeland, by force they established their state and by force they annexed new lands to this country.<sup>16</sup>

Al-Qaraḍāwī presents here the familiar argument that the Israel-Palestine conflict stems from Israel's occupation of Palestine, which is part of the lands of Islam (*Dār al-Islām*). According to al-Qaraḍāwī, “The war between us and the Jews is due to one reason and no other: They have conquered our land—the land of Islam—Palestine.”<sup>17</sup>

## Al-Qaraḍāwī's Hostility to the Jews

In addition to the texts which are hostile to the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the posts calling on Muslims to fight to liberate Palestine by force, al-Qaraḍāwī has emphasized his hostility toward the Jews. On the December 11, 2017, he tweeted:

The Qur'ān does not tell us about the Persians or the Romans at length as it tells us about the Jews whose crimes and shameful acts it revealed. The Jews are the greatest liars in their speech, the most malicious when they quarrel [with someone] and the most treacherous when they make an alliance [with someone].<sup>18</sup>

In one of his books, al-Qaraḍāwī elaborated on this point and explained why the Qur'ān tells us so much about the Jews and not about other nations. He wrote:

It is only because Allāh knows that there will be a war between us and them in the future. Therefore, we must know them well in order to know how to contest them on the basis of reality and not on the basis of imagination.<sup>19</sup>

One can clearly see here al-Qaraḍāwī's lack of distinction between the Jews of the Qur'ān and contemporary Jews. According to him, God in the Qur'ān bothered to warn the Muslims against the eternal evil qualities of the Jews because

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**16** Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), “Reality has taught us [Arabic],” Twitter, December 21, 2017, <https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/943888811343433729>.

**17** Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Quds Qaḍīyyat kull Muslim*, 41.

**18** Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), “The Qur'ān does not tell us [Arabic],” Twitter, December 11, 2017, <https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/940280031347011584>.

**19** K. Al-Sa'd, *Khutab al-Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī*, 5:112.

he knew that in the future, there would be a war between the Muslims and the Jews in Palestine. Therefore, the Qur’ān deals with the children of Israel and Jews of Medina in such a substantial way.

What war does al-Qaraḍāwī mean? In the Islamic tradition, there is a famous *Ḥadīth* that states that the land will be conquered by the enemies of the Muslims, the Jews. It also predicts that eventually the Muslims will triumph—when all of creation, including trees and stones, will be conscripted to help them.<sup>20</sup> Al-Qaraḍāwī hints at this *Ḥadīth*, known as *The Ḥadīth of the Trees and Stones*, when he writes about the future war with the Jews. The Hadith states as follows:

The hour [of resurrection] will not arrive until you fight the Jews. The Jew will hide behind stones or trees and the stones and trees will cry out: “O Muslim! O servant of God! There is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.”<sup>21</sup>

On December 14, 2017, al-Qaraḍāwī tweeted:

We will not be able to liberate our land if we do not free ourselves and our ideas.... What is really remarkable is that we are hostile to the Jews but at the same time we find that among us are those who learn from their ideas. And there is no need to mention names because they are known.<sup>22</sup>

Al-Qaraḍāwī stressed his hostility to the Jews in a book he published in 1999 and uploaded it to his official website after Trump’s declaration. The book is called *The Doctrinal Position of Islam on the Heresy of Jews and Christians*. This book was written in response to an article in the Qatari newspaper, *Al-Watan*, which claimed that the Christians were not heretics. In the book, al-Qaraḍāwī discusses the variety of Islamic sources on the issue and deduces from them the opposite meaning to the conclusion of the article. Al-Qaraḍāwī’s conclusion is as follows:

The Jews and the Christians are infidels, for they have distorted their books, changed their religion, talked about Allah without knowledge, distorted the truths of God, described Allah with descriptions that are not appropriate to his perfection and greatness ... and also reduced the value of the prophets who were sent to serve as role models.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Quds Qaḍīyyat kull Muslim*, 13–14.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. This tradition is also cited in Article 7 of the Hamas Charter.

<sup>22</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), “We will not be able to liberate our land [Arabic],” Twitter, December 14, 2017, <https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/941336997620203521>.

<sup>23</sup> Y. Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Mawqif al-Islām al-‘Aqadi min Kufr al-Yahūd wa-‘Inaṣārā* (Doḥā: Mu’asasat al-Risāla, 1999), 36.

According to al-Qaraḏāwī, the Jews and the Christians are infidels, even though they belong to the monotheistic religions, because they deny Muhammad's prophecy. According to him, it is not enough to believe in God to be considered a believer, for "all the apostles should be believed ... and every apostate in one of the apostles is as if he is denying them all."<sup>24</sup> Therefore, those who nullify Muhammad's mission are infidels, for belief in him is one of the requirements of faith.

At the end of the book, al-Qaraḏāwī limits his previous words: "The heresy of the people of the book is not an atheist heresy,"<sup>25</sup> since the faith of the People of the Book in God, in the Prophets, and in the hereafter is valid, even if there are some changes and errors. This is why the People of the Book have a special status in Islam, and therefore it is permissible for a Muslim to eat their food and to marry their women. He then devoted a few pages to dealing with the tolerance of Islam for the People of the Book. He also called for: "A dialogue between the religions of the book in order to find common ground for all of them and to create a common bloc that would fight atheism."<sup>26</sup> He then concluded his book by bringing four "meanings of Islamic tolerance" toward the People of the Book. "Every Muslim believes in human dignity, regardless of religion, race, color."<sup>27</sup>

Aware of the ambivalence in his words, al-Qaraḏāwī asks: "How can we reconcile our determination that the People of the Book are heretics and the tolerance to be displayed towards them?" And he answers:

Every religion claims that the other religions are infidels, and they do not mean that they are atheists, rather they believe that the other believers deny their own beliefs. Indeed, it is true. If the Christians did not think that the Muslims were heretics, they were liars, or they would join the Muslims themselves.<sup>28</sup>

When al-Qaraḏāwī writes about tolerance toward the Jews, as being part of the People of the Book, he does not mean Jews living in Israel. As far as he is concerned, they are defined as "People of Death" because they conquered Muslim land. Therefore, the only treatment for them is *jihad* until they are expelled from Palestine. The presentation of the Jews as unbelievers in the religion of truth—Islam—is the basis for the conclusion that they are not worthy of inheriting Palestine. Even when he calls for dialogue between the Peoples of the Book,

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<sup>24</sup> Al-Qaraḏāwī, *Mawqif al-Islām*, 28.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–56.

he refers mainly to Christians. When an interfaith conference was held in Doha in 2013, al-Qaraḍāwī canceled his participation in the conference, because the conference was attended by a Reform Jewish rabbi from New York, Rabbi Reuven Firestone. He said he was willing to attend interfaith conferences only with Christians and that he would not “filthy his hand by shaking hands with a Jewish murderer and criminal whose hands are covered with Palestinian blood.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, the only Jews al-Qaraḍāwī is willing to meet with are the rabbis of Neturei Karta, who are openly anti-Zionist and call for the destruction of Israel.<sup>30</sup>

## The Legitimacy of Jewish Rule in the Land of Israel according to the Qur’ān and al-Qaraḍāwī’s Interpretation

In his many books, al-Qaraḍāwī deals with the challenge of the Jewish claim to Israel by rewriting various verses in the Bible and in the Qur’ān and by creating a new narrative aligned to his political agenda. I have shown elsewhere his discussion and interpretation of various chapters of the Bible.<sup>31</sup> Now I will present his interpretation of Chapter 17 of the Qur’ān verses 4–8 according to a religious ruling (*fatwā*) he recently uploaded to his website named: “Verses of the Corruption of the Children of Israel and their Interpretation” [“Ayāt Ifsād Banī Isrā’īl wa-Tafsīrihā”].

Qur’ān Chapter 17, verses 4–8 state as follows:

And We conveyed to the Children of Israel in the Scripture that: “You will surely cause corruption on the earth *twice*, [author emphasis] and you will surely reach [a degree of] great haughtiness. So, when the [time of] promise came for the first of them, We sent against you slaves of Ours—those of great military might, and they probed [even] into the homes, and it was a promise fulfilled.” Then We gave back to you a return victory over them and We reinforced you with wealth and sons and made you more numerous in manpower. [And said], “If you do good, you do good for yourselves; and if you do evil, [you do it] to yourselves.” Then, when the final promise came, [We sent your enemies] to sadden your faces and to enter the Jerusalem temple as they entered it the first time, and to destroy what they had taken over with [total] destruction. [Then Allāh said], “It is expected, [if you repent], that your Lord will have mercy upon you. But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]. And We have made Hell, for the disbelievers, a prison bed.”

<sup>29</sup> Bartal and Rubinstein-Shemer, *Hamas and Ideology*, 189.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>31</sup> See N. Rubinstein-Shemer, “Qaradawi’s View on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 20 (2016): 81–102.

The questions that the classical commentators of the Qur'ān dealt with regarding these verses were: In which book and in the wake of what corruption did God decree for the children of Israel to be exiled from the land? When did these two times of corruption by the children of Israel take place and what was their punishment? Why does the last verse allude to the words: “But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]?”

The commentators of the Qur'ān claim that the reason for the exile of the Israelites from the land is that they did not observe the commandments of God. The Torah says that God made a covenant with the Children of Israel—if they did not observe His covenant and His commandments, as punishment He would send other nations to fight them. In addition, the Israelites killed the prophets that God sent to them to cause them to repent.<sup>32</sup>

The idea that the other nations are a whip in the hands of God to punish the Children of Israel is a biblical idea that has been rolled into the Qur'ān. The hatred of the Israelite enemies is presented as a result of divine intent. This is for two reasons. The first one is to save the Israelites from their enemies and to show God's superiority over the enemies. An example of this is the story of how God hardened Pharaoh's heart and then punished the Egyptians as a result. A second reason is to punish the Israelites when they have too many sins. Examples of this idea can be seen in the recurring motif in the book of Judges when the children of Israel sin. God brings their enemies to fight them and then establishes a judge from among them to fight the enemies and save the Israelites. In the book of Jeremiah, Chapter 25, we see a combination of these two motifs—Jeremiah rebukes the people of Israel who worshipped idols and did not listen to the admonition of the prophets that God sent to them. This is why God said that he would send “his servant Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon” (Jer 25:9), in order to punish the Israelites, to turn their land into a barren area and to exile them. The chapter further states that after the end of the seventy years of exile, God decreed against the Children of Israel that he would turn his wrath toward his servant, the king of Babylon, and turn his land and the lands of the rest of the nations into barren areas.

The common opinion among the commentators of the Qur'ān is that the two times where God punished the Israelites and expelled them from their land were at the time of the destruction of the first and second temples.<sup>33</sup> The Qur'ān ends with the words: “But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]” (wa-In

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32 H. Busse, “The Destruction of the Temple and its Reconstruction in the Light of Muslim Exegesis of Sūra 17:2–8,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 7–10.

33 *Ibid.*, 2.

‘udtum- ‘udnā). This last verse may refer to other possible punishments by other powerful rulers, the “servants of God.” It opens up the possibility of bringing Islam onto the scene.

Modern scholars such as the Egyptian scholar Sheikh Al-Sha’raawi (1911–1998), Sheikh Ahmad Yāsīn (1937–2004), the founder of Hamas movement, and Egyptian scholar Sheikh ‘Abd al-Sitār (b. 1931) suggested a new commentary for the two punishments: The first corruption of the Jews was when they declared the prophet Muhammad a liar and tried to kill him. Muhammad fought and subdued them. This was their first punishment. The second corruption of the Jews was when they occupied Palestine and established the State of Israel. Therefore, the second punishment will be in the future, when the Muslims will fight the Jews in Palestine. These Qur’ānic verses that were revealed to Muhammad in Medina predict the future, one that is taking place in our day. This is also the accepted commentary to these verses by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.<sup>34</sup>

Al-Qaraḍāwī rejects this modern interpretation and argues that it is weak because the words of the verses themselves contradict it: The Qur’ān states that it is written in the Torah that these events will occur, meaning that they occurred in the past and are not predicting the future. The first punishment cannot be attributed to the Jews of al-Medina because they were a small group of Jewish tribes who were exiled from Arabia and do not represent the kingdom and the rule of the Israelites in the land as the verses describe. The prophet did not fight them in the Land of Israel, rather he fought them in Arabia. The words in the verse: “After this we renewed your power” cannot relate to the Jews of Medina, since they were defeated by Muhammad. The Muslims never entered houses of prayer by the sword, they did not break or destroy, as the verses describe. This was the custom of the Babylonians and the Romans who completely destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem. The final argument is that the verses indicate that after the first punishment the Israelites behaved well and therefore God renewed their power to rule for the second time. Therefore, it cannot be said that the first time refers to the Jews of Arabia because we did not see that afterwards God renewed their power to rule again. On the contrary, God only punished them through powerful rulers such as Hitler. Since the Holocaust, the Jews have not behaved well but the opposite: for the past one hundred years, the Jews have not only been deceiving the Muslims but also have been controlling them in order to steal their land.<sup>35</sup>

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34 Sh. Bartal, “Reading the Qur’ān: How Hamas and the Islamic Jihad explain Sura al-Isra (17),” *Politics, Religion and Ideology* 17, no. 4 (2016): 392–408.

35 Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, “Verses of the Corruption of the Children of Israel and their Interpretation” [Ayāt Ifsād Bani Isrā’īl wa-Tafsirihā].



Al-Qaraḏāwī therefore argues that in his view, the correct interpretation of these verses is that they relate to the two destructions of Jerusalem—the destruction of the first and second temples. But what about the situation today? Israel controls Palestine, and its capital is Jerusalem. How can one integrate this situation into the theological history? Al-Qaraḏāwī explains the situation of Jewish rule in Israel as a temporary situation. Jewish history is governed by the rule mentioned in the last verse: “But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]” [wa-In ‘udtum- ‘udnā]. If the Israelites return to sin, God will punish them again. To illustrate this idea, he uses a popular saying: “If the scorpion comes back, we will wait for it with a shoe, and that shoe will be ready for it.” The idea that the divine punishment of the Jews is endless is supported by another Qur’ānic verse (7:167): “Your Lord has announced that until the Day of Resurrection he will not cease to send men to them to crush them and torture them.”

In one of his YouTube videos, al-Qaraḏāwī makes it clear that the “faithful servants of God” who will break the rule of the Jews for the third time will be the Muslims:

But Allāh lies in wait for them and he will not forsake this nation. He will not allow these people to continue to spread corruption in this land. We wait for the revenge of Allāh to descend upon them. And, Allāh willing, it will be by our own hands: “Fight them, Allāh will torment them by your hands, and bring them to disgrace, and will assist you against them, and will heal the hearts of the believers, and will still the anger of your hearts.”<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusions

Al-Qaraḏāwī’s view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its developments is a theological approach that underlies a Jewish-Christian idea that has been adopted by the Qur’ān. The right of the people of Israel over the land is derived from their obedience to the commandments of God. When they violated them, God sent “his servants”—other nations to punish them by the destruction of Jerusalem and their exile. Jewish history continued to operate according to the rule of “But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment].” Whenever the Jews did evil in the eyes of God, he sent a tyrant ruler to punish them. This is the theological explanation for the Holocaust, according to al-Qaraḏāwī. Al-Qaraḏāwī sees Jewish rule in Israel as illegitimate because Muslims are the true representatives of God, and they are the heirs of Judaism. Therefore, they are the religion

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<sup>36</sup> Yūsuf Al-Qaraḏāwī, “Allama Yusuf Al Qardhawi About Yahood,” Islamic Media Centre, September 23, 2014, YouTube video, 10:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRiwshIzHu8>.

that should govern Jerusalem, the first direction of Islamic prayer and the third most important city for Islam. The Jews lost their Temple and their land, because of their sins and because they murdered the prophets. According to the Islamic theological view, it is significant that Muslims and not Jews built a place of worship for God on the Temple Mount instead of the Temple that was destroyed as the Jews failed in building the Third Temple. In order to prevent such a possibility and to expel the Zionists from the land of Islam, al-Qaraḏāwī assigns Muslims the historical divine mission of punishing the heretical Jews and expelling them from the land. That is why he calls for *jihad* against the State of Israel.

Based on this theological background, we must understand al-Qaraḏāwī’s deep shock over Trump’s declaration. Apart from the political interest in recognizing the Israeli occupation and the loss of Palestinian rights, there is a theological-religious problem here for the Muslims since control over Jerusalem symbolizes the validity of Judaism as a relevant religion.

The theological idea of cyclicity in Jewish history, which results from the unchanging nature of the Jews, who were meant to violate their covenant with God over and over, stems from the negative way in which the image of the Jew was portrayed in classical Muslim sources, first and foremost, the Qur’ān. According to historian Jane Gerber: “[T]he Muslim is continually influenced by the theological threads of antisemitism embedded in the earliest chapters of Islamic history.”<sup>37</sup> In the Middle Ages, religious-theological antisemitism developed when Muslims felt that some Jews had overstepped the boundary of humiliation prescribed to them by the Islamic law. In the modern era, the establishment and prosperity of the State of Israel is the reason for the development of modern antisemitic theological ideas. The focus of hatred is mainly the State of Israel and not only the individual Jew.

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37 J. Gerber, “Antisemitism and the Muslim World,” in *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Antisemitism*, ed. D. Berger (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1997), 82.

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