

Protestant Bible Scholarship

*Antisemitism, Philosemitism
and Anti-Judaism*

Edited by

ARJEN F. BAKKER, RENÉ BLOCH,
Yael FISCH, PAULA FREDRIKSEN
AND HINDY NAJMAN

Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism

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Preface

The academy is one of the few places where it is possible to have a conversation about shared heritage across cultural and religious boundaries. At the same time, academic conversation is shaped to a large extent by inherited traditions of scholarship, in which violent forms of discourse are entrenched. In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, fierce debates are taking place in the academy today about the legacies of colonialism and racism in university curricula and their institutional embedding. While ethical self-reflection is a fairly new phenomenon in certain academic disciplines, such as Classics and Theology, other fields of inquiry have internalized similar critique for many decades. Among anthropologists, for example, no one would think to replicate the terminology or conceptual structures that were used by 19th century ethnography to describe ‘primitive’ peoples. The underlying sentiments of Western superiority and triumphalism, and their deployment in colonial rule, have become causes for shame, and rightly so.

In the field of biblical studies, however, despite some important exceptions,¹ there has been little sustained reflection on the ways in which scholarship has engaged, and continues to engage, its most significant Other. This is surprising, since historical-criticism of the Bible, which emerged in the context of protestant Christian theology, is confronted in every aspect of its study with otherness: the Jewish people and their writings. Few constructs have been as enduring, as pluriform, and as socially consequential across centuries as have Christianity’s theological interpretations (and deployments) of “Jews,” of “Judaism” and of the “Old Testament.”

There are good reasons for this. Christianity – or, perhaps more accurately, Christianities – emerged in Mediterranean antiquity from various kinds of early Roman-period Judaism. The core of the Christian canon, Paul’s undisputed letters and the four gospels, are all types of Hellenistic *Jewish* writings. Further, much older texts specific to Jewish tradition, in their Greek voice (the “Septuagint”), were incorporated by the fourth century into the Christian canon as well. Christians today have a dual library of inherited revelation: the

1 See for example Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Danielle Cohen-Levinas et Antoine Guggenheim, eds., *L’Antijudaïsme à l’épreuve de la philosophie et de la théologie* (Paris: Seuil, 2016); Manfred Gailus und Clemens Vollnhals, eds., *Christlicher Antisemitismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Der Tübinger Theologe und »Judenforscher« Gerhard Kittel* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019); Armin Lange et al., eds., *Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2020).

“Old Testament” and the “New Testament.” Thus, as soon as Christians read Christian scriptures, they encounter representations of Judaism and of Jews.

It was in the course of the second century that some forms of gentile Christianity became, quite specifically, *not*-Judaism. As these Christianities shaped and expressed their new identities, their new theological principles, and eventually (after Constantine) their new social policies, they used thinking with “Jews” to do so. Ideas *about* Jews and Judaism became essential to articulating the borders of Christian community and the behaviors of the Christian self. More often than not, a negative construction of the former served to convey idealizations of the latter. In other words, Christian “rhetorical Jews” were not “historical” Jews: they were virtual Jews, a means by which non-Jews made (and make) claims about *themselves*.

By the end of antiquity, “rhetorical Jews” – “Jews” as a short-hand for misreadings of Scripture and for wrong enactments of it – were hardwired into Christian discourses of all sorts. Epistles, commentaries, apocryphal acts, martyr stories, sermons, treatises: this huge literary legacy conveyed teachings *adversus Iudaeos* to medieval Christian Europe. In the Reformation, this legacy shaped Protestant rhetoric against Catholic opponents who, like “the Jews” of Luther’s Pauline commentaries, were (according to these polemics) mired in works-righteousness, dead legalism, and empty ritual. Jews are more than a rhetorical trope, of course. They are also real people; people whose lives have been affected – sometimes positively; much more often, violently and negatively – by the symbolic weight laid upon them by the external accidents of history and by the internal demands of Christian theology.

Modern biblical criticism as an intellectual enterprise was born in the Renaissance. But it was launched socially and spiritually, as well as politically, because of the sixteenth century’s Protestant Reformation. It was the teaching of *sola scriptura* that assumed direct access to the truths of the text, unmediated by traditions of reading and interpretive authority. Through a strict and rigorous engagement with biblical texts, reformed churches claimed the exclusive inheritance of what was accumulated throughout many centuries. The critical study of the Bible that emerged in the wake of the enlightenment built on the Protestant notion of direct textual access.² We are confronted today with questions of methodology, which are equally ethical questions. What is the criterion in our field for classifying interpretive claims as true or false? To what extent can we reconstruct ancient history on the basis of a limited

2 See in particular, the analysis and critique of Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993).

number of sources, and to what extent can we reconstruct the early history of our texts? Is the academic study of texts a neutral activity? Are there practices of scholarship and interpretation that are violent? These are some of the questions that are considered in this collection of essays.

In “Karl Georg Kuhn (1906–1976) – Two Academic Careers in Germany,” Hermann Lichtenberger looks back at his teacher’s work on ancient Judaism. In anguished retrospection, Lichtenberger traces Kuhn’s glowingly successful career in its two stages, pre- and post-World War II. During the years of flourishing National Socialism, Kuhn was a fervent and vocal antisemite, and an enthused accomplice in Nazi politics. After the war, allowed to return quickly to his university, Kuhn enjoyed long decades as a distinguished academic. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provided Kuhn with an opportunity to relaunch his research on ancient Jewish sources. His later academic successes effectively and enduringly concealed the virulent antisemitism of his early career.³

How did Jewish scholars navigate their understanding of Jewish law in light of the demands of liberal Protestantism? Irene Zwiep, in her contribution, “Judaism as Religious Cosmopolitanism: Apologetics and Appropriation in the *Jüdisches Lexikon* (1927–1930),” investigates this question by analyzing how the authors of this lexicon, working within a cultural context of acculturation and assimilation, sought to rehabilitate Judaism as something both different from Protestant Christianity and yet compatible with it. Presenting contemporary Judaism as a kind of *Kulturprotestantismus*, the *Jüdisches Lexikon*’s authors stressed the inherent humanism of Jewish law.

In “Antisemitism and Early Scholarship on Ancient Antisemitism,” René Bloch shows how the agenda of the work of classicists (such as Mommsen, Zacher, and Stähelin) and theologians (such as Leipoldt) on ancient antisemitism often overlap. Both classicists and theologians viewed ancient Judaism, from its origins through to the rabbinic period, in the Wellhausenian mode as a tale of decline. Simplistic readings of classical texts on Jews and Judaism as evidence of Greco-Roman authors’ shift from pro-Jewish sympathies to anti-Jewish hostility smoothly cohered with Christian interpretations of Judaism as a religion whose promising beginnings gave way to spiritual

3 Berndt Schaller, who sadly passed away in May 2020, has written a monograph on Kuhn and his scholarship. The book is expected to be published posthumously in the near future and was unfortunately not yet available while preparing this volume. See Berndt Schaller, *Christlich-akademische Judentumsforschung im Dienst der NS-Rassenideologie und -Politik: Der Fall des Karl Georg Kuhn* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021).

desuetude, degeneration and decay. Read in this way, the sources of ancient antisemitism served to legitimate these modern scholars' own antisemitism.

Konrad Schmid tracks the history of the polemical designation *Spätjudentum* long before Wellhausen, to its roots in late eighteenth century Germany, whence it traveled as a term of historical description into other European languages. In modern times, Wilhelm Bousset's work deployed *Spätjudentum* as part of an agenda at once antisemitic and anti-Catholic. Linked to the history of the term is the question of Jewish origins: when did Judaism begin? For scholars such as Klaus Koch and Martin Noth, rephrasing the term as "spätisraelitisch," Judaism was always deteriorated, thus always "late."

In "'Circumcision is Nothing': A Non-Reformation Reading of Paul's Letters," Paula Fredriksen interprets Paul's teachings against "circumcision" and about "new creation" historically, showing that in both cases he has only gentiles in mind. She then traces the ways that patristic anti-Judaism was weaponized anew by sixteenth-century Reformers against Catholics, thereby driving a global condemnation of circumcision and of Torah into modern New Testament Study's constructs of an anti-Jewish Paul. The historical apostle, she argues, lived, thought and taught within his native Judaism. His rejection of circumcision for *gentiles* rested upon his conviction that their connection to Abraham was achieved not through flesh but *only* through spirit, as an eschatological act of Christ.

In "Anti-Judaism and Philo-Judaism in Pauline Studies, Then and Now," Matthew Novenson reveals the various agendas implicit in current Pauline Studies. Often, he observes, the Paul whom different scholars present (whether anti-Judaic or philo-Judaic) bears a close resemblance to the theologies of his modern interpreters. The distinction between the views of the first-century Paul and his modern interpreters all but collapses. This erasure of difference, concludes Novenson, seems very much a specifically Protestant phenomenon since, for Catholics, there is much less at stake in how exegesis reconstructs Paul.

Olivia Stewart Lester, in "The Sibylline Oracles: A Case Study in Ancient and Modern Anti-Judaism," takes scholarship on the highly heterogeneous *Oracula Sibyllina* as an example of how biased views on Judaism impact modern scholarly attitudes towards the Jewishness of these pseudepigrapha. As Stewart Lester shows, the Sibylline Oracles are a particularly interesting case in point because the corpus itself includes anti-Jewish additions to originally Jewish texts.

Jörg Frey, in "Anti-Judaism, Philosemitism, and Protestant New Testament Studies: Perspectives and Questions," first sketches the historical development of various Protestant positions towards Jews and Judaism over time (which

were often but not always negative); and then, from a theological perspective, considers some of the anti-Jewish hostility on display in canonical Christian texts. He then reflects on “philosemitism” both within and without scholarly circles, and concludes with a call for handling these negative New Testament passages with honest and ethnical integrity.

In “American Biblical Scholarship and the Post-War Battle against Antisemitism,” Steven Weitzman shows how interfaith biblical scholarship could lay the groundwork for coordinated interfaith action. Taking William Foxwell Albright, a major figure in 20th century American biblical scholarship, as his example, Weitzman shows how Albright, despite his ambivalence about Judaism, eagerly combatted antisemitism and helped to integrate Jewish scholars into American academia.

From a theological point of view, John Barton’s “Jewish and Christian Approaches to Biblical Theology” considers the differences over time between Christian and Jewish readings of the Bible. He contrasts the Christian master narrative of sin, failure and redemption to the Jewish (that is, rabbinic) reading of Torah as a way to live a Jewish life within the soaring ups and the downward swoops of the people of Israel’s continuing history. Barton also lifts up the rabbinic principle *davar aher*, ‘another opinion,’ proposing it as a generative model for Christian theology as well. Christian theology of the church’s Old Testament, long emphasizing and valuing unity and harmony, might very well profit, he suggests, from accommodating differences and varieties of doctrine as well.

This volume is the product of a two-day conference held in Oriel College, Oxford at the Centre for the Study of the Bible. Faculty, invited scholars, students and community members came together to think about the interaction between scholarship and society, about the redemptive and destructive impact that scholarship can have, and about our responsibilities as citizens, scholars, students and teachers. None of us has invented or created the scholarly heritage to which we contribute and which we pass on. Rather, through many years of painstaking study and various forms of renunciation, we have become initiated into a community of learning, which we love and with which we identify in the deepest possible sense. Indeed, our teachers have had a deep influence upon our lives and their teachings have shaped our thinking and perception of the world, and of each other. But our discipline is not innocent. This volume asks of each of us to reflect on our past as scholars, to acknowledge our responsibility to our students, and to prepare the pathway for scholarship that is mindful of its own power and susceptibility to violence and racism. We mark the past in order to help shape a future which is full of hope and generosity, and a future that does not recycle or repeat the hatred of the past.

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Karl Georg Kuhn (1906–1976) – Two Academic Careers in Germany

Hermann Lichtenberger

1 Introduction

In his book “Hitler’s Professors,” in 1946, the Research Director of the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO),¹ Max Weinreich, makes several references to Karl Georg Kuhn. Remarkable to Weinreich is Kuhn’s review of the antisemitic amateurish pamphlet of Hermann Schroer.² Kuhn insists on the academic treating of the “Judenfrage” and formulates a sort of program. I quote his remarks in Weinreich’s translation:

That is not the right way: to take a translation [of Shulhan Aruh IV] made one hundred years ago by a converted Jew [Loewe], to provide it with a fervent antisemitic title and no less fervent antisemitic introduction and think to have served national socialism by publishing this. On the contrary, our science in the new Germany, in this fought-for position, is being discredited by such a procedure. We cannot work, nor ought we today to work on the Jewish question by simply taking over and solely providing with a new façade the old [material] that had been created from quite different points of view; we must start from the sources and approach the problems in quite a new way.³

Weinreich continues: “In the early months of their regime, when the Nazis had yet very little to offer by way of scientific presentation of the Jewish problem, they must have doubly appreciated the services rendered them by one of the

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- 1 Max Weinreich, *Hitler’s Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany’s Crimes against the Jewish People* (New York, NY: Yiddish Scientific Institute-YIVO, 1946).
 - 2 Hermann Schroer, *Blut und Geld im Judentum: Dargestellt am jüdischen Recht* (Schulchan Aruch), übersetzt von Heinrich Georg F. Löwe sen., 1836, neu herausgegeben und erläutert, vol. 1 (München: Hoheneichen-Verlag, 1936).
 - 3 Weinreich, *Hitler’s Professors*, 41. See Kuhn’s review in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 156 (1937): 313–316.

first university scholars who openly joined in their fight on the Jews. This was Dr. Gerhard Kittel.⁴ And Karl Georg Kuhn was his student.

Karl Georg Kuhn's career in Tübingen until 1945 is a gloomy chapter in the history of the University of Tübingen, interwoven into the criminal history of Germany with its crimes and the genocide of the Jews in Europe. And there is a second career after 1945, starting in 1948, which first led to deputy professorships at the universities of Göttingen (1949) and Mainz (1950–52) and then in 1954 to the chair in New Testament at the University of Heidelberg. This career is connected with the unwillingness of German society and the universities to draw conclusions from the Nazi history of their political and academic representatives.

To talk about Karl Georg Kuhn is, for me, both a duty and a burden. I had been his student from my fifth semester in the winter-term 1966/67 until he resigned ("Emeritierung") in 1971. At the same time, I was a student assistant in the Qumranforschungsstelle Heidelberg working with him and others on a Hebrew lexicon of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1971, Hartmut Stegemann became director of the Forschungsstelle and transferred it and the collaborators to Marburg in 1973. I had already begun my dissertation on the "Menschenbild in Texten der Qumrangemeinde" under Kuhn's supervision and finished it in 1975 with Hartmut Stegemann in Marburg. When I came to Heidelberg and to the "Qumranforschungsstelle," I did not know who Kuhn was.

In 1988, I became the successor (after an interlude by Ernst Bammel) of Karl Heinrich Rengstorf in Münster, who had been habilitated by Gerhard Kittel in Tübingen (1930). In 1993, I became the successor of Martin Hengel in Tübingen. He was the successor of Otto Michel, who followed Gerhard Kittel (1946). That is the small world of academics.

In our home in Tübingen, we had two neighbours on both sides of the house: on the left side, was Ernst Käsemann, who had been a member of the "Bekennende Kirche" and was imprisoned by the Gestapo because of a sermon he gave as a pastor in his congregation. On the right side, was the family of the Nazi who rivalled with Kuhn for the speech at the NSDAP-rally at the boycott of the Jews on April 1st, 1933. That is the small world of Tübingen.

4 Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors*, 41.

2 A Tübingen Career in the Dritte Reich

2.1 *Biography*⁵

Karl-Georg Kuhn⁶ was born on March 6, 1906, in the little village of Thaleischweiler in Palatine into a pietist family. His father was later the secretary of the YMCA in Breslau-Silesia/Wrocław-Poland. From 1925 to 1930, Kuhn studied Protestant Theology and Oriental languages first at the *Kirchliche Hochschule Bethel*, then at the universities of Breslau and Tübingen; in Breslau he attended classes at the *Rabbinerseminar* (Jewish Theological Seminary) with Dr Israel Rabin. In 1928, he became a student of Gerhard Kittel in Tübingen and started the translation and commentary of the Midrash Sifre Numeri. In 1931, he earned his Doctorate of Philosophy in Oriental languages on the first part of Sifre Numeri⁷ with Enno Littmann.⁸ Kuhn had little inclination for the “Tübingen Theology,” represented by Schlatter and Heim. Therefore, Oriental Studies became his chief occupation. Consequently, his *Habilitation* in 1934 was at the Philosophical Faculty in Oriental Languages. It is astonishing that as a student of Kittel, Kuhn was not promoted and habilitated by him in Theology. Kuhn told me privately that because Kittel intended to habilitate Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, he would not accept a second young scholar for a doctorate and *Habilitation*. In 1932–34, Kuhn worked in the university library of Tübingen on the Arabic Lexicon by Theodor Nöldeke⁹ and started writing articles for Kittel’s *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, the first volume of which was

5 Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, “Karl Georg Kuhn, der Forscher und der Lehrer,” *Ruperto Carola* 62/6 (1979): 53–58; idem, art. “Kuhn, K.G.,” *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* 2 (1999): 39–40; Gert Jeremias, “Karl-Georg Kuhn (1906–1976),” in *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft nach 1945: Hauptvertreter der deutschsprachigen Exegese in der Darstellung ihrer Schüler*, ed. C. Breytenbach and R. Hoppe (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 2009), 298–312. Gerd Theissen, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft vor und nach 1945: Karl Georg Kuhn und Günther Bornkamm*, Schriften der Philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 47 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009).

6 From the very beginning in 1930 Kuhn used his first names in his publications without a dash, but Professor Gert Jeremias told me that he had seen the two first names written with the dash in official documents. In this contribution I will write Kuhn’s name as he preferred.

7 The full work was published in 1959: *Der tannaitische Midrasch Sifre zu Numeri*. Übersetzt und erklärt, Rabbinische Texte, zweite Reihe Tannaitische Midraschim 3 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1959).

8 Kuhn contributed to the Littmann-Festschrift: “יהוה, יהו, יי.” Über die Entstehung des Namens Jahwe,” in *Orientalistische Studien: Enno Littmann zu seinem 60. Geburtstag am 16. September 1935*, ed. R. Paret (Leiden: Brill, 1935), 25–42.

9 For the difficulties in this project see Jeremias, “Karl-Georg Kuhn,” 301.

printed in 1932/1933.¹⁰ Kuhn had to revise the articles of other authors concerning Rabbinic literature and himself wrote five articles, or parts of articles, for volume 1, see for instance the article on βασιλεύς κτλ,¹¹ to which he contributed four pages.¹² In volumes I to IV he contributed ten articles (1933–1942?). By a *Lehrauftrag*, he taught Rabbinics together with Kittel at the Protestant Theological Faculty of Tübingen but had never been a member of the faculty. Only in 1946, when he ended his work in theology, was he banished from the university and the town of Tübingen. His *Lehrauftrag* in Rabbinics, beginning November 11, 1936, was in the department of “History of Religions” at the Philosophical faculty.

2.2 *Kuhn and April 1, 1933*

On March 19, 1932, Kuhn applied for membership in the NSDAP and was accepted by September 1, 1932.¹³ He gave testimony of hateful antisemitism in his speech at the boycott of Jewish-owned shops and Jewish lawyers and doctors from the balcony of the Tübingen town hall on April 1, 1933. On March 16, 1933,¹⁴ he had taken the step to self-incrimination at the court of the NSDAP because the *Stürmer* had doubted that he was in line with the antisemitic policy of the party. The other reason was alleged communism because his former fiancée had become a communist. Concerning the suspicion of philosemitism, Kuhn answered: “My view has totally changed as can be seen in my entry to the NSDAP in March (he had applied for membership in March 1932!) and even more explicit in my speech at the rally of the Tübingen NSDAP this spring on the market-place on the occasion of the boycott-day.”¹⁵

10 Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Erster Band A–I* (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1933).

11 Kittel, *Wörterbuch*, 1:562–595.

12 Karl Georg Kuhn, art. “βασιλεύς κτλ,” in: Kittel, *Wörterbuch*, 1:570–573. See Johannes S. Vos, “Antijudaismus/Antisemitismus im Theologischen Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 38 (1984): 89–110. Vos states: “Für das ThW schrieb Kuhn 12 Artikel, 10 davon in Bd. I–IV. In diesen Artikeln habe ich keine Spur von Antisemitismus oder auch nur von exegetischem Antijudaismus finden können. (...) Erwähnenswert ist jedoch, daß Kuhn in seinem 1959 veröffentlichten Artikel προσήλυτος seinen (...) Beitrag zum 3. Band der F(orschungen) z(ur) J(udenfrage) mehrfach zitiert. Die einseitige Interpretation findet man hier aber nicht mehr wieder.” See Karl Georg Kuhn, art. “προσήλυτος,” in: Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Sechster Band IIε–P*, ed. G. Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GMBH, 1959), 727–745.

13 See Theissen, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 18.

14 See Jeremias, “Karl-Georg Kuhn,” 301f.; Theissen, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 18 and note 8.

15 “So hat sich meine Überzeugung in diesem Punkt eben gründlich geändert, wie schon mein Eintritt in die NSDAP im März beweist und noch deutlicher meine Rede, die ich bei

This speech marked the end and the climax of the boycott-day. At about 8 PM, members of the NSDAP in their brown uniforms marched through the streets of Tübingen and by half-past 8 reached the marketplace. The placards saying “Meidet die Juden! Kauft nicht bei Juden” were posted in front of the town-hall. Then Karl Georg Kuhn took the word and gave a speech. The *Tübinger Chronik* from April 3, 1933, gives an account of it.¹⁶ The terminology of the speech is characterized by typical antisemitic slogans: “jüdische Greuelpropaganda,” “internationales Weltjudentum,” having declared war against the “neues Deutschland,” “Lügenpropaganda,” “jüdische Hetzpropaganda.” Fight is needed “bis die Hetze eingestellt wird.” “Deutscher Bürger, deutscher Gelehrter, reihe dich ein in diese Kampffront, die getragen ist von der Kraft der neuen Bewegung. Die Fahne hoch, die Reihen dicht geschlossen.” After the speech, the Horst-Wessel-Lied was played, which already had been quoted by Kuhn: “Die Fahne hoch! Die Reihen fest geschlossen.” It was the only speech of this evening, and it was the speech of a former student of theology and a Doctor

der Kundgebung der NSDAP Tübingen anlässlich des Boykott-Tages in diesem Frühjahr auf dem Marktplatz hielt”; quote according to Theissen, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 22.

16 *Tübinger Chronik* April 3, 1933: “Von der Kanzel des Rathauses aus nahm Dr. Kuhn das Wort zur politischen Lage und jüdischen Greuelpropaganda, wobei er in der Hauptsache nachstehendes darlegte: Das internationale Weltjudentum hat dem neuen Deutschland den Krieg erklärt, nicht mit Waffen, sondern mit Worten, aber es ist darum nicht weniger ernst. Als am 30. Januar die neue entschlossene nationale Regierung unter Führung Adolf Hitlers gebildet wurde und am 5. März in einem Ausmaße wie noch nie das Vertrauen des Volkes bekam, da waren viele, die diesen gewaltigen Umschwung noch nicht begriffen hatten. Wer ihn aber begriff, war das internationale Judentum, das 14 Jahre in Deutschland eine unbestrittene Domäne hatte. Es wußte, daß mit dem Umschwung ihre Macht gebrochen war. Darum haben sie in der ganzen Welt eine ungeheure Lügenpropaganda in Szene gesetzt, und, was das Erschütterndste war, sie wurde geglaubt. 14 Jahre lang wußten die deutschen Regierungen, wie viel ähnliche Lügen des internationalen Judentums uns im Kriege geschädigt haben, aber nichts ist dagegen geschehen.

Der neuerlichen jüdischen Hetzpropaganda mußten wir begegnen. Kein Mensch hat daran gedacht, eine Boykottaktion in Bewegung zu setzten. Wir sind dazu gezwungen worden. Nun geht es Zum um Zug. Zwar wird der Kampf schwer, aber Sieger muß Deutschland sein. Weil es um Deutschland geht, deshalb darf niemand in diesem Abwehrkampf zurückstehen, damit er wirksam wird, wenn auch nur ein Teil der Juden davon getroffen wird. Der Kampf wird solange andauern, bis die Hetze eingestellt ist. Zwar wird der Boykott mit Disziplin durchgeführt, aber täusche sich niemand und lege diese Disziplin als Schwäche aus. Deutscher Bürger, deutscher Gelehrter, reihe dich ein in diese Kampffront, die getragen ist von der Kraft der neuen Bewegung. Die Fahne hoch, die Reihen dicht geschlossen!

Nach dieser Rede spielte die Kapelle das Horst-Wessel-Lied. Der Propagandazug marschierte anschließend noch durch die verschiedenen Straßen der Stadt. ”

For the reasons why he insisted to be accepted as speaker, see Theissen, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 20 and note 12: “to prevent an (even worse) inflammatory speech.”

of Philosophy. The addressees of Kuhn's speech were clearly not only "national Tübingen," but also "academic Tübingen" ("Deutscher Bürger, deutscher Gelehrter ..."). As "achievement," it may be noted that by May 1, 1933, Kittel and three more professors of the Protestant Faculty became members of the NSDAP despite the fact that Kittel had protested against the boycott.¹⁷

2.3 *Habilitation*

Following his *Habilitation* in 1934 "Die älteste Textgestalt der Psalmen Salomos,"¹⁸ Kuhn gave his inaugural lecture on December 19, 1934, about "The spread of Jewry in the ancient world."¹⁹ The first part was published in the newly founded German Christian ("Deutsche Christen") journal, "Deutsche Theologie," with the title "The internal conditions of the Jewish spread."²⁰ The spread of Judaism is the outcome of millions of emigrations into the "Wirtsvölker" ("host peoples"), where they refused to assimilate. The connection between religion and nationhood was a guarantee for their survival wherever Jews lived. Since they had the Torah, they were not in need of a country of their own. The "Jewish question" thus existed already in antiquity. "Ahasver, the Eternal Jew, is the embodiment of Judaism." Because of this unchangeable character, the founding of a Jewish state in Palestine would not solve the problem. "There is only one way to treat the Jewish question: to put them energetically into place again and again – because it is an everlasting problem which never could be solved "endgültig" – everywhere they strive for power or threaten their "Wirtsvölker."²¹ Kuhn in his inaugural lecture gave a foundation for a "wissenschaftliche Behandlung der Judenfrage" not only supporting Nazi ideology and politics but giving a "scholarly" foundation.

17 Theissen, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 20f.

18 *Die älteste Textgestalt der Psalmen Salomos insbesondere auf Grund der syrischen Übersetzung neu untersucht. Mit einer Bearbeitung und Übersetzung der Psalmen Salomos 13–17* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1937).

19 "Die Ausbreitung des Judentums in der antiken Welt."

20 "Die inneren Voraussetzungen der jüdischen Ausbreitung," *Deutsche Theologie* 2 (1935): 9–17.

21 Kuhn, "Ausbreitung," 17: "Richtig angepackt wird die Judenfrage und praktisch wirksam wird auch jeder Antisemitismus nur dann, wenn *der ewige Jude* als eine mit dem Begriff notwendig gegebene geschichtliche Tatsache begriffen wird. Es gibt von da aus nur eine einzige mögliche Behandlung der Judenfrage, nämlich die Juden überall dort, wo sie in ihrem Streben nach Macht sich vordrängen und etwa gar zu einer Bedrohung der Wirtsvölker werden, stets und immer wieder von neuem – darauf liegt der Nachdruck, weil es eben ein ewiges, nie *endgültig* lösbares Problem ist –, sie immer wieder von neuem energisch in ihre Schranken zurückzuweisen."

2.4 “Forschungen zur Judenfrage”

Kuhn always insisted on the exclusively academic character of his scholarship presented in the three contributions in the volumes “Forschungen zur Judenfrage.” When in 1951 he retracted “Die Juden als weltgeschichtliches Problem, 1939,” he refused to include the following three publications into his revocation.

In 1936 Kuhn had become a member of the Research branch “Jewish question” of the “Reich’s Institute for the History of the New Germany” (“Forschungsabteilung Judenfrage des Reichsinstituts für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands”).²² In the first conference in November 1936, Kittel²³ refers to Kuhn’s inaugural lecture in his contribution on “The origin of Judaism and the rise of the Jewish question.” Kuhn lectured on “The origin of Talmudic Thought.”²⁴ Kuhn’s lecture is rather moderate in comparison to Kittel’s. Kittel finishes with an *apotheosis* of the “Führer” “who has grounded the ‘Judenproblem’ on a new basis for the German people, as the first ones in modern times.” “And this was not arbitrary brutality and barbarism, but true political action born out of historical soberness.”²⁵

Kuhn in his lecture contradicts the opinion held by most Christian theologians that after 70 CE Judaism became a petrified and non-vital religion which was documented in the Talmud(s). This does not correspond to the vitality and power of the Jews for whom the Talmud(s) is/are the mental fertile soil. “This Jewish book was an interpretation of the Torah in order to facilitate the accomplishment of the biblical law. Its use was a good training of the intellectual powers of the Jewish individuals. But this training had the wrong aim. It led to an abstract formalism which ‘often made the process of penetrative analysis an empty end in itself.’ The ideal of Judaism was formal logical virtuosity.”²⁶

22 Helmut Heiber, *Walter Frank und sein Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands, Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte* 13 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966), 626–628.

23 Gerhard Kittel, “Die Entstehung des Judentums und die Entstehung der Judenfrage,” *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 1 (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1937), 43–63.

24 “Die Entstehung des talmudischen Denkens,” *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 1 (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1937), 64–80.

25 Kittel, “Entstehung,” 63: “Und daß es nicht willkürliche Brutalität und Barbarei war, sondern echtes, aus historischer Nüchternheit geborenes politisches Handeln, wenn der Führer des neuen Deutschlands für das deutsche Volk als erstes Volk der Neuzeit das Judenproblem in radikalem Entschluß auf eine völlig neue Grundlage stellte.”

26 Kuhn, “Entstehung des talmudischen Denkens,” 80: “Die formal-logische Virtuosität” wird “das Ideal des Judentums.” “Nicht der ist der berühmteste, der seiner Zeit den *einen* großen Gedanken zu geben vermag, sondern der, der unter Umständen bei irgendeiner kleinen Tüftelei hundert Beweise dafür *und gleichzeitig* hundert Beweise dagegen zu führen

With Steinweis we may conclude: “In contrast to Kittel’s contribution in the same issue of the ‘Forschungen,’ Kuhn’s article examined the nature of the Jews not in racial terms but in cultural and intellectual ones. Nevertheless, it resonated with familiar stereotypes about the Talmud and traditional Judaism.”²⁷

Kuhn’s contribution to the second conference in 1937²⁸ was on “World Jewry in Antiquity.” While Judaism in Palestine had a “healthy national structure” and was predominantly based on agriculture, diaspora Judaism was characterized by assimilation and urban commercial, financial and intellectual activities. It is an “unvölkisches Weltjudentum,” with religion as the only stable factor. From the two types only diaspora Judaism survived, but before disappearing, Palestinian (and Babylonian) Judaism had created rabbinism and the Talmud, and this “Talmudjudentum” gained predominance in all the “world Jewry.” In the final sentence, Kuhn hints at the heart of the problem: “The prevailing of the Talmud is the main reason for the further existence of Judaism and ultimately the reason why for us, 2000 years later, the ‘Judenfrage’ is still a burning problem.”²⁹

The contribution to the third conference in 1938³⁰ was “The origin and essence of the Talmudic attitude toward non-Jews.” “Although Kuhn acknowledged passages in both the Torah and the Talmud urging hospitality towards strangers, he depicted Judaism as being intrinsically hostile toward other peoples and religions. He saw this hostility rooted in the Jewish doctrine of divine selection, and in the rivalries between the ancient Israelites and the neighbours and conquerors with whom they came into contact.”³¹ “It had been the old nomadic law from the wilderness which outlawed the stranger that became the law of a dispersed minority for their relationship to the rest of the population.” Kuhn claimed e.g., “that according to the Talmud, a Jew who killed a Non-Jew would never be punished, whereas a Gentile having killed a Jew

vermag.” See Gerhard Lindemann, “Theological Research about Judaism in Different Political Contexts: The Example of Karl Georg Kuhn,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 17 (2004): 331–338.

27 Alan E. Steinweis, *Studying the Jew: Scholarly Antisemitism in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 80.

28 “Weltjudentum in der Antike,” in *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 2 (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1937), 9–29.

29 Kuhn, “Weltjudentum in der Antike,” 29: “Die Durchsetzung des Talmud ist die Hauptursache für den weiteren Bestand des Judentums und schließlich auch die Ursache dafür, daß für uns auch heute noch, nach 2000 Jahren, die Judenfrage ein brennendes Problem ist.”

30 “Ursprung und Wesen der talmudischen Einstellung zum Nichtjuden,” in *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 3 (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1938), 199–234.

31 Steinweis, *Studying*, 84.

would be sentenced to death even if he killed him inadvertently.”³² The Talmud *had made Jewry what it is* (“es zu dem zu machen, was es ist”).

Kuhn has repeated essential parts in his lecture “Der Talmud. Das Gesetzbuch der Juden” for the “Wissenschaftliche Akademie des NS-Dozentenbundes” in 1941.

In these three articles and his inaugural lecture, Kuhn intended to demonstrate his philological, historical, and literary competence in the study of rabbinic texts, a specimen of “our scholarship in the new Germany.” These articles are full of antisemitic presuppositions and tendencies which directed the reading of the Talmud. In the following contribution, Kuhn would even take a further step.

“The Jewish Question as a World-Historical Problem.”³³ Kuhn gave this lecture on December 1, 1938, at the fourth conference and repeated it a few days later for an audience of 2500 listeners in Berlin, with similar success in Munich and Stuttgart. “It was also in this piece that Kuhn made the leap from religious-cultural to racist antisemitism. Despite having been a member of the Nazi party since 1932 and a protégé of the increasingly racist Gerhard Kittel, Kuhn had so far resisted crossing this line in his scholarship.”³⁴ It was no longer the Talmud that defined Jewish behaviour and actions, but the “hereditary biological predispositions” and the “racial substance.”³⁵ In his *finale*, Kuhn seems to outdo his teacher in the *apotheosis* of the “Führer,” who now has created the possibilities for a “den gesamtgeschichtlichen Gesichtspunkten allein gerecht werdende Lösung der Judenfrage” (“a solution of the Judenfrage taking account of the encompassing historical perspectives”). The Jews are now “reaping what they have sown for the past 150 years.”³⁶

32 Lindemann, “Karl Georg Kuhn,” 335.

33 Karl Georg Kuhn, *Die Judenfrage als weltgeschichtliches Problem* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1939).

34 Steinweis, *Studying*, 86.

35 Steinweis, *Studying*, 86.

36 K.G. Kuhn, *Judenfrage*, 46f.: “Was das Judentum seit einigen Jahren erlebt – nicht nur in Deutschland, sondern weithin in die Welt –, ist nichts anderes, als daß es jetzt erntet, was es in seiner großen Mehrheit nun bald 150 Jahre hindurch gesät hat. Es ist die Rechnung für die Verfälschung des Sinnes der Emanzipation nach jeder Richtung durch das Judentum selbst. Aber das Judentum in der ganzen Welt begreift nicht den Sinn der weltgeschichtlichen Stunde. Es will ihn nicht und es kann ihn auch nicht begreifen, weil es mit einem solchen Begreifen das Gesetz verleugnen würde, nach dem es angetreten. Es ist ein typischer Ausdruck dafür, wenn der Jude Artur Ruppin, den wir schon mehrfach zitierten, Ende 1933 zu den nationalsozialistischen Judengesetzen des Jahres 1933 schreibt: ‘Die Verletzung des Prinzips gleicher Rechte für die Bürger wird sicher Schwierigkeiten für Deutschland selbst ergeben. Schließlich ist die Feindschaft von 16 Millionen Juden,

2.5 *Summary*

It may be doubted whether non-overt antisemitic statements in Kuhn's argumentation should be understood as philosemitism. Kuhn's study of rabbinic texts should – according to his self-understanding – serve the interpretation of the New Testament. But Kuhn never opposes the traditional paradigm that Christianity has overcome Judaism. It may be noted, on the other hand, that I have never encountered in Kuhn the intention for a Christian mission among Jews (quite different from Schlatter, Kittel, and Rengstorf). Kuhn's religious origins in pietism did not prevent him from antisemitism. From cultural, ethical, and economic antisemitism, Kuhn increasingly became a proponent of racist antisemitic Nazi ideology and politics.

2.6 *Excursus: Tübingen University in the Third Reich and Kuhn's Relationship to the Protestant Faculty*

The law “zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums” (April 7, 1933) had only little consequence at Tübingen university. Only four professors were dismissed. The reason is that Tübingen university already had been nearly “judenfrei.”

Kuhn was never a member of the Faculty of Protestant Theology Tübingen. For some time, he had a “Lehrauftrag,” but he never belonged to the collegium. This may also be the reason why he was not among the subscribers of the “Tübinger Sätze” from 1934, a clear statement of the faculty's support for the Dritte Reich. The third “sentence” was: “Wir sind voll Dank gegen Gott, daß er als der Herr der Geschichte unserem Volk in Adolf Hitler den Führer und Retter aus schwerer Not geschenkt hat” (“We are full of praise to God that he, as the sovereign of history, has send to our people Adolf Hitler, the ‘Führer’ and savior from grave distress”).³⁷

die Deutschland sich zugezogen hat, kein nebensächlicher (bedeutungsloser) Faktor, weder politisch noch wirtschaftlich.’

Angesichts einer solchen Drohung begreifen wir es, wenn der Führer am Grabe Wilhelm Gustloffs sagte:

‘Wir verstehen die Kampfansage, und wir nehmen sie auf!’

Eines aber wissen wir, daß im deutschen Volk selbst der Führer in einer geschichtlich einzigartigen Weise zum erstenmal – völkisch sowohl wie politisch, geistig sowohl wie wirtschaftlich – die Voraussetzungen geschaffen hat, die – soweit es Deutschland betrifft – durch allen Kampf hindurch letztlich eine wirkliche, den gesamtgeschichtlichen Gesichtspunkten allein gerecht werdende Lösung der Judenfrage ermöglichen.’

37 Text in Kurt D. Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse und grundsätzlichen Äußerungen zur Kirchenfrage. Band 2: Das Jahr 1934*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1935), 73f. To the signatories of the Tübingen faculty belong: Bauernfeind, Faber, Max Müller, Paulus, Rengstorf, Rückert, Schlatter, Schlunk, Traub, Weiser, Wehrung.

3 1940–1944: Kuhn in the Wehrmacht

From 1940 to 1944, Kuhn served in the army. During this time, in 1942, the title of “außerplanmäßiger Professor” was bestowed upon him at the faculty of philosophy.

3.1 *Warsaw Ghetto*

In 1940 Kuhn was sent to Poland on behalf of the “Reichsinstitut für Judenfragen” to study “the eastern-Jewish problem as long as the situation is so favourable.” According to the diaries of Adam Czerniaków, the president of the “Judenrat” in the Warsaw ghetto, Kuhn arrived in June in Warsaw and made investigations in the archive and museum. As the museum was already confiscated (“robbed”) when Kuhn arrived, Kuhn was not directly involved in the confiscation of the Warsaw ghetto libraries and museums. But the dean of the faculty of philosophy wrote in a letter to the rector, supporting the aim of founding a chair for “Judenkunde” in Tübingen: “His (scil. Kuhn’s) teaching at the university was as successful as were his popular lectures in several cities meritorious in the scholarly clarification on Judaism. His predominance among all scholars was acknowledged some months ago in the ‘Sonderauftrag’ to study the Talmudic Jewry in Poland and to confiscate (‘sicherstellen’) Talmudic manuscripts and libraries.”³⁸ The confiscated libraries served to build a central library in Munich at the “Reichsinstitut,” which included already more than 20 000 volumes in 1940.³⁹

3.2 *Memorandum on the Karaites*

In a further instance, Kuhn was asked among other – also Jewish – experts to give a memorandum on the racial status of the Karaites. The Karaites themselves insisted on their Turko-Mongol non-Jewish descent. In 1939, the German Ministry of the Interior followed this opinion. “But the question of Karaite racial origins arose once again after the Nazi conquest of Eastern Europe. Einsatzgruppen commanders and occupation officials on the ground required clarification from Berlin on how to handle the Karaites.”⁴⁰ Kuhn’s memorandum supported the Karaites’ own conviction that they were not

38 Horst Junginger, *Die Verwissenschaftlichung der “Judenfrage” in Nationalsozialismus*, Veröffentlichungen der Forschungsstelle Ludwigsburg der Universität Stuttgart 19 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), 198–200; English version: idem, *The Scientification of the “Jewish Question” in Nazi Germany*, Numen Book Series 157 (Leiden, Boston, MA: Brill, 2017), 176–178.

39 Junginger, *Verwissenschaftlichung*, 246–248; idem, *Scientification*, 221–224.

40 Steinweis, *Studying*, 87.

Jews in religious and racial terms. In his apology after 1945, Kuhn presented himself as saviour of the Karaites and an opponent against racial persecution. "Maintaining that the anti-Talmudic Karaites were not Jews was entirely consistent with Kuhn's previous writings, and can hardly be construed as an act of resistance against Nazi racial policy."⁴¹

4 1944–1948: Return to University, Suspension, Denazification

In June 1944, Kuhn was labelled "unabkömmlich" ("indispensable," "in reserved occupation"), meaning that he was more needed in his profession than in the army. He returned from military service for the winter-term 1944/45 to Tübingen university and gave a seminar on "Der Talmud. Einführung in seine Entstehung und seinen Inhalt. Lektüre talmudischer Texte" in the "Religionswissenschaftliches Seminar".

On May 3, 1945, the French military authorities suspended him from the faculty. He was readmitted from October 10, 1945 through January 31, 1946 and by February 1, 1946, was again suspended and banished from Tübingen to Biberach.

In 1948, Kuhn had to justify himself in two denazification proceedings in Stuttgart (American) and Tübingen (French). In Stuttgart, the committee consisted of lay members (a bank employee, an electrical mechanic, a chemist, a retiree), who had bravely read Kuhn's articles and found nothing antisemitic in them. In Tübingen, the committee consisted of academics. Kuhn fought for rehabilitation and presented himself as an apolitical scholar who had tried to bring scholarly objectivity into the discussion of the "Judenfrage." He convinced the board that he had joined the NSDAP for personal (in protest of his fiancée entering the communist party) rather than political reasons. Kuhn presented letters from his correspondence with Jews in the mid-thirties and grateful letters of former students who praised him for "immunizing his students against rampant antisemitic slogans." The postwar rector attested that Kuhn "remained a pure scholar, having carefully refrained from the slightest bias toward antisemitism." Both boards praised Kuhn for helping to save the Karaites from extinction. Both boards classified Kuhn as "nicht belastet" ("exonerated"), and Tübingen University allowed his return. The two boards did not realize that in his memorandum, Kuhn participated in the racist definition of Jews by the Nazis, and neither board was able to realize the overt antisemitism in Kuhn's writings.

⁴¹ Steinweis, *Studying*, 87.

The outcome of the denazification proceedings “nicht belastet” was the basis for the new life Kuhn was going to begin. Part of this new life was that Kuhn, except in one instance⁴² and in articles for the ThWNT⁴³ (which might have been written before 1945), never again published on Rabbinics. It is depressing to note with Alan E. Steinweis: “The arguments contained in Kuhn’s own post-war apologia, the defenses of him submitted by his academic colleagues, and the rationale behind the decisions of two denazification committees all paint a revealing and disturbing picture of how Kuhn’s brand of learned antisemitism was perceived by his contemporaries.”⁴⁴

5 1949–1976: The (Fictitious) Rehabilitation

5.1 Göttingen

In 1949 Kuhn was appointed extraordinary professor at the theological faculty of Göttingen. It was Joachim Jeremias, the eminent New Testament scholar in Göttingen, a member of the “Bekennende Kirche” and opponent to the Nazis, who vouched for him. In the process of his appointment in Göttingen, the dean of the faculty kept silent on Kuhn’s antisemitic writings and reckoned him “among the few Christian scholars presently in Germany who possess expertise in Rabbinics.”⁴⁵ Perhaps it was Joachim Jeremias who convinced Kuhn to retract his lecture from 1938 and the book from 1939, “*Die Judenfrage als weltgeschichtliches Problem*.” Kuhn writes in a footnote to an article published in “*Evangelische Theologie*”:

Ein persönliches Wort sei hier noch angefügt: Es ist verständlich und nur zu gut verständlich, wenn heute nach allem, was geschehen ist, jüdische Gelehrte mit Deutschen nichts zu tun haben wollen. Es kommt uns nicht zu, hier einen ersten Schritt zu tun. Es kommt uns nur zu, dies zu verstehen und zu achten. Das einzige, was wir tun können und was notwendig ist als Voraussetzung überhaupt, das ist, daß man selbst offen sagt, worin man nach der eigenen Überzeugung falsch gehandelt hat, und es richtig

42 “Giljonim und sifre minim,” in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias. Zweite vielfach berichtigte und ergänzte um eine wissenschaftliche Würdigung und eine Bibliographie des Jubilars erweiterte Auflage*, ed. W. Eltester, BZNW 26 (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1964), 24–61. The monographs on rabbinic literature (*Achtzehngebet und Vaterunser und der Reim*, 1950 and *Sifre zu Numeri*, 1959) were written before 1945.

43 See e.g. art. “προσήλυτος,” *Theologisches Wörterbuch* 6, 727–745.

44 Steinweis, *Studying*, 88.

45 Steinweis, *Studying*, 90. The reference to Rabbinics is restricted to Sifre Numeri.

zu stellen. Ich für meine Person sage in diesem Zusammenhang, daß ich es bedaure, die Schrift: Die Judenfrage als weltgeschichtliches Problem, Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt Hamburg 1939, 53 Seiten, geschrieben zu haben und daß ich sie in aller Form widerrufe. Ich bedaure, daß ich damals so blind war, nicht zu sehen, daß der Weg der Hitlerschen Judenpolitik in den Abgrund des Grauens ging und daß er unaufhaltsam war. Nur solche Blindheit machte es möglich, daß ich die Schrift damals schrieb.⁴⁶

Kuhn regretted “in every respect” that he had not seen that the “Jewish policy” of Hitler went into “the abyss of horror” and that it was unstoppable. “Only such complete blindness made it possible that I wrote this essay at that time.”⁴⁷ However, after the November pogroms of 1938, nobody could be blind concerning what was happening and what would happen!

Alan E. Steinweis comments on this: “In 1951 he did something that was highly unusual for a West German ex-Nazi who had published antisemitic statements before 1945: he issued a public ‘retraction’ and apology. (...) The retraction, however admirable, was quite limited, applying only to the single booklet from 1939. It did not refer to Kuhn’s articles in the ‘Forschungen.’”⁴⁸

In the meantime, Kuhn had already published in the “Theologische Literaturzeitung,”⁴⁹ edited by Kurt Aland, an opponent to the Nazis, in the first volume of the (re-founded) “Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche,”⁵⁰ edited by Gerhard Ebeling representing a Bultmann tradition of theology and “Bekennende Kirche,” as well as in “Evangelische Theologie,”⁵¹ edited by Ernst Wolf, preserving the heritage of the “Kirchenkampf” of the “Bekennende

46 Kuhn, “Die Schriftrollen vom Toten Meer. Zum heutigen Stand ihrer Veröffentlichung,” *Evangelische Theologie* 11 (1951/1952): 72–75 (73). Translation: “A personal note should be added here: It is understandable and only too understandable, if today, after everything that has happened, Jewish scholars do not want to have any interaction with Germans. It is not up to us to take the first step here. It is only up to us to understand and respect this. The only thing we can do, and which we are required to do, is to say publicly wherein, according to one’s own conviction, one has acted wrongly, and to correct it. I for myself state in this context that I regret to have written the publication “The Jewish Question as a World-Historical Problem” (Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt Hamburg 1939, 53 pages) and that I retract it in every form. I regret that I was so blind at the time not to have seen that the path of Hitler’s *Judenpolitik* led into the abyss of horror and was unstoppable. Only such blindness made it possible for me to write this publication at the time.”

47 Translation according to Lindemann, “Karl Georg Kuhn,” 338.

48 Steinweis, *Studying*, 90.

49 “Die Abendmahlsworte,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 75 (1950): 399–408.

50 “Die in Palästina gefundenen hebräischen Texte und das Neue Testament,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 47 (1950): 192–211.

51 “Die Schriftrollen vom Toten Meer,” 72–75.

Kirche.” As Dieter Lührmann⁵² rightly observes, this is a token of Kuhn’s “Eingliederung in die Theologie,”⁵³ his “integration into theology, to which he had never belonged before 1945.” Apart from some short reports in the ThLZ, all contributions were on the Dead Sea Scrolls and their impact on the New Testament. In a few years, Kuhn had made a *new* name. In Western Germany in the early fifties, he was the most famous and productive scholar and teacher in Qumran studies.

In addition to the Extraordinariat in Göttingen, Kuhn was deputy professor in Mainz (1950–1952).

5.2 *Heidelberg*

In 1954 he was appointed chair in New Testament (“*professor ordinarius*”) at the Protestant Faculty of Theology at the University of Heidelberg. The faculty considered Kuhn “a pioneer of modern, critical, and sharply focused religious-historical methodology” and a “leading representative of Rabbinics.” There is no mention of Kuhn’s antisemitic writings. The dean only writes to the Secretary for Culture (“Kulturminister”): “After 1945, Prof. Kuhn was for some time removed from the university for political reasons. But today there is no necessity to refer to these officially resolved matters.”⁵⁴ Since 1950, Kuhn had published on the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, and the Heidelberg colleagues expected him to bring honour to the faculty. In 1955 he received the theological honorary doctorate of the Göttingen faculty, following a custom of the faculties to honour their members when they were appointed at another university. This means the Göttingen faculty, after these five years, viewed Kuhn as belonging to their circle.

Kuhn seemed to respond to the expectations of his new faculty in Heidelberg by founding in 1957, as a result of the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft zu den Qumrantexten” (which had already started in Göttingen and now continued in Heidelberg), the “Qumranforschungsstelle” with three student assistants financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Already in 1958, he published in collaboration with H. Stegemann and G. Klinzing the *Retrograde*

52 Dieter Lührmann, “Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft vor und nach 1945,” *Theologische Rundschau* 76 (2011): 120–128.

53 His co-operation in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3. Auflage also belongs to this integration. Kuhn contributed the following articles: “Askese III. Im Judentum and IV. Im Urchristentum” (1:641–644, 1957), “Essener” (II:701–703, 1958), and “Qumran” (V:740–754, 1961).

54 Theissen, *Wissenschaft*, 52.

*Dictionary*⁵⁵ and in 1960, in collaboration with P. Albert-Marie Denis, OP, R. Deichgräber, W. Eiss, G. Jeremias and H.-W. Kuhn, the *Konkordanz zu den Qumrantexten*.⁵⁶ His own publications (some of them also translated into English)⁵⁷ deal mostly with the relevance of the Dead Sea Scrolls with respect to the New Testament.

The “Forschungsstelle” thus gained an international reputation and attracted visitors and Qumran scholars like A.S. van der Woude (Netherlands), A.-M. Denis (Belgium), H. Muszynski, the later Bishop of Gniezno (Gnesen, Poland), and Piotr Scholz (Poland).

5.3 *The Heidelberg Academy*

The election to the Heidelberg Academy in 1964 surely was the climax of Kuhn’s postwar career.

On January 10, 1964, the Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad, the New Testament scholar Günther Bornkamm, both from the theological faculty, the Assyriologist Adam Falkenstein and the Egyptologist Eberhard Otto proposed Kuhn for election to the Academy. Their proposal had to be accompanied by a bibliography which did not include the following articles by Kuhn:

“Die inneren Voraussetzungen der jüdischen Ausbreitung”, *Deutsche Theologie* 2 (1935): 9–19.

“Die Entstehung des talmudischen Denkens”, *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 1 (1937): 64–80.

“Weltjudentum in der Antike”, *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 2 (1973): 9–29.

“Ursprung und Wesen der talmudischen Einstellung zum Nichtjuden”, *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 3 (1938): 199–234.

Die Judenfrage als weltgeschichtliches Problem. Schriften des Reichsinstituts des neuen Deutschlands, Hamburg 1939.

55 *Rückläufiges hebräisches Wörterbuch*, unter Mitwirkung von H. Stegemann und G. Klinzing (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958).

56 *Konkordanz zu den Qumrantexten* in Verbindung mit P. Albert-Marie Denis O.P., R. Deichgräber, W. Eiss, G. Jeremias, H.-W. Kuhn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960).

57 Krister Stendahl, *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York, NY: Harper, 1957/London: SCM Press 1958) published the following translations: “The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel” (54–64.256–259), “The Lord’s Supper and the Communal Meal at Qumran” (65–93.259–265), “New Light on Temptation, Sin, and Flesh in the New Testament” (94–113.265–270).

“Der Talmud, das Gesetzbuch der Juden”, *Aus den Jahressbänden der wissenschaftlichen Akademie des NS-Dozentenbundes/Wissenschaftliche Akademie Tübingen des NS-Studentenbundes* 1 (1937–39), (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1941), 226–233.

At least the Tübingen member of the Academy, the church historian Hans Rückert, must have known Kuhn’s speech from April 1, 1933 and the antisemitic statements in his inaugural lecture from 1934, because he was the founder and editor of *“Deutsche Theologie”* where the lecture was published.

After his election, Kuhn gave his inaugural speech for the Academy. In this self-presentation, there is a gap between his *Habilitation* in 1934 and 1949 “when Joachim Jeremias called me to Göttingen.” According to his own words, his scholarly work in these fifteen years consisted exclusively in the collaboration on Kittel’s *Wörterbuch* “where for years I controlled the manuscripts and completed or corrected them *in rabbinicis*.”⁵⁸ Nothing more.

When Gerd Theissen was the “Sekretar” of the Academy he published the book *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft vor und nach 1945. Karl Georg Kuhn und Günther Bornkamm*, Heidelberg 2009. In the final passages, Theissen writes: “Kuhn was an agreeable colleague, an inspiring teacher and a true scholar (...). But he could not step out of the shadows of German history. Through him also a shadow falls upon the Academy.”⁵⁹ “It would have been better not to accept K.G. Kuhn to the Academy.”⁶⁰

In 1965 Kuhn was the highly praised host and organizer of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*-congress in Heidelberg. This, too, was a victory over the past because in 1938 the rector of Tübingen University did not allow him to become a member of a foreign society, the SNTS.

5.4 *The Festschrift*

In 1971 Kuhn was honoured with a *Festschrift*: *Tradition und Glaube. Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt. Festgabe für Karl Georg Kuhn zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Gert Jeremias, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn und Hartmut Stegemann,⁶¹ Göttingen 1971, 434p., 7 plates.

58 “Antrittsrede” Heidelberg Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Jahrbuch der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1963/64 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1965), 61–63.

59 Theissen, *Wissenschaft*, 148f.

60 Theissen, *Wissenschaft*, 148.

61 We would also expect Jürgen Becker among the editors, but Becker had left Heidelberg after a conflict with Kuhn; he is also not among the contributors.

The volume bears several peculiarities. There is neither a biographical sketch of the honoured nor a bibliography. Among the contributors from the Heidelberg ordinary professors of the faculty there is only Claus Westermann, among the “Privatdozenten” are Dieter Lührmann, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn and Hartwig Thyen. The only further Heidelberg *ordinarius* is the Egyptologist Eberhard Otto from the philosophical faculty; from this faculty also the “Privatdozent” Klaus Beyer, a student of Kuhn. Contributions from other universities come from Hans Bardtke (Leipzig), Claus-Hunno Hunzinger (Hamburg), Lienhard Delekat (Bonn), Martin Hengel (Tübingen), Carsten Colpe (Berlin), Hartmut Stegemann (Marburg), Otto Michel (Tübingen), Ferdinand Hahn (Mainz), Anton Vögtle (Freiburg), Roland Bergmeier (Karlsruhe). Remarkable are the contributions by foreign scholars: Eduard Schweizer (Zürich), Jean Carmignac (Paris), Jean P.M. van der Ploeg (Nijmegen), Adam S. van der Woude (Groningen).

From some of the foreign contributors, I know personally that they only were ready to be involved in the Festschrift because the name “Jeremias” stood on the front page, now the name of a son of Joachim Jeremias, Gert. Joachim Jeremias himself had already paved Kuhn’s way to Göttingen and later to Heidelberg.

6 A Glance Backward

Kuhn was an extraordinarily gifted scholar who had devoted all his energy into two careers: the first career from 1928 to 1945 and the second career from 1948 until his death in 1976.

In his first career, he served the abominable Nazi ideology giving a “scholarly” basis for racial antisemitism and welcoming Hitler’s barbaric and murderous measures against the Jews leading to genocide. His retraction of the 1939 book in 1951 is only a small token of *teshuva*, because he refused to also retract his other antisemitic writings. This goes hand in hand with the concealment of these writings, e.g., in his inaugural speech in the Academy. But not only he himself was concealing his writings, so were the people who promoted him into new positions after 1945.

Before his second career, an unexpected event had occurred: the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1947–1956. With all his philological and theological capacities, he started a new life and became one of the most renowned Dead Sea Scrolls’ scholars of the first Qumran-decades. He published and taught successfully, and his students became Qumran scholars like him, and professors like him on New Testament chairs. The election to the Heidelberg Academy

was, without doubt, the coronation of his life, but at the same time, he seemed to have crossed the horizon. It is noteworthy that afterwards, he published only one single minor article in the twelve years until his death.⁶²

Let me conclude with some personal remarks as I began. When I came from Erlangen to Heidelberg in the winter term 1966/67, it seemed to me as a gift from heaven that there existed an “Arbeitsgemeinschaft über die Qumrantexte.” I attended the classes, and after some weeks, I was in charge of the “Qumranforschungsstelle,” working on a dictionary of Qumran Hebrew. I experienced Kuhn as a demanding but thoughtful “Studentenvater.” He accepted me as a doctoral student before my examination. He invited his students to his home, and there was a lot of talking, laughing, discussing, smoking, wine drinking. I belonged to the students who were active in the Heidelberg “Studentenbewegung” in 1968, and at one of these occasions in his house we confronted Kuhn with his past and especially with the book of 1939. He did not answer but went to the bookshelf, took the volume of *Evangelische Theologie* from 1951 and read his retraction aloud. Fini. Then again talking about music, literature, and gossip.

Alan E. Steinweis concludes the chapter on Kuhn in the following way, and I consent: “Kuhn’s continued defense of the academic legitimacy of his “Forschungen” articles, three decades after they were published, demonstrated a remarkable disregard for truth and decency. His dishonesty was compounded by the disinclination of his colleagues and students to acknowledge that there was a problem; by remaining silent, they tolerated the antisemitism of Kuhn’s articles. If Kuhn’s Nazi-era career illustrated the perversion of scholarship by antisemitic ideology, his postwar career reflected the failure of many in the German academic world to honestly confront the persistence of antisemitism in their own ranks and to hold their peers accountable for violating the integrity of their profession.”⁶³

Karl Georg Kuhn is a representative of German history from 1933 to 1945, for the first two decades after 1945 and in some sense until today.

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Judaism as Religious Cosmopolitanism: Apologetics and Appropriation in the *Jüdisches Lexikon* (1927–1930)

Irene Zwiép

In 1919, one year after the unspeakable *Barbarei* of the Great War, thirty-six-year-old Franz Kafka turned to his father Hermann in a personal letter. “Dearest Father,” it said, “recently you asked me, why it is that I say I dread you.”¹ Afraid to answer the question in a direct confrontation, the son chose the subtle delay of writing. From the paradoxical superlative (*liebster Vater*) to the cynical framing of the father’s question (*warum ich behaupte, ich hätte Furcht vor Dir*) the opening line was vintage Kafka. What followed was a merciless dissection of a father-son relationship that suffered from a fundamental lack of mutual affinity and respect. Not even Judaism, their shared point of departure, proved a viable point of contact or, in Kafka’s words, an escape-route from his father’s overbearing discontent.² Instead of bringing them closer, their different expectations and experiences of Judaism only seemed to deepen the rift.

In the letter Kafka described his father’s Judaism as a remnant from his youth in a small village community, not so much a ghost as a souvenir, a cheap token of little value and no intrinsic meaning. For Kafka *père*, as for so many emancipated urban Jews, Judaism had lost its function as a guiding principle rooted in devout tradition. Instead, his creed echoed the profane “opinions of one specific Jewish social class,” a set that others jokingly referred to as Jewish citizens of the bourgeois faith. In the synagogue, which the family attended four times a year (hence the expression *Viertagesjuden*), the father proved surprisingly knowledgeable but impiously indifferent. Not so the son, to whom the service seemed endlessly boring, with the Torah scrolls resembling old, headless dolls, the holy ark a shooting gallery at a funfair.³ For Hermann Kafka, born in 1851, *Judentum* had dwindled into “a nothing, a joke, not even a joke” – empty, pointless, yet curiously persistent. For his son Franz, born a decisive

1 “Liebster Vater, Du hast mich letztthin einmal gefragt, warum ich behaupte, ich hätte Furcht vor Dir;” Franz Kafka, *Brief an den Vater* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1952), 1.

2 “Ebensowenig Rettung vor Dir fand ich im Judentum;” Kafka, *Brief*, 44.

3 Kafka, *Brief*, 46.

thirty-two years later, it was little more than a distant mirror. His personal Jewishness, however vague and fragile, was – to paraphrase Hannah Arendt – one of the indisputable factual data of his life.⁴ Collective Judaism, by contrast, had lost its intimate plausibility.⁵

In 1919, one year after the unspeakable *Barbarei* of the Great War, thirty-four-year-old historian Georg Herlitz and Bruno Kirschner, one year his senior, started working on the *Jüdisches Lexikon*, an ambitious reference work that appeared at the Jüdischer Verlag in Berlin between 1927 and 1930.⁶ Their aim was to emulate all previous attempts at giving an overview of the ‘topics, problems, and people’ that were, or had once been, related to Judaism. Less biased than the theological dictionary, less shallow than the *Konversationslexikon*, less strictly academic than the American *Jewish Encyclopaedia* of 1901–1906, and less anecdotal than the alphabetical *Realwörterbuch*, that was how they envisaged their new “encyclopaedic handbook of Jewish knowledge.” What began as a single-volume *Jüdisches Wörterbuch* soon developed into a four-volume encyclopaedia for “the educated classes.”⁷

The *Lexikon*’s print run counted 50,000 copies. In their preface, the editors explicitly targeted a broad audience, inviting not only academics but also *Bildungsbürger*, workers, women, and children to consult their work when looking for answers to Jewish questions, be they theoretical or practical. Still, their ambition was to provide more than a handbook of ready information. All ten thousand entries, they wrote, were bound together by a single unifying principle: the “Idee [...] der ‘Kultur des Judentums,’” a concept which they failed to qualify but which, in their words, best expressed the “organic, inner unity” of Judaism. Surfing from cross-reference to cross-reference, the diligent reader could gain systematic, cutting-edge knowledge of its most important themes and branches, from Assimilation to Zionism, and from Abel to Stefan

4 In her correspondence with Gershom Scholem on the Eichmann controversy in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 20 October 1963; English translation published in *The Jew as A Pariah. Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. R.H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 240–251 (246).

5 For an in-depth analysis of the ambivalent Jewish intellectual identifications with Judaism in the decades preceding and following World War II, see Vivian Liska, *When Kafka Says We. Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

6 On Herlitz, see Robert Jütte, *Die Emigration der deutsch-sprachigen “Wissenschaft des Judentums”: die Auswanderung jüdischer Historiker nach Palästina 1933–1945* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991), 89–94.

7 For an impression of the aim, audience, scope and organisation of the *JL*, and of the respective roles of its publisher (the energetic Siegmund Katznelson), staff, authors and subject editors, see the “Einleitung,” vol. 1 (1927), v–xii.

Zweig. Though arranged alphabetically, the *Lexikon* thus had a singular, linear programme: to restore Judaism's intimate plausibility and collective appeal in the face of assimilation and growing Jewish illiteracy. Under the banner of Jewish culture, it hoped to revive at least some of its relevance to those for whom Judaism, in the words of Walter Benjamin, had become "remote as a religion, and unknown [...] as a national aspiration," a problematic legacy that was associated with "antisemitism and a vague sense of piety"⁸ – or, in Kafka's case, with an untouchable, domineering father.

In the late 1920s, the publication of a comprehensive *Jüdisches Lexikon* fit into a pattern that we might call the consolidation of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.⁹ The age of personal experiment and intellectual conquest, of the individual genius of scholars like Leopold Zunz and Moritz Steinschneider, was over. What the field needed was a collective reorientation, a joint "Neuorientierung unserer Wissenschaft" in the words of Ismar Elbogen, one of the *Lexikon's* six subject editors.¹⁰ In a 1918 lecture that echoed with the recent trauma of World War I, Elbogen had underlined the importance of a collaborative, project-based approach, built around a central research agenda, at the service of a living Judaism in which *Leben und Lehre*, life and study, would once again complement each other. The *Lexikon*, with its 230 contributors, its popular reach, its emphasis on theory and praxis, and its postulate of one authentic Jewish culture, hoped to offer just that.

In its pursuit of systematic, unifying scholarship, Herlitz and Kirschner's initiative was not unique. In 1901, Martin Buber had set the stakes by drawing the contours of a new, robustly Jewish-national, research agenda in an article that was simply but provocatively titled "Jewish Scholarship."¹¹ A year later, the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums* called for an orthodox *Neugründung* of the *Wissenschaft*, initiating various collaborative

8 Quoted from Irving Wolffarth, "Männer aus der Fremde": Walter Benjamin and the 'German-Jewish Parnassus,'" *New German Critique* 70 (1997): 3–85 (7).

9 See the introduction to my article "Between Past and Future. European Jewish Scholarship and National Temporalities, 1845–1889," in *Frontiers of Jewish Scholarship: Expanding Origins, Transcending Borders*, ed. A.O. Albert, N. Gerber and Meyer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 21–41.

10 Ismar Elbogen, "Neuorientierung unserer Wissenschaft," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 61.2 (1918): 81–96. On Elbogen's programme, see Michael A. Meyer, "Without *Wissenschaft* there is no Judaism," *The Life and Thought of the Jewish Historian Ismar Elbogen*, Braun Lectures in the History of the Jews in Prussia 11 (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2004).

11 Martin Buber, "Jüdische Wissenschaft," first published in *Die Welt* 41–43 (October 1901) and re-published in Idem, *Die jüdische Bewegung. Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen 1900–1915* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1916), 45–51.

publication series, including the *Corpus Tannaiticum* and the *Germania Judaica* project.¹² In 1919, the historian Eugen Täubler, at the instigation of Franz Rosenzweig, founded a secular Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, conceived as an independent research centre.¹³ Elbogen's wake-up call, one year before, had been issued within the walls of the ostensibly neutral, but essentially Reform-oriented Hochschule (officially 'Lehranstalt') für die Wissenschaft des Judentums. The Jüdischer Verlag, in its turn, had its roots in the cultural Zionism of Martin Buber and Chaim Weizman. In 1922, it had published Theodor Herzl's diaries, and at the time Herlitz and Kirschner were finalizing their handbook, it was busy issuing Simon Dubnow's ten-volume *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes* (1925–1929).¹⁴ In the modern age, the term Judaism may have claimed a catholic status, but it came in a series of well-defined opposites: pious versus secular, Reform versus Orthodox, national versus humanistic. And for all its apparent alphabetical neutrality, the *Lexikon*, as we shall see, was no exception.

In their introduction (p. ix), the editors expressly stated they were proud to have worked with an all-Jewish team, but that they had tried to avoid apologetics, both in the overall design and in the individual entries. Hardly surprising, this proved a noble yet idle ambition. One only had to consult the entry on Jewish apologetics, authored by the Viennese writer Samuel Meisels, to learn that Judaism had a long history of religious defence, and that recently the number of apologetic writings had boomed. Inevitably, Meisels wrote, all modern Jewish *Wissenschaft* had "irgendwie eine polemische Tendenz."¹⁵ On the one hand, it saw itself confronted by the "neuzeitliche Judenhassern, die sich "Antisemiten" nennen" (the latter-day Jew-haters who call themselves antisemites); on the other, he continued, there was, as always, the existential polemic with Christianity that demanded its attention.

Taking the long view, one might add that *anno* 1919 the traditional stakes and frames of the theological debate had shifted. Whereas in pre-modern times Jewish scholars had refuted the Christian truth claim from a position of

12 Leopold Lucas, "Zum 25jährigen Jubiläum der Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 71 (1927): 321–332.

13 Michael Brenner, "Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums," in *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. D. Diner (Stuttgart: Springer-Verlag, 2011–2017). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2468-2845_ejgk_COM_0008>.

14 On the history of Jüdischer Verlag, see Anatol Schenker's doctoral thesis *Der jüdische Verlag: Zwischen Aufbruch, Blüte und Vernichtung*, *Conditio Judaica* 41 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2003).

15 Samuel Meisels, "Apologeten des Judentums," *Jüdisches Lexikon* vol. 1, cols. 391–395 (394).

stable, if precarious, alterity, their modern colleagues opposed it from within a process of acculturation and assimilation.¹⁶ This paradoxical predicament meant that they had to rehabilitate Judaism as fundamentally different from Christianity while simultaneously guarding its essential compatibility with the norms and values of the Christian majority and, in the case of the *Jüdisches Lexikon*, of German liberal Protestantism in particular. The result was a proudly modern *Kulturjudentum* that would prove a worthy match to contemporary *Kulturprotestantismus*.¹⁷ This typical attempt at assimilation by imitation¹⁸ may well explain the strong emphasis on an unspecified, yet obviously liberal, *idea of a culture* of Judaism. By the same token, the Protestant benchmark complicated their attempt at shaping a Jewish cultural ethos that was free of apologetic overtones.

To date, the best and most comprehensive analysis of this formative-defensive balancing act is Christian Wiese's monograph on the exchange between Jewish *Wissenschaft* and Protestant theology in Wilhelmine Germany, based on his 1999 German doctoral dissertation.¹⁹ Concentrating on the period 1880–1914, Wiese first sketches the general historical and intellectual context, before zooming in on the major points of contact and combat between Jewish *Wissenschaftler* and Protestant theologians during the period: the awkward relation between *Judenmission* and – perceived – philosemitism (chapter three, with more than a cameo appearance for Gustav Dalman, Hermann Strack and Franz Delitzsch); the contested representations of *Rabbinismus* and *Spätjudentum* in Protestant New Testament scholarship (chapter four, giving centre stage to religious historian Wilhelm Bousset); the impact of Christian higher criticism on Jewish biblical scholarship and theology (chapter five, evaluating, *inter alia*, the position of Rudolf Kittel); and the dynamic of separation and rapprochement in the dialogue between liberal Judaism and liberal

16 For the complex process of turning Judaism into a modern European religion, informed by individual religiosity and a bourgeois habitus, see Simone Lässig, *Jüdische Wege ins Bürgertum: Kulturelles Kapital und sozialer Aufstieg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 243–441.

17 For the normative role of German liberal Protestantism, see Steven S. Schwarzschild, "The Theologico-Political Basis of Liberal Christian-Jewish Relations in Modernity," in *Das deutsche Judentum und der Liberalismus: Dokumentation eines internationalen Seminars der Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Leo Baeck Institut, London* (Sankt Augustin: COMDOK, 1986), 70–95 (79).

18 The phrase is derived from Achad Ha-Am's essay "Chiqquy ve-hitbolelut" in *Selected Essays*, ed. L. Simon (New York: Schocken, 1970), 71–75.

19 Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Scholarship in Wilhelmine Germany*, Trans. Barbara Harshav and Christian Wiese, *Studies in European Judaism* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

Protestantism (chapter six). In the seventh and perhaps least developed chapter, Wiese offsets these results against the Christian reception of contemporary Jewish scholarship, dwelling at length on the Protestant reluctance to welcome Jewish scholars as rightful participants in academic theological discourse. In hindsight, the title of Wiese's English edition (*Challenging Colonial Discourse*) may seem a trifle zealous and trendy. It does, however, neatly cover his central objective, *viz.* to offer a productive counter-history by reconstructing how German-Jewish scholars managed to confront *and* appropriate German-Protestant bias and put it at the service of a modern, viable, and relevant Judaism.

My aim in this short paper is not to challenge or reconsider Wiese's narrative. What I would like to do is take one of its central ideas, namely that of Jewish-Christian appropriation via confrontation, one small step further, both in time (from the early 1900s to the closing days of the *Wissenschaft* around 1930) and in scale, *viz.* from the elite academy to the 50,000 copies of the *Jüdisches Lexikon*. Its editors knew that, in order to help a broad, assimilated audience find the solid Judaism behind their elusive Jewishness, they had to walk a fine line between familiarity and difference, between German habitus and a vaguely resounding Jewish past. This was especially true for their treatment of Jewish religion, and it was here that the recent experience of Jewish-Christian exchange, with its dialectic of conflict and harmonization, came in helpful.

A glimpse of what their readers, in their turn, may have hoped to find can be caught between the lines of Franz Kafka's *Brief an den Vater*. As we have seen, Kafka dismissed his father's Judaism as an empty social routine devoid of higher purpose and intent, a remnant of times past, robbed of all contemporary relevance. From the way he phrased his verdict, we may deduce that for him, Judaism *was* to be taken seriously as a personal guideline inspired by abstract meaning rather than a hollow ritual rooted in social identity or shared descent. Here it was not, I would say, his use of the law metaphor that defined Kafka as a Jewish author (if at all), but his search for a less formulaic, more robust and moving Jewish *Glaubensmaterial* than the one he had been handed by his parents.²⁰ And, hardly surprising, it was precisely this personally relevant, robust and moving religion that the editors of the *Lexikon* wished to offer their readers.

20 Kafka, *Brief*, esp. 47. Compare Vivian Liska's reading of Benjamin on Kafka and the Law in "Benjamin and Agamben on Kafka, Judaism and the Law," in *Towards the Critique of Violence: Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben*, ed. B. Moran and C. Sanzani (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 175–194.

There are many ways to map the construction of Jewish religion on the pages of the *Jüdisches Lexikon*. In this volume on pro- and anti-Jewish sentiment in Protestant theology, an obvious starting point would be the entry on Judaism as a “Gesetzesreligion” by Dr Max Joseph (1868–1950), rabbi in Stolp (today Ślupsk) in Pomerania.²¹ On a *prima facie* level, the term resounded with the Pauline stigma of Jewish *religion as law*, an uncomfortable buzzword which, in the words of Viennese rabbi Moritz Güdemann, had become an obstinate prejudice which, ironically, modern thinkers like Moses Mendelssohn had confirmed rather than refuted.²² On a more intimate, inner-Jewish level, it epitomized the modern unease with law as part of the Jewish religious ethos. The idea of *Gesetzesreligion* had become a paradox, one might say, if not an outright contradiction in terms.

Following the *Lexikon*’s reading guidelines, we can use this precarious lemma as a steppingstone for a journey through related territory, with the entries “Gesetz” and “Religion” as our main beacons. In essence, the themes and motifs that emerge from this cluster were hardly new, yet they had regained urgency in the face of Jewish assimilation and its many, private as well as public, consequences. The main issues that governed its contents and rhetoric can be summarized as follows: (1) the obvious, yet ill-defined relation between individual and collective Judaism; (2) the fragile bond between Judaism and civil society; and (3) the conflict between docile ‘legalism’ and the modern insistence on moral choice. As we shall see, in each of these domains the idea of a divinely revealed law, laid down in a covenant between God and his creation, was the problem as well as the solution.

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21 Vol. 2 (1928), cols. 1117–1118. On Joseph’s theological-political position, see Georg Y. Kohler, “Rabbi Max Joseph: between Reform and Zionism,” *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 19.1 (2016): 96–117.

22 Moritz Güdemann, *Jüdische Apologetik* (Glogau: Flemming, 1906), 159–160. In *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (1783), Mendelssohn had defined Judaism as revealed legislation rather than revealed religion, in order to secure its rational potential. The orthodox Güdemann, by contrast, reinterpreted Jewish *Gesetz* as *Gesetzlichkeit* (legality), which in its turn equalled *Gerechtigkeit* (justice) and hence had a strong connection with *Sittlichkeit* (morality). For him, the essence of Judaism lay in its teachings (*Lehre*), not in its laws. See D. Feuchtwang, “Moritz Güdemanns Anteil an der Wissenschaft des Judentums,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 62 (N.F. 26) (1918): 161–177 (167), and Ismar Schorsch, “Moritz Güdemann: Rabbi, Historian and Apologist,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 11.1 (1966): 42–66.

Max Joseph's defence of law-based religion, a concept that existed by virtue of the difference between Judaism and Christianity, was a prime example of assimilation through apologetics. Taking the Pauline opposition as his point of departure, Joseph began by explaining that originally the term *Gesetzesreligion* had been coined to denote a difference in *theological* perspective. Whereas Christianity believed in release from original sin through grace and sacrifice, Judaism hoped to achieve justice before God by obeying his laws and statutes. Until today Judaism had not forfeited this basic tenet, whose goal was to boost morality and preserve human dignity. Such unwavering obedience, Joseph hastened to add, was a constant mental struggle, in which the moral mortal depended on God's encouraging grace. Using big words and packing them into complex sentences, Joseph's prose tends to make a hard read. His strategy, by contrast, is crystal clear: to secure Judaism's individuality by acknowledging the Pauline definition, while making sure to highlight its interface with current Christian values. Hence the emphasis on human dignity, moral struggle and, almost by way of an afterthought, the invocation of heavenly moral support.

In recent times, we learn from the remainder of Joseph's argumentation, the discussion had shifted towards an opposition of *moral* attitudes, with Judaism as the embodiment of rigid legal reckoning and Christianity as the religion of merciful love. The identification of Judaism with law was true, he granted, in as far as historical Israel had adopted a set of legal, cultic and ceremonial rulings *on top of* its religious and moral teachings. It was false, however, when taken to mean that all Jews preferred outward legal action over inner moral scruple. One only had to delve into biblical literature and savour its piety and wisdom, to see that Jewish legalism was compatible with a "deep and pure religiosity [...] and morality, rooted in genuine love of humankind." In modern times, he concluded, when the (moral) essence of religion was more readily recognized than ever before, both Judaism and Christianity had given centre stage to this holy inner ethos. Nowadays, it was especially "critically oriented" (read: Reform) Judaism that strove to realize the divine *Sittengesetz*, the cosmopolitan moral law that found its roots in God.

In its final conclusion the entry on *Gesetzesreligion* expressly matched the editors' wish to create a Jewish equivalent to liberal Protestantism. Judaism was put forward as a fellow-ethical monotheism, closely mirroring Christianity in its ambitions regarding personal piety and humanist philanthropy. In Joseph's – indeed rather implicit – prose, the main differences between the two religions were presented as historical accidents: it was post-exilic Israel who, under Ezra and Nehemiah, had adopted a host of public and cultic laws, and it was early rabbinic Judaism that had prioritized accountability over redemption. In the bibliography we find that Joseph had found ammunition in two

equally relevant, yet slightly incongruent publications. For religious defence he relied on Moritz Güdemann's *Jüdische Apologetik* (1906), which had been published by the orthodox Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums and targeted a Jewish audience who, according to some, knew their Wellhausen better than they knew the Hebrew Bible.²³ For his reconciliation of law-based religion and moral autonomy, Joseph had drawn inspiration from *Die Ethik des Judenthums*, where Reform leader Moritz Lazarus had forged a remarkable bond between *Versittlichung* and *Gesetzlichkeit*, between the human will to do what is right and the 'autonomous' Jewish law that empowered the Jewish collective to make that choice.²⁴

The gist and tenor of Joseph's thoughts were confirmed in the entries "Gesetz" and "Religion, jüdische," written by Reform rabbi Max Wiener, editor of the *Lexikon's* religion section. During his rabbinical training at the theological seminary in Breslau and the Berlin Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, Wiener (1882–1950) had received a doctorate for his thesis on *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes Lehre vom Wesen und Inhalt der Geschichte* (1906). From 1908 he had been Leo Baeck's assistant in Düsseldorf, followed by rabbinical positions in Stettin (Szczecin) and, from 1926, Berlin. Since the 1960s his interpretation of twentieth-century Jewish Reform as superior ethical monotheism has been the subject of several publications.²⁵ Within the context of the *Lexikon*, however, the main challenge was to reconcile the modern notion of religion as religiosity with the traditional legal habitus. And so Wiener, like Joseph, but in much greater detail, set out to reinterpret the history of Judaism as a law-based religion.²⁶ For the sake of brevity I will refrain from analysing his entire argumentation, but instead follow one connecting thread that is relevant for our context.

Wiener's entry can be read as a belated correction of Wilhelm de Wette's (1780–1849) early but influential typology of degenerate *Judenthum*.²⁷ Roughly

23 Sic Feuchtwang, "Moritz Güdemanns Anteil," 171. See also footnote 22.

24 Moritz Lazarus, *Die Ethik des Judenthums* (Frankfurt: J. Kaufmann, 1899), §§ 203–219. For a discussion, see Zwiep, "Gesetz als Gegensatz," and the literature cited *ibid.*, fn. 30.

25 Hans Liebeschütz, "Max Wiener's Reinterpretation of Liberal Judaism," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 5 (1960): 35–57; Pinchas Rosenblüth, "Gesetzesreligion als positiver Begriff: Max Wieners Verständnis der Thora," in *Treue zur Thora: Beiträge zur Mitte des christlich-jüdischen Gesprächs. Festschrift für Günther Harder zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. P. von der Osten-Sacken (Berlin, 1979), 101–107; Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*, 239–248, focusing on Wiener's reception of the Protestant interpretation of prophecy in the early 1910s.

26 Vol. 4.1 (1930), cols. 1323–1341.

27 In his *Biblische Dogmatik Alten und Neuen Testaments. Oder kritische Darstellung der Religionslehre des Hebraismus, des Judenthums, und des Urchristenthums* (Berlin, 1818).

following the latter's periodization, Wiener began by sketching the customs of the biblical patriarchs, mapping their interconnections with broader Semitic polytheism and primitive magic, elements of which (e.g. circumcision) had been absorbed into pre-Mosaic rite. A turning point had been the founding, by Moses, of the religion-cum-nation known as Israel. Its key text was the Book of Deuteronomy, where "old legal materials and moral-humanistic principles were merged," thus creating "an ideal nation that was devoted to its divine law-giver and benefactor through deep humanity in statute and law."²⁸ During the Babylonian exile religion had taken priority over politics, and "ancient religious custom had been transformed into austere religious law that was to be kept with utmost stringency" (e.g. the *mitzvah* to observe the Shabbat).²⁹ In the era of political restoration that followed upon Judah's return, Ezra and Nehemiah had tried to safeguard this religious *Geist* by choosing God's Torah as their holy constitution. A theocracy was born, with a special role for the scribal class, whose task was to convert the revealed Word of God into an increasingly intricate legal corpus.

Such was the legacy, Wiener continued, that was handed down to the rabbinic sages. It had been their mission to translate the principles behind the Judean theocracy into a viable model for Jewish life under foreign rule. To this end they decided to subordinate the totality of human life (*das Ganze des Daseins*) to the divine law, a move that gave all of life religious meaning, down to the slightest, most delicate detail. The holistic span of God's command was reflected in their holistic take on the law: in rabbinic legal thinking there could be no distinction between the religious and the moral, or between public law and cultic custom. The substance of the rabbinic elaborations was drawn from a – sometimes more, sometimes less religiously biased – folk tradition that went back many centuries. Unlike the worldly, aristocratic Sadducees, the scribes and Pharisees thus became the keepers of the nation's cultural heritage.³⁰

To refute De Wette meant to counter the reputation of *Rabbinismus* as the degenerate successor to Old Testament *Hebraismus*. The Pharisaic scribes, Wiener conceded, had perhaps been a bit radical in their *Gesetzhaftigkeit* and in their putting rational intellectualism above simple piety.³¹ One should not

In De Wette's narrative, Old Testament religion had evolved from early polytheistic Hebraism, via Mosaic theocratic Hebraism, to symbolic prophetic Hebraism. By exchanging morality for speculation, and by preferring interpretation and *Buchstabenwesen* over religious esprit, rabbinic *Judenthum* had marked its ultimate collapse.

28 Vol. 4.1 (1930), col. 1330.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 1334–1335.

31 Ibid., 1337.

forget, however, that keeping the *mitzvoth* was in itself a pious act, from which morality and humanism were never absent. It was a grave injustice, therefore, to dismiss the Pharisees and their followers as hypocrites, as the authors of the Gospels had done. Putting their theory (of respect, justice, chastity and humility) into practice, they had lived and died for their creed like few others had. And where Christianity had managed to inspire little beyond the passive, sentimental egotism of *Innerlichkeit* and *Gnadenerfülltheit*, the Sages had successfully propagated a religious life of action and responsibility, filled with ‘den einzigartigen Ernst der Tat.’³²

It was this form of ‘Talmudic-rabbinic religiosity’ that dominated Judaism’s subsequent spiritual development. Various historical developments – medieval Karaism, the introduction of religious philosophy, Kabbalah, the rise of charismatic Chassidism – could not affect this ancient inner core. The nineteenth-century response to political emancipation had posed a more significant threat, with Jewish Reform (too doggedly confessional to Wiener’s taste), Orthodoxy (too extreme and bordering on the sectarian) and Zionism (too particularistic, like all other nationalisms) corroding the rabbinic idea of religion, each in its own uncompromising way. The future, Wiener told his readers, lay with twentieth-century *Liberalismus*. Taking nineteenth-century Reform to the next, more balanced level, this new variant would succeed in reconciling religious inspiration with the “individuality of personal, subjective life,” a life nourished by tradition but never governed by it, leaving room for free judgment and private conscience in a Jewish key.

Wiener’s sketch of religious law as the backbone of Jewish life through the ages was excerpted from his essay “Tradition und Kritik im Judentum,” published one year before in *Protestantismus als Kritik und Gestaltung*, a publication of Paul Tillich’s religious-socialist Kairos-Kreis.³³ In both versions, Wiener’s line of argument was historical, with little differentiation between his Protestant and Jewish audiences. One important constant in both narratives was his steady identification of Jewish law with Jewish (*in casu* Israelite) life

32 Ibid., 1335–1336. NB: In the entry ‘Rabbinismus’ Max Joseph had taken a much less apologetic stance, using the term as a neutral historical category rather than a pejorative theological label. Ostensibly relying on the work of Ludwig Philippson, Abraham Geiger and George Foot Moore’s *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (1927–1930), he sketched its *Werdegang* as the ‘real’ successor to ‘so-called Mosaismus,’ dominant from the days of Ezra until the threshold of modern times, occasionally threatened by Karaism, Kabbalah, Chassidism and radical Enlightenment (also Wiener’s favourite villains), and always transforming the original revelation in line with Jewish cultural growth; vol. 3 (1930), cols. 1214–1217.

33 Max Wiener, “Tradition und Kritik im Judentum,” in *Protestantismus als Kritik und Gestaltung*, ed. Paul Tillich (Darmstadt: Otto Reichl Verlag, 1929), 347–407.

and mores. We have seen how Semitic custom was absorbed into patriarchal rite and, eventually, into Mosaic law; how Judah's exile, to compensate for the loss of political footing, had transformed religious custom into binding law; how the post-exilic leadership, in an attempt at safeguarding the new religious mentality, had founded a theocracy supported by an apparatus of legal professionals; and finally, how the Sages, once Jewish sovereignty had come to an end, had turned this political legacy into a lasting religious mindset by bringing all of Jewish life under God's all-embracing law. What De Wette had dismissed as "eine verunglückte Wiederherstellung des Hebraismus" (a wrecked [rabbinic] rehabilitation of [Old Testament] Hebraism)³⁴ was now presented as an organic consolidation of indigenous Jewish religiosity.

One easily discerns how, as a belated answer to De Wette, Wiener's account of Jewish law mirrors Friedrich Carl von Savigny's early nineteenth-century notion of legal evolution.³⁵ Writing under the influence of German Romanticism, von Savigny had postulated a three-stage development of national law, starting with an early period dominated by direct law, lived and practised by the community without any judicial intervention (the time of the patriarchs, in Wiener's entry). This organic harmony was followed by a middle state, in which living law and its formal redaction went hand in hand (as exemplified by the Book of Deuteronomy) and was concluded by an era in which positive law evolved into an independent discipline and became the exclusive domain of expert professionals (*viz.* the post-exilic Judean theocracy). It had been up to the sages to go one step beyond von Savigny's linear scheme and close the circle by amplifying the law with the help of local folklore and reintegrate the result into everyday Jewish life.

Wiener recapped this final move first as "Talmudic-rabbinic religiosity" and, further down the line, as simple but adequate "tradition."³⁶ Only recently, he concluded, Jewish Reform had rediscovered this authentic national treasure, using philosophy and historical criticism to strip it of its canonical status and subordinate it to personal will and piety. Thus, as in Max Joseph's lemma, a compromise was struck between Jewish nomism and moral autonomy, and between collective religion and private faith. Unlike Joseph, however, Wiener

34 De Wette, *Biblische Dogmatik*, 116–117.

35 Friedrich Carl von Savigny, *Vom Beruf unserer Zeit für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft* (Heidelberg: Mohr & Zimmer, 1814). For its impact, see e.g. Benjamin Lahusen, *Alles Recht geht vom Volksgeist aus: Friedrich Carl von Savigny und die moderne Rechtswissenschaft* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2012).

36 In the entry "Tradition" Max Joseph endorsed Wiener's view that oral law had preserved old but vibrant folk traditions and as such served as a corrective of the rigid letter of the law (comp. De Wette's *Buchstabenwesen*); vol. 4 (1930), cols. 1027–1029.

chose to present this form of religiosity as a typical correlate of the Jewish way of life, a historical, and therefore mutable, manifestation of the “idea of [...] a culture of Judaism” that was the central, if elusive, topic of Herlitz and Kirschner’s *Jüdisches Lexikon*.

In presenting Judaism as the point where the moral content of law, religion and philosophy met, the *Lexikon* offered its readers a pretty consistent programme. Wiener’s lemma on ‘Sittlichkeit’ (morality), for example, was the mirror image of his entry on religion.³⁷ Once more he grasped the opportunity to tackle the Christian prejudice against Rabbinism, this time by turning Judaism’s focus on *Versetzlichung* into a moral imperative and stressing its compatibility with the Kantian insistence on the “Sinn des Guten in seiner idealen Bedeutung für den Willen des Menschen” (the sense of the Good in its ideal relevance for the human will). A crucial role was set aside for revelation, as the moment when divine purpose and human will had met in their joint ambition to establish and do what is good.³⁸ The separation of religion and ethics, Wiener stressed, was a late phenomenon; in God’s commandments, we still witness the original convergence of law, sacral claims, and ethical rule. The essence of this ancient religious formation, he concluded, was fully consonant with modern moral cosmopolitanism. Refuting the cliché of the Jewish double standard (under explicit reference to Weber’s *Innen- und Außenmoral*) he showed how Jewish law was built around principles of charity and social justice. Humanism, he argued, was its timeless substance, national theocracy its transitory, political form. In Wiener’s moral universe, the individual, the Jewish collective, and all of humanity were thus connected (rather than divided) by Talmudic-rabbinic law.

Volume two of the *Lexikon* included a short entry on “Gesetz,” in which Jewish law and Jewish religion became completely synonymous.³⁹ Tracing back its etymology, via the Septuagint translation *nomos*, to the Hebrew concept of *Torah*, Wiener once more pointed out that the term *Gesetz* captured the essence of a Jewish religion that centred not on obedience, but on

37 Vol. 4.2 (1930), cols. 451–465.

38 In his entry “Offenbarung,” Wiener did not capitalize on this interpretation of revelation as a moral encounter, which in secular, Kantian terms was utterly contradictory. Here he simply addressed the fraught relationship between revelation as the supra-natural origin and essence of religious knowledge on the one hand, and the modern scientific epistemology on the other; vol. 4.1 (1930), cols. 554–555. NB: Wiener’s moral interpretation of revelation conflicted with Max Joseph’s definition of ‘Bund’ (covenant) as a purely legal transaction, the moral realization of which was later effectuated by the prophets; vol. 1 (1927), cols. 1231–1234.

39 Vol. 2 (1928), cols. 1104–1106.

teaching action and moral probation. Alternating between writ and orality, its Mosaic-Talmudic foundations were an organic unity of ceremonial, ritual, social, and ethical ordinances (Wiener's failure to mention its common, civil, public and private legal applications is quite revealing here). Once again divine revelation guaranteed its lasting validity as a moral-religious package deal: a law that had not been ratified by humankind could never be nullified by humankind, Wiener argued.⁴⁰ Grotius' famous dictum that there was also such a thing as natural law, self-evident even *without* the intervention of a caring God, apparently had no place in Wiener's definition of Jewish law as the source of ethical voluntarism.⁴¹



Navigating between God and Kant, between Paul and the Pharisees, between tradition and biblical criticism, and between moderate Reform and temperate Zionism, the *Lexikon* sought to construct an idea of Judaism that was appealing to a dual readership: the liberal Protestant and the assimilated Jew. Its insistence on justice and accountability will have helped its readership to position Jewish 'legalism' vis-à-vis the Christian ethos of love and grace. Its idea of Jewish law as national cultural heritage provided the individual Jew with at least some form of communal backdrop. Its emphasis on the law's inherent humanism bridged the gap between national theocracy and universal values. In postulating divine origins, it endowed the law with lasting validity, despite the lack of land and state. And finally, through its stubborn refusal to accept the enlightened separation of religion and morality, it tackled the eternal tension between collective obedience and personal choice. As I hope to have shown in the preceding paragraphs, in each of these dilemmas the idea of a transcendent law, adapted and transmitted by generations of worldly scholars, not only constituted the problem, but also provided the key to the solution.

Franz Kafka, author of iconic stories on the law and its autonomous logic, did not live to see the publication of the *Jüdisches Lexikon*. He did, however,

40 In the entry "Recht" legal scholar Marcus Cohn (1890–1952) gave an overview of Jewish law in terms of Western (Roman) legal history; vol. 4.1 (1930), cols. 1261–1275. Cohn presented Jewish law as a compromise between justice and mercy (*din* and *rakhamim*) and between human *ius* and divine *fas*. The latter (as in Latin *fas est*) nourished its antenna for the moral good. Its origins in a collective covenant with the divine ensured its validity beyond the borders of a territorial state.

41 *Et haec quidem quae iam diximus, locum aliquem haberent etiamsi daremus, quod sine summo scelere dari nequit, non esse Deum, aut non curari ab eo negotia humana*; in the "Prolegomena" to his *De Iure Belli ac Pacis* (1625).

make it into its literary canon. Tucked away between the entries on “Kaffer” and “Kafrurie,” his restless genius was quietly absorbed into its edifying, bourgeois agenda.⁴² Author of the entry was Max Brod, Kafka's long-time friend and (*anno 2020* contested) executor of his literary estate. In his short portrait, “Kafka, Franz, Dichter, Dr. jur. und Beamter in Prag” became a “great and singular producer of world literature.” His early poetry was of a deeply pious nature, his later work perhaps not always hopeful, but never without faith. In every detail, however laborious, Brod noticed a link with “a higher world of morality and redemption.” And even though he was a universal author, Kafka revealed his Jewishness by writing about his wrestling with God and with life as a stranger in an uncongenial world. In his later years, Brod concluded, Kafka had studied Hebrew and Talmud and was even planning to emigrate to Palestine. Piety, faith, morality, redemption, Zion: on the pages of the *Jüdisches Lexikon*, Kafka became the incarnation of the robust and moving *Glaubensmaterial* he had sought in vain in his father's house. A religious substance, one might add, that was at once Jewish, Christian, and cosmopolitan, and owed as much to Kant and Schleiermacher as it did to Moses, Hillel and Herzl.

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⁴² Vol. 3 (1930), cols. 524–525.

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Antisemitism and Early Scholarship on Ancient Antisemitism

René Bloch

The great German historian Theodor Mommsen, in the fifth volume of his magisterial *Römische Geschichte* (1885), framed a sentence that was soon after both endorsed and criticized by many other scholars. Mommsen stated there that “Jew-hatred and agitations against the Jews” (“Judenhass und die Judenhetzen”) were as old as the Jewish diaspora itself.¹ As soon as there was Judaism – or, at least, Diaspora Judaism – there was also anti-Judaism and, thus, antisemitism. Judaism and antisemitism had a twin birth of sorts. Mommsen’s comments on Judaism, both ancient and modern, are ambivalent, to say the least, and his sweeping remarks on the origins of antisemitism are problematic.² One could say, though, that the beginnings of the *study* of ancient antisemitism is a phenomenon contemporary with the beginnings of modern antisemitism.³ In the last decades of the 19th century, ancient antisemitism became a topic of interest. It has remained so ever since.⁴

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- 1 Theodor Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte: Fünfter Band, Die Provinzen von Caesar bis Diocletian* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1921 [1885]), 519: “Der Judenhass und die Judenhetzen sind so alt wie die Diaspora selbst; diese privilegierten und autonomen orientalischen Gemeinden innerhalb der hellenischen mussten sie so nothwendig entwickeln wie der Sumpf die böse Luft.”
 - 2 Cf. the enlightening comments on Mommsen by Christhard Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althistoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, SJMT 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 87–132.
 - 3 Rightly noted by Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum*, 222: “Der antike Antisemitismus wurde im wesentlichen erst mit dem Aufkommen des modernen Antisemitismus ein «Thema».” Cf. also Nicolas de Lange, “The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Ancient Evidence and Modern Interpretations,” in *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*, ed. S.L. Gilman and S.T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 24 (21–37); Rainer Kampling, “Antike Judenfeindschaft,” in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 3, ed. W. Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 14.
 - 4 Among the recent book-length studies on the topic are: Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) (with a good survey on the history of scholarship: 1–6); Zvi Yavetz, *Judenfeindschaft in der Antike: Die Münchener Vorträge*, With an introduction by Christian Meier, Beck’sche Reihe 1222 (München: C.H. Beck, 1997); Anton Cuffari, *Judenfeindschaft in Antike und Altem Testament:*

Greco-Roman literature voices negative statements about Jews, ranging from casual mockery to overt animosity.⁵ Moreover, historical sources mention various expulsions (repeatedly from the city of Rome), attacks (most specifically in Alexandria, in 38 CE), and prohibition of Jewish customs (in Jerusalem under Antiochus IV). While it would be greatly exaggerated to assume that a generalized contempt, let alone oppression, characterized Jewish life in Greco-Roman antiquity, there is no doubt that at various times Jews were the target of pagan assaults. Scholarship in the last 150 years has debated three principal questions extensively. First: did Greeks and Romans treat Jews any differently from the ways that they treated other “barbarian” peoples? This question is further complicated by the fact that due to the Christian interest in Jewish-Hellenistic texts (including Josephus’ *Contra Apionem*), pagan anti-Jewish materials assumed an outsized afterlife in our evidence. Second: Did anti-Jewish rhetoric or activities reflect circumstantial conflicts, or did these relate to some “essential” aspect of Judaism? Third: which term – anti-Judaism, antisemitism or something else – best describes negative attitudes toward Jews in Greco-Roman antiquity?

Modern historiography, reflecting contemporary political impulses and cultural conflicts, has intensified the argument on these questions. Deliberations about the social and civil status of Jews in modern Europe (the so-called “Jewish question,” beginning in the 19th century); German antisemitic propaganda before and during World War II; the horrors of the Holocaust and its enduring aftermath; the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948: all these factors have contributed continually to the proliferation of very different interpretations of what – or whether – one can identify ancient hostilities toward Jews as antisemitism. (I will discuss this problematic term below.) The literature on ancient antisemitism is vast; many questions remain controversial.

The current paper continues my earlier investigations into this topic.⁶ My question, here, is specifically What triggered scholarly interest in Greco-Roman antisemitism in the period between the late 19th century and World War II?

Terminologische, historische und theologische Untersuchungen (Hamburg: Philo, 2007). Still very valuable is John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Cf. also Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 25–102, on the origins of specifically Christian traditions *adversus Iudaeos*.

5 Here I am taking up a section from the introduction to my bibliographic entry on ancient antisemitism in *Oxford Bibliographies*, cf. René Bloch, in <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199840731/obo-9780199840731-0140.xml?rskey=LrGBFr&result=6>. See the entry for a detailed survey on scholarship on ancient antisemitism from the beginnings up to recent times.

6 See previous note and René S. Bloch, *Antike Vorstellungen vom Judentum: Der Judenexkurs des Tacitus im Rahmen der griechisch-römischen Ethnographie* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2002).

Why did ancient antisemitism suddenly present such compelling questions, both to classicists and to theologians? As a matter of fact, their respective agendas often overlapped.⁷ Theodor Mommsen is a case in point. In his *Roman History*, he endorses and reinterprets the distinction, quite common among Christian theologians at the time (I shall come back to this) between a putative, earlier cosmopolitan Judaism and a later, misanthropic Judaism. For Mommsen, the dividing line between these two Judaisms was demarcated not so much by the temple's destruction in 70 CE, but rather by the first Jewish revolt itself. His critique of the frozen Judaism of the rabbis, which supposedly replaced the open-minded earlier religion of Israelites, thereby acquired an added, specifically political dimension. Mommsen writes:

The Jews had always been foreign, and wished to be so; but the feeling of estrangement mounted in horrifying fashion, both among them and towards them, and its hateful and pernicious consequences were extended starkly in both directions. From the disparaging satire of Horace against the importunate Jew from the Roman ghetto, it is quite a step to the solemn resentment which Tacitus harbours towards this scum of the earth for whom everything clean is unclean and everything unclean is clean; in between are those uprisings of the despised nation, the need to defeat it and perpetually expend money and people on keeping it down.⁸

7 In light of the main questions of this volume, I will focus on views by Christian scholars, referring only occasionally to Jewish scholars such as Isaak Heinemann. Towards the end of the 19th century Théodore Reinach's *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au judaïsme* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1895) became an important tool for the study of comments on Jews and Judaism in Greco-Roman literature, replacing earlier much less exhaustive studies. Similarly influential were the two volumes by Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain: leur condition juridique, économique et sociale* (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1914).

8 Theodor Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, 551: "Fremde waren die Juden immer gewesen und hatten es sein wollen; aber das Gefühl der Entfremdung steigerte sich jetzt in ihnen selbst wie gegen sie in entsetzlicher Weise und schroff zog man nach beiden Seiten hin dessen gehässige und schädliche Konsequenzen. Von dem geringschätzigen Spott des Horatius gegen den aufdringlichen Juden aus dem römischen Ghetto ist ein weiter Schritt zu dem feierlichen Groll, welchen Tacitus hegt gegen diesen Abschaum des Menschengeschlechts, dem alles Reine unrein und alles Unreine rein ist; dazwischen liegen jene Aufstände des verachteten Volkes und die Nothwendigkeit dasselbe zu besiegen und für seine Niederhaltung fortwährend Geld und Menschen aufzuwenden." English translation by David Ash from René Bloch, "Tacitus' Excursus on the Jews over the Centuries: an Overview of the History of its Reception", *Oxford Readings in Tacitus*, ed. R. Ash, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 401. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

As Christhard Hoffmann has shown, Mommsen on this point was heavily influenced by Julius Wellhausen, whose views on a Judaism in steady decline (from the Persian period with Ezra and Nehemiah, accelerated even further by the rabbis) he shared. Shortly after his comparison between Horace's and Tacitus' comments on the Jews, Mommsen refers to post-70 Judaism as paralyzed to an absurd extent.⁹ Mommsen's interpretation can indeed be read as a "secularized form of the traditional Christian template for interpretation."¹⁰ As we shall see shortly, Mommsen was by no means an exception among contemporary classicists, whose historiography of ancient antisemitism reflected and reaffirmed Christian theological claims. Just how much Mommsen's reading of the Jews in the Roman empire was influenced by the *political* discourse on the role of the Jews in the modern state emerges clearly from his most infamous comment on Judaism. Commenting on the Jewish diaspora at the time of Julius Caesar in the third volume of *Roman History*, Mommsen identified Jewish "cosmopolitanism" as an important contributing factor aiding Caesar's political goal of "national decomposition."

This remarkable people, yielding and yet tenacious, was in the ancient as in the modern world everywhere and nowhere at home, and everywhere and nowhere powerful. (...) Even in the ancient world, Judaism was an effective leaven of cosmopolitan and national decomposition, and to that extent a specially privileged member in the Caesarian state, the polity of which was strictly speaking nothing but a citizenship of the world, and the nationality of which was at bottom nothing but humanity.¹¹

The phrase "leaven of cosmopolitan and national decomposition" ("Ferment des Kosmopolitismus und der nationalen Decomposition") became an antisemitic slogan later exploited by the National Socialists, including Goebbels and Hitler.¹² Again, Mommsen's approach to Judaism and the Jews is ambivalent. He does endorse and repeat anti-Jewish stereotypes, but his understanding of

9 Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, *ibid.*

10 Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum*, 114.

11 Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, Vol. 3 (1856) 516–517: "Das merkwürdige nachgiebig zähe Volk war in der alten wie in der heutigen Welt überall und nirgends heimisch und überall und nirgends mächtig. (...) Auch in der alten Welt war das Judentum ein wirksames Ferment des Kosmopolitismus und der nationalen Decomposition und insofern ein vorzugsweise berechtigtes Mitglied in dem caesarischen Staate, dessen Politie doch eigentlich nichts als Weltbürgerthum, dessen Volksthümlichkeit eigentlich nichts als Humanität war." English translation, William P. Dickson, *History of Rome*, 5, 417–419.

12 Christhard Hoffmann, "Ancient Jewry – Modern Questions: German Historians of Antiquity on the Jewish Diaspora", *Illinois Classical Studies* 20 (1995): 191–207.

the Jews' function as a ferment of decomposition for Caesar's empire, although based on the stereotype of the cosmopolitan Jew, was not meant in a necessarily negative way. During the so-called "Berliner Antisemitismus-Streit" between 1879 and 1881, Mommsen forthrightly opposed the antisemites gathered around historian Heinrich von Treitschke.¹³ The term "Antisemitismus" as a concept and political movement was coined at this time: in September of the year 1879 the "Antisemiten-Liga", which set itself the goal of reducing a supposed Jewish influence in the German Empire, was founded in Berlin.¹⁴ From that point on, "Antisemitismus" spread quickly and became a catchphrase.¹⁵

The term antisemitism is thus a problematic one. It not only, and misleadingly, uses a linguistic term – seemingly referring to Semitic languages – it also was originally a term of self-reference, coined in the late 19th-century by Germans who identified themselves as "antisemites." But it has become the term most often used, also in scholarly contexts, for any and all anti-Jewish attitudes and behaviours. Incidentally, the term "philosemitism," as Wolfram Kinzig has shown, is similarly problematic. It was created by antisemites as a term of derogation aimed against their opponents in the very same period: those who attacked the antisemites were criticized for their philosemitic fervour ("philosemitischen Eifer").¹⁶

But what about the ancient Greco-Roman world? Which term should be used to describe the negative treatment of Jews in Greco-Roman antiquity? In the late 19th century, the new term "antisemitism" was also applied to the ancient world. Konrad Zacher, a classicist based in Breslau, published an article in 1898

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- 13 Cf. Theodor Mommsen, *Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1880). On this debate cf. Walter Boehlich, ed., *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1965); Jürgen Malitz, "Mommsen, Caesar und die Juden," in *Geschichte – Tradition – Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag, vol. II: Griechische und Römische Religion*, ed. H. Cancik et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 371–387; Stefan Rebenich, "Eine Entzweiung: Theodor Mommsen und Heinrich von Treitschke," in *Berlins wilde Energien: Portraits aus der Geschichte der Leibnizischen Wissenschaftsakademie*, ed. S. Leibfried et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 262–285.
- 14 Ulrich Wyrwa, "Antisemiten-Liga", in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 5, ed. W. Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 30–33. The adjective "antisemitisch" had been used before: cf. Alex Bein, *The Jewish Question: Biography of a World Problem* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 594.
- 15 Werner Bergmann, "Antisemitische Bewegung", in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 5, ed. W. Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 34–39.
- 16 Wolfram Kinzig, "Philosemitismus – was ist das?: Eine kritische Begriffsanalyse," in *Geliebter Feind – gehasster Freund: Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Julius H. Schoeps*, ed. I. Diekmann and E.V. Kotowski (Berlin: VBN-Verlag, 2009), 25–60.

entitled “Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus im klassischen Alterthum.” The article appeared in the *Preußische Jahrbücher*, the same monthly in which von Treitschke had published his anti-Jewish contributions twenty years earlier.¹⁷ Zacher, who otherwise had a keen interest in Greek linguistics as well as in Greek comedy, may indeed have been the very first scholar to use the term “antisemitism” (“Antisemitismus”) for the ancient world.¹⁸ In this essay, Zacher, whose academic career was not very successful,¹⁹ does not hide his antipathy towards the Jews of his own day, complaining of their “national characteristics that emerge unpleasantly, such as the tendency to arrogance, doctrinarism and skepticism”.²⁰

Very much like Mommsen, Zacher begins his article by stating that antisemitism was as old as Judaism.²¹ While Zacher stresses from the beginning that antisemitism has not always been the same in all times and places; and that in Greco-Roman antiquity, unlike in 19th-century Germany, Jews were not capitalists, he does refer to some “very interesting parallels” to antisemitism of his own time. Zacher’s study obviously mirrors the debates of the days in which it was written. Towards the end of this article, Zacher explains ancient antisemitism as a consequence of Jewish, that is “Pharisaic” torpidity which, originating in Jerusalem with the Maccabees in the aftermath of the anti-Jewish edict of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, had then spread throughout the Diaspora. Antisemitism is a reaction to the religious stubbornness of the Jews, as well as (in Egypt) to their contempt of the Egyptian religion.²² The first encounters of Jews and Greeks, at the time of Alexander, had been

17 Konrad Zacher, “Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus im klassischen Alterthum,” *Preußische Jahrbücher* 94 (1898): 1–24.

18 Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum*, 222.

19 Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff argued strongly against Zacher’s promotion, cf. William M. Calder III, Alexander Košenina, ed., *Berufungspolitik innerhalb der Altertumswissenschaft im wilhelminischen Preußen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1989), 71.160.

20 Zacher, “Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus”, 2–3 (“unangenehm hervortretende nationale Eigenschaften, wie die Neigung zur Ueberhebung, zum Doktrinarismus und Skeptizismus”). Zacher’s stereotypical picture of modern Judaism is not only negative: he also refers to the Jews’ “intelligence”, “ambition”, and “diligence” (2: “Intelligenz”, “Ehrgeiz”, “Fleiß”) which leads to their success and then to envy and antipathy (2: “Neid und Mißgunst”).

21 Zacher, “Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus,” 1: “Der Antisemitismus, im weitesten Sinne gefaßt als feindliche Gesinnung oder Bethätigung gegen jüdische Mitbürger, ist so alt wie das Judentum selbst und die jüdische Diaspora; aber seine Erscheinungsformen und Motive sind sehr verschieden nach Zeiten und Völkern.” Later in the article, Zacher criticizes Mommsen’s interpretation of the Jewish *privilegia*. These were not introduced by Caesar, Zacher argues, but must already have existed before in the Greek East (13–14).

22 Zacher, “Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus,” 20–21.

fruitful and positive, Zacher claimed: Greek authors interpreted Judaism as a philosophy.²³ What Mommsen noticed for the time of Julius Caesar, Zacher then suggests, was already true for the period of Alexander the Great: the Jews served both men as a means to implement their respective political agendas. The Jews, adapting and adopting Hellenistic ideas, were the perfect “oriental element” facilitating the merging of Hellenism with the East.²⁴ But later on, after the Maccabean revolt and the success of the Pharisees (sic), Jewish self-confidence and exclusive presumptuousness contrasted sharply with tolerant, open Hellenism.²⁵ Thus, Greek philosemitism yielded to Greco-Roman antisemitism. Zacher ends his article with the very dichotomy that stands at the core of his argument, the same one common among theologians at the time, but clearly shared by Christian classicists: Judaism had started off well but, in its orthodox, Pharisaic form, it deteriorated into torpor (“erstarnte”). In Rome, Judaism served for some time as a “stimulating leaven” (“anregender Sauerteig”) – this language recalls Mommsen’s picture of Judaism as a “ferment” – but eventually it was replaced by Christianity, the emerging world power, which was “new,” “fresh,” and “vital.”²⁶ Zacher’s article begins with antisemitism and culminates in “das Christentum.”

A few years after Zacher’s article, in 1905, Felix – later to become professor of ancient history at the University of Basel – published the first (if brief) monograph on ancient antisemitism, like Zacher using that very term: *Der Antisemitismus des Altertums in seiner Entstehung und Entwicklung*.²⁷ Stähelin’s study is a mostly descriptive history of political conflicts involving Jews and

23 Interestingly Zacher uses the word “Philosemitismus” only in the title of his article, but this is what is meant by the term: the early Greek sympathy for the Jews.

24 Zacher, “Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus”, 18: “Seine Absicht war ja eine Verschmelzung von Griechenthum und Orient; welches orientalische Element konnte für die Förderung dieses Planes geeigneter erscheinen als die Juden, die sich dem aufgeklärten Hellenenthum so wesentlich näher zu stellen schienen als die übrigen Orientalen?”

25 Zacher, “Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus”, 23: “Es (sc. das Judentum) wurde orthodoxer, starrer, gegen alles Andere abgeschlossener. Das hochmüthig zur Schau getragene Selbstbewusstsein, im Besitz der allein wahren Religion zu sein, mußte das tolerante Griechenthum mehr und mehr abstoßen.” 20: “Unter der Führung der Makkabäer sammelte sich das altgläubige Judentum und errang Freiheit des Glaubens nicht nur, sondern auch des Landes. Die Folge war denn auch im Innern der völlige Sieg der pharisäischen Richtung (...).”

26 Zacher, “Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus”, 24: “sein Erbe übernahm die neue, frische, lebendige welterobernde Macht – das Christentum”. Overall, Zacher’s article is not one-sided. He denounces the absurdity of some of the antisemitic accusations and calls the riot in Alexandria of 38 CE a “furchtbaren Ausbruch” (22).

27 Felix Stähelin, *Der Antisemitismus des Altertums in seiner Entstehung und Entwicklung*, (Basel: C.F. Lendorff, 1905). In its original form Stähelin published his study first in 1901

negative statements on the Jews. Stähelin, who had just filed his dissertation on the history of the Galatians, was also influenced by current theological discourse on Jews, as is clear from the beginning and the end of his book. On page one he refers to Julius Wellhausen's *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* to recount that Jewish separatism and legalism had replaced the "fresh, religious life" of ancient Israel.²⁸ Concluding, Stähelin states that Christianity should not be accused of having invented antisemitism since antisemitism predated Christianity by centuries. It is "a pagan instinct that erupts now and then" ("ein heidnischer Instinkt, der von Zeit zu Zeit wieder hervorbricht").²⁹

The relation of pagan, Christian, medieval and modern animosity towards Jews is much debated in scholarship. Many scholars try to avoid using "antisemitism" as a term of historical description for the ancient and medieval periods. The main argument in this instance is that modern antisemitism encompasses a racialist component seemingly foreign to the earlier periods, Greco-Roman, Roman Christian, and medieval. Prominent alternative suggestions for pagan antiquity are "anti-Judaism" and "Judeophobia."³⁰ Each of these labels, however, is problematic in its own way. "Judeophobia" (used most prominently by Zvi Yavetz and Peter Schäfer)³¹ seemingly implies psychological issues (more so than the broader term "xenophobia"). Pagans indeed mocked Jews and occasionally targeted them with violence, but "phobia" scarcely seems descriptively correct.

As for "anti-Judaism," many scholars avoid using it for pagan contexts, reserving it rather for Christianity. The study of ancient antisemitism regularly and from its beginnings revolved around the question whether or to what extent pagan polemics against the Jews should be distinguished from Christian ones. Zacher and Stähelin exemplify this issue. At times, an apologetic agenda is quite tangible: If antisemitism was already virulent in pagan antiquity, it can hardly be called a Christian invention. Or the other way around: By stressing

in the conservative Swiss newspaper *Allgemeine Schweizer Zeitung* (Nr. 17–19) which was printed in Basel.

- 28 Stähelin, *Der Antisemitismus des Altertums*, 2: „(...) den endgiltigen Triumph jener geisttötenden, peinlichen Gesetzlichkeit, zu dem sich kaum ein grellerer Gegensatz denken läßt als das frische religiöse Leben, das im alten Israel geherrscht, und der Geist, der einst die Propheten getrieben hatte.“
- 29 Stähelin, *Der Antisemitismus des Altertums*, 54.
- 30 An extensive survey on the use of different terms in Cuffari, *Judenfeindschaft in Antike und Altem Testament*, 21–56.
- 31 Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Zvi Yavetz, "Judeophobia in Classical Antiquity: A Different Approach", *JJS* 44 (1993): 1–22.

the origins of *Christian* antisemitism, Greco-Roman antiquity can be freed from the ugliness of Jew-hatred. The question of the extent to which pagan antisemitism differs from Christian antisemitism is central in practically all wide-ranging studies on the topic. Jules Isaac, in *Genèse de l'antisémitisme*, published in 1956 and written with great passion (and under the direct impact of the Holocaust), concludes that pagan antisemitism remained a temporary and fragmentary phenomenon, while Christian antisemitism was much more virulent and more fundamental to Christian identity.³² Some thirty years later, John Gager, in his *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, also compared pagan and Christian antisemitism, stressing the differences between the two.³³ According to Gager, neither paganism nor early Christianity knew some kind of pervasive antisemitism. However, Gager argues, the various contributions of early Christian contribution to modern antisemitism should not be minimized by referring to selected anti-Jewish passages in Greco-Roman literature.³⁴

Being aware of the apologetic risks inherent in this discussion, I tend to agree in principle with both Isaac and Gager. Early Christianity, at least from the time of the church fathers on, brought a new dimension to earlier pagan polemics against the Jews. Quite enlightening is a comparison between Roman historian Tacitus, in the early second century CE, and Christian writer Sulpicius Severus some three centuries later. Sulpicius Severus (ca. 363–420 CE) seems to have used a lost part of Tacitus's *Histories* to describe the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.³⁵ Whether or not he did so,³⁶ the differences between the two authors are telling. Tacitus indeed disparages Jews and Jewish customs in *Histories* 5; but outside of his long digression on Judea and Judaism, he has little else to say. He nowhere comments on the Jewish origins of figures like Tiberius Julius Alexander, King Agrippa II, or his sister Berenice. Tacitus may

32 Jules Isaac, *Genèse de l'antisémitisme: Essai historique* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1956). Also James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Anti-semitism* (London: Soncino Press, 1934), draws a sharp line between pagan polemics and Christian antisemitism: "(...) the advent of Christianity perpetuated their [sc. the Jews'] tragedy. The reasons for this have nothing to do with the old enmities. They are to be found only in the conflict of Christianity with its parent religion" (26).

33 Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*.

34 Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 268.

35 Jacob Bernays, "Über die Chronik des Sulpicius Severus, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der classischen und biblischen Studien," in J. Bernays, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. 2, ed. H. Usener (Berlin: Hertz, 1885 [1861]), 81–200.

36 Cf. the critical remarks by Eric Laupot, "Tacitus' Fragment 2: the Anti-Roman Movement of the Christiani and the Nazoreans", *VChr* 54 (2000): 233–247.

not have liked Jews, but they were of no major concern to him.³⁷ He hardly “feared” them.

Christian authors like Sulpicius Severus, however, had much more at stake. The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem for him is of fundamental theological importance:

Thus, according to the divine will, the minds of all being inflamed, the temple was destroyed, three hundred and thirty-one years ago. And this last overthrow of the temple, and final captivity of the Jews (*haec ultima templi eversio et postrema Iudaeorum captivitas*), by which, being exiles from their native land, they are beheld scattered through the whole world (*per orbem terrarum dispersi*), furnish a daily demonstration to the world, that they have been punished on no other account than for the impious hands which they laid upon Christ (*cotidie mundo testimonio sunt, non ob aliud eos quam ob illatas Christo impias manus fuisse punitos*).³⁸

More than Christian vocabulary distinguishes Sulpicius Severus from Tacitus. Striking, for our concerns, is his deployment of *cotidie*, “daily.” For authors such as Sulpicius Severus – as centuries earlier, with Ignatius, Justin, and Tertullian – “the Jews” had become a fundamental theological category framing Christian claims to Jewish scriptures (the church’s Old Testament), thus a daily issue, so to speak.³⁹ The terms *Iudaeus* and *Iudaicus* appear fewer than a hundred times in all of pagan Roman literature (not counting the toponym *Iudaea*). Tertullian alone (who writes three generations after Tacitus, whom he read) uses *Iudaeus* and *Iudaicus* 270 times.⁴⁰ To the Romans, the Jews were a strange people, often viewed as foreign, but only one ethnic group among many. It is only with the arrival of Christianity that the *Iudaei* become an essential topic – although

37 Bloch, *Antike Vorstellungen vom Judentum*.

38 Sulp. Sev. Hist. 2.30.8 (transl. A. Roberts).

39 Cf. Hubert Cancik, “Der antike Antisemitismus und seine Rezeption”, in *Das ‘bewegliche’ Vorurteil. Aspekte des internationalen Antisemitismus*, ed. C. von Braun et al. (Würzburg: Königshausen u. Neumann, 2004), 63–79 who also refers to the differences between Tacitus and Sulpicius Severus stating that with the latter “ist das Unglück der Juden zum festen Bestandteil der christlichen Heilsgeschichte und zu einem handgreiflichen Beweisstück geworden” (76).

40 Cf. René Bloch, “Jew or Judean: The Latin Evidence”, in *Torah, Temple, Land: Constructions of Judaism in Antiquity*, ed. M. Witte, J. Schröter, and V. Lepper, TSAJ 184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 231–242.

also in the case of early Christian literature there were of course nuances with regard to each individual author's relation to the Jews.⁴¹

Christian animosity towards the Jews is thus different *in kind* from its pagan predecessor. And this seems to be a good reason to use different terms, "anti-Judaism" for Christianity and something else for the pagan phenomenon. But matters are, alas, more complicated. If anti-Judaism is a phenomenon specific to Christian antiquity (if not also already to some late first-century texts gathered in the New Testament), when does that period end? Medieval polemics against the Jews are no less theologically charged and, as is clear from our observations on Mommsen, Zacher, and Stähelin, confessional Christian agendas continued to shape modern academic discourses.

The beginnings of racist anti-Jewish discourse in the 19th century did not exclude the influence of long-lived Christian tropes. And scholars debate whether some kind of proto-racism shaped such discourse in the Middle Ages or even in Greco-Roman antiquity.⁴² Alas, we lack a simple answer to the question what the appropriate term(s) are appropriate for which times. In my earlier research, I had avoided using "antisemitism" for those centuries before the term itself was coined in the late 19th century. Today, I hesitate less. The distinctions between the different periods that have been suggested are in my view inaccurate and rather artificial. It is true, as Nicolas de Lange wrote, that "Anti-Semitism, in the strict sense of the term, cannot be detached from the racial theories which exercised such an important influence on the ethos of Western politics and thought from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth".⁴³ The term "antisemitism" with its antisemitic origins is problematic and there were different forms and degrees of this phenomenon over time. Still, "antisemitism" has become the general denominator for any kind of anti-Jewish hostility or agitation. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it denotes "prejudice, hostility, or discrimination towards Jewish

41 As de Lange, "The Origins of Anti-Semitism", 30, rightly notes it would indeed be "an exaggeration to claim that early Christianity was uniformly hostile to the Jews and Judaism."

42 Cf. Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). Rather sophisticated is Gavin I. Langmuir's distinction between anti-Judaism and antisemitism in *Toward a Definition of Anti-semitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). According to Langmuir anti-Judaism is a theologically framed precursor ("the necessary preparation") of anti-Semitism which is more irrational, but the two terms are not simply to be understood in a chronological way. Thus for Langmuir, e.g. the medieval blood libel should also be considered antisemitic. On Langmuir (and on Jules Isaac) cf. the helpful comments by Robert Chazan, *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism: Ancient and Medieval Christian Constructions of Jewish History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2016), vi-xvi.

43 De Lange, "The Origins of Anti-Semitism", 22.

people on religious, cultural, or ethnic grounds; (also) the theory, action, or practice resulting from this".⁴⁴ This is a good working definition. Adjectives such as "religious," "racist," as well as "ancient," "Christian," "medieval," and "modern" can help clarify further what kind of antisemitism we mean. This is why I think it is legitimate to talk about ancient antisemitism, knowing that it was, then, often simply a species of Greco-Roman ethnographies that denigrated exotic "others" – and in which ancient Jews also engaged. But the fact that there are no specific modern terms for animosity against the Egyptians, Phoenicians and other ethnic groups insulted by classical authors must not preclude the historian from using a specific term for ancient anti-Jewish animosity. Finally, it hardly needs to be brought to mind that research on antisemitism post-Holocaust is haunted by that unprecedented catastrophe. Research into pre-Holocaust anti-Jewish hostility – but also into contemporary, post-Holocaust animosity – risks being belittled by comparison. In sum: ancient antisemitism was often more circumstantial than essential and the suffix -ism, often indicating some kind of greater movement or ideology, may be somewhat misleading. Ancient antisemitism does differ from later Christian and still later racial antisemitism; but Greek and Roman animosity towards Jews could be quite substantial. *Faute de mieux*, even for antiquity, antisemitism seems the most appropriate term.

Let us now return to the late 19th century's stirrings of scholarship on ancient antisemitism. A variety of causes triggered interest in the topic. Of fundamental importance, as Christhard Hoffmann writes, was

the political debate on the 'Jewish question', i.e. on the position of the Jewish minority in modern society. Against the thesis of the liberal proponents of emancipation, according to which hatred of the Jews is nothing more than a Christian religious prejudice that must be overcome, the nationalistic opponents of Jewish equality (such as Friedrich Rühs) and the intellectual sympathisers with modern antisemitism (such as Heinrich von Treitschke), which was forming in the 1870s, offered the arguments of the supposedly universal ancient antisemitism. (...) The persuasive function of this interpretation in the contemporary discussion of the 'Jewish question' is clear: If Jews have been the object of contempt, hatred and persecution wherever they appeared in world history,

44 *OED*, third Edition (2019), s.v. (the second edition (1989) had: "Theory, action, or practice directed against the Jews. Hence anti-Semite, one who is hostile or opposed to the Jews").

then the reason must lie within themselves and not in Christian religious prejudice.⁴⁵

In midst of the modern debates on the Jews' place in civic society, ancient antisemitism could serve to exemplify a seemingly eternal problem. At times, and especially in the period of National Socialism, scholars looked for historical steppingstones to their own antisemitic agendas. A very explicit example for this is the volume *Das antike Weltjudentum*, co-authored by Gerhard Kittel (professor of New Testament at the University of Tübingen) and Eugen Fischer (professor of medicine and promotor of eugenics in Nazi Germany). The book was published in 1943 as volume 7 of the *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* (FzJ). The two authors attempt to show that Jews, "whether in the first or the 20th century," had always striven for absolute world domination.⁴⁶ The first part of the book ends with a brief chapter on ancient antisemitism ("Antike Judengegnerschaft") which serves to validate its modern iterations.⁴⁷ The second and third parts of the book, mainly by Fischer, provide a racist discussion of supposedly Jewish portraits on Egyptian mummies and of terracotta figures with crooked noses, explained as anti-Jewish caricatures.⁴⁸ Religion is not at the core of the volume, but Kittel, also a Lutheran theologian, had already expanded his often antisemitic views on ancient Judaism in a number of earlier publications.⁴⁹ In the late 19th century up to the time of National Socialism, ancient antisemitism could serve as "a historical legitimization" for

45 Christhard Hoffmann, "Judaism", in *Brill's New Pauly*, Antiquity volumes edited by: Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, English Edition by: Christine F. Salazar, Classical Tradition volumes edited by: Manfred Landfester, English Edition by: Francis G. Gentry . http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1407860. Jewish scholars, especially Isaak Heinemann and Elias Bickermann, responded to the view that ancient antisemitism was a natural precursor of the Jewish problem by putting ancient hostility towards the Jews in a historical context: cf. Hoffmann, *ibid.* and Bloch, "Ancient Anti-semitism". Heinemann explicitly rejects Mommsen's view that antisemitism is as old as the Jewish diaspora: Isaak Heinemann, "Antisemitismus," in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Supplement 5, Agamemnon bis Statilius, ed. G. Wissowa (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1931), 3–43 (19).

46 Eugen Fischer, Gerhard Kittel, *Das antike Weltjudentum: Tatsachen, Texte, Bilder*, *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 7 (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1943), 11 ("ob im Ersten oder im Zwanzigsten Jahrhundert"). Cf. Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum*, 254–259.

47 Fischer, Kittel, *Das antike Weltjudentum*, 89–92. Interestingly the two authors avoid the term "Antisemitismus", but speak instead of "Judengegnerschaft".

48 Fischer, Kittel, *Das antike Weltjudentum*, 95–219.

49 Cf. the extensive discussion on Kittel in Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann*, *Studies in Jewish History and Culture* 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 417–530.

modern antisemitism.⁵⁰ Particularly attractive to early interpreters of ancient antisemitism, it seems to me, was a seemingly clear development of the phenomenon from Greco-Roman (that is, non-Christian) texts. As Zacher's work especially demonstrates, many scholars stressed the differences between a positive view on the Jews in Hellenistic texts ("Jews as philosophers" and "cosmopolitan citizens") on the one hand, and the very negative depictions of the misanthropic Jews in later Roman literature (with Tacitus in a starring role). More recently, some scholars – Erich S. Gruen, Nicholas de Lange and I, for example – have pointed out that things may be quite a bit more complicated. After all, the accusation of Jewish misanthropy shows up for the first time as early as the late 4th century BCE, with Hecataeus of Abdera.⁵¹ Even when one puts the Roman evidence aside and only looks at the Greek, one arrives at the conclusion, with Bezalel Bar-Kochva, that there is no "logical, coherent line from admiration at the time of first contacts between Greeks and Jews through a cooling-off period as Greeks learned more about the Jews to extreme hostility with the rupture between Jews and the Greek world following the religious persecutions by Antiochus Epiphanes."⁵² In short, no simple and straight development from philosemitism to antisemitism can be supported by our ancient evidence. To interpreters in the late 19th century and early 20th century, however, such a reading easily accommodated the Christian theological interpretation of a Judaism that had had a good start (and thus was praised), but that fell into depravity (and thus became the object of hatred). It was no coincidence that this developmental timeline traced an arc from the heights of Israelite prophecy to the moribund depths of "rabbinic legalism" (itself a trope of Reformation anti-Catholic polemic, with rabbis as stand-ins for Papists). Moreover, two prominent pagan authors – one Greek, the other Latin – could be pressed into service of such an interpretation. The geographer Strabo and the Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus report on a dichotomy between an early, positive period of Judaism and a later time when Judaism fell into decadence.⁵³ It comes as no surprise that some scholars made use of these ancient sources to strengthen their general understanding of Judaism as a history of decline.

50 Hoffmann, "Judaism".

51 Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 41–53; de Lange, "The Origins of Anti-Semitism", 31–33; René Bloch, "Misanthropia," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 24 (2011), ed. G. Schöllgen et al. (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann), 828–845; Bloch, *Antike Vorstellungen vom Judentum*.

52 Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *The Image of the Jews in Greek Literature: The Hellenistic Period*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 517.

53 Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.35–37; Tac. *Hist.* 5.4–5.

A particularly interesting and telling exemplar of such historiography is Johannes Leipoldt. Leipoldt authored two important contributions to the study of ancient antisemitism: a 50 page article, “Antisemitismus in der alten Welt” (1933), and the entry on antisemitism in the very first volume of the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (1950).⁵⁴ Leipoldt, who lived from 1880 to 1965, studied Theology and *Orientalistik* in Berlin and Leipzig. His academic work ranges widely from Coptic Christianity to the historical Jesus to late Roman patristics. From 1916 until his retirement in 1959 he taught New Testament in Leipzig.⁵⁵ During World War II, Leipoldt was involved with the “Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life”, a Protestant pro-Nazi institute that worked to “dejudaize” Christianity.⁵⁶ His 1933 study on antisemitism in the ancient world mixes sound scholarly assessments of ancient sources with imaginary conjurings of ancient anti-Judaism, thoroughly influenced by contemporary antisemitic discourse. Ten years before Kittel and Fischer, Leipoldt (who became Kittel’s doctoral advisor in Kiel)⁵⁷ refers to Egyptian mummy portraits that he claims have a Jewish look, thus proving that Jewish physiognomy had not changed since ancient times. This extraordinary stability was especially instantiated by “what appears to us today as the most striking physical peculiarity of the Jew: the curved nose”.⁵⁸ But it was not Jewish noses that triggered ancient antisemitism,⁵⁹ Leipoldt urged, but the Jews’ religion.⁶⁰ On this point Leipoldt enlists Strabo’s comments on Moses and his successors. Leipoldt writes:

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- 54 Johannes Leipoldt, *Antisemitismus in der alten Welt* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1933); id. “Antisemitismus”, *RAC* 1 (1950), 469–76.
- 55 Klaus-Gunther Wesseling, “Johannes Leipoldt”, *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 4 (1992), 1391–1395.
- 56 Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 178: “Within the Institute Leipoldt was a constant presence, lecturing frequently at its conferences, including at its final meeting in March of 1944. The Institute gave him the opportunity to incorporate racial theory in his academic work, explaining the rise of Christianity in antiquity as an Aryan triumph that incorporated Teutonic ideas, as he argued in a paper on ‘The History of the Ancient Church in Racial Illumination,’ presented at an Institute conference in November 1941.”
- 57 Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 419.
- 58 Leipoldt, *Antisemitismus in der alten Welt*, 17–18: “was uns heute als die auffälligste körperliche Besonderheit des Juden erscheint: die gebogene Nase (...). Die körperliche Art des Juden hat sich also von der alten Zeit bis heute ziemlich unverändert erhalten.”
- 59 Leipoldt, *Antisemitismus in der alten Welt*, 20: “Der Rassen Gegensatz reicht nicht aus, um den Antisemitismus der alten Welt zu erklären.”
- 60 *Ibid.*: “Mir scheint der religiöse Grund des Antisemitismus der wichtigste zu sein.” Two years before Heinemann, “Antisemitismus”, argued the opposite (10: “Gegen die jüdische Religion als solche hat man nichts einzuwenden”. 18: “Überblicken wir nunmehr die

Perhaps the average judgment of the educated is best rendered by the carefully weighing geographer Strabo (d. 19 CE). He does not hesitate to recognize the greatness of Moses. According to Strabo Moses rightly said that the divine being should not be thought of in animal or human form. Strabo takes anti-Semitism into account by portraying the later successors of Moses as superstitious and tyrannical: it was they who first introduced the dietary laws, circumcision and the like.⁶¹

In his long description of Judaea and the Jews in Book 16 of his *Geography*, Strabo indeed speaks of Judaism's gradual decline. Moses was an Egyptian priest who had left Egypt because he was "displeased with the state of affairs there".⁶² Moses particularly disliked the Egyptian way of worshipping gods, their theriomorphic representations of divine being, since he rejected any production of an "image of God resembling any creature amongst us". Moses, Strabo continues, persuaded many reasonable men and led them to Jerusalem, where he installed "a kind of worship and kind of ritual which would not oppress those who adopted them either with expenses or with divine obsessions or with other absurd troubles".⁶³ But this ideal form of Mosaic Judaism eventually degenerated once Moses was gone. Strabo continues:

His successors for some time abided by the same course, acting righteously and being truly pious toward God; but afterwards, in the first place, superstitious men were appointed to the priesthood, and then tyrannical people; and from superstition arose abstinence from flesh, from which it is their custom to abstain even today, and circumcisions and excisions and other observances of the kind. And from the tyrannies arose the bands of robbers (...).⁶⁴

politischen Verwicklungen zwischen den Juden und ihrer Umwelt im Altertum, so erkennen wir, daß es sich in der Hauptsache nicht um Religionskriege, sondern um Machtkämpfe handelt.”)

61 Leipoldt, *Antisemitismus in der alten Welt*, 14: "Vielleicht wird das Durchschnittsurteil des Gebildeten am besten von dem vorsichtig abwägenden Geographen Strabon wiedergegeben (gest. 19 nach Christus). Er ist ohne weiteres bereit, die Größe des Moses anzuerkennen. Mit Recht sage Moses, das göttliche Wesen dürfe nicht in Tier- oder Menschengestalt gedacht werden. Dem Antisemitismus trägt Strabon dadurch Rechnung, daß er die späteren Nachfolger des Moses als abergläubisch und tyrannisch hinstellt: sie erst hätten die Speisegebote, die Beschneidung und dergleichen Dinge eingeführt."

62 Strab. Geog. 16.2.35: δυσχεράνας τὰ κατεσθῶτα (English translation of Strabo from LCL).

63 Strab. 16.2.36.

64 Strab. 16.2.37.

According to Strabo, who seems to have drawn from Posidonius (for whom the pattern of decline is essential), Mosaic piety (*theosebeia*) was later replaced by superstitious ritual (*deisidaimonia*) such as dietary laws and circumcision. With the religious decline came political depravation: tyrannies and robber bands.⁶⁵ Leipoldt does not explicitly draw a line from Strabo's description of Judaism's deterioration to his own version of such a history, but he seems to both share and endorse the geographer's antitheses, praising Strabo's astute assessment of the evidence.⁶⁶ Towards the end of his study on ancient antisemitism, Leipoldt discusses Christianity, very much as historians Zacher and Stähelin had done. Here Leipoldt stresses the differences between Christianity and Judaism. In these differences lay the root reason for antisemitism:

There must be significant differences between Judaism and Christianity: otherwise the mutual countercurrents would not have had such a different fate. The differences lie first and foremost in religion. Christianity does not shut itself off. It knows no ceremonial law. Jesus already disregards the Sabbath commandments when there is a need. He absolutely ignores the purity regulations. Paul coined sharp formulas. For this Christian freedom of law. Its ultimate reason is the new relationship with God that Jesus introduces. (...) the Christian feels driven and called to love his neighbor without limit and without restriction; and with this charity he can be a blessing in any economic system. Christianity has remained true to this social character to this day.⁶⁷

65 Among the first who argued for Posidonius as Strabo's source was Isaak Heinemann, "Poseidonios über die Entwicklung der jüdischen Religion," *MGWJ* 63 (1919): 113–121. On Strabo on the Jews, including the question whether the argument might go back to Posidonius, cf. more recently Bar-Kochva, *The Image of the Jews*, 355–398; René Bloch, "Posidonian thoughts-ancient and modern", *JSJ* 35 (2004): 284–292. On Strabo's reference to female circumcision (ἐκτομαί), unique in Greco-Roman ethnography on the Jews, cf. Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Why aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?" in *Gender and the Body in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. M. Wyke (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), 139–41.

66 As for Tacitus' distinction (Hist. 5.5) between ancient Jewish rituals that can be justified because of their antiquity (*antiquitate defenduntur*) and other customs that prevail because of their depravity (*pravitate valere*), which in its origins may go back to Strabo/Posidonius, it similarly went along with commentators' thoughts on a Jewish decline: cf. Bloch, "Posidonian Thoughts", 288–294.

67 Leipoldt, *Antisemitismus in der alten Welt*, 52–3: "Es muß bedeutende Unterschiede geben zwischen Judentum und Christentum: sonst hätten nicht die beiderseitigen Gegenströmungen ein so verschiedenes Schicksal. Die Unterschiede liegen zunächst und hauptsächlich auf religiösem Gebiete. Das Christentum sperrt sich nicht ab. Es kennt kein Zeremonialgesetz. Schon Jesus setzt sich über die Sabbatgebote hinweg, wenn es Not tut. Von den Reinheitsordnungen will er überhaupt nichts wissen. Paulus prägt scharfe

Leipoldt's tractate on ancient antisemitism ends with this paean to Christian love of neighbour (evidently innocent of its source, Leviticus 19). In Strabo's (Posidonius') language one could thus say that, for Leipoldt, Moses leaving Egypt, peacefully entering Jerusalem and piously worshiping God, represents the last Christian before Judaism's fall into depravity.⁶⁸ In his entry "Antisemitismus" for the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* – published in 1950 but written during World War II⁶⁹ – Leipoldt stresses once more the religious causes of ancient antisemitism. It was Jewish separatism which led to anti-Jewish hostility. As in his earlier work on the topic, Leipoldt combines sound historical observation with standard antisemitic stereotypes, as when he writes of a "financial dominance of the Jews" (nodding to Cicero's *Flacc.*), as well as of their political and economic power (as contrasted to the early Christians, who lived in poverty).⁷⁰

To conclude. The beginnings of scholarship on ancient antisemitism coincided with the invention of the term itself and with the development of a new form, modern racial antisemitism. As we have seen, the discourses of theologians and (Christian) classicists writing on the topic could overlap: Ancient Judaism, from the beginnings to the rabbinic period, is regularly viewed as a

Formeln. Für diese christliche Gesetzesfreiheit. Ihr letzter Grund ist das neue Verhältnis zu Gott, in das Jesus einführt. (...) der Christ fühlt sich zur Nächstenliebe getrieben und berufen, ohne Grenze und ohne Einschränkung; und mit dieser Nächstenliebe kann er in jeder Wirtschaftsordnung ein Segen sein. Diesem sozialen Zuge ist das Christentum treu geblieben bis auf den heutigen Tag."

68 Isaak Heinemann once noted that "Posidonius has, in a certain sense, become a predecessor of the interpretation of the development of the Israelite religion, today usually named after Wellhausen," cf. Heinemann, "Poseidonios über die Entwicklung der jüdischen Religion" (121: "[Poseidonios ist] in gewissem Sinne zum Vorläufer der heute meist nach Wellhausen genannten Vorstellung von der Entwicklung der israelitischen Religion geworden (...)."). In his 1940 article "The Attitude of the Ancient World toward Judaism," *The Review of Religion* 4 (1940), 385–400, Heinemann argues very much against the view, shared by Leipoldt and others, that it was "ritual difference which gave antisemitism its special stamp" (394). According to Heinemann it was "the exclusiveness of Jewish monotheism" (397) which attracted the proselytes and repelled the antisemites: "the roots of hate and love were the same" (398). Remarkably, Heinemann gives Leipoldt credit for taking some Talmudic literature in consideration (385 n.1) and otherwise does not mention him by name in his critique.

69 Cf. Theodor Klauser's introduction to the first volume of the *RAC*, published in 1950.

70 Johannes Leipoldt, "Antisemitismus," 472: "finanzielles Übergewicht der Juden"; 473–4: "daß die Juden nach politischer Macht streben und bei erster Gelegenheit sich an den Vertretern des Antisemitismus rächen. (...) So war zu befürchten, daß man die Christen als Juden ansah und mit den Waffen des Antisemitismus bekämpfte. Aber das geschah selten. Wer die Christen kannte, stellte leicht fest, daß die Vorwürfe des Antisemitismus auf sie nicht zutrafen." (...) "waren so arm, daß sie keine wirtschaftliche Macht darstellten".

Wellhausian tale of decline. The argument is not always overtly theological, but very often it is teleological, Christianity serving as Judaism's soteriological corrective. Does the history of antisemitism have articulated inflection-points? A number have been proposed but, as current scholarship has shown, all are problematic. Anti-Jewish hostility is neither specific to the Hasmonean period nor to that following the temple's destruction in 70 CE; neither was there a development from Greek philosemitism to Roman antisemitism. The view, widespread in early scholarship, that ancient antisemitism was the result of some kind of deterioration (whether religious or political) within Judaism mirrors the Christian conviction that Judaism was in decline. Pagan sources describing an earlier, pious form of Judaism and a later, superstitious, ritually overladen one were happily pressed into service. At times, the study of ancient antisemitism served simply to legitimate modern antisemitism.

Can a history of antisemitism in Greco-Roman antiquity be written? Difficult to say, and hard to imagine. It would have to be a history with many twists and turns and location-specific hotspots. Nonetheless, substantial differences mark pagan antisemitism off from that of Christian tradition. Greco-Roman hostility towards the Jews could indeed wax ferocious at times; but religiously, Jews could never occupy in paganism the central role they were forced into by Christian discourse, which was on a fundamentally different scale. Antisemitism may remain a problematic term. For the ancient world, it may require some qualifications. Nevertheless, its heuristic value abides.

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The Rise and Fall of the Notion of “Spätjudentum” in Christian Biblical Scholarship

Konrad Schmid

The notion of “Spätjudentum” (i.e., “late Judaism”) as a term for Second Temple Judaism (or parts thereof) was pertinent in biblical scholarship from about 1870 until 1970.¹ It suggested that Judaism as a theologically legitimate entity ended with the emergence of Christianity. The concept of “Spätjudentum” is a partial mirror of how Protestant Christianity perceived Judaism in the 19th and 20th centuries, as expressed, for instance, by Friedrich Schleiermacher:

“Der Judaismus ist schon lange eine tote Religion, und diejenigen, die jetzt noch seine Farbe tragen, sitzen eigentlich klagend bei der unverweslichen Mumie.”² (“Judaism has long been a dead religion, and those still wearing its colours 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. Michaelis’ approach is aptly portrayed by Michael Legaspi’s study from 2011.³

1 Cf. Ulrich Kusche, *Die unterlegene Religion: Das Judentum im Urteil deutscher Alttestamentler*, SKI 12 (Berlin: Institut für Kirche und Judentum, 1991).

2 Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, Studienausgabe (Zürich: TVZ, 2012 [orig. 1799]), 237. On Schleiermacher and his position regarding the Hebrew Bible and Judaism, see Rudolf Smend, “Schleiermachers Kritik am Alten Testament,” in *Epochen der Bibelkritik: Gesammelte Studien*, ed. idem, BEvTh 109 (München: Kaiser, 1991), 3:128–44; Matthias Blum, “*Ich wäre ein Judenfeind?*”: *Zum Antijudaismus in Friedrich Schleiermachers Theologie und Pädagogik*, Beiträge zur Historischen Bildungsforschung 42 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010).

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

1 The Terms “Spätjudentum,” “Frühjudentum,” and “Antikes Judentum” and Their Cognates in German, English, French, and Italian

In German, “Spätjudentum” and “Frühjudentum” are, oddly enough, designations for the same period, each applying in slightly different ways 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.”⁴ On the other hand, in the monumental *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 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.”⁵ The reason here is not because the lexicon still prefers “Spätjudentum” over “Frühjudentum,” but because “Spätjudentum” is a loaded concept that had its own history.

The shift from “Frühjudentum” to “Spätjudentum” in 20th 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.” But that is not the whole 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.” In 1968, the title was rephrased to “Arbeiten zur Geschichte des späteren Judentums und des Urchristentums”; in 1970 it was amended to “Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums”; 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.”⁶ However, the term “Spätjudentum” vanishes nearly completely after 1970. Its occurrences after

4 “Frühjudentum,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 31:605.

5 Martin Ritter, “Spätjudentum,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 9:1312–15.

6 A few randomly chosen examples include Gerhard Kittel, *Die Probleme des palästinischen Spätjudentums und das Urchristentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926); Gustav Hölscher, *Urgemeinde und Spätjudentum* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1928); Ernst Gaugler, *Das Spätjudentum: kulturhistorische Vorlesung* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1943); Hans Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1950); Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1,26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen*, FRLANT 58 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960).

1970 are mainly to be found in texts that discuss the concept in the history of scholarship. Since the mid-20th century, both "Frühjudentum" and "Antikes Judentum" have been on the rise, and by now they have replaced the term "Spätjudentum."

In English-speaking contexts, "Late Judaism" never managed to establish itself as a fully recognized term, being found only sparsely in the secondary literature.⁷ Similarly, the proposal by Gabriele Boccaccini to speak of "Middle Judaism" has not won the day.⁸ Unlike the parallel terms in German scholarship, "Ancient Judaism" is more frequent in English than "Early Judaism," but both terms are widely used and recognized.

In the same general timeframe of German scholarship 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 translated from German.⁹

In Italian-speaking contexts, the picture is significantly different. Here there is a widespread use of "tardo giudaismo," (i.e., "Late Judaism"), which seems still to be the most common designation. While "antico giudaismo" ("Ancient Judaism") 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 the German "Spätjudentum" or have been motivated by German scholarship.¹⁰

Accordingly, we can confidently trace the origins of the term "Spätjudentum" / "late Judaism" back to the German-speaking realm, from which it spread more or less successfully into other languages.

7 See for instance Terry L. Donaldson, "Levitical Messianology in Late Judaism: Origins, Development, and Decline," *JETS* 24 (1981): 193–207.

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

9 See Oscar 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 primitive* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1976).

10 Fausto Parente, "Escatologia e politica nel tardo giudaismo e nel cristianesimo primitivo," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 80 (1968): 234–96; Liliana Rosso Ubigli, "Alcuni aspetti della concezione della 'porneia' nel tardo giudaismo," *Henoch* 1 (1979): 201–45; Helmer 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 18th 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 seniorum Judaeorum decretis quorum vestigia in libris inde ab exilii aetate usque ad saeculi quarti post c.n. initia deprehenduntur*, he applied the term “seniores Judaei” (“later Jews”) to the period from the exile to the 4th century CE. “Seniores Judaei” seems to be an original formulation by him. In previous literature the main categories were “Judaei antiqui” and “Judaei recentiores.”¹¹ A year later, Poelitz published a book entitled *Pragmatische Uebersicht der Theologie der spätern Juden*,¹² 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 hervorgegangen, 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 interesting for us, since Christianity ... went forth from this religion.... Since it needed to satisfy the needs of its time, it had to connect itself to the concepts and ideas of that period.... Coming from this philosophical perspective, I analysed 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 approach to history, he analyses the concepts and ideas of Judaism from the preceding times. In his own words:

11 Cf. Jean 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 Andreas Georg Wähler in 1743 still uses this opposition; see his *Antiquitates Ebraeorum de Israeliticae gentis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1743), e.g. 134, 224.

12 Karl Heinrich Ludwig Poelitz, *Pragmatische Uebersicht der Theologie der spätern Juden* (Leipzig: Feind, 1795).

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 itzt in dem Zeitalter einer höhern Kultur wenig interessiren würde), sondern vorzüglich deswegen, um die in unserem Zeitaltern begonnene Revision der Dogmen zu erleichtern und vermittelst 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.¹³

("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, only the combination of "später" (i.e., "late") and "jüdisch" or "Juden" (i.e., "Jews" or "Jewish") could be found. But Poelitz uses the adjective "spätjüdisch" later on in his book, where he speaks of "spätjüdische Theologie" or "late-Jewish theology."¹⁴ His wording on page 287 is as follows:

"... 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."¹⁵ Christ thus demarks the boundary between the earlier "later Jews" and the later "earlier Jews."

¹³ Poelitz, *Pragmatische Uebersicht*, 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 and 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 and 10.

3 Shifting Concepts of “Judentum” and Its Internal History in the 19th Century

Poelitz’s proposed designation of Second Temple Judaism as “späteres Judentum” was accepted in the early 19th 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 19th 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*. In his book, he seems to use “Judaism” simply for “Judaism in biblical times” and thus can speak of Ezra’s era as “spätjüdisch” (“late Jewish”).

But the 19th century also saw some major *general* terminological shifts in the study of the history of Judaism. These shifts became decisive 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, Judentum, die vorexilische hingegen Hebraismus.”¹⁶ (“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 Judentum ist die verunglückte Wiederherstellung des Hebraismus und die Mischung der positiven Bestandtheile desselben mit fremden mythologisch-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.

16 Wilhelm 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 [orig. 1813]), 9.

2. Neben der mißverstandenen Symbolik eine schriftliche Religion-
quelle, ohne selbständige Hervorbringungskraft.
3. Während der Hebraismus Sache des Lebens und der Begeisterung war,
ist das Judentum Sache des Begriffs und des Buchstabenwesens.¹⁷
(Judaism is the unsuccessful restoration of Hebraism, and a combination
of its positive components with alien mythological-metaphysical teach-
ings, 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, there is 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.¹⁸ For present purposes, it is especially important to see that de Wette pushed the beginning of Judaism down 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, the concept is considerably older, going back to Poelitz. Second, Wellhausen never uses the noun "Spätjudentum," even if there are a few attestations of the corresponding 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," and that is his differentiation

¹⁷ de Wette, *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmatik*, 114.

¹⁸ Ekkehard 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; see also Lothar Peritt, "Hebraismus – Deuteronomismus – Judentum," in *Deuteronomium-Studien*, ed. idem, FAT 8 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 247–60.

within Judaism, *before and after the Pharisees*, or, in Wellhausen's words: the differentiation between "Judenthum" and "Judaismus."¹⁹

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."²⁰ ("[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 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,"²¹ which he differentiates from the "Judentum vor der makkabäischen Periode"²² that, according to him, was "durchaus nicht so streng und ausschliesslich wie seitdem" ("not so serious 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 Pharisäer und die Sadducäer: eine Untersuchung zur inneren jüdischen Geschichte*, he tried to describe the Pharisees based

19 On Wellhausen's view of Judaism, see Rudolf Smend, "Julius Wellhausen und das Judentum," in *Epochen der Bibelkritik: Gesammelte Studien*, ed. idem, BevT 109 (München: Kaiser, 1991), 186–215.

20 Julius Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1904), 203.

21 *Ibid.*, 254.

22 *Ibid.*, 295.

on extrabiblical sources and mentioned the New Testament’s distorted view of them.²³

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 20th century, especially in Göttingen.²⁴ One of its champions was Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920),²⁵ who employed the term frequently and also explained 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.“²⁶ (“Spätjudentum is thoroughly and completely Pharisaism and nothing other than Pharisaism.”)

It becomes immediately apparent that Bousset links up with Wellhausen here. Equating “Spätjudentum” with “Pharisäismus” is exactly what Wellhausen had in mind 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.”²⁷ (“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.”)

23 Julius Wellhausen, *Die Pharisäer und die Sadducäer: eine Untersuchung zur inneren jüdischen Geschichte* (Greifswald: Bamberg, 1974), 21.

24 See Gerd Lüdemann and Alf Özen, “Religionsgeschichtliche Schule,” *TRE* 28:618–624.

25 On Bousset see Lutz Doering, “Wilhelm Bousset’s Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter,” *Early Christianity* 6 (2015): 51–66; Otto Merk, “Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920) / Theologe,” in *Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Exegese: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. R. Gebauer et al., *BZNW* 95 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 159–74.

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

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

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 20th century becomes clear through its use even by Jewish scholars like Gershom Scholem, who spoke of “spätjüdische Apokalyptik” in a 1928 article.²⁸ In his later letters, he comments correctly that the term “Spätjudentum” is a “skandalöse und beleidigende Terminologie,” (“a scandalous and insulting terminology”)²⁹ but he seems only to have made this assessment *ex-post*.

5 The Abandonment of the Concept

A certain unease regarding the notion of “Spätjudentum” seems to appear first in Ernst Jacobi’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.”³⁰ (“We shall not dispute with the author [sc. 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, Jacobi 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 published in a Jewish journal. The most decisive invocation against the term and concept of “Spätjudentum” came from Kurt Schubert, who clearly criticized the use of the term in his article in the 2nd 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.”³¹ (“Late

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

29 Thomas Sparr, ed., *Briefe, 1948–1970* (Munich: Beck, 1995), 2:121.

30 Ernst Jacobi, “Neue Literatur über Paulus und das Urchristentum,” *MGWJ* 75 (1931): 332.

31 Kurt Schubert, “Spätjudentum,” *LThK* 9:949f. (949). On him see Clemens Thoma, “Kurt Schubert: Initiator der Judaistik im deutschsprachigen und christlichen Raum,”

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 encyclopaedia, and finally from outside of Germany. Since the late 1960s, the term has been abandoned nearly without explanation.

Nevertheless, there is a very short final chapter to be mentioned in the history of the term "spätjüdisch." In the early sixties, when the notion of "Spätjudentum" was being abandoned, Klaus Koch proposed to replace "spätjüdisch" with "spätisraelitisch." Apparently, he felt uncomfortable with the adjective "spätjüdisch" and thought of healing this awkward terminological problem by using "spätisraelitisch" instead. Yet it is *no less* awkward and also has been given up today. In his book *Das Buch der Bücher*, Koch wrote:

"Die Forschung grenzt deshalb [wg. den Identitätskonflikten zwischen Hellenisten und „Judaisten“ in der Makkabäer- und Hasmonäerzeit] die letzte Epoche israelitischer Geschichte von allen vorhergehenden scharf ab und spricht vom Zeitalter des Spätjudentums oder treffender des Spätisraelitentums; denn die eigentlich jüdische Religion bildet sich erst nach Verlust des Tempels auf dem Boden des Talmuds und einer reinen Gesetzesfrömmigkeit aus." ("[Because of the conflicts of identity between Hellenists and 'Judaists' in the Maccabean and Hasmonean Period,] scholarship differentiates sharply between the last era of the history of Israel and all preceding ones, because the Jewish religion per se only develops after the loss of the temple on the basis of the Talmud and a strictly legal piety.")³²

in *Judentum – Ausblicke und Einsichten: Festgabe für Kurt Schubert zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. idem et al., *Judentum und Umwelt* 43 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1993), 9–12; Petrus Bsteh, "Kurt Schubert (1923–2007) – 'Zwischen meinem Christentum und dem Judentum besteht doch irgendwie ein metaphysischer Zusammenhang,'" in *Wegbereiter des interreligiösen Dialogs*, ed. idem and B. , *Spiritualität im Dialog* 4 (Münster: Lit 2012), 155–59.

32 *Das Buch der Bücher: Die Entstehungsgeschichte der Bibel* (Heidelberg: Springer, 1963), 84; see also Klaus Koch, "Spätisraelitisch-jüdische und urchristliche Danielrezeption vor und nach der Zerstörung des zweiten Tempels," in *Rezeption und Auslegung im Alten Testament und in seinem Umfeld: Ein Symposium aus Anlass des 60. Geburtstags von Odil Hannes Steck*, ed. R.G. Kratz and T. Krüger, OBO 153 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1997), 93–123.

It is not difficult to identify Martin Noth's influence behind this use of "spätisraelitisch" instead of "spätjüdisch." In his influential "History of Israel" from 1950, Noth posited an explicit link between the end of the history of Israel and the rejection of Christ. His famous and notorious chapter 34 is titled "Die Ablehnung des Christus" ("The Rejection of the Christ"),³³ and Noth stated 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.")³⁴ It is puzzling to see how Noth, who was more a historian than a theologian, made use of a very narrow theological argument in order to define "Israel." According to Noth's perspective, Judaism only began *after* the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE: "Was aus diesem Untergang 'Israels' erwuchs, war jene Erscheinung, die wir als 'Judentum' zu bezeichnen pflegen."³⁵ ("What grew out of this demise of 'Israel' was the phenomenon that we call 'Judaism.'")³⁶

It is of course a tricky question where to allocate the beginnings of "Judaism." But it is certainly wrong to make Judaism *in toto* as young as Christianity and allow for *no* or *hardly any* overlap between "late Israel" and "Judaism" and positing the year 70 CE as the main watershed as Noth does. A helpful approach is offered instead by Marc Brettler.³⁷ He convincingly describes the genesis of Judaism as a staggered process that clearly reaches back into the biblical period and well reaches into the classical period of rabbinic Judaism, so that

33 Martin Noth, *Geschichte Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1950), 383–86. On Noth see Udo Rüterswörden, ed., *Martin Noth – aus der Sicht der heutigen Forschung*, BTSt 58 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004); Steven L. McKenzie and M.P. Graham, eds., *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, JSOT.S 182 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

34 Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, 386.

35 *Ibid.*, 15.

36 Noth clarified that post-70 CE 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).

37 Marc Brettler, "Judaism in the Hebrew Bible? The Transition from Ancient Israelite Religion to Judaism," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 429–47; cf. the detailed discussion of Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512. For the discussion on the historical and intellectual significance of 70 CE see Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss, eds., *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?*, AJEC 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

there is neither any room nor need for “Spätjudentum” or “Spätisraelitentum” in the late Second Temple period. The prefix “spät” (“late”) applied to *any term* related to Israel or Judaism in that era is supersessionist in nature because its only motivation is to highlight the difference between the precursors of Christianity and Christianity itself in terms of something that came to a natural end. In a scary way, it is reminiscent of Schleiermacher’s quote at the beginning of this paper.

Note from the Author

This is an updated version of my “The Interpretation of Second Temple Judaism as ‘Spätjudentum’ in Christian Biblical Scholarship,” in *An End to Antisemitism! Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism*, ed. Armin Lange *et al.* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 139–52. I thank de Gruyter for allowing to republish this article in this volume.

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“Circumcision is Nothing”: A Non-Reformation Reading of the Letters of Paul

Paula Fredriksen

The fact that even the second generation does not know what to make of [Paul’s] teaching suggests the conjecture that he built his system upon a conviction which ruled only in the first generation. But what was it that disappeared out of the first Christian generation? What but the expectation of the immediate dawn of the messianic kingdom of Jesus?

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My *presupposition* in this paper is straightforward: When Paul says “Israel,” he means “Jews.” And by “Jews” Paul means his kinsmen *kata sarka*, those recipients of the divine gifts and privileges listed in Romans 9:4–5, categorized as “irrevocable” in Romans 11:29, and confirmed by Christ’s coming in Romans 15:8.

My *argument* in this paper may seem to contradict my presupposition. I will make the case here that by “circumcision” Paul sometimes refers to “Israel” and sometimes refers to “not-Israel.” That is, Paul will sometimes speak of a male from among the *ethnē* when he considers those who are thinking about becoming circumcised or those who, at some point prior to their contact with him, have already been circumcised.² Given that, often but not always, Paul combats other Christ-followers who think that male gentiles-in-Christ *should be*

1 William Montgomery, trans., *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 39.

2 Those thinking about receiving circumcision, e.g., Gal 6:13 (a present participle, περιτεμνόμενοι). Gentiles who have already been circumcised (that is, who have received proselyte circumcision) before their contact with Paul, I will argue, are represented in 1 Cor 7:18, in Rom 2:17–29 and in 7:5–25. Unless otherwise noted, translations from primary texts are my own.

circumcised, the referent of “circumcised” or of “circumcision” will depend on its immediate rhetorical context in Paul’s (frequently highly-charged) letters.

This argument – namely, that sometimes Paul refers to circumcised or circumcising *gentiles* when he says “circumcision” – represents a new reading of Paul, one that rests on the work of a growing group of New Testament scholars who see Paul as standing *within*, not against, Judaism. We begin from a foundational assumption, namely, that this apostle of the raised and returning Christ always continued in his *pistis* toward his native Judaism’s convictions, commitments, and *practices*. Such a reading runs counter to traditions of interpretation spanning centuries, from the New Testament’s deutero-Pauline epistles through the church fathers to Luther, and thence to the prevailing scholarly consensus of our own day. This essay challenges that consensus by presenting Paul within, not against, his *paradoseis patrikai* (Sections 1–3) and concludes, nodding to Schweitzer (Section 4), with a diagnosis of Post-Reformation Pauline Studies’ root reason for resisting seeing Paul as a Jew. Sections 1 through 3, in brief, rereads Paul in imagined innocence of the Reformation.

Some preliminary points of orientation. First, I see Paul as articulating a particular and peculiar type of Late Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, *temporally* conceived. Paul and the rest of his contemporary Christ-followers, no matter how variously they proposed to cope with the issue of integrating ex-pagan gentiles into the Christ movement some two decades after Jesus’ crucifixion, all expected the Kingdom to come within their own lifetimes. I use “apocalyptic eschatology,” in other words, to mean “expecting the End soon.”³ This looming end to history put pressures on the new movement; but it also induced and supported considerable social latitude as well.

3 “Apocalyptic,” some NT scholars urge, is best understood as referring strictly to “revelation,” with no timetable implied. “Eschatology,” similarly, can be taken to indicate “last things,” again with no proximate End in view. Douglas A. Campbell’s *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) exemplifies such a position. For smaller samplings of these modern positions, which stretch from Ernst Käsemann to N.T. Wright and beyond, see (some of) the essays collected in Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds., *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016); also (concentrating on the work of Beker, Martyn, Campbell, and Gaventa), J.P. Davies, *Paul Among the Apocalypses? An Evaluation of the ‘Apocalyptic Paul’ in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*, LNTS 562 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016). Examples could be endlessly multiplied. For a concise history of the variety of definitions surrounding this term, John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1–42. For my arguments against these views, Paula Fredriksen, *Paul. The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale, 2017), for Paul himself; on this temporal commitment as providing the propulsion of the post-crucifixion message out into the Diaspora, eadem, *When Christians Were Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 74–107.

Second, I will not address the question whether Paul himself, after his call to become an apostle, continued to observe his native ancestral practices. I assume that he did so, as I think that virtually all of the Jews within the first generation of this movement did. For the argument, though, I refer the reader to earlier publications.⁴

Third, I do not think that Paul advocated two ways of redemption, Torah for Jews and Christ for ex-pagan gentiles. The *telos* of the Law for Israel, per Romans 10:4, is their recognition that Jesus is the eschatological Davidic messiah. Their redemption, which Paul assumes (Rom 11:26), will be mediated through and accomplished by *pneuma*, itself mediated through Christ. The Davidic messiah, according to Paul, redeems the entire cosmos, both super-human (e.g., Phil 2:10; Rom 8:23) and human (Rom 11:25–26; 15:8–12). The redemption of Israel is quite precisely the object of Christ's first coming *and* his second, culminating, triumphant one (Rom 15:8).

Fourth, I will not go beyond the core of the seven undisputed letters when building my case. In my view, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastorals are all demonstrably later literary productions that appeal to Paul's authority to establish their own post-Pauline teachings.⁵

Fifth, there were no religiously neutral ethnicities in antiquity. Gods and humans came bundled together in family groups; ethnicity, *syngeneia*, linked heaven and earth. Accordingly, while I will sometimes translate *ethnē* as “gentiles” or as “nations,” I will also sometimes translate it as “pagans.” The point is that non-Jews were born into their relationships with and obligations to their gods, as indeed Jews were to theirs. While “gentile” sounds “religion-neutral,” “pagan” does not. Thus, despite its intrinsic anachronism (it is a fourth-century Christian term of derogation), “pagan” usefully reminds us that Paul had to deal with the social agency of lower cosmic powers (*daimonia*) as a consequence of turning the *ethnē* of his assemblies from their gods to his god.

Sixth, and importantly: “soteriology” does not exhaust the category of ancient “religion,” which is itself a problematic term and concept for antiquity.⁶ Divine-human *syngeneia*, connected peoples and pantheons;⁷ thus, what we

4 Besides the two books mentioned immediately above, see Paula Fredriksen, “Why Should a ‘Law-Free’ Mission Mean a ‘Law-Free’ Apostle?” *JBL* 134 (2015): 637–50.

5 Fredriksen, *Paul*, 169.

6 On which see esp. Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); also idem, “The Concept of Religion and the Study of the Apostle Paul,” *JMJS* 2 (2015): 1–26, especially his critique of the deployment of “salvation” in academic discussions of Paul.

7 Pagan gods often took human partners, and ancient peoples generated lineages tracing descent from a god. Jews, too, saw their god as their “father” (a biblical commonplace, cf.

think of as “religion” was conceptualized as an ethnic inheritance, constituted of protocols passed down from one generation to the next. These defined people groups: τὰ πατρία ἦθη, παράδοσις τῶν πατέρων, *mos maiorum*. Words that we frequently translate as “belief” (*pistis, fides*) and as “piety” (*eusebeia, pietas*) in their ancient context meant “loyalty” or “faithfulness to” or “confidence in” these ancestral customs, which for all ethno-religious groups choreographed a broad range of observances, food ways, cult acts, calendars, purifications and domestic rituals. In short, “ancestral custom” coordinated relations between heaven and earth, as well as relations between human family members living and dead: *pietas* described and defined this deference. These patrimonies shaped and defined how one lived. “Salvation” was a very specialized concern, often for philosophers or for adepts of mystery cults: it was not a standing issue, much less a dominating one, of *patria ethē*.⁸

Seventh, and finally, and in keeping with the work of Benjamin Isaac on ancient ethnography, and more specifically with the work of Caroline Johnson Hodge and of Matthew Thiessen on Paul’s own ethnic reasoning, I construe Paul as an ancient ethnic essentialist.⁹ For Paul, Jews are Jews “by nature,” *physei*; and gentile sinners are gentile sinners *physei* (e.g., Gal 2:15). I will unpack this idea in the course of my presentation. Matthew Thiessen, further, has recently emphasized the importance of specifically eighth-day circumcision for Paul (cf., on this point, Phil 3:5 and Rom 3:1). By receiving (proselyte) circumcision as adults, well past their eighth day of life, Thiessen urges, male gentiles would accordingly violate the “law of circumcision” precisely when and because they receive it (thus, Paul’s statement in Gal 6:13). In this latter interpretation, Paul objected to proselyte circumcision not because he thought that gentiles *should* not “become” Jews, but because he thought that gentiles *could* not become Jews. Whether for this reason, or because of innate pagan *physis*

Rom 9:4) and the people of Israel as his “sons,” though this connection was not genealogical, as it could be with Greek and Roman gods (hence Paul’s use of *huiōthesia* of Israel’s sonship). See further Paula Fredriksen, “How Jewish is God? Divine Ethnicity in Paul’s Theology” *JBL* 139 (2018): 193–212, at 194–99.

- 8 On the distortions done to ancient Judaism by construing it, like Christianity, as a “religion of salvation,” see too Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 25–29.
- 9 Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), a magisterial investigation of ancient ethnic essentialism; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

more generally, Paul was convinced that proselyte circumcision cannot turn a non-Jewish male into a Law-fulfilling Jew.¹⁰

One last prefatory remark. My title is not meant to single out the Protestant Reformation as some sort of straw man. As my opening quotation from Schweitzer suggests, the reading of Paul's "Israel" as indicating the church, a mixed body of Jews and gentiles saved through Christ, begins with the loss of the Christ-movement's first generation – which had been convinced that it would be history's *last* generation. Already, Ephesians collapses the distinction between Israel and the nations, a distinction upon which, I will argue, Paul's whole theology rested (Eph 2:11–16). Already, the author of Colossians disarmed those cosmic "principalities and powers" whose defeat, Paul had admonished the Corinthians, was still, and necessarily, awaited (Col 2:15; cf. 1 Cor 15). The "all Israel" that "will be saved," for the centuries of patristic writers surveyed by Marcel Simon, meant always and only the Christian church.¹¹ Finally, you do not have to be a church father, or a Protestant, or even a Christian, to hold this view: you simply have to be oriented in the materials by the broad lines of Protestant Pauline scholarship.¹² Paul the post-Jewish, universalist apostle of a blended, generic humanity is the product of this scholarship.

Nineteen and a half centuries is a long hermeneutical lifetime. Permit me to suggest an alternative.

1 *Physis and Pneuma*

"We are Jews *physei*," Paul said to Peter in Antioch, "and not gentile sinners" (Gal 2:15).¹³ The NRSV translates *physei* as "by birth." What it means, though, is "by nature," *physis*. *Physis* is an essentialist category of ancient anthropology. (Slaves, too, for example, were servile *physei*; women, by their very nature, were inferior to men.) Paul further states here that non-Jews, the *ethnē*, are sinners "by nature." This is in part because non-Jews did not worship the Jewish god,

10 See Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 54–101. As I will argue further on, Paul states as much in Rom 2:17–29, and dramatizes this gentile's lament in Rom 7.

11 Marcel Simon, *Verus Israël: Études sur les relations entre Chrétiens et Juifs dans l'empire romain (135–425)* (Paris: E. de Boccard 1948). For a consideration of the interpretive theological issues, John M.G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 418–22.

12 Thus, e.g., Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert. The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Shaye J.D. Cohen, *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 387.

13 Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί.

and they compounded this problem by sacrificing before cult statues of their own gods. In the language of Jewish anti-pagan polemics, gentiles made offerings to idols. They thereby partnered with *daimonia* (1 Cor 10:20). From this, a cascade of ethical sequelae tumbled.¹⁴

What did it mean for Paul, to be a *Ioudaios physei*? What, in other words, did all Jews as such have in common? Here, a prime text is Romans 9:4–5. Israelites, Paul’s “kinsmen by flesh,” his “brothers,” enjoy *huiiothesia*: God had long ago made Israel his sons. (Note that, according to Paul, and unlike ex-pagan Christological *huiiothesia*, Jewish sonship was established quite apart from, and antecedent to, any involvement with or relationship to Christ.) Jews enjoy a particular intimacy with God, whose glorious presence resided in Jerusalem’s sanctuary (*doxa*). Jews know God’s will thanks to the covenants and the Law and the ancestral cult of sacrifices, *latreia* (also another reference to Jerusalem’s altar). They have God’s promises. They have the patriarchs. And they have *syngeneia kata sarka* with the messiah.¹⁵ “Circumcision” is so much a part of this religious and cultural cluster that, in Galatians 2:7, Paul can use it as a metonymy for “Jews,” as “foreskin” functions for *ethnē*: Peter will go to the circumcision, Paul to the foreskin.

God has given Israel special privileges. As Paul said a little earlier in Romans, Jews have advantages. Covenantal circumcision is one of them, as is having been entrusted with God’s *logia* (Rom 3:1–2; cf. Phil 3:5).¹⁶ As Paul will say a little later in this letter, all of these privileges and promises are the irrevocable gifts and calling of God (11:29). Indeed, he urges in conclusion, God sent Christ precisely in order to show his own truthfulness and to confirm the promises made earlier to the patriarchs (15:8).

This is not to say that Israel is “sinless.” All humanity “both Jews and Greeks are under sin” (Rom 3:9). But for Paul, sin – as so much else – is also ethnically inflected: Jews sin in *their* ways, and “gentiles”/ “pagans” in theirs.¹⁷ All suffer the effects of life – thus, of sin and of death – after Adam (1 Cor 15:22;

14 This idea that worshiping the wrong gods, or worshiping in the wrong way, leads to wrong behaviors is another ancient polemical commonplace. On this point, and its place in second-century intra-Christian polemics, Paula Fredriksen, *Sin: The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 80–88.

15 Paul speaks ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα. 9:4 οἵτινές εἰσιν Ἰσραηλῖται ὧν ἡ υἰοθεσία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι; 9:5 ὧν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα.

16 Τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου, ἢ τίς ἡ ὠφέλεια τῆς περιτομῆς; 2 πολὺ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον. πρῶτον μὲν ἵνα γὰρ ὅτι ἐπιστεύθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ.

17 Stephen L. Young investigates Paul’s views on specifically Jewish sin in “Ethnic Ethics: Paul’s Eschatological Myth of Jewish Sin” *NTS* (forthcoming 2022). I warmly thank Dr Young for sharing his pre-publication essay with me.

Rom 5:12). However, since he writes to gentiles and about gentiles, Paul spends relatively little time on “Jewish” sins. He does lament that his genealogical brothers (unlike his “adopted” *adelphoi*, the gentiles-in-Christ) are zealous for *nomos*, but in an unenlightened way: most of them seem not to have realized that Christ is Law’s *telos*, the “righteousing” culmination to which *nomos* leads (Rom 10:4). In short, the Jews’ prime sin is that they do not recognize Jesus as (or “trust” that he is: *pisteuo*) the eschatological messiah. This circumstance is so extraordinary that Paul has to mobilize divine fiat to explain it.¹⁸

In what ways, then, do pagans sin? What did Paul intend, when he held that these ethnic others were sinners “by nature,” *physei*? What does it imply, even once they are “in Christ,” that these peoples are engrafted into the eschatological olive tree still *para physin*, “against [their] nature” (Rom 11:24)? On this topic Paul dilates frequently, stereotyping pagan behaviours with conviction. Because they worship idols, he holds, the *ethnē* inevitably live lives mired in wrongdoing: bad habits, bad sex, bad cult, distempered societies, dysfunctional families. “They not only do such things [as lie, cheat, and steal], but they consent to those doing them!” (Rom 1:18–32, a re-mix of themes from the Wisdom of Solomon).¹⁹ The pagan Corinthians, before Paul reached them, were adulterers, idolaters, sexual miscreants, thieves, drunks and robbers (1 Cor 6:9–11).²⁰ Those who indulge in immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery,

18 Rom 11:25, God disenables Israel from receiving the gospel; cf. 9.6–18, where Paul narrates those times in Israel’s foundational past when God had similarly exercised sovereign control over events.

19 Rom 1:18–32: Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων, 19 διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς, ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφανερώσεν. 20 τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθοράται, ἣ τε ἀίδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολόγητους, 21 διότι γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἠυχάριστησαν, ἀλλὰ ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία ... etc.; cf. *Wisdom of Solomon* 13:10–14.28, behavioral wrongs explicitly linked, as in Romans, to idolatry. Despite Paul’s emphasis in this passage on idol worship and its deleterious effects, John Barclay argues that Rom 1:18–32 addresses the problem of *universal* sin, thus that these verses indict both Jews and gentiles, *Paul and the Gift*, 463–66. Thiessen, by contrast, brings examples of ancient Christian commentators who took Paul’s indictment as targeting pagans solely and specifically and, pointing to various pagan authors aware of Judaism’s aniconism, Thiessen argues that even ancient *gentile* hearers (like those whom Paul addresses!) would recognize in Paul’s opening salvo a critique of specifically pagan practices and ethics, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, 43–52. Cf. too Krister Stendahl’s conclusion: “The issue at hand in Romans is the justification of Paul’s Gentile converts, not of sinners in general,” *Final Account: Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 76.

20 1 Cor 6:9–11: Ἡ οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἄδικοι θεοῦ βασιλείαν οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν; μὴ πλανᾶσθε οὔτε πόρνοι οὔτε εἰδωλολάτραι οὔτε μοιχοὶ οὔτε μαλακοὶ οὔτε ἀρσενικοῖται 10 οὔτε κλέπται οὔτε πλεονέκται, Ἦ οὐ μέθυσοι, οὐ λοιδοροὶ, οὐχ ἄρπαγες βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσουσιν. 11 καὶ

enmity, drunkenness, and so on (and on), he reminds his Galatian assemblies, will not inherit God's kingdom (Gal 5:19–21).²¹ Left to their own devices, this, *physei* (“by [their] nature”), is how *ethnē* behave.

Now that the “ends of the ages have come” upon Paul and his generation (1 Cor 10:11), now that the messiah has come once, been crucified and raised and is *therefore* about to come back, transforming the quick and the dead, how can a gentile prepare? How, in Paul's view, can a pagan become an *ex-pagan*, altering his very *physis*, thereby ceasing to sin? Can there even *be* such a thing as an *ex-pagan* pagan, given Paul's ethnic essentialism? To answer this question, I would like to consider, briefly, the ancient concept of acting like a member of a different people group – an idea which itself essentializes ethnicity.

Ethnic verbing in antiquity: To Hellenize. To Persianize. To Egyptianize. To Judaize. All of these terms indicated an outsider's assumption of behaviours and customs belonging to a different ethnic (thus religious) group. Like everything else, such voluntary affiliations were on a gradient. A Jew, for example, might “Hellenize” by assuming a Greek name. He might gain a good Greek education. He might become an athlete or an actor or a citizen of his diaspora city. He might, like Philo's nephew, forsake his ancestral *ēthē* (Josephus, *AJ* 20.100). Or he could even (and most radically), by undergoing epispasm, “make himself a foreskin” in the language of 1 Maccabees 1.15 (καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀκροβυστίας). And traffic might also run in the other direction: non-Jews might “Judaize.” Such voluntary behaviours could stretch from contributing, as an affiliated pagan, to a synagogue fund drive, to sending votive offerings to the Jerusalem temple, to participating in Jewish fasts or feasts; or even, for men, to receiving proselyte circumcision and thereby becoming a Jew of a special sort, that is, an “incomer,” a *proselytos* or “convert.”²²

ταυτά τινες ἦτε· ἀλλὰ ἀπελούσασθε, ἀλλὰ ἡγιάσθητε, ἀλλὰ ἐδικαιώθητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

21 Gal 5:19–21: φανερά δέ ἐστιν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἴ ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, 20 εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, 21 ἴ φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι, καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν ἴ καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.

22 Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, HCS 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) and Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512, both explore the semantic as well as the social range of this ethnic verbing. On the ways that this “outsider” adaptation and adoption of Jewish *ethē* complicates translation and understanding of the term *Ioudaïsmos*, Matthew V. Novenson, “Paul's Former Occupation in *Ioudaïsmos*,” In *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letters*, ed. M.W. Elliott et al., (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 24–39. *Ioudaïsmos*, Novenson argues there, relates not to transethnic behaviors but to a

Paul himself, his rhetoric in Galatians notwithstanding, demanded a radical degree of Judaizing from his assemblies of ex-pagans. Paul absolutely insisted that his gentiles-in-Christ assume the two uniquely Jewish behaviours that were the most socially conspicuous in a diaspora setting. His people were to make an *exclusive* commitment to the Jewish god; and they were to desist, absolutely, from making offerings before images of their native gods. This last, I will point out, is a *ritual*, not an “ethical” demand; and it went far beyond anything that diaspora synagogues ever demanded of sympathetic pagan adherents. Paul’s ex-pagan pagans, in short, were to commit to the first of Sinai’s ten commandments: No other gods, and no cult images.²³

But. But Paul also insisted that his gentiles were not to receive circumcision, though he expected them to start Judaizing, that is, to start acting more-or-less like (his idealized vision of) Jews. The only reason that his ex-pagans were able to act in the way Paul demanded, said Paul, was because they had received “spirit.” Absent spirit, as we shall see, the circumcised gentile might “call himself a Jew” (Rom 2:17) but he still could not act like one, and he could never “be” one: indeed, he would still be mired in “gentile” sin. (Rom 2:21–23 mentions theft, adultery, and sacrilege, “stereotypically gentile sins,” as Matthew Thiessen notes.²⁴ This person’s frustrated inability is narrated in 7:4–25; cf. 13:13–14, a reprise of the sins lavishly listed in 1.18–32.)

Though Paul himself might no longer “preach circumcision” (Gal 5:11),²⁵ he nonetheless, as Christ’s apostle to the *ethnē*, surely insisted that these gentiles

political program of internal intensification practiced on and advocated *by Jews for Jews*. See too Fredriksen, *Paul*, 181 n. 3; further on the range of pagan affiliation with diaspora Jewish communities, *ibid.*, 49–60; also eadem, “If It Looks like a Duck, and It Quacks like a Duck ...: On Not Giving Up the Godfearers.” In *A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer*, ed. S.A. Harvey et al., (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2015), 25–34. Cf. Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 37–41, who interprets the word to indicate active cross-ethnic outreach (a.k.a. missionary activity).

23 Paula Fredriksen, “Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel,” *NRS* 56 (2010): 232–252. This division between “ceremonial” or “ritual” or “symbolic” aspects of Jewish law (irrelevant to gentiles), and “moral” or “ethical” law (still binding) goes back to the patristic period, e.g., Tertullian, *Marc.* 2.17–19; Augustine, *Faust.* 6.2. This is not a distinction native to Second Temple Judaism, nor did it occur to Paul.

24 Matthew Thiessen, “Paul’s So-Called Jew and Lawless Law-keeping,” in *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans* ed. R. Rodriguez, M. Thiessen, and R. Thorsteinsson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 59–83, esp. 76–79; *idem*, *Gentile Problem*, 47–52, making the point that even a gentile hearer would associate this list of vices with gentiles.

25 At what point and to what end had Paul promoted proselyte circumcision? Thiessen, following Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 275–84 and, more recently *idem*, “Paul within Judaism: A Critical Evaluation from a ‘New Perspective’ Perspective,” in *Paul*

“act Jewishly” (which is the ancient definition of “Judaizing”).²⁶ He expected Christ-following gentiles to be uniquely enabled to act Jewishly, their *physis* notwithstanding, because they had been eschatologically altered by divine spirit through immersion into Christ’s death and resurrection (e.g., Rom 4:25, 5:6–11, 7:4). To nod again to Thiessen: proselyte circumcision was mere cosmetic surgery. Infusion by divine spirit was deep gene therapy.²⁷

2 Circumcision and New Creation

Spirit and spirit alone (so Paul) effected gentile adoption, *huiiothesia*. God’s new sons remained of a different biological lineage from Israel *kata sarka*. They were *not* descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the “fathers.” Nor, he insists, could they be made part of fleshly Israel *through* flesh, that is, through receiving proselyte circumcision. Pneumatic lineage is *not* fleshly – and that is the point. By undergoing *huiiothesia kata pneuma*, by establishing a specifically pneumatic lineage through Christ to Abraham (Gal 3:6–29; cf. Rom 4:1–12), these gentiles, too, could now be legitimate heirs, along with ethnic Israel,

Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle, ed. M.D. Nanos and M. Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 277–302, at 299n. 39), conjectures that Paul, prior to his contact with the Christ-apostles had promoted missions to non-Jewish males to turn them into Jews. Given the absence of evidence that such a missionary endeavor ever existed (other than that of Paul’s mid-first century competitors within the Christ movement), I proposed that Paul had encouraged male godfearers, already within a synagogue ambit, to commit fully to the Jewish god (as he would continue to do as an apostle of Christ), Fredriksen, *Paul*, 126, 164. More Recently, Joshua D. Garroway has accounted for Paul’s statement in Gal 5:11 by speculating that Paul advocated such Judaizing for almost a decade as part of his mission in Christ; then, undergoing a second “conversion experience,” Paul only began to promote a circumcision-free mission in Philippi, c.43 CE, see Joshua D. Garroway, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Paul, Philippi and the Origins of Christianity* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 6, 72–81, and passim. For an exhaustive review of the historiography on this question of Jewish missions to gentiles, see esp. Rainer Riesner, “A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?” In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. J. Ådna and H. Kvalbein, WUNT 127 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 211–50.

26 John M.G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, WUNT 275 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) states that my use of “Judaizing” in connection with Paul’s mission is “etic, not emic, i.e., dependent on *our* definitions of ‘Judaism’ and ‘Judaizing’, not those current in antiquity,” 18 n. 48. To the contrary: a non-Jew’s assumption of Jewish behaviors – such as, in the case of Paul’s message, making an exclusive commitment to the Jewish god – is precisely the ancient definition of “Judaizing”; see above, n. 22.

27 Thiessen’s nice analogy, *Gentile Problem*, 117.

Paul's kinsmen, to the promise of salvation granted to Abraham.²⁸ They, too, could inherit the Kingdom. Their changed status was manifest in the (brief) here-and-now, not ethnically, but *ethically*: new gentile *adelphoi*, enabled through spirit, and despite their old "nature" – the "outer man" (2 Cor 4:16)? – could now fulfil God's law (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8).

With these as our interpretive plumb lines, let us consider in more detail what Paul says about circumcision, about sin, about law, and about Jews and, thus, Israel. We start with a passage that E.P. Sanders long ago characterized as one of the "most amazing" that Paul had ever dictated: 1 Corinthians 7:17–19:

Let each one lead the life that God has discerned and called him to. I command the same in all the assemblies. Was anyone circumcised when he was called? He should not seek epispasm. Was anyone called when in foreskin? He should not seek circumcision. Circumcision is nothing and foreskin is nothing; what matters is keeping God's commandments.²⁹

But one of God's commandments *was* circumcision. And elsewhere Paul says that (Jewish) circumcision is of great value ("much in every way," Rom 3:1; cf. Phil 3:5, on his own eighth-day circumcision). What, then, is he saying here? In this place, metonymy is not at work: Paul does not speak here about two different people groups, Jews on the one hand ("the circumcision") and gentiles on the other ("the foreskin"). Rather, and in keeping with the general emphasis on pagans/gentiles throughout the entire Corinthian correspondence, *Paul here distinguishes between two different kinds of gentiles*. Some had already received proselyte circumcision at some point before they had joined his Christ-assemblies; others had not. Both groups, as far as Paul is concerned, are gentiles. In other words, here as elsewhere – most especially in Galatians – Paul insists that *gentile* circumcision is nugatory with respect to the male gentile's being "in" Christ/having Christ's spirit "in" him; nugatory, thus, as well in terms

28 Gentiles do not descend *kata sarka* from Abraham (if they did, they would not be candidates for adoption); and for that reason, I find Richard Hays' proposed translation of Rom 4:1 attractive: "What then shall we say? Is Abraham found to be our forefather according to the flesh?" Τί οὖν; ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα; Richard Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). See esp. 61–84 for his translation of Rom 4:1.

29 E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 103, on 1 Cor 7:19: Εἰ μὴ ἐκάστῳ ὡς ἠέμερισεν ὁ Ἰσχυρίως, ἕκαστον ὡς κέκληκεν ὁ Θεός, οὕτως περιπατεῖτω· καὶ οὕτως ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις πάσαις διατάσσομαι. 18 περιτετμημένος τις ἐκλήθη; μὴ ἐπισπάσθω ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ ἡ κέκληται τις; μὴ περιτεμνέσθω. 19 ἡ περιτομή οὐδὲν ἐστίν, καὶ ἡ ἀκροβυστία οὐδὲν ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ.

of keeping the law. Only *pneuma* can make a pagan into an ex-pagan. Only *pneuma* reformats gentile *physis*, enabling him to keep God's commandments.

In his generation, "upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor 10:11), Paul was a witness to and an agent of an eschatological transformation. Pagans were voluntarily turning from their native gods to his god. They were abandoning their idols. They were enabled to live according to the idealized ethics embodied in Jewish law, "unlike the *ethnē* who do not know god" (1 Thes 4:5). Spirit filled, thereby empowered with divinatory and charismatic gifts, they could call down the "spirit of Christ" into their assemblies until he came back definitively, publicly, in power, to defeat cosmic forces and to raise the dead. Paul, in other words, dedicated himself to building up communities of *eschatological* gentiles, the sort of non-pagan gentile prophesied by Isaiah long ago.³⁰ This is the person in 2 Corinthians 5:17 whom Paul names *kainē ktisis*, a "new creation."³¹

So similarly, I would urge, with Paul's finale in Galatians. Galatians 6:15–16 is also often misinterpreted as dismissing the importance of Jewish circumcision, while lumping Christ-following gentiles and Jews together into one eschatological body, "the church," God's new Israel. "For neither is circumcision anything, nor foreskin, but new creation. Peace and mercy upon all who walk by this rule, and on the Israel of God."³² But the whole of this letter is motivated by the question whether *gentiles* need to be circumcised. Paul never speaks in Galatians about Jewish circumcision here; only about, and against, *proselyte* circumcision. (Jewish, that is, covenantal eighth-day circumcision is irrelevant to Paul's topic, and to his auditors' circumstance.) As with the Corinthian correspondence, so also here: Paul again speaks about two different kinds of *gentile* Christ followers, those who have received *proselyte* circumcision (presumably at some prior point) and those who have not. All that matters, Paul

30 Fredriksen, *Paul*, 73–77, on eschatological gentiles.

31 2 Cor 5:17: ὡςτε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, *καινὴ κτίσις*: τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν ἱκανά. Further on the significance of these gentiles' eschatological empowerment, Jennifer Eyl, *Signs, Wonders and Gifts. Divination in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), and Giovanni Bazzana, *Having the Spirit of Christ: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Early Christian Groups* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020). In terms of charismatic empowerment, the verb used by Paul in 1 Cor 1:2 and quoted from Joel 3:5 LXX/Rom 10.12, *epikaloumai*, "call upon" in the middle voice, was also commonly used to summon various other Mediterranean deities; Fredriksen, *Paul*, 238 n. 15.

32 Gal 6:13–16: οὐδὲ γάρ οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν, ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτεμνεσθαι ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῆσωνται. 14 ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται ἱκανῶς κόσμῳ. 15 ὅτε γὰρ περιτομὴ τί ἐστιν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία, ἀλλὰ *καινὴ κτίσις*. 16 καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνην ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ.

insists, is their receiving spirit, thus being enabled to stop acting like pagans. *That* eschatological ability is what renders them a “new creation,” brought into being by Christ’s death, resurrection, and transformative in-spiriting.

Thus, in the conclusion of this letter, Paul once again speaks about two different kinds of *gentile* Christ followers, those who receive circumcision (as his rivals urge) and those who do not and have not. What matters, urges Paul, is their re-creation through reception of spirit, which enables them to stop acting like pagans. “Neither is circumcision anything nor is foreskin anything, but [again] *kainē ktisis*” (6:15) – the unprecedented and, therefore, *new* creation, worked by divine pneuma, of the eschatological gentile.

“Peace and mercy upon all who walk by this rule, *and upon the Israel of God*” (Gal 6:16). Whom does Paul intend by this phrase? The RSV drops Paul’s second *kai* but, as Stendahl noted, that *kai* makes all the difference.³³ Paul here blesses the Christ-following gentile, and he also blesses his own people group, those whom he elsewhere identifies as his “kinsmen by flesh” (Rom 9:3).³⁴ The “Israel of God” here, like the “remnant” of Romans 11:5, refers to those Jews currently within the Christ-movement (at least, those ones with whom Paul agrees). They represent an eschatological prolepsis, the down-payment toward the redemption of *all* Israel.³⁵ Paul’s god is not the kind of god who breaks his promises (Rom 11:29; 15:8).

3 Israel and the Nations

I conclude this exploration of Paul’s continuing concern with ethnic specificity by glancing, briefly, at Romans. Romans, of course, has served as the jewel in the crown of Reformation theology. The letter has been seen – and for many, still is seen – as Paul’s theological treatise par excellence, an expansive meditation on universal sinfulness; on the impossibility of anyone, whether gentile or Jew, achieving righteousness through the works of the law (taking Rom 7 as Paul’s description of his own failings and frustrations³⁶); on the gospel’s revolutionary message of justification not through works but *sola fide*; and on the

33 *Final Account*, 40; see more recently Susan Grove Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6:16 and Romans 9–11,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 367–95.

34 “Israel is always Israel for Paul,” Stendahl, *Final Account*, 5.

35 Thus too J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, NovTSup 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 106–17.

36 Which in turn, of course, makes Paul’s confident self-assessment of “blameless” law-observance in Phil 3:6 nothing short of baffling.

ethnic reformatting of “Israel,” the “people of God,” as the new mixed-ethnic community of the Christian church.³⁷

Various lines of research have challenged this paradigm. Kümmel, in 1929, argued definitively against interpreting Romans 7 as an autobiographical statement on Paul’s part.³⁸ In 1963, pushing this insight further, Krister Stendahl published his classic essay, “Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West.” “The issue at hand in Romans,” Stendahl insisted, “is the justification of Paul’s gentile converts, not of sinners in general.”³⁹ Almost thirty years thereafter, Stanley Stowers’s *Rereading of Romans* (1994) attended closely to conventions of ancient epistolary rhetoric, especially diatribe. Stowers interpreted the “voices” in Paul’s letters as a kind of pedagogical ventriloquism, “speech in character” (*prosōpopiia*). And, like Stendahl, he stressed that the Roman audience of the letter was, quite specifically, Christ-following *gentiles* (Rom 1:5–6, cf. 1:13–14; 11:13; 15:16–19; 16:25–26). Paul directed his letter, said Stowers, toward the goal of enabling gentile self-control (*autarkia*).

Finally, in 2003, Runar Thorsteinsson published *Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans 2*.⁴⁰ Emphasizing techniques of ancient letter writing, Thorsteinsson importantly argued, first, that the function of Paul’s rhetorical interlocutor

37 A pristine and principled interpretation of the letter along these lines is Ernst Käsemann’s commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980). Similarly, while foregrounding his construal of Paul’s “theology of grace,” Barclay, *The Gift*, esp. 449–561. Since, in this construal, Christ-following Jews within this community no longer live according to Jewish ancestral practices (Torah now being understood as “dead currency,” 383), their practical Jewishness is erased. Matthew V. Novenson has recently argued (I think, demonstrated) that the principle of “justification by works of the Law” existed only within Paul’s own heated polemics: see chapter three of his forthcoming study, *The End of the Law: Jewishness and Time in the Letters of Paul*.

38 Werner Georg Kümmel, *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament. Zwei Studien*. Theologische Bücherei 53 (Munich: Kaiser, 1974), esp. 139–60; orig. pub. J.C. Hinrichs (1929). The autobiographical reading of this chapter of Paul’s epistle enters history only in the 420s, when Augustine weaponized Romans 7 against Pelagius: it stuck. For a review of the evolution of Augustine’s thought on this verse, Paula Fredriksen, “Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy. Augustine on Paul against the Manichees and Pelagians,” *Recherches augustiniennes* xxiii (1988): 87–114; also eadem, “Paul, Augustine, and Krister, on the Introspective Conscience of the West,” in *Krister Among the Jews and Gentiles*, ed. P. Fredriksen and J. Svartvik (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2018), 146–62.

39 Originally published in *HTR* 56 (1963): 199–215, the essay was reprinted in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 78–96. In *Paul*, Stendahl reviews his and Käsemann’s disagreements; cf. *Final Account*, 76, which provides a succinct summary of their debate in notes 10 and 11; cf. Käsemann’s prior response to Stendahl, *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 59–78.

40 *Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans 2: Function and Identity in the Context of Ancient Epistolography*, ConBNT 40 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2003). His argument is

was to represent the letter's ex-pagan gentile recipients; and, second, that this conjured persona – in the interests of aural and dramatic clarity – remained constant throughout the epistle's entirety (126–150). The meaning of Romans 2 accordingly shifted radically, as indeed did the interpretation of the whole letter. The person who “calls [himself] a Jew” at Romans 2:17 represented a *Judaizing gentile*, thus by Paul's lights *not a Jew*.⁴¹ The second half of this chapter, therefore, was not Paul's radical “reconstitution of Jewish identity,”⁴² but his description of the possibilities of gentile Judaizing: a baptized ex-pagan can “do the Law,” while a circumcised gentile, without “circumcision in *pneuma*,” only strives to look the part of a Jew, but cannot indeed act like one.

It is this so-called “Jew” who is represented by the conflicted “I” of Romans 7:5–25. It is *his* circumcision that, in terms of Paul's eschatological calculus, is “nothing.” And it is this so-called Jew, someone who “knows the law” (cf. 7:1), whose conflicts reach resolution only in and through Christ (7:25), and who achieves *huiiothesia* through spirit, in Christ (8:1–17). Only at that point, eschatologically adopted into the family, can such ex-pagan gentiles address the Jewish god by his Jewish family name in the Jewish tongue. “When we cry ‘*Abba!* Father!’ it is the Spirit ... testifying with our spirit that we are children (*tekna*) of God” (8:16; cf. Gal. 4:7).⁴³

But in Romans 9–11, turning from so-called “Jews” and from gentiles who want to act like Jews to actual, ethnic Jews, Paul finally describes ethnically specific Jewish sin. He also, abruptly and surprisingly, reconfigures eschatological family once again. Paul begins with a lament for his kinsmen who do not know what time it is on God's clock, thus who do not understand or accept

summarized nicely by Matthew V. Novenson, “The Self-Styled Jew of Romans 2 and the Actual Jews of Romans 9–11,” in *So-Called Jew*, 135–6.

41 *Paul's Interlocutor*, 126–150, this in contrast to Stowers, who suggested that the “voice” in Rom 2:17–27 was that of a Jewish teacher to and of gentiles, *Rereading*, 144–75. At the 2019 SBL in San Diego, on the panel celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Rereading's* original publication, Stowers endorsed Thorsteinsson's “better argument,” agreeing that the speaker in Rom 2:17ff. indeed represented a Judaizing gentile, perhaps a circumcised proselyte.

42 So Barclay, *The Gift*, 469, dismissing Thornsteinsson without argument in n. 51; but then, Barclay insists that Romans 1:18–32 is about universal sin, not “gentile” sins, 462–63. Boyarin reads Rom 2 similarly, *Radical Jew*, 94–95, as Paul's radical redefinition of “true” Jewishness. The RSV tendentiously introduces words that are not in the Greek: “true” circumcision and “real” circumcision are glosses. See on this passage esp. Matthew Thiessen, “Paul's Argument Against Gentile Circumcision in Romans 2:17–29,” *NovT* 56 (2014): 373–91; also Novenson, “Self-Styled Jew,” 137–41, and his proposed translation of Rom 2:17–29, on 139.

43 On the ethnic specificity of ancient divinity, language (“*Abba*”), cultic custom and people groups, Fredriksen, “How Jewish is God?”

what their god, through his messiah, is about to accomplish. Jewish sins are not gentile sins. Pagans stand accused of “passions, extreme moral failure, cognitive corruption, and idolatry”; the most of Israel, currently, is guilty rather of “disobedience,” lack of trust (*apistia*), and misunderstanding, all of which Paul ultimately attributes to God’s work in the current moment of history’s climax.⁴⁴ Accordingly, Paul constructs an idea of (a temporary and provisional) Israel-within-Israel, those who, through God’s sovereign will, express his purpose of election (9:6–26; Paul is himself, of course, a conspicuous member of this happy few, 11.1–2). These, *for the brief time being*, are “the remnant” (9:27; 11:5). God has caused (much of) Israel to stumble, but they have not fallen (11:11). They are still in the race, and God will (of course) ultimately make good on his promises. It is this “remnant chosen *chariti*, by grace at the present time” (Rom 11:5) that is the “Israel of God” upon whom Paul earlier had wished peace (Gal 6:16). In short: “Israel,” whether temporarily divinely hardened or currently divinely chosen, is always, for Paul, the Jews.

It is perhaps for this reason that Paul in chapter 11 moves from his prior, Roman, legal metaphor and mechanism of “son-making,” *huiiothesia*, in favour of a more traditionally Jewish, scriptural, genealogical metaphor. In 11:25–26, Christ-following gentiles acquire yet another biblical lineage, one tracing back not pneumatically to Abraham, but genealogically to Noah. “A toughening has come upon part of Israel, until the *plērōma tōn ethnōn* comes in, and so *pas Israēl* will be secured.”⁴⁵

These populations do not stand in for pleasant theological abstractions. They are envisaged in Jewish tradition as historical, discrete people groups. Paul’s language here echoes that of the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, with its totalling of gentile nations, a global human census of seventy kinship groups individually distinguished by family, language, land, and nations/peoples.⁴⁶ From among the descendants of Shem, God chose (that is, separated out)

44 On these lists of pagan sins in Paul’s letters, above, nn. 19–21; on this “eschatological myth” of Israel’s sinfulness, Young (n. 17 above); also, on Israel’s *apistia*, Novenson, “So-called Jew,” 159–60; Matthew Thiessen, “Conjuring Paul and Judaism Forty Years after *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,” *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting* 5 (2018): 7–20 (18–20).

45 Rom 11:25–26: Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ ᾤητε ἑαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι, ὅτι πάρωσις ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ, 26 καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται. Further on this verse, Fredriksen, *Paul*, 160–64.

46 Genesis 10, the Table of Nations, distinguishes the descendants of Noah according to their lands [עַרְבֵי / ἐν τῇ γῆ αὐτῶν], according to their tongues [לְשׁוֹנֹת / γλώσσα], after their families [בְּתֵיבָה / φύλα], in their nations [עַמֵּי / ἔθνη], totaling seventy ἔθνη. On this “eschatological arithmetic” and the significance of the 70 nations, see James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations*. WUNT 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

Israel for himself. These other nations worship their own gods; Israel, beneficiary of revelation, worships the “true god” (cf. Deut 32:8–9).

“All Israel,” meanwhile, implies more than those Jews of Paul’s day. Paul looks to *Davidic* Israel, the one that David’s son the eschatological messiah – that is, Jesus Christ (Rom 1:4; 15:12) – will gather in. “All Israel” means all twelve tribes, itself an eschatological idea (cf. Matt. 19:28/Lk 22:20). In brief, just as Paul’s rejection of proselyte circumcision *reinscribes* difference *kata sarka* (though not *kata pneuma*) between Jews and ex-pagan gentiles within the *ekklēsia*, so here too, does his conjuring of this more scripturally traditional genealogy. Paul’s eschatological arithmetic in this passage, the seventy gentile nations plus Israel’s twelve tribes, precisely *preserves* ethnic distinctiveness, the post-diluvian kinship groups or “nations,” while simultaneously invoking the plenum of humanity, redeemed by the Jewish messiah about to manifest from Zion, under the sovereign Jewish god (11:26–27).

His closing cento of verses in Romans 15:9–12 repeats Paul’s vision of eschatological unity-in-diversity. The nations rejoice *with* Israel. The nations praise God *along with* Israel. But the nations do not *join* Israel: the Davidic messiah, rather, rules over them (*archein*, 15:12).⁴⁷ But Israel redeemed, in and at the End, like “the Israel of God” in what Paul was convinced would be the brief meanwhile, was for Paul always and only his genealogical “kin” (Rom 9:3), the Jews. And Paul’s “new creation,” in this brief meanwhile, was always and only the redeemed pagan nations, those “eschatological gentiles” who, through the gift of spirit, no longer act like pagans (Gal 6:15; Rom 11:24); those who, *against* their own ethnic *physis*, have been engrafted into the eschatological olive tree (Rom 11:13, 24); who, through shared *pneuma*, can now also call God “Αββα.”

Redemption, for Paul (as for those colleagues within the movement who agreed with him, and vice versa), worked through God’s or Christ’s *pneuma*. How eschatological Israel, living and dead, comes to receive this *pneuma* is a detail that Paul neglects to describe here. Is *pneuma* poured out on them at or as the End (cf. Joel 2:28)? Is there an eschatological immersion into Christ? Paul, his extant letters addressed chiefly or solely to gentiles, does not say. But God’s ancient election of Israel – his promises to their forefathers, his gifts, his calling – ensures their inclusion in the Kingdom, thus their final pneumatic

47 Rom 15:8–12: λέγω γὰρ Χριστὸν διάκονον γεγενῆσθαι περιτομῆς ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας θεοῦ εἰς τὸ βεβαιῶσαι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων 15:9 τὰ δὲ ἔθνη ὑπὲρ ἐλέους δοξάσαι τὸν θεόν. καθὼς γέγραπται διὰ τοῦτο ἔξομολογήσομαι σοι ἐν ἔθνεσιν καὶ τῷ ὀνόματί σου ψαλῶ; 15:10 καὶ πάλιν λέγει εὐφρανθήτε ἔθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ; 15:11 καὶ πάλιν αἰνεῖτε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τὸν κύριον καὶ ἐπαινεσάτωσαν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ λαοί; 15:12 καὶ πάλιν Ἰησοῦς λέγει ἔσται ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἄρχειν ἐθνῶν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἔλπιουσιν.

transformation (Rom 11:29, 15:8; 9:4–5; cf. 1 Cor 15:22–28, 35–52, on the translation from flesh-body to spirit-body). They are its “natural” heirs.

Eschatological gentiles, through Christ and *pneuma*, are also, mercifully, included in this kingdom. But they are included *as* gentiles, not as part of covenanted Israel. Their *sarkikos* status – that is, whether they are circumcised or not – is irrelevant to this redemptive process: their *pneumatic* status is all that matters. It is in this regard that they constitute, at this moment of the movement – the ages’ turning – a “new creation.” *It is for these gentiles, then, and for them alone*, that “circumcision is nothing.”

4 Jewish Eschatology and Christian Anti-Judaism

Let me conclude by returning, briefly, to our opening quotation from Schweitzer. Once history continued to continue, once Paul’s framework of imminent eschatology ceded to the *force majeure* of time, most of the other components of his message had to shift as well. We have glanced at the ways that Ephesians and Colossians each inflects this adjustment, with a de-Judaized unified humanity (Eph 2:11–16)⁴⁸ and with a realized cosmic eschatology (Col 2:15; 3:10).

The second century, reframing Paul’s message, presided over a more general identity crisis for the god of Israel, for his son the Davidic messiah, and for his Israelite apostle to the nations. For these later gentile Christian communities, Christ’s divine father assumed the ethnic featurelessness of the high god of Middle Platonism. The messiah came to reveal the symbolic meanings of Jewish law, thereby nullifying its ethnically specific enactments. And the Jewish Paul’s arguments against circumcision, specifically and only for gentiles, became the Christian Paul’s arguments against Torah observance generally.⁴⁹ The second-century Paul, founder of gentile Christianity, rails less against paganism than he does “against Judaism” (*adversus Iudaismum*, commenting on Galatians, Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.2).

This interpretive position when reading Paul still prevails in much current New Testament scholarship as well. Why? And how? In part because these second-century theological positions were reinvested with powerful theological significance in the sixteenth century, when biblical criticism and modern historiography both were born. Modern New Testament scholarship is the child of the Protestant Reformation.

48 On which, see esp. J. Albert Harrill, “Ethnic Fluidity in Ephesians,” *NTS* 60 (2014): 379–402.
49 Briefly, Fredriksen, *Paul*, 167–74; more fully, eadem, *Augustine and the Jews*, 41–78.

Luther famously repurposed these ancient tropes that set God-Christ-Paul against Judaism. Those “Jews” available in traditional Christian readings of Galatians and Romans did double duty as proxies for Luther’s Catholic opponents.⁵⁰ “Justification by faith alone, and not by the works of the Law,” the Reformation’s battle cry against late Renaissance Roman sacramentalism, served and (as Käsemann’s great Romans commentary witnesses) serves still as the lodestone for much Protestant theology. But this sixteenth century lodestone exerts a tremendous magnetic pull within current “historical” readings as well. What Paul’s letters, for modern Protestant theology, *mean* merges unobtrusively into academic reconstructions of what Paul, the late Second Temple Jewish apostle of the returning Christ, must himself have *meant*.⁵¹

For scholars such as Käsemann, as Stendahl observed, “the Pauline key words have in them all the depth that later traditions found in them.”⁵² These later traditions still avail themselves of artificial and ahistorical constructions of first-century “Jews” and “Judaism” to bring into focus issues important for contemporary Christian identity. When the issue is Pauline “monotheism,” such “Jews” are deployed positively, as a bulwark against pagan “polytheism.”⁵³ But when the issue is Pauline teachings on “grace and not works” – (Protestant)

50 Real Jews were also caught in the crossfire. On the entanglement of anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic sentiment mobilized by Lutheran theologies of justification and grace, see Michael Bachman, “The anti-Judaic Moment in the ‘Pauline’ Doctrine of Justification,” in *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism*, ed. F. Abel (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 21–59. Bachman quotes the German historian Dietz Bering who, in his 2014 monograph *Was Luther Antisemit?* opined that their focus on works-righteousness “closely linked the Jews with the systematic profiteer of this works ideology: the Pope,” translated and quoted by Bachman, *ibid.* 23. On the abiding Protestant-Catholic face-off when reading Paul’s letters “against” Judaism, see the following note to J.Z. Smith.

51 Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine. On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), notes the ways that “the question of Christian origins takes us back, persistently, to the same point: *Protestant anti-Catholic apologetics*,” 34 (emphasis original); on the persistent confusion of such identity-confirming apologetics with doing history, *ibid.* 13, citing Mark Pattison.

52 Stendahl, *Final Account*, 76 n. 11.

53 On the double (or “duplicitous”) function served by scholarly constructions of ancient Judaism vis-à-vis Christianity (Judaism is “good” when providing a “*cordon sanitaire*” between Christianity and paganism; “bad” when serving as a code for “Catholic”), Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 43, 83. For a sampling of imaginative constructions of Jewish “monotheism” that firewall Pauline Christology against ditheism, see, e.g., the work of Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); David Capes, *The Divine Christ: Paul, the Lord Jesus, and the Scriptures of Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018); Carey Newman, *Paul’s Glory Christology*, NovTSup 69 (Leiden:

Christianity, in brief, as opposed to (Catholic) Judaism – such “Jews” represent the flawed and rightly opposed contrasting alternative to Paul’s gospel. And while Christian Europe’s mid-twentieth-century murders of millions of European Jews, where and if acknowledged, is usually regretted,⁵⁴ the scholarly rhetoric of theological derogation continues largely unabated, projected back onto and into the mid-first-century Jewish apostle’s letters.

Why is this still the case? Whatever its more general sociohistorical matrix, I think that we can name with some precision its modern intellectual taproot. The academic study of Christian origins still has not caught up with the implications of Schweitzer’s great insight into mid-first-century Jewish apocalyptic eschatology.⁵⁵ Paul’s theology continues to be, quite literally, timeless. Time, however, was the last thing that Paul thought he had lots of. He knew, by direct revelation, that history stood at the edge of its End.

Their experience of the resurrected Jesus’s continuing pneumatic presence alerted Paul and his apostolic colleagues that the general resurrection was rushing toward them – “nearer to us now,” Paul proclaimed, “than when we first became convinced. The night is far gone. The Day is at hand” (Rom 13:11–12). This generation thus framed their world within only two religious options: the right way (worship of Israel’s god, in Jewish ways, while awaiting that god’s eschatological champion, the returning victorious messiah) and the wrong way (everyone else’s way, a.k.a. “paganism”). There was no third way. “Christianity,” in the mid-first century, had yet to be invented.⁵⁶ Apostles might dispute among themselves the degree of Judaizing required of their expagan “eschatological gentiles”; but all of them, Paul emphatically included,

Brill, 1992), and the article “Glory” in the *NIDB*, ed. K.D. Sakenfield (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007) 1:576–80. This list could easily be expanded.

54 Though not by N.T. Wright, who laments instead those scholars who look at Paul’s texts through “tearful misted-up post-Holocaust” spectacles, accusing them of being “pro-Jewish,” *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 2:1413, cf. 1129, criticizing Stendahl specifically on this account. Wright’s Paul (like Wright’s Jesus) evinces principled problems with Jews, with Judaism, and evidently with Theodor Herzl. For my assessment of Wright’s efforts with Paul, my review in *CBQ* 77 (2015): 387–91.

55 See above, n. 3, for some recent scholarly redefinitions of Paul’s eschatology. John Barclay, on the evidence both of his important monograph *Paul and the Gift*, and of his more recent essay *Paul: A Very Brief History* (London: SPCK 2017), simply does not consider Paul’s foreshortened timeframe to be an important factor when interpreting Paul’s thought: he treats it nowhere in *The Gift*, and mentions it only in passing, briefly indeed, in *Brief History*.

56 John W. Marshall, “Misunderstanding the New Paul: Marcion’s Transformation of the *Sonderzeit* Paul.” *JCS* 20 (2012) 1–29, esp. at 6.

advocated a socially radical, indeed an unprecedented, form of Judaizing: exclusive commitment to Israel's god. No other gods. No more idols.

Modern authorized translations of Paul's letters damp down this intense eschatological conviction, while insinuating the tropes of theological anti-Judaism into their English texts. The ubiquitous use of "church" as a translation of *ekklēsia*, for one example, anachronistically retrojects this later institution back into Paul's lifetime, while implying that he was establishing a new, third religion, other than and in many ways opposed to his native traditions.⁵⁷ So, too, does translating *Ioudaismos* in Gal 1:13 as "my former life in 'Judaism,'" so that Paul in the mid-30s CE implicitly conjures that other great, contrasting body of abstract doctrine, "Christianity." The RSV and NRSV's English of Romans 1:4 redirects attention away from Christ's imminent, signature, public (indeed, cosmic) eschatological act, the general "resurrection of the dead" (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν) to Christ's own individual resurrection *from* the dead. This phrasing mistranslates Paul's Greek, but goes far toward accommodating how history actually worked out.⁵⁸

Translation choices leach Paul's continuing Jewishness from his texts. We have already seen how the English of Romans 2:27–29 introduces words (thus, concepts) not in the Greek: "physically" in v. 27; "true" in v. 28; "real" in v. 29. These additions turn the passage into an invidious comparison between "real" (that is, "Christian," "spiritual") Jewishness and false, fleshly, outward, traditionally "Jewish" Jewishness. In Romans 9:4, rendering *doxa* as (very vague) "glory" and *latreia* by rather bloodless "worship" completely effaces Paul's reference to Jerusalem's temple as the place where God's earthly presence dwells, and as the site for enacting his sacrificial cult; but it does oblige the (post-70 CE) Christian position that, for Paul, his gentile Christian churches replaced Jerusalem as the new, true "temple of the holy spirit" (1 Cor 6:19).⁵⁹ And right at the crescendo

57 See esp. Jennifer Eyl, "Semantic Voids, New Testament Translation, and Anachronism," *MTR* 26 (2014): 315–39.

58 On reading Rom 1:4 not as Christ's *own* resurrection *from* the dead but as "*the* resurrection of the dead" (which is what the Greek happens to say), see Fredriksen, *Paul*, 141–45. I owe this observation to Augustine, *ep. ad Romanos expositio inchoata* 5.11. Cf. 1 Cor 15:12–21: (12) Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised *from* the dead [ἐκ νεκρῶν], how can some of you say that there is no resurrection *of* the dead [ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν]. (13) If there is no resurrection *of* the dead [ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν], then neither has Christ been raised.... (20) But now Christ has been raised *from* the dead [ἐκ νεκρῶν], the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For since through a human being [came] death, so also through a human being [came? will come?] resurrection *of* the dead [ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν]. (RSV, modified).

59 Fredriksen, *Paul*, 152–54, on Paul's deployment of temple imagery for his *ekklēsiai* precisely because he esteemed Jerusalem's temple; also, eadem, "How Later Contexts Effect Pauline Content, or: Retrospect is the Mother of Anachronism," in *Jews and Christians in*

of Paul's hymn to all Israel's continuing election in Romans 11, where he asserts "while, with respect to the *evangelion*, they are hostiles on account of you [*ethnē*, cf. 11:13, 24, etc.], with respect to [divine] choice they are beloved, on account of the forefathers," the RSV/NRSV renders his meaning as, "as regards the gospel, they are enemies of God" (11:28). In no Greek manuscript does the phrase *tou theou*, "of God," even occur.⁶⁰

The failure to integrate meaningfully the first generation's vivid conviction that it was history's last generation continues to oblige much of the historicizing *salonfähig* anti-Judaism of New Testament scholarship. At the same time and for the same reason, this intellectual failure continues also to support the anachronistic quality of much academic New Testament historiography.

Paul's urgent eschatology can be muted, even avoided, by those motivated to do so. Paul claimed merely that Jesus was coming back – indeed, that Christ may return at any time – but he did not actually say *when*. The claim that Jesus may return "at any time" is indeed logically distinct from the claim that Jesus will return "soon." And that logical distinction has the virtue of leaving history with a lot more time on its hands, conforming, happily, to the way that things did indeed work out.

But this is not what Paul says. He uses the past perfect tense when he speaks of the ends of the ages. He says "we" and "us," "we the living," when he speaks of those who will witness Christ's martial *adventus*. The Thessalonians got their impression that no member of their assembly would die before the Parousia from someone, and that someone was Paul. He did not correct or qualify that impression so much as reassure them that things were, after all, on track.⁶¹ Paul measured time between "now" and "soon."

the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their History, ed. P.J. Tomson and J. Schwartz, CRINT 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 17–51 (26–31).

60 κατά μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἔχθροί δι' ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας.

61 Some twenty years after receiving his call, Paul still proclaims the impending End to his assemblies: 1 Thess 4:15–18 ("For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that *we who are alive, who are left until the Parousia* of the Lord, will not precede those who have 'fallen asleep.' For the Lord himself will descend from heaven ... and then *we the living who remain* will be snatched up"); Phil 4.5 ("The Lord is *near*"); 1 Cor 7:29 ("The time *has been shortened* ... the form of *this world is passing away*"), 10:11 ("These things were written down for *us, upon whom the ends of the ages have come*"), 15:51–52 ("Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all 'sleep,' but we shall all be changed.... For the trumpet will sound, the dead will rise imperishable, *and we shall all be changed*"); 2 Cor 6:2 ("*Now* is the acceptable time; lo, *now* is the day of salvation"); Rom 13:11–12 ("You know what the hour is, how it is full time now for you to awake ... For *salvation is even nearer to us* than when we first

Schweitzer, in his quests both of the historical Jesus and of the historical Paul, faced this issue forthrightly. Following him, Stendahl in his Romans commentary put the issue in the plainest terms: "If the text says 'now' in year 56 of the Common Era, where does that leave you and me? It leaves us almost 2000 years later. No kerygmatic gamesmanship can overcome this simple fact."⁶² Stendahl issued a call to a new kind of scholarly dedication to the Reformation, an appeal to embrace the historical specificity of Christianity's primary sources with moral integrity and with theological courage.⁶³ And, for ethical reasons no less than for scholarly ones, he urged Christians to stop building their religious identities on the patristic-cum-Protestant polemical chimera of Jew-as-antitype.

The sooner the New Testament guild integrates, indeed embraces, Schweitzer's historical insights and Stendahl's ethical-theological summons, the sooner it will free biblical scholarship from its long-lived traditions of toxic anti-Judaism.

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became convinced. The night is far gone; *the day is at hand*"), 16:20 ("the god of peace will crush Satan under your feet soon").

62 Stendahl, *Final Account*, 23.

63 *Paul Among the Jews and Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1976), 72.

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Anti-Judaism and Philo-Judaism in Pauline Studies, Then and Now

Matthew V. Novenson

1 Paul, Judaism, and Protestantism

According to Epiphanius, the Ebionites thought the theology of Paul so anti-Jewish that they reasoned he could not have been a Jew, but was a gentile proselyte who, when he learned too late that he could not marry a woman from a priestly family, channelled all his resentment into writing his apostolic letters (*Panarion* 30.16.8–9). This story is melodramatic fantasy, but the debate over anti-Judaism in Paul goes back before Epiphanius and the Ebionites¹ to our earliest post-Pauline sources. It is a major theme already in the Acts of the Apostles (turn of the second century, plus or minus). When Paul comes to Jerusalem, the Jerusalem apostles warn him, “[The Jewish Christ-believers in Judea] have been instructed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the gentiles apostasy from Moses, saying that they should not circumcise their children or walk according to the customs” (Acts 21:21). And when Paul’s opponents apprehend him a few verses later, they level that very accusation: “This is the person who teaches everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place [viz. the temple]” (Acts 21:28). The author of Acts, however, insists that these reports about Paul are false. He narrates a scene of Paul bringing a votive offering at the temple (Acts 21:23–26), proving, to the author’s satisfaction, at least, that “there is nothing to what they have been instructed about you, but that you yourself walk by guarding the law” (Acts 21:24).² In short, by the turn of the second century, if not before, some Christ-believers hold up Paul as a champion of Judaism, others as an enemy of Judaism.

1 On whom see A.F.J. Klijn and G.J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sect*, NovT 36 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 19–43; Sakari Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian ‘Heretics’*, ed. A. Marjanen and P. Luomanen (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 247–278.

2 On this episode and Luke’s view of Paul’s law observance, see Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 111–141.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. One could organize a textbook on the modern critical study of Paul following the template of this ancient debate recounted in Acts 21.³ Hence my title: Anti-Judaism and Philo-Judaism in Pauline Studies, Then and Now. There are reams and reams of material we could discuss under this heading,⁴ but in the space of this article, it will be necessary and profitable to select just a few of the most important figures to illustrate some main points. But first, a brief word on terminology. In my title, I have used the pair “anti-Judaism and philo-Judaism” in a bid for symmetry and accuracy, but the latter term is admittedly awkward and not widely current (although the cognate adjective “philo-Judaic” does have some traction, at least). If one searches for “philo-Judaism” in the standard journal databases and library catalogues, one finds studies of the Judaism of Philo of Alexandria. We, as a linguistic community, have the well-established paired terms “antisemitism” and “philosemitism,” and we have the additional term “anti-Judaism” (often used to cover cases where “antisemitism” is considered anachronistic or otherwise not quite right), but we lack a standard contrast term for “anti-Judaism.” “Philo-Judaism” would be an obvious choice, clumsy though it may be.⁵ It solves the same kinds of conceptual problems that “anti-Judaism” does vis-à-vis “antisemitism.” I will therefore use it in this article as a kind of linguistic experiment.

The central claim of the present article is as follows: There is a crucial ambiguity baked into our topic, the importance of which is hard to overestimate. Indeed, the story of anti-Judaism and philo-Judaism in Pauline studies is, in large part, the story of this ambiguity. It is this: an anti-Jewish (or, *mutatis mutandis*, a philo-Judaic) reading of Paul might mean one in which the interpreter exposes *the apostle's* position as anti-Jewish, or it might mean one in which *the interpreter's own* anti-Judaism colors or even determines his or her exegesis of Paul. Hyam Maccoby, for instance, offers an anti-Jewish reading of Paul in the former sense,⁶ while F.C. Baur, to cite an eminent example, offers

3 Indeed, Magnus Zetterholm has effectively done so in his *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

4 See further Daniel R. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann*, SJHC 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Patrick Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture: The Apostle and His Critics Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016).

5 There is express warrant for using it in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “philo-.”

6 Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1998); and see the review by J. Louis Martyn, “A Gentile in Spite of Himself,” *New York Times* (July 20, 1986).

an anti-Jewish reading of Paul in the latter sense.⁷ The plot thickens, however, because Baur thought that he was doing the former, but we, with the benefit of hindsight, know that he was doing the latter (or, at least, I think we know that). Baur's Paul ends up championing Baur's own anti-Jewish hobby-horses.⁸ This collapsing of the distinction between Paul's view and the interpreter's view is *the* hermeneutical issue in the matter before us. But here is the thing: in the history of Protestant interpretation, in particular, the collapsing of the distinction between Paul's view and the interpreter's view is, as we say nowadays, not a bug but a feature. Exhibit A: these classic lines from the preface to Karl Barth's monumental commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans:

I have nothing whatever to say against historical criticism. I recognize it, and once more state quite definitely that it is both necessary and justified. My complaint is that recent commentators confine themselves to an interpretation of the text which seems to me to be no commentary at all, but merely the first step towards a commentary.... Place the work of Jülicher side by side with that of Calvin: how energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks, and the man of the sixteenth century hears. The conversation between the original record and the reader moves round the subject-matter, until a distinction between yesterday and to-day becomes impossible.⁹

In this venerable tradition, to collapse the distinction between Paul and the modern interpreter is the whole point of exegesis. In the matter before us, then, we could try to (and in this article, I sometimes do) introduce terminology to eliminate this ambiguity, but to do so is also to miss the point of most modern Pauline studies, whose whole *raison d'être* has been to trade on this ambiguity. We will come back to this.

The history of Protestant interpretation of the Bible is littered with instances of anti-Judaism and, less so, of philo-Judaism. This is the case because Protestants (like other Christians, but in our own way) have always used Jews and Judaism as tools for thinking our Christian and Protestant identities. (N.B.

7 Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, trans. Eduard Zeller, 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1876 [German original 1845]).

8 See further Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 97–120.

9 Karl Barth, "Preface to the Second Edition" (1921), in idem, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 6–7.

I say “our” because I am a Protestant myself, though because I come from a family of mixed Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant backgrounds, I am more sharply aware of the contingencies of Protestant history than I might otherwise have been.) There are obvious ethical problems with this phenomenon, but some form of it or other was virtually inevitable once the ancient church rejected Marcionism for a two-testament Christian Bible.¹⁰ (And had the church opted in favour of Marcionism, they would have been stuck with yet another form of the same problem.) At the risk of oversimplifying, we may say that, historically, Protestants have needed the idea of Jews and Judaism in order to know what we, Protestants and Protestantism, are.¹¹

Protestant interpretation of all parts of the Bible illustrates this point, but the letters of Paul are a special case. Never are Protestants more Protestant, we might say, than when they are reading Paul.¹² At least part of the reason for this is congenital. Martin Luther, forefather of the Protestant churches, famously prized Paul’s letters above the rest of the biblical canon, and the Letter to the Galatians above all else. “The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle, to which I am betrothed. It is my Katie von Bora” (LW 26: ix), the name, of course, of Luther’s human wife. (Not coincidentally, Galatians is the only book of the New Testament in which the Greek word *Ioudaismos*, commonly translated *Judentum* or Judaism, occurs: twice in Gal 1:13–14.)¹³ I single out Luther here because he is the originator, but it is not only Luther. Many key contributions to the history of Protestant theology have taken the form of interpretations of Paul: Luther’s *Lectures on Galatians* (1519 and 1535, not two editions of the same commentary but two different commentaries), John Calvin’s interpretation of Romans 9–11 in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Albrecht Ritschl’s *Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, Karl Barth’s commentary

10 This problem was perceptively theorized by Brevard Childs, among other places, in his *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 55–69.

11 As many ancient Christians already did, a phenomenon Paula Fredriksen has perceptively characterized with the phrase “Jews in the head.”

12 A point well made by Robert Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, SBT 2.25 (London: SCM, 1973), 53: “The field of Pauline interpretation ... is where Protestant theologians since Luther have generally heard the gospel ‘clearest of all.’ This is, therefore, the point at which their interpretation of the tradition and their own theology are most likely to coincide. In saying what Christianity *was* for Paul, they are often saying what it *is* for themselves” (emphasis original).

13 On which see Matthew V. Novenson, “Paul’s Former Occupation in *Ioudaismos*,” in *Galatians and Christian Theology*, ed. Mark W. Elliott et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 24–39.

on Romans (all six editions), Rudolf Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* (in which Paul's only equal is John), Thomas Torrance's *Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (in which Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius are measured against Paul and found wanting), and many more beside.¹⁴

Because Protestants have done a great deal of their theology by reading Paul, the modern critical study of Paul has tended to happen especially (though by no means exclusively) in Protestant institutional spaces: Tübingen, Marburg, Cambridge, Durham, Princeton, New Haven, etc. Not so much Rome, Leuven, South Bend, or Jerusalem – until relatively recently, that is, much to the benefit of the discipline.¹⁵ What is more, although the modern critical study of Paul is, in theory, independent of the history of dogma and free to pursue whatever lines of enquiry it may choose, in practice, it has most often run in the grooves carved out by Luther and his successors. Some recent commentators consider this fact a happy one, others think it tragic,¹⁶ but there is little or no dispute that it is the case. In particular, the modern critical study of Paul has often taken for granted what Luther took for granted: that the interpretation of Paul consists in explaining where, how, and why Paul departs from Judaism. Historically, to do Protestant theology is to interpret Paul, and to interpret Paul is to explain Paul's relation to Judaism.

But this state of affairs is contingent, not inevitable. Catholic exegesis of Paul naturally shares with its Protestant counterpart a number of inherited theological problematics, but it is, on the whole, considerably less anxious than Protestant exegesis of Paul is. Compare the Romans commentaries by Joseph Fitzmyer and Brendan Byrne on the one hand with their Protestant counterparts by James Dunn and Robert Jewett on the other.¹⁷ Reading Catholic

14 Luther's two sets of *Lectures on Galatians*, of 1519 and 1535, are translated in *Luther's Works*, vols. 26 and 27, respectively. And see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Elsie Anne McKee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London, 1813 [1755]); Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, trans. H.R. Mackintosh and A.B. Macaulay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902); Barth, *Romans*; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1951–1955); Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1948).

15 See, e.g., the excellent Catholic/Jewish/Protestant collaboration *Paul's Jewish Matrix*, ed. Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011).

16 See, e.g., Stephen Westerholm, *Justification Reconsidered: Rethinking a Pauline Theme* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013) for the former perspective; and J. Albert Harrill, *Paul the Apostle: His Life and Legacy in Their Roman Context* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) for the latter.

17 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008 [1993]); Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, SP 6 (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1996); James D.G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2 vols., WBC (Dallas:

exegesis of Paul, one gets the sense that there is less at stake, because, well, there is less at stake. Catholic theology has recourse not only to the rest of the canon but also to tradition and magisterium, whereas Protestant theology stands or falls on its interpretation of Paul. (I generalize and exaggerate, but not by much.) Of course, this is also why some Protestant exegesis of Paul (e.g., Barth's commentary on Romans, or part 2 of Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*, or J. Louis Martyn's commentary on Galatians) can be so exciting to read, because one can tell that, for the author, life and death hang in the balance.¹⁸ This is bracing stuff, but it has not always yielded the most sober, disciplined historical judgments.

2 Anti-Judaism in Pauline Studies

While there certainly have been egregious examples of racist antisemitism in Protestant New Testament scholarship (one thinks immediately of Walter Grundmann's quixotic quest for an Aryan Jesus),¹⁹ in Pauline studies, it seems to me, the glaring problem is theological anti-Judaism. Most Protestant theologies of Paul require a foe for the apostle to vanquish, and most have made Judaism play the part of that foe, however it may need to be constructed in order so to serve (e.g., as legalism, ritualism, or ethnocentrism). "The apostle's message of justification is a fighting doctrine, directed against Judaism," as Ernst Käsemann put it,²⁰ and an overwhelming number of modern interpreters have agreed.

This is true already of Luther's *Lectures on Galatians*, mentioned above. Luther casts Paul's anonymous opponents in the letter, whom Paul himself only calls "agitators" (Gal 1:7; 5:10), as representatives of Judaism. "Right after he [Paul] had gone away false teachers among the Galatians had destroyed what he had built up so painstakingly. These false apostles, adherents of

Word Books, 1988); Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

18 Barth, *Romans*; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010 [1997]). Another, more recent example is Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

19 Walter Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1940), on which see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 531–576; and Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

20 Ernst Käsemann, "Justification and Salvation History in the Letter to the Romans," in *Perspectives on Paul* (London: SCM, 1971), 70.

Judaism and Pharisaism at that, were men of great prestige and authority.”²¹ For Luther, Paul’s fight is with Judaism, which is assumed to teach a false gospel of justification from works of the law. But Luther also makes this supposed Jewish false gospel stand in for all the sixteenth-century theologies with which he, Luther, has a quarrel. He writes, “If the doctrine of justification is lost, the whole of Christian doctrine is lost. And those in the world who do not teach it are either Jews or Turks or papists or sectarians. For between these two kinds of righteousness, the active righteousness of the Law and the passive righteousness of Christ, there is no middle ground.”²² For Luther, the imagined Jews of Galatians represent Jews in his own present, but they also represent Turks (i.e., Muslims), papists (i.e., Roman Catholics), and sectarians (i.e., other non-Lutheran churches). This is a rhetorically powerful kind of theological anti-Judaism, different in interesting ways, however, from the crass antisemitism of old man Luther’s *On the Jews and Their Lies* of 1543.²³

If Luther marks the beginning of Protestant interpretation of Paul, then F.C. Baur (mentioned above) marks the beginning of modern, critical interpretation of Paul, which, not coincidentally, has also been largely Protestant.²⁴ “Anti-Judaism” (*Antijudaismus*) is actually Baur’s own term for the apostle’s theology. Arguing, for instance, that Marcion’s fourteen-chapter recension of the Letter to the Romans was in fact the original text, Baur writes, “The criticism of the last chapters [i.e., Romans 15–16] leads to but one result: they must be held to be the work of a Paulinist, writing in the spirit of the Acts of the Apostles, seeking to soothe the Judaists, and to promote the cause of unity, and therefore tempering the keen anti-Judaism of Paul with a milder and more conciliatory conclusion to his Epistle.”²⁵ Baur’s overarching historical question is how Christianity managed to break free of its origins in Judaism.²⁶ As he puts it, “How Christianity, instead of remaining a mere form of Judaism, and ultimately being absorbed in it, asserted itself as a separate, independent principle, broke loose from it and took its stand as a new form of religious thought and life, essentially differing from Judaism, and freed from all its national

21 Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), 14.

22 Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), 9.

23 On which see Thomas Kaufmann, *Luther’s Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism*, trans. Lesley Sharpe and Jeremy Noakes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

24 On Baur’s tremendous significance, see the essays collected in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, ed. M. Bauspiess, C. Landmesser, and D. Lincicum; trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

25 Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 1:365.

26 See Anders Gerdmar, “Baur and the Creation of the Judaism-Hellenism Dichotomy,” in *Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, 96–115.

exclusiveness, is the point of next greatest importance in the primitive history of Christianity.²⁷ On Baur's telling, the hero of this story is Paul, whose genius lies in his anti-Judaism, his realization that Judaism itself is the problem.²⁸ "The element of the Jewish religion, which must have excited the most lively repugnance in the fully formed Christian consciousness, as it appeared for the first time in Paul, was undoubtedly its empty confidence in outward works. From this it was necessary to appeal to the inner disposition – to faith."²⁹ With Baur we need not lay the charge of anti-Judaism; he confesses to it openly. It is his own name for Paul's guiding theological principle.³⁰

Most (though not all) subsequent interpreters have been far more subtle. In the twentieth century, Protestant interpreters tended to favour the idea that, for Paul, Jews and Judaism represent *homo religiosus*, humanity at its pious best.³¹ There are myriad examples, but one standout is Ernst Käsemann, a student of Bultmann and one of the foremost Paulinists writing after the Second World War. Käsemann writes, "The apostle's real adversary is the devout Jew, not only as the mirror-image of his own past – though that, too – but as the reality of the religious man.... Religion always provides man with his most thoroughgoing possibility of confusing an illusion with God. Paul sees this possibility realized in the devout Jew."³² There are echoes here of Luther's idea that the Jews represent not only themselves but also Muslims, Catholics, and heretics, that is, religious people who nevertheless do not grasp the (Lutheran, or Käsemannian) gospel of Christian righteousness. Käsemann argues further in the same essay, "Israel has exemplary significance for [Paul]; in and with Israel he strikes at the hidden Jew in all of us, at the man who validates rights and demands over against God on the basis of God's past dealings with him and to this extent is serving not God but an illusion."³³ Here the Jew is not just a historical but a psychological phenomenon, "the hidden Jew in all of us," that aspect of the human self that makes demands of God.³⁴ Käsemann is much less contemptuous of

27 Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 1:3.

28 See Christof Landmesser, "Ferdinand Christian Baur as Interpreter of Paul: History, the Absolute, and Freedom," in *Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, 147–176.

29 Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 2:307.

30 See further Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 97–120.

31 On which theme, see the critical but sympathetic discussion by Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 27–56.

32 Ernst Käsemann, "Paul and Israel," in *New Testament Questions of Today*, ed. E. Käsemann, (London: SCM, 1969), 184.

33 Käsemann, "Paul and Israel," 186.

34 On this theme in Käsemann, see the devastating criticism of Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 209–214.

actual Jews than Luther or Baur had been, but his use of Jewishness as a cipher in this way is another kind of theological anti-Judaism.³⁵

The New Perspective on Paul, a movement so named by James Dunn in 1982, fits rather awkwardly in this story.³⁶ Dunn credited E.P. Sanders's 1977 *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* with catalyzing the movement, but Sanders himself has never owned the label and arguably does not do what Dunn's New Perspective does.³⁷ Sanders showed with devastating effectiveness that the traditional (read: Protestant) interpretation of Paul depended on a colossal straw man, a theory of a supposedly ubiquitous Jewish doctrine of salvation by works (as, e.g., in Ferdinand Weber's *Jüdische Theologie*).³⁸ Sanders showed that there was no such doctrine, which left New Testament scholars wondering what Paul was so exercised about, then. Sanders himself appealed to the simple thatness of Christ: "The law is good, even doing the law is good, but salvation is only by Christ; therefore the entire system represented by the law is worthless for salvation."³⁹ Or, more tersely and famously: "In short, this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: It is not Christianity."⁴⁰

For Dunn's New Perspective, however, this is too arbitrary an answer. Dunn complains, "The Lutheran Paul has been replaced by [Sanders's] idiosyncratic Paul who in arbitrary and irrational manner turns his face against the glory and greatness of Judaism's covenant theology."⁴¹ Unlike Sanders, Dunn needs to diagnose a problem in the Judaism of Paul's day to which the apostle can respond and over which he can triumph. Dunn finds it not, as previous generations of Protestant interpreters had done, in legalism but rather in nationalism: "Judaism had itself invested so much significance in these particular works, so that the test of loyalty to covenant and law was precisely the observance of circumcision, food laws and sabbath.... They had become the expression of a too narrowly nationalistic and racial conception of the covenant, because they

35 See further R. Barry Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism*, JSNTSup 127 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 186–246.

36 The movement was spoken into being in James D.G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95–122, which is reprinted together with Dunn's other major Pauline essays in idem, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

37 The landmark book was E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). Sanders's own reading of Paul is more fully laid out in his *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); and his most recent statement is idem, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

38 Ferdinand Weber, *Jüdische Theologie*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1897).

39 Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 550.

40 Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552.

41 Dunn, "New Perspective on Paul," 103.

had become a badge not of Abraham's faith but of Israel's boast."⁴² Similar but more measured is the New Perspective *à la* N.T. Wright, who writes, "Paul's critique of Israel was aimed not at proto-Pelagianism or 'moralism' but at ethnocentric covenantalism."⁴³ Sanders had had the closest thing I know of in Pauline studies to a genuinely new insight: that the entire scholarly quest for "Paul's critique of Judaism" was and had always been a mistake. With Dunn's New Perspective, however, the quest was re-entrenched,⁴⁴ but now it was Pauline universalism over against Jewish ethnocentrism, in contrast to the older freedom-versus-legalism rubric.

3 Philo-Judaism in Pauline Studies

Not at all coincidentally, it is in the aftermath of the Holocaust that we begin to see significant strands of philo-Judaism in academic Pauline studies. This development was part of the reckoning, happening in many corners of Christian theology, with the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and antisemitism.⁴⁵ There had been earlier dissenters from the main stream of anti-Jewish interpretation of Paul. One thinks especially of Albert Schweitzer's *Paul and His Interpreters* (1912) and *Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (1931) and W.D. Davies's *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948),⁴⁶ both of whom interpreted Paul's theology in inner-Jewish terms: Schweitzer apocalyptic Jewish, Davies rabbinic Jewish, but both firmly against the majority view that Paul marshalled the resources of Hellenism to transcend Judaism.⁴⁷ But these earlier dissenters dissented on historicist grounds, not ecumenical ones. They were correcting an error in historical-critical interpretation, not doing anti-supersessionist theology for the churches.

In the 1950s and following, though, a number of interpreters undertook to do the latter in addition to the former. The foremost figure in this movement

42 Dunn, "New Perspective on Paul," 118–119.

43 Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," 66.

44 A point well made by Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4–7.

45 On this period, see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research, Volume 3: From C.H. Dodd to Hans Dieter Betz* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).

46 Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black, 1912); idem, *Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black, 1931); W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948).

47 On this older majority view and its discontents, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville: WJK, 2001).

was Krister Stendahl, long-time Professor of New Testament at Harvard and latterly also Lutheran bishop of Stockholm in his native Sweden. Stendahl's argument – now justly famous – is that Paul's gospel is not about salving the guilty conscience but about bringing unwashed gentiles into covenant with the God of Abraham.⁴⁸ For Stendahl's Paul, it is gentiles, not Jews, who are the problem. He writes, for instance:

Paul does not say that when the time of God's kingdom, the consummation, comes Israel will accept Jesus as the Messiah. He says only that the time will come when 'all Israel will be saved' ([Rom] 11:26). It is stunning to note that Paul writes this whole section of Romans (10:17–11:36) without using the name of Jesus Christ.... Paul's reference to God's mysterious plan is an affirmation of a God-willed coexistence between Judaism and Christianity in which the missionary urge to convert Israel is held in check.⁴⁹

That last sentence hints at Stendahl's post-Holocaust ecumenical stance, which becomes quite explicit later in the same essay:

The United States of today [1963] is the first place in the modern world since Philo's Alexandria where Jews and Christians as people, as religious communities, and as learned communities, live together in a manner and in sufficient numbers to allow for open dialogue. It is the first time in recent history where there could be an open relation between Christians and Jews and where the conversation which Paul started in Romans 9–11, but which was broken off mainly by Christian expansion and superiority feelings, can start again. The pain of history and the shame of the holocaust interfere with real dialogue, but the possibility really exists and, it is to be hoped, will increase.⁵⁰

Above I suggested that F.C. Baur illustrates the collapsing of the distinction between Paul's view and the Protestant interpreter's view: both Baur and Baur's Paul are contemptuous of a Judaism supposedly preoccupied with legal externalism. But Stendahl, too, illustrates this Protestant collapsing of

48 Especially in his *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); but see also his later *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

49 Stendahl, "Paul among Jews and Gentiles," in idem, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 4.

50 Stendahl, "Paul among Jews and Gentiles," in idem, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 37.

horizons, albeit in a much more ethically praiseworthy direction. In this connection, there is a poignant story about Stendahl related by the German Jewish philosopher Jacob Taubes, a friend and almost exact contemporary of Stendahl who, however, pre-deceased Stendahl by more than twenty years. In his excellent *Political Theology of Paul*, Taubes writes:

[Krister Stendahl] visited me once in New York, and we were standing in front of a very large fireplace. And Krister – he’s a real warrior type, you know, Goebbels would have envied him his figure – he says to me that his deepest worry is whether he belongs (we were speaking English) to the ‘commonwealth of Israel.’ So I said to myself, Krister, you super-Aryan from Sweden, at the end of the world, as viewed from the Mediterranean, other worries you don’t have? No, he has no other worries! There I saw what Paul had done: that someone in the jungles of Sweden – as seen from where I’m standing – is worrying about whether he belongs to the ‘commonwealth of Israel,’ that’s something that’s impossible without Paul. (I was able to reassure him: as far as I’m concerned he’s in.)⁵¹

This is a lovely story of a Jewish/Christian friendship forged in the aftermath of twentieth-century atrocity, but it also illustrates our point about Protestant exegesis of Paul. Stendahl the exegete argues that Paul’s apostolate is about bringing gentiles into the people of God, and Stendahl the gentile Christian worries whether he himself will be counted among that people. The wall between the first century and the twentieth becomes transparent, Barth might have said.

If Stendahl saw in Paul’s letters “a God-willed coexistence between Judaism and Christianity,” some of his successors went further still, arguing that Paul has a fully formed two-covenant theology: gentiles are to be saved through Christ-faith, Jews through the Sinai covenant.⁵² One standout figure here is the North American Presbyterian Lloyd Gaston, whose 1987 book *Paul and the Torah* is a landmark in this tradition of liberal Protestant exegesis.⁵³ Gaston

51 Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 41.

52 For a retrospect on and thoughtful criticism of this hypothesis, see Terence L. Donaldson, “Jewish Christianity, Israel’s Stumbling, and the *Sonderweg* Reading of Paul,” *JNST* 29 (2006): 27–54.

53 Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987). Also important here is Gaston’s contemporary John G. Gager, who reads Paul similarly but without Gaston’s theological commitments. See John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 193–264; idem, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

starts from the theological problematic famously posed by Rosemary Radford Ruether in her 1974 *Faith and Fratricide*: “Possibly anti-Judaism is too deeply embedded in the foundations of Christianity to be rooted out entirely without destroying the whole structure.”⁵⁴ Whereas Ruether the Catholic thinks this problem theologically, Gaston the Protestant answers it with – lo and behold – an exegesis of Paul. To Ruether’s sobering claim that “anti-Judaism is the left hand of Christology,” Gaston answers, “It may be that Paul, and Paul alone among the New Testament writers, has no left hand ... I believe that it is possible to interpret Paul in this manner. That it is necessary to do so is the implication of the agonized concern of many in the post-Auschwitz situation.”⁵⁵ Note Gaston’s Protestant reasoning: In the agonized post-Auschwitz situation, Christian theology is on the ropes, but a fresh reading of the letters of Paul will save us. Or, as he says elsewhere, “A Christian church with an antisemitic New Testament is abominable, but a Christian church without a New Testament is inconceivable.”⁵⁶ Philo-Judaic exegesis of the New Testament becomes a moral imperative, and Paul is the canon within the canon who will admit of such an exegesis.

4 Conclusion

The state of anti-Judaism and philo-Judaism in Pauline studies now is both like and unlike what it was then, that is, in generations past. It is *unlike*, in many respects, for the better. One is not likely to find the racist antisemitism of the later Luther or the interreligious contempt of a Baur in any work of critical Pauline studies nowadays. It is shameful that it took an evil on the scale of the Holocaust to effect this change in scholarship, but we may be grateful, at least, that change did come. But the state of affairs now is also *like* what it was then in some respects. Pauline studies is still a disproportionately Protestant project. And although the extreme sentiments of a Luther or a Baur have become *déclassé*, other, cooler-headed anti-Jewish interpretations of Paul survive and even thrive.⁵⁷ Claims such as Käsemann’s – “Paul’s real opponent is the devout Jew,” “Paul strikes at the hidden Jew in all of us” – are still quite close to the mainstream, which – and this, I think, is the key – continues to look for Paulinism

54 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974), 228.

55 Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 34.

56 Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 15.

57 A number of such interpretations are footnoted in Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). See also Matthew Thiessen, “Conjuring Paul and Judaism Forty Years after *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,” *JMJS* 5 (2018): 6–20.

at just those points where Paul supposedly departs from his ancestral religion. If Paulinism is, as per a Protestant axiom, *true* and, as per the aforementioned model, *not Judaism*, then some form of theological anti-Judaism, however soft, is virtually inevitable. Hence while almost all interpreters nowadays line up to affirm that Paul is a Jew, most also hasten to qualify that affirmation: he is an anomalous Jew, a radical Jew, a transformed Jew, a redefined Jew⁵⁸ (where it is assumed that, say, the Teacher of Righteousness, or Philo, or Bar Kokhba was not anomalous or radical each in his own way).

Significantly, however, the popular anomalous-Jewish or radical-Jewish Pauls of recent interpretation are not at all anomalous or radical relative to the theological views of their proponents. Quite the contrary. Indeed, what all of the various anti-Jewish and philo-Judaic Pauls we have discussed have in common is their extremely close affinity with the theologies of their respective modern interpreters. Whether Paul is presented as blisteringly anti-Jewish or humanely philo-Judaic, he almost never fails to agree with the person doing the presenting.⁵⁹ This is why it is so jarring to read the rare interpretation of Paul (e.g., Albert Schweitzer's or Paula Fredriksen's) in which the apostle comes out looking genuinely strange, holding views that no modern person, of whatever theological persuasion, holds.⁶⁰

With Schweitzer, I would argue that it makes for both better history *and* better theology to let Paul be Paul and then to take responsibility for whatever theological and ethical steps we need to take beyond or away from him.⁶¹ (Easier said than done, I realize; most of the interpreters discussed above have

58 E.g., John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 381–396: “Paul: an anomalous diaspora Jew”; Love Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race*, LNTS 410 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009); N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols. (London: SPCK, 2013), 774–1042: “the people of God [Israel, Jews], freshly reworked”; Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1–30: “Paul the Jew ... of sorts.”

59 Recall Robert Morgan's observation: “In saying what Christianity was for Paul, they are often saying what it is for themselves” (*Nature of New Testament Theology*, 53).

60 Schweitzer, *Mysticism of Paul*; Fredriksen, *Pagans' Apostle*. One also thinks here of Rudolf Bultmann's famous demythologizing project, which, whatever weaknesses it may have had, paid Paul the compliment of allowing him to hold strange ancient views.

61 See Schweitzer, *Mysticism of Paul*, x: “My methods have remained old-fashioned, in that I aim at setting forth the ideas of Paul in their historically conditioned form. I believe that the mingling of our ways of regarding religion with those of former historical periods, which is now so much practised, often with dazzling cleverness, is of no use as an aid to historical comprehension, and of not much use in the end for our religious life.” For an impressive recent effort to think theology along similar lines, see Dale B. Martin, *Biblical Truths: The Meaning of Scripture in the Twenty-First Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

said that they were letting Paul be Paul. But it is possible to do better.) This rule applies to a great many topics, but Judaism is certainly one of the most important. E.P. Sanders, representing a road unfortunately not taken in the subsequent New Perspective debates of the 1980s and 1990s, made this point in one of his early discussions. He writes:

It perhaps should go without saying ... that Paul's view does not provide an adequate basis for a Jewish-Christian dialogue. Generations have come and gone, and Paul's expectations have not been fulfilled. His references to the fullness of the Gentiles and to all Israel depend on his expectation that the Redeemer would come soon, and they have in view only the generation during which Paul worked. Thus they cannot be used in any simple way to determine what Paul would have thought of the fate of future generations of either Gentiles or Jews. We may put the matter this way: what Paul would have thought, had he foreseen that God would not do what he based his entire life on expecting him to do, is simply imponderable. That will not, however, keep us from pondering it.⁶²

It should go without saying, Sanders writes, but it really does not. It needs careful, repeated saying. As I have argued here, it is in the disciplinary DNA of academic Pauline studies (especially but not only of the Protestant variety) to assume that Paul's view on anything, but on Judaism above all, *does* provide an adequate basis for a modern view on that thing. Barth's ideal of the hermeneutical dissolution of the wall between the first century and the twenty-first remains an ideal for many, perhaps most. That ideal, however, will strongly press the interpreter to read Paul as saying what she herself believes to be theologically true, e.g., that Judaism is a religion of empty ritual (thus Baur), or that Christ came to save gentiles only (thus Gaston), or any of a thousand other passionately held views. There may be no other ancient author whom we have such a hard time just letting him be himself, letting him hold the views that he holds. On average, non-Christian interpreters can perform this hermeneutical feat more easily than Christian ones can, and Catholics more easily than Protestants,⁶³ but almost no one does it effortlessly (see, e.g., Daniel Boyarin's *A Radical Jew*, or Alain Badiou's *The Foundation of Universalism*).⁶⁴ The story

62 Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 197.

63 See, e.g., Claudia Setzer, "Does Paul Need to Be Saved?" *BibInt* 13 (2005): 289–297; Gregory Tatum, "Did Paul Find Anything Wrong with Judaism?" *JJMJS* 5 (2018): 38–44.

64 Boyarin, *Radical Jew*; Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

of anti-Judaism and philo-Judaism in Pauline studies is a classic story of what happens when we moderns use an ancient person's words to do our thinking for us.

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The Sibylline Oracles: A Case Study in Ancient and Modern Anti-Judaism

Olivia Stewart Lester

1 Introduction

This chapter considers the topics of Judaism and anti-Judaism with respect to the Jewish-Christian Sibylline Oracles.¹ It is my hope that training our focus on the Jewish-Christian Sibylline Oracles adds at least two insights to the larger conversation in a volume on Protestant Bible scholarship and anti-semitism, philosemitism, and anti-Judaism. First, with respect to modern scholarship, an analysis of the Sibylline Oracles and anti-Judaism reinforces that anti-Judaism does not just affect the status or appreciation of canonical texts; it also hinders an appreciation of texts such as the Sibylline Oracles as fully Jewish, as can be seen in the comments of Adolf von Harnack, one of the major Protestant Bible scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Second, the particularly composite nature of the Sibylline Oracles illuminates the ways that, already in antiquity, ancient anti-Judaism could infect readings of ancient Jewish texts. In the Sibylline Oracles, Jewish texts and anti-Jewish texts coexist side by side in the same collection, sometimes in the very same book. The Sibylline Oracles are not unique in this respect, but the close proximity of Jewish and anti-Jewish material does make them a helpful case study for examining the potency and dangerous legacies of ancient anti-Judaism, as ancient anti-Jewish polemics have the power to feed modern anti-Judaism.

At the outset, a brief introduction to the Jewish-Christian Sibylline Oracles is needed. The Sibylline Oracles are a collection of pseudepigraphic Jewish and Christian prophecies written in Greek hexameters over hundreds of years and voiced by a type of “pagan” prophetess, a sibyl. The earliest surviving literary reference to a sibyl, attributed to Heraclitus by Plutarch, describes her as

1 I am grateful to Hindy Najman, the organizer of the “Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism, and Anti-Judaism” conference (with Arjen Bakker and Yael Fisch), for the invitation to participate in this conference and volume, and to all of the attendees of the conference for helpful conversation and suggestions. I am also grateful to the editors and editorial assistants of this volume for their suggestions and corrections, especially René Bloch, Edward Maza, and Shannon Parrott.

a single ancient figure, cheerless and mad but speaking to a thousand years through divine inspiration.² Over time, sibyls multiplied. They became associated with different geographical locations, as in the famous consultation between Aeneas and the Cumaean Sibyl in book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, where a sibyl is this kind of localized prophet.³ Eventually, sibyls were most closely associated with a collection of prophetic books owned by the Roman Senate, who appointed a group of ten men to guard them and consult them when directed.⁴ The Jewish-Christian Sibylline Oracles take up a traditional trope of sibylline prophecies of doom and innovate by adding ethical and theological instruction.⁵ With respect to their production, the Sibylline Oracles are deeply composite. They are literarily composite, as they reinterpret Homer, Hesiod, Greek mythology, texts that eventually become part of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, Pseudo-Phocylides, and Christian apocalypses, among others. They are also composite in terms of dating and provenance, with different books (and different layers of individual books) most likely produced in different contexts. Scholarly consensus dates the Jewish-Christian Sibylline oracles as a collection from approximately the 2nd century BCE to the 7th century CE.⁶ An analysis of these texts, then, must attend to the individuality of each passage from the Sibylline Oracles on a case by case basis, as well as locating each text within the larger prophetic collection.

2 Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis*, 397A. For a general introduction to these texts, see among others, Johannes Geffcken, *Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sibyllina* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1902); John J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, SBL Dissertation Series 13 (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974); idem, "Sibylline Oracles," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1., ed. J.H. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 317–472. More recently, see Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and Its Social Setting: With an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, SVTP 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); J.L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles: With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Olaf Waßmuth, *Orakel Sibyllinische 1–2: Studien und Kommentar*, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 76 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011); Ashley L. Bacchi, *Uncovering Jewish Creativity in Book III of the Sibylline Oracles: Gender, Intertextuality, and Politics*, JSJSup 194 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020).

3 Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.1–155.

4 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 4.62.4–6; Cicero, *On Divination* 2.54.112.

5 Collins, "Sibylline Oracles"; idem, "The Jewish Transformation of Sibylline Oracles," in *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages in Hellenistic Roman Judaism*, JSJSup 54 (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), 181–97 at 189; "Sibylline Discourse," in *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 251–70 at 252–53; H.W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1988), 7, 10–11, 12–13; J.L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles: With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8 n31, 16–17, 136.

6 Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 317–472.

This chapter will proceed in three movements: the first two sections examine modern scholarly attitudes towards the Jewishness of the collection; the third section returns to the sibylline texts themselves and analyses the anti-Jewish views within portions of the collection, in some cases juxtaposed within the same book as Jewish sibylline oracles.

I begin with a brief discussion of Adolf von Harnack's analysis of the Sibylline Oracles in his survey of early Christian literature, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, before turning to the role they play in his construction of Hellenistic Judaism within the monumental history of Christian dogma, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*. Harnack agreed with the consensus view of scholars that some of the Sibylline Oracles were Jewish, and others were Christian, although he did not think highly of their quality or the enterprise of forging them in the first place.⁷ Even while he acknowledged these texts as Jewish, however, he read the Jewish Sibylline Oracles, among other Hellenistic Jewish texts, as belonging to "a Judaism of a second order."⁸ In Harnack's model, this more universal, less-Jewish-Judaism prepared the world for the universal Christian gospel. Others have commented on Harnack's negative views of Judaism; his comments on the Sibylline Oracles provide an additional example of such anti-Jewish ideology.⁹

7 See Adolf von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, Teil II: Die Chronologie, Band 1: Die Chronologie der Litteratur bis Irenäus nebst einleitenden Untersuchungen, 2d ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1958), 581–89; *ibid.*, Band 2: Die Chronologie der Litteratur von Irenäus bis Eusebius, 184–89.

8 « ein Judentum zweiter Ordnung » (Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Vol. 1 [Freiburg: Mohr, 1888], 51, 94). Translation follows that of Neil Buchanan, *History of Dogma* [New York: Dover, 1894], unless otherwise indicated).

9 Some have described Harnack's negative views of Judaism without locating them within the categories of anti-Judaism or antisemitism (e.g., Christoph Marksches, "Harnack's Image of 1 Clement and Contemporary Research," *ZAC* 18.1 [2013]: 54–69; Wolfram Kinzig, "Harnack, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and the First World War," *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 22.2 [2015]: 190–230; *idem*, *Harnack, Marcion und das Judentum: Nebst einer kommentierten Edition des Briefwechsels Adolf von Harnacks mit Houston Stewart Chamberlain* [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004]). Others do employ "anti-Judaism" for Harnack's ideas (e.g., "l'antijudaïsme," Dan Jaffé, "Jésus dans le monde juif de son temps: Réflexions autour de L'Essence du christianisme d'Adolf von Harnack," *Études théologiques et religieuses* 92.3 [2017]: 587–607; Jean Zumstein, "Le problème de l'antijudaïsme en exégèse du Nouveau Testament à l'exemple d'Adolf von Harnack," *Études théologiques et religieuses* 92.3 [2017]: 609–18; see also Joseph B. Tyson, "Anti-Judaism in the Critical Study of the Gospels," in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, ed. W.R. Farmer [Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999], 216–51). In this chapter, I consider Harnack's negative views of Judaism as belonging to the category of "anti-Judaism," in part because of their resemblances with ancient anti-Judaism, to be discussed further below.

Second, Harnack's views on the Sibylline Oracles highlight specific questions about how one constructs the "Jewishness" of an ancient text, including the roles played by particular themes such as law and ritual in demarcating Jewish texts from non-Jewish texts. These questions are deeply relevant for the specific study of the Sibylline Oracles, but they speak to a much larger set of debates about how to classify Jewish pseudepigrapha preserved by Christians. The second part of this chapter will briefly review these debates and their significance for the Sibylline Oracles. It will then argue that a reading of Harnack adds new urgency to debates about classifying pseudepigrapha as Jewish or Christian, in that any stance on this question must take the dangers of ancient and modern anti-Judaism more fully into consideration.

Third, one aspect that makes the Sibylline Oracles challenging to study is that if indeed there are Jewish and Christian layers – as virtually all scholars would agree, although they differ on the details – they are not in a neutral relationship with one another. There are passages within the Christian material that display a violent anti-Judaism. Such polemics are not only actively anti-Jewish in their content; they also efface the Jewishness of other Jewish Sibylline Oracles in the collection with which they bear strong resemblances. The third section of this chapter will examine several of these anti-Jewish passages, following the logics of aggressive anti-Judaism in these texts and arguing for their capacity to erase the Jewishness of other sibylline texts. By reading this troubling material together, I argue that an anti-Jewish reading such as Harnack's is not just a product of its own time. Different layers within the Sibylline Oracles, with an apparent continuity with the rest of the collection, work against a reading of other layers as part of the robust diversity of ancient Judaism.

2 Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, and the Sibylline Oracles

Harnack devotes his closest analysis to the Sibylline Oracles in *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, where he considers whether any of the collection could have been written by a Christian living in the first or second century CE.¹⁰ He proceeds book by book, sometimes section by section, and concludes that interpolations and redaction notwithstanding, no Christian composed Sibylline Oracles before the third century at the earliest, and more

¹⁰ Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.1, 581–89; II.2, 184–89.

specifically, the latter third of the third century.¹¹ In the course of this analysis, he affirms that many of the Sibylline Oracles are Jewish, including Sib. Or. 3–5 (with the exception of some interpolations), an earlier layer of Sib. Or. 1–2 (later redacted by a Christian), and portions of Sib. Or. 8.¹² When discussing book 8, he asserts the Jewishness of these texts forcefully, reproaching scholars such as Theodor Zahn who suggested that the first two hundred lines were Christian.¹³ He concludes by describing Christians' indebtedness to ancient Jewish writers for the Sibylline Oracles: first, Christians read and used Jewish oracles; then, in the third century, Christians copied Jews in the writing of their own oracles.¹⁴

Ultimately, however, it becomes clear that Harnack's appreciation of ancient Christians' indebtedness to Jewish writers for the Sibylline Oracles does not amount to a positive portrayal of Jewish literary activity. For Harnack, it is a good thing that he finds no evidence of Christian sibylline composition in the first and second centuries, "because all this literature is tainted with the blemish of deliberate forgery."¹⁵ In his final summary, he locates the Christian sibylline writers during a period of literary poverty in early Christianity and claims that they contributed to the weakness (Schwäche) and untruthfulness (Unwahrhaftigkeit) of this period.¹⁶ In affirming the indebtedness of the Christian Sibylline Oracles to the Jewish Sibylline Oracles, then, Harnack is also claiming that the fault for conscious deception and poor literary quality lies with the Jewish writers.

Harnack's close reading of the Sibylline Oracles in *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius* evidences a very specific negative view of Jewish literary activity in the writing of Sibylline Oracles. He sees these texts in particular as deceitful and characterized by weak literary quality. Elsewhere in his work, Harnack utilizes the Sibylline Oracles to make a broader set of anti-Jewish claims. It is to these claims – found in *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* – and the place of the Sibylline Oracles within them, that we now turn.

Harnack does not pay special attention to the Sibylline Oracles in his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, but they appear several times as examples of a more universalized Hellenistic Judaism. Harnack names Hellenistic Judaism

11 Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.1, 589; II.2, 189.

12 Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.2, 185–86; II.1, 586–88.

13 « Dass hier ein Jude spricht, hätte man nie verkennen dürfen. » ("That here a Jew speaks, one should never have failed to recognize.") Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.1, 587.

14 Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.1, 588.

15 « ... denn diese ganze Litteratur ist doch mit der Makel bewusster Fälschung behaftet. » Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.1, 588.

16 Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.2, 189.

as a factor for the growth of Christianity from a movement within Judaism to a more philosophical, universal dogma.¹⁷ He describes it this way:

Between the Graeco-Roman world which was in search of a spiritual religion, and the Jewish commonwealth which already possessed such a religion as a national property, though vitiated by exclusiveness, there had long been a Judaism which, penetrated by the Greek spirit, was, *ex professo*, devoting itself to the task of bringing a new religion to the Greek world, the Jewish religion, but that religion in its kernel Greek, that is, philosophically molded, spiritualised and secularised.¹⁸

We can already comment on the idea that Jewish religion was nationalistic and exclusive here as an instance of Harnack's anti-Judaism. Harnack continues, describing the similarities between Hellenistic Judaism and later Christian propaganda:

The propaganda of Christianity in the Diaspora followed the Jewish propaganda and partly took its place, that is, the Gospel was at first preached to those Gentiles who were already acquainted with the general outlines of the Jewish religion, and who were even frequently viewed as a Judaism of a second order, in which Jewish and Greek elements had been united in a peculiar mixture.¹⁹

Harnack goes on to name the Christian Sibylline Oracles as one example of such a Christian text that "completely agree[s] in plan, in form and contents

17 Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 53.

18 « Zwischen der griechisch-römischen Welt, die eine geistige Religion suchte, und dem jüdischen Gemeinwesen, welches eine solche als nationales Eigenthum, übel genug verschränkt, besass, stand seit langer Zeit schon ein Judenthum, welches, vom griechischen Geist durchdrungen, ex professo beflissen war, der griechischen Welt eine neue Religion zu bringen – die jüdische Religion –, aber diese Religion in ihrem Kerne griechisch d. h. philosophisch modellirt, vergeistigt und säcularisirt » (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 50, trans. Neil Buchanan, *History of Dogma* [New York: Dover, 1894], 53–54).

19 « ist die Propaganda des Christenthums in der Diaspora der jüdischen Propaganda gefolgt und hat sie theilweise abgelöst, d.h. das Evangelium ist zunächst solchen Heiden verkündet worden, welche die jüdische Religion in allgemeinen Umrissen bereits kennen gelernt hatten und häufig selbst als ein Judenthum zweiter Ordnung constituirt waren, in welchem Jüdisches und Griechisches in eigenthümlichen Mischungen sich vereinigt hatten » (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 51; Buchanan, 54).

with Graeco-Jewish writings of the Diaspora.”²⁰ Finally, Harnack affirms that “Alexandrian and non-Palestinian Judaism is still Judaism,”²¹ and that it would eventually serve to connect the “Jewish Church”²² (i.e., the early Jesus movement), and the Roman empire.

In this first passage, Harnack describes Hellenistic Judaism as ultimately Jewish, but distinctly different from nationalistic, exclusive Palestinian Judaism. It is a religion that owes its philosophical, spiritual, and secular identity to Greek culture. When he describes the transmission of this religion to Gentiles, Harnack invokes the idea of a second order Judaism, a mixture of Jewish and Greek elements. While in this passage, it is unclear who held the view of Gentiles interested in Judaism as a ‘Judaism of a second order,’ in a moment, we will see Harnack himself take up this framing. Finally, Harnack instrumentalizes Hellenistic Judaism, viewing it as a bridge to bring Jewish followers of Jesus and the larger Roman empire together.

Harnack elaborates his views on the Jewish Sibylline Oracles slightly later in the same volume:

From the remains of the Jewish Alexandrian literature and the Jewish Sibylline writings, also from the work of Josephus, and especially from the great propaganda of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman world, we may gather that there was a Judaism in the Diaspora, for the consciousness of which the cultus and ceremonial law were of comparatively subordinate importance; while the monotheistic worship of God, apart from images, the doctrines of virtue and belief in a future retribution beyond the grave, stood in the foreground as its really essential marks. Converted Gentiles were no longer everywhere required to be even circumcised; the bath of purification was deemed sufficient. The Jewish religion here appears transformed into a universal human ethic and a monotheistic cosmology.²³

20 « welche vollkommen in Anlage, Form und Inhalt mit griechisch-jüdischen Schriftstücken aus der Diaspora übereinstimmen » (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 51; Buchanan, 54).

21 « Auch das alexandrinische und ausserpalästinensische Judenthum ist Judenthum » (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 52; Buchanan, 54).

22 « jüdischen Kirche » (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 52).

23 « Aus den Resten der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Litteratur und der jüdischen Sibyllistik, auch aus den Werken des Josephus, vor allem aber aus der grossen Propaganda des Judenthums in der griechisch-römischen Welt ist zu schliessen, dass es in der Diaspora ein Judenthum gab, für dessen Bewusstsein der Cultus und das Ceremonialgesetz von verhältnissmässig untergeordnetem Belang waren, während ihm die bildlose monotheistische Gottesverehrung, die Tugendlehren und der Glaube an eine künftige jenseitige Vergeltung als die eigentlich wesentlichen Merkmale des Judenthums in Vordergrunde

Harnack argues that within this transformed Judaism, the Jewish Sibylline Oracles especially demonstrated their Jewishness by placing emphasis on the books of Moses as the source for all knowledge about God. The Pentateuch was, therefore, the ultimate source of Greek religion, poetry, and philosophy.²⁴

Harnack returns to the idea of a Judaism of a second order, a Judaism without law:

These Jews and the Greeks converted by them formed, as it were, a Judaism of a second order without law (ceremonial law), and with a minimum of statutory regulations. This Judaism prepared the soil for the Christianising of the Greeks, as well as for the genesis of a great Gentile Church in the empire, free from the law; and this the more that, as it seems, after the second destruction of Jerusalem, the punctilious observance of the law was imposed more strictly than before on all who worshipped the God of the Jews.²⁵

We can add to Harnack's presentation of Judaism as nationalistic and exclusivist an implication of Jewish legalism here, which is contrasted with Christian freedom. A number of recent publications have traced anti-Judaism or anti-Jewish viewpoints in the writings of Harnack.²⁶ For example, Christoph Marksches writes of Harnack, "one can under no circumstances take on board today his strangely negative evaluation of Judaism as a mere religion of laws."²⁷ There is a clear example of such a view in this passage.

In the course of describing the rise of Christian dogma, Harnack constructs a Hellenistic Judaism that combines monotheistic worship, ethics, and belief

standen. Selbst die Beschneidung wurde von den bekehrten Heiden nicht durchgängig mehr verlangt: man begnügte sich auch mit dem Reinigungsbad. Die jüdische Religion scheint hier umgesetzt in eine allgemeine menschliche Moral und in eine monotheistische Kosmologie » (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 93; Buchanan, 93, alt.; "retribution" instead of "reward" for Vergeltung).

24 Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 93.

25 « Diese Juden und die von ihnen bekehrten Griechen bildeten gleichsam ein Judentum zweiter Ordnung ohne Gesetz (Ceremonial-gesetz) und mit einem Minimum von statutarischen Ordnungen. Dasselbe hat den Boden für die Christianisierung der Griechen sowie für die Entstehung einer grossen, gesetzesfreien Heidenkirche im Reiche bereitet, und dies um so mehr, als wie es scheint, nach der zweimaligen Zerstörung Jerusalems die pünktlichste Beobachtung des Gesetzes für alle Verehrer des jüdischen Gottes in erhöhtem Masse wieder verbindlich geworden ist. » (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 94; Buchanan, 94).

26 E.g., Tyson, "Anti-Judaism in the Critical Study of the Gospels," 216–51; Zumstein, "Le problème de l'antijudaïsme."

27 Marksches, "Harnack's Image of *1 Clement* and Contemporary Research," 68.

in a final judgment with universal and philosophical elements from Greek culture, asserting the ultimate dependence of Greek culture on the books of Moses. In Harnack's judgment, this Hellenistic Judaism produced people who belonged to a second-order Judaism, one without law. Harnack concludes his discussion of Hellenistic Judaism in this section with a narrative of decline: "the vigor and immediateness of the religious feeling was flattened down to a moralism, the barrenness of which drove some Jews even into Gnosis, mysticism and asceticism."²⁸

Harnack locates the Jewish Sibylline Oracles within this portrait of Hellenistic Judaism and asserts that the Christian Sibylline Oracles resemble the Jewish books in every way. In the process, Harnack both denigrates Judaism and imposes a distance between the Jewish Sibylline Oracles and the normative centre of the Judaism produced by his account. Harnack creates a portrait of Judaism as exclusivist, nationalistic, and legalistic, and claims that its legalism only intensifies after the destruction of the Temple. He presents Hellenistic Judaism as more universal, ethical, and philosophical, but in Harnack's judgment, it was ultimately vapid and un compelling.²⁹ In Harnack's portrayal, Judaism appears as a caricature, and the Jewishness of the Sibylline Oracles can be characterized as second-order at best.

3 Questions for the Study of Jewish Pseudepigrapha

Harnack's comments on the Sibylline Oracles highlight a number of questions for studying these texts and other Jewish pseudepigrapha preserved by Christians. More specifically, how do we recognize whether an ancient text is Jewish? What roles do law, ritual, and national particularity play in a definition of Jewishness? These questions, always important, take on a new urgency within current debates about Jewish pseudepigraphic texts preserved by Christians.

Regarding such texts, Robert Kraft has famously argued that the scholarly default should be to take them as Christian, and then prove the ways in which they are Jewish.³⁰ James Davila has taken up the charge from Kraft to delineate characteristics that would indicate Jewish authorship of such a text. He

28 «Die Kräftigkeit und Unmittelbarkeit des religiösen Gefühls stumpfte sich zu einem Moralismus ab, dessen Dürftigkeit selbst einige Juden in die Gnosis, Mystik, und Askese getrieben hat.» (Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 94; Buchanan, 94).

29 Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 94.

30 Robert Alan Kraft, *Exploring the Scripturesque: Jewish Texts and their Christian Contexts*, JSJSup 137 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), esp "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity," 3–34.

has developed five “signature features” of a Jewish work, which he describes as follows:

- [1] A work with substantial Jewish content of any kind and strong internal evidence that the work was composed in the pre-Christian era. [...]
- [2] Compelling evidence that the work was translated from Hebrew, which, as far as I can tell, was used in antiquity only by Jews. [...]
- [3] Sympathetic concern with the Jewish ritual cult (especially priesthood, temple, ritual purity, calendar, festivals, sabbaths, and circumcision). [...]
- [4] Sympathetic concern with Jewish law/Torah and *halakhah*. [...]
- [5] Concern with Jewish ethnic and national interests, particularly self-identification as a Jew, polemics against gentile persecution of Jews, and internal Jewish polemics.³¹

An explanatory note about Davila’s aim is needed here before I locate portions of the Sibylline Oracles alongside these signature features. Davila acknowledges that these signs of Jewishness privilege a stance of boundary maintenance on the part of ancient Jewish authors.³² In his discussion leading up to these signature features, Davila allows for much more complex interactions between gentiles and Jews (including the categories of proselytes, God-fearers, gentile sympathizers, and syncretistic Jews), and between Jews and Christians.³³ He explains, however, that his purpose in proposing signs of Jewish authorship is to isolate texts that are definitively Jewish from among the many debated texts preserved by Christians. In this endeavour, he affirms that it would be preferable to exclude Jewish works that are not certainly Jewish rather than to include Christian or non-Jewish gentile texts by creating parameters that are too wide.³⁴ Thus he creates a set of parameters suited for “boundary-maintaining Judaism,”³⁵ not for the range of complex interactions between Jews and gentiles he describes.

With respect to the Sibylline Oracles, Davila accepts that large portions of books 3 and 5 could be Jewish (excluding interpolations and material largely recognized as later by scholarly consensus), but suggests that they could also have been written by a gentile interested in Judaism (book 3), or by a Jewish-Christian or a Gentile God-fearer (book 5).³⁶ Beyond this, he expresses doubts about classifying any of the other sibylline books as Jewish.³⁷ Davila

31 James R. Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?* JSJSup 105 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 65. The “I” here is Davila.

32 Ibid.

33 Davila, *Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha*, 23–50.

34 Ibid., 64.

35 Ibid., 73.

36 Ibid., 181–89.

37 Ibid., 188 n17.

concludes “it seems likely that some of the material in the corpus of *Sibylline Oracles* stems from Jewish circles, but the arguments advanced thus far for large blocks of it being Jewish are not compelling.”³⁸

In holding this position, Davila counters a general scholarly view that the majority of books 3, 4, and 5 of the *Sibylline Oracles* are Jewish, and a widespread, although more debated, view that Sib. Or. 1 has a significant Jewish substratum. Virtually every discussion of whether a given sibylline book is Jewish acknowledges a variety of complications in making this determination, but the tendency among scholars has been to emphasize the Jewishness of Sib. Or. 3–5, rather than Davila’s distancing of these texts from being fully Jewish.³⁹ For example, regarding book 4, Arnaldo Momigliano agrees with John Collins and David Flusser that the text marks a break with a previous oracle at line 4.101; of this latter section of the book, Momigliano writes “The second section is indisputably Jewish, or at best Jewish-Christian.”⁴⁰ Davila, by contrast, writes, “I see nothing in Book 4 that points decisively to Jewish authorship ... It is not impossible that the final form of Book 4 comes from a radically Hellenizing, baptizing Jew, but it could equally well come from a God-fearer or a Jewish or gentile Christian.”⁴¹ Both Momigliano and Davila hold open different possibilities for the degree to which this text can be counted as Jewish, but Davila ultimately opts to distance Sib. Or. 4 from a squarely Jewish identity, while Momigliano emphasizes its Jewishness.

It must be said that none of the *Sibylline Oracles*, including Sib. Or. 4, fit well with Davila’s signature features of a Jewish work. A strong case has been made that the majority of Sib. Or. 3 was produced in the second century BCE,

38 Ibid., 190 n17.

39 E.g., David Flusser, “The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel,” *IOS 11* (1972): 148–75; Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*; idem, “The Place of the Fourth Sibyl in the Development of the Jewish Sibyllina,” *JJS* 25 (1974): 365–80; Arnaldo Momigliano, “From the Pagan to the Christian Sibyl: Prophecy as History of Religion,” in *The Uses of Greek and Latin: Historical Essays*, ed. A.C. Dionisotti, A. Grafton, and J. Kraye (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1988), 3–18; Matthew Neujahr, *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East: Mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World*, *BJS* 354 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2012), esp 208–18 (Sib. Or. 3), 235–42 (Sib. Or. 4), and 227–37 (Sib. Or. 1). See also the very helpful summaries of the whole Jewish-Christian collection by Collins, “*Sibylline Oracles*,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 317–324, and more recently, Erich S. Gruen, “*Sibylline Oracles*,” *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (22 Dec. 2016); <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.8134>.

40 Momigliano, “From the Pagan to the Christian Sibyl,” 8; for redactional proposals, see Flusser, “The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel” and Collins, “The Place of the Fourth Sibyl in the Development of the Jewish Sibyllina.”

41 Davila, *Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha*, 188–90 n 17.

which is why Davila is willing to count it as Jewish.⁴² Otherwise, however, the Sibylline Oracles most likely date from the turn of the era or later. The Sibylline Oracles were composed in Greek, not Hebrew, and they evidence a diversity of perspectives on the “Jewish ritual cult.” Some passages from books widely accepted as Jewish express interest in the Jerusalem Temple (3.286–94, 564–67, 573–90, 702–704) – including rage and grief over its destruction (e.g., 3.663–68, 5.397–413) – but other passages display interest in other temples (including a temple in Egypt, 5.484–511, perhaps referring to Leontopolis⁴³), and at least one passage in Sib. Or. 4 is against any kind of temple cult (4.6–30). The Sibylline Oracles generally taken as Jewish engage in extensive biblical interpretation, including interpretation of the Pentateuch (e.g., both books 3 and 1 interpret Genesis, including the Tower of Babel and the flood in 3.97–109, and a much longer reinterpretation of the creation of Adam and Eve, the fall, and Noah and the flood in 1.5–282). They also deliver ethical instruction that coheres with the Pentateuch, but they do not demonstrate special interest in *halakhah*. Finally, if indeed the majority of Sib. Or. 3–5 and 1 are Jewish, they present a rich, multicultural portrait of Hellenistic Judaism. There are polemics against other nations (e.g., 3.350–388), but there are other texts that demonstrate a hospitable attitude toward other nations (Greeks, 3.732–40; Egyptians, 5.484–503).

It may be the case that Sib. Or. 4, 5 and the majority of Sib. Or. 1 are not Jewish, but it could also be the case that Davila has created a model that is not suited to recognize this material as Jewish. The mode of expression throughout the majority of these books – if they are Jewish – indicates an intellectually multicultural Hellenistic Judaism; the writers of these texts are readers of Homer, of Hesiod, of Greek mythology, and they put their own scriptural traditions into conversation with these texts. While the ultimate point is to assert the dominance of their God’s divine judgment, the literary strategies used to convey that message imply that the writers are intellectual citizens of a wide, multicultural world. While there is plenty of pseudepigraphic divine ire in these texts directed at other nations (especially the Romans), the overall impression of these texts in style, literary influences, and choice of prophetic figure is not one of “boundary-maintaining Judaism.”⁴⁴

In his proposal of Jewish signature features for pseudepigraphic texts, Davila is not only wrestling with the questions posed by Kraft; he is also engaging the questions I suggested that Harnack raises. How do we recognize whether an ancient text is Jewish? More specifically, what roles do law, ritual, and national

42 Davila, *Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha*, 186.

43 Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, 112.

44 *Ibid.*, 73.

particularity play in a definition of Jewishness? The spectre of Harnack here reinforces how high the stakes are when we ask these questions, in that there is an historical legacy of anti-Judaism in select biblical scholarship that can subtly inform judgments about the Jewishness of texts like the Sibylline Oracles. I want to be very clear about the extent to which I suggest any resemblance between Harnack and Davila's readings of the Sibylline Oracles here. Harnack was a hugely significant figure in the field of New Testament studies, but many have commented on the anti-Judaism in his writings. I am not calling Davila's signature features anti-Jewish. Davila is attempting a reconstructive project in the most methodologically careful manner possible. I do think, however, that his criteria are too narrow, and this results in an underappreciation of Hellenistic Jewish texts like the Sibylline Oracles that demonstrate at least some cross-cultural hospitality in their style, language, and literary influences.

For all of the differences between Harnack's views and Davila's, and they are many, the result is the same: the Sibylline Oracles largely considered Jewish (especially large portions of 3–5, 1) are excluded from full participation in the category of "Jewishness" because of the lack of emphasis on ritual, law, and ethnic/national particularity. In Harnack's model, their Hellenistic Judaism is only second-order Judaism; in Davila's, they do not demonstrate enough signature features to be considered Jewish rather than Christian. Davila's criteria privilege law, ritual and temple cult, Hebrew over Greek or Aramaic, and "Jewish ethnic and national interests."⁴⁵ In so doing, they create an "ancient Judaism" in which Sibylline Oracles cannot participate. This portrait, however, is not able to recognize a diasporic, intellectually multicultural Jewishness as fully Jewish. As Davila himself acknowledges, his proposal for Jewish signature features delineates only a certain kind of boundary-maintaining Judaism.

There are at least two broader issues at stake in these debates about the Jewishness of pseudepigraphic texts preserved by Christians, including the Sibylline Oracles, that deserve further attention. The first issue, raised by the scholarship of Liv Ingeborg Lied, is the ethical danger of ignoring communities to whom these texts belonged, both Jewish and Christian. It is to Lied's warning that I now turn. The second issue, which I will consider in the final section of this chapter, is the nefarious ancient anti-Judaism present within portions of the Christian Sibylline Oracles, and the capacity of these texts to warp the interpretations of both ancient and modern readers of the Jewish oracles.

It must be noted that any Jewish "text" in the work called Sibylline Oracles is a reconstructed entity, drawn from Christian manuscripts. Liv Ingeborg Lied

45 Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha*, 65.

has written about the need for greater scholarly attentiveness to the material realities of pseudepigraphic texts, on the one hand, and for greater ethical attentiveness to the different communities represented by various stages of a text's life, on the other. First, Lied argues forcefully that when studying pseudepigrapha, one must differentiate three entities: (1) the text, i.e., the words that appear on a page, (2) the manuscript, i.e., the material object on which the words appear, and (3) the work, which Lied calls a "conceived compositional unit."⁴⁶ The material history of the Sibylline Oracles makes the need for this differentiation more urgent, as the earliest manuscripts date from the fifteenth century, long after proposed dates of composition for either Jewish or Christian oracles.⁴⁷

But Lied has written more recently about the fact that at each stage of the text's life, whether in the imagined reconstruction of its earliest writing or its material preservation, it belonged to a particular community.⁴⁸ This adds an ethical dimension for Lied, in that there is a danger of forgetting the communities to which these texts belonged; Lied highlights especially the communities responsible for material preservation, long underappreciated, reiterating that studying Jewish pseudepigraphic texts often means studying "someone else's manuscripts."⁴⁹ She also notes, however, that in cases such as the Syriac preservation of 2 Baruch, there may be different, marginalized, communities responsible for both the production and preservation of a text. In the midst of asserting the overlooked significance of the text-preserving communities, she asks how scholars avoid "running the risk of erasing the equally legitimate claims of a Jewish immaterial heritage?"⁵⁰ The ethical challenge for Lied is to balance attentiveness to these different communities, Jewish and Christian. Lied's insights about Jewish-composed texts preserved in Christian manuscripts, such as 2 Baruch, apply to the Sibylline Oracles as well. She offers a

46 Liv Ingeborg Lied, "Text – Work – Manuscript: What is an Old Testament Pseudepigraphon?" *JSP* 25.2 (2015): 150–65.

47 Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 321; Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 257; Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and Its Social Setting: With an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, SVTP 17 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 65–66. As a collection, the Jewish-Christian Sibylline Oracles survive in two manuscript traditions. The first contains books numbered 1–8, but subdivides into versions that contain a prologue and versions that do not. The second contains two books numbered 9 and 10 that reduplicate material in the first tradition, followed by books 11–14. Modern editions thus contain 1–8, and then 11–14.

48 Liv Ingeborg Lied, "Textual Scholarship, Ethics, and Someone Else's Manuscripts," *Ancient Jew Review*, (May 21, 2019), <https://www.ancientjewreview.com/articles/2019/5/21/textual-scholarship-ethics-and-someone-elses-manuscripts>.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

powerful reminder that reconstructing a text as Jewish or Christian is often a process of making some communities visible, and erasing others. Such a reconstructive enterprise is no neutral task, particularly when the communities in question were politically or ideologically marginalized.

Lied reminds scholars of the complicated and difficult factors involved in debates about Jewish pseudepigraphic texts preserved by Christians; she also changes the question facing scholars of these texts. Instead of asking what the positive markers are of a particular community's identity, Lied asks which communities are made visible, and which communities are erased, in a given reading of a text. Even when Harnack reads certain Sibylline Oracles as Jewish, he erases the Jewishness of Hellenistic Jewish communities by relegating them to a second-order, pre-Christian vacuity. Davila's reading, although much more careful and explicitly focused on "boundary-maintaining Judaism" as a heuristic, also runs the risk of erasing the Jewishness of communities that do not fit his model.

4 Sibylline Anti-Judaism

When we turn back in time, from modern scholarship to closer readings of the Sibylline Oracles themselves, we find that dynamics of erasure are not solely a modern phenomenon. Through redaction, anti-Jewish polemic, and rewriting, Christian portions of the Sibylline Oracles erase the Jewishness of other sibylline texts. Within the sibylline collection itself, some Christian writerly voices work to silence other Jewish voices that chose a sibyl as their spokeswoman. After surveying a number of anti-Jewish sibylline texts, I argue that the ancient anti-Judaism lurking within the collection feeds modern anti-Jewish readings such as Harnack's and further muddies the waters of debate among scholars such as Kraft and Davila about whether pseudepigraphic texts should be viewed as Jewish or Christian. In their negative portrayals of Judaism, and their effacement of earlier Jewish sibylline texts, the passages considered in this section undermine an appreciation of any of the Sibylline Oracles as Jewish. All of the texts to follow are, according to scholarly consensus, Christian, and written in approximately the second and third centuries CE.

The first example is from Sib. Or. 1. Sib. Or. 1 offers a periodized account of time beginning with the creation story from Genesis, and then continuing through seven successive generations, interpreting several other figures from Genesis, such as the Watchers and Noah.⁵¹ After the seventh generation, there

51 For recent studies of Sib. Or. 1–2, see Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles*, and Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1–2*.

is a break in the generational sequence, and the Sibyl delivers prophecy about Jesus. This prophecy (a “radical Christological turn” according to Matthew Neujahr)⁵² includes an indictment for Jesus’ treatment by Israel.

And then Israel, having become drunk, will not understand
 nor will it hear, weighed down with weak ears.
 But when the raging wrath of the Most High comes to the Hebrews
 It will take faith away from them
 Because they harmed the son of the heavenly God,
 Then indeed Israel will give him blows
 And poisonous spittings with defiled lips.
 They will impiously give (him) gall for food and unmixed vinegar for a
 drink
 Dominated by evil frenzy with respect to breast and heart, and not
 beholding with the eyes,
 More blind than rats, more terrible than venomous
 creeping beasts, bound by a deep sleep.
 But when he spreads his hands and measures all
 And wears the thorny crown
 And they pierce his side with reeds, for the sake of this one, for three
 hours
 There will be fearsome dark night in the middle of the day ...⁵³

Sib. Or. 1.360–75

52 Neujahr, *Predicting the Past*, 229.

53 Καὶ τότε δ' Ἰσραὴλ μεμεθυμένος οὐχὶ νοήσει,
 οὐδὲ μὲν αὐθ' αἴσει βεβαρημένος οὐασι λεπτοῖς.
 ἀλλ' ὁπότεν Ἑβραίοις ἤξη χόλος Ὑψίστοιο
 οἰστρομανῆς καὶ πίστιν ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἔξαφελείται,
 οὐρανίου ὅτι παῖδα θεοῦ διεδηλήσαντο,
 καὶ τότε δὴ κολάφους καὶ πτύσματα φαρμακόμεντα
 Ἰσραὴλ δώσει μισαροῖς ἐνὶ χεῖλεσι τούτῳ.
 εἰς δὲ τὸ βρώμα χολῆν καὶ εἰς ποτὸν ὄξος ἄκρατον
 δυσσεβέως δώσουσι κακῶ βεβολημένοι οἴστροφ
 στήθεα καὶ κραδίην, ἀτὰρ ὄμμασιν οὐκ ἔσορῶντες
 τυφλότεροι σπαλάκων, φοβερώτεροι ἔρπυστήρων
 θηρῶν ἰοβόλων, βαρεῖ πεπεδημένοι ὕπνω.
 ἀλλ' ὅταν ἐκπετάσῃ χεῖρας καὶ πάντα μετρήσῃ
 καὶ στέφανον φορέσῃ τὸν ἀκάνθινον ἠδὲ τε πλευράν
 νύξωσιν καλάμοισιν, ὅτου χάριν ἐν τρισὶν ὥραις
 νύξ ἔσται σκοτόεσσα πελώριος ἤματι μέσσω (Sib. Or. 1.360–75).

Greek follows Johannes Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902); translations are my own, in consultation with Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” and Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles* (with respect to books 1–2).

Three features are worth noting here about the anti-Jewish polemic found in these lines. First, blaming Jews for the suffering of Jesus is one of the oldest and most ubiquitous instances of anti-Judaism; it resonates with the gospel of Matthew's infamous blood libel formula (Matt 27:25) and the portrayal of "the Jews" throughout the gospel of John.⁵⁴ The persistence of this trope does not make it any less pernicious. Second, in the context of the book, this text comes shortly before a description of the destruction of Jerusalem (1.387–400). This passage explains the fall of Jerusalem as divine judgment, introducing a prophecy of the temple being destroyed with the framing, "Then, when the Hebrews reap the bad harvest"⁵⁵ – in context, probably referring back to the passage quoted above about Jesus.

Third, in addition to the clear anti-Jewish polemic of this passage, there may be a more subtle erasure of earlier Jewish material here. Many scholars read the passage about Jesus as evidence of a Christian redaction of an earlier Jewish layer, in part because of a break in the ten-generation periodization of history.⁵⁶ In Sib. Or. 1.65–323, the sibyl details a succession of seven generations. Then material about Jesus follows (1.324–86), leading to a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem (1.387–400). In the beginning of Sib. Or. 2, after a brief first-person introduction (2.1–5), the sibyl returns to the generational schema found in Sib. Or. 1, resuming with the tenth generation (2.15). Generations eight and nine are missing entirely. In terms of their material history, Sib. Or. 1–2 were originally one book, divided by a sixteenth century editor, so this literary continuity is entirely possible.⁵⁷

If a Christian redactor did change a ten-generation schema, two generations would have been erased by the insertion of Christian material, creating a timeline that is broken by the sudden entry of Jesus. By the time the reader reached Sib. Or. 2.15, and returned to the tenth generation, generations eight and nine would have been lost. In the meantime, "Israel" has been indicted for rejecting Jesus (1.360–71). And in the logic of Sib. Or. 1, this treatment of Jesus explains the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (1.387–400). This is literary erasure,

54 See, among many others, Amy-Jill Levine, "Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of Matthew," in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, 9–36; Adele Reinhartz, *Cast out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018).

55 ἔθθεν ὄταν Ἑβραῖοι τὸ κακὸν θέρος ἀμύσωνται (Sib. Or. 1.387).

56 E.g., Johannes Geffcken, *Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sibyllina* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1902), 47–53; Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 330–34; Neujahr, *Predicting the Past*, 229–35. Lightfoot disagrees with this position, arguing instead for Christian composition from Jewish sources (Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 94–152). Neujahr has responded to Lightfoot's proposal, asserting Jewish priority in part because of the total lack of any reference to Jesus or his followers in the material that participates in the generational schema (Neujahr, *Predicting the Past*, 229–35).

57 Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 6–8; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 258–59.

but it speaks to something much more sinister, especially in its treatment of Jerusalem: the effacement of Jewishness by ancient Christians, including the erasure of Jewish suffering. Even if one does not think that Sib. Or. 1–2 were Jewish first, and then “Christianized,” these two tendencies are widespread in early Christian literature, and as I will argue further with the next example, they are both present in the Sibylline collection as a whole.

The production of anti-Jewish material in such literary continuity with earlier Jewish material has the capacity to erase the Jewishness of the former, cutting it off from its own origin with violence. A selection from Sib. Or. 2 demonstrates precisely this tendency, where Jesus is predicted to come in judgment with a number of illustrious figures from the Hebrew Bible.

Christ, himself imperishable, will come to the imperishable one
 On a cloud, in glory, with blameless angels
 And he will sit at the right of the Mighty One, judging at the tribunal
 The life of the pious and the way of the impious men.
 Moses, the great friend of the Highest One, will come
 Having put on flesh; great Abraham himself will come
 And Isaac and Jacob, Joshua, Daniel and Elijah,
 Habakkuk and Jonah and those whom the Hebrews killed.
 He will destroy all the Hebrews after Jeremiah,
 Judged at the tribunal, in order that they might receive
 and pay the deserved penalty, as much as anyone did in mortal life.⁵⁸

Sib. Or. 2.241–51

There is a sharp turn in this text, in 2.248, where Jewish prophetic figures are associated with “those whom the Hebrews killed.” Sib. Or. 2 speaks in the style of earlier Jewish sibylline oracles, takes Jewish texts that become biblical to draw on this litany of Jewish heroes, and then rips them all away, by declaring the guilt of the Hebrews and predicting divine judgment against them.

58 ἤξει δ' ἐν νεφέλῃ πρὸς ἀφθιτον ἀφθιτος αὐτός
 ἐν δόξῃ Χριστὸς σὺν ἀμύμοισιν ἀγγελτῆρσιν
 καὶ καθίσει Μεγάλῳ ἐπὶ δεξιᾷ, βήματι κρίνων
 εὐσεβέων βίον καὶ δυσσεβέων τρόπον ἀνδρῶν.
 ἤξει καὶ Μωσῆς ὁ μέγας φίλος Ὑψίστοιο (245)
 σάρκας δυσάμενος· Ἀβραάμ δ' αὐτὸς μέγας ἤξει,
 Ἰσαάκ ἠδ' Ἰακώβ, Ἰησοῦς Δανιήλ τ' Ἡλίας,
 Ἀμβρακὸν καὶ Ἰωνᾶς καὶ οὐς ἔκταν Ἑβραῖοι.
 τοὺς δὲ μετ' Ἡρεμίαν ἐπὶ βήματι πάντας ὀλέσσει
 κρινομένους Ἑβραίους, ἵνα ἄξια ἔργα λάβωσιν (250)
 καὶ τίσωσ', ὅσα περ βιότῳ θνητῶ τις ἔπραξεν. (Sib. Or. 2.241–51)

Sib. Or. 6, a Christian hymn known to Lactantius,⁵⁹ repeats the same vitriolic logic about Jewish treatment of Jesus that was evident in Sib. Or. 1:

But for you alone, Sodomite land, evil calamities are in store;
 For you, senseless, did not perceive your God
 Who came within mortal sight; but with a crown of thorn
 You crowned him, and mixed terrible gall
 For an outrage and spirit; that will cause evil calamities for you.⁶⁰

Sib. Or. 6.21–25

This text, however, has amplified the rhetoric, naming the audience as “Sodomite land” and mocking them as lacking in perception. Harnack himself noted the Christian anti-Judaism in this line from Sib. Or. 6, describing it as “completely Christian (and strongly anti-Jewish ...).”⁶¹

Sib. Or. 8 provides two further examples of anti-Jewish blame for the suffering of Jesus.

Later he [Jesus] will come into the hands of lawless and faithless ones,
 And they will give God blows with unholy hands
 and poisonous spittings with defiled mouths.
 Then, spreading out his back, he will give it to the whips
 [For he will hand over the holy virgin to the world.]
 When he is slapped, he will be silent, lest anyone recognize him,
 Who he is, whose son he is, and whence he came, so that he might speak
 to the dead.
 And he will wear the crown of thorns; for the crown
 From chosen thorns is an eternal honor.
 They will pierce his side with a reed on account of their law;

Sib. Or. 8.287–96⁶²

59 Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” 406.

60 σοι δὲ μόνῃ, Σοδομίτι γαίῃ, κακὰ πῆματα κείται·
 αὐτὴ γὰρ δύσφρων τὸν σὸν θεὸν οὐκ ἐνόησας
 ἔλθόντα θνητοῖσιν ἐν ὄμμασιν· ἀλλ’ ἀπ’ ἀκάθου
 ἔστυψας στεφάνῳ, φοβερὴν δὲ χολὴν ἐκέρασσας
 εἰς ὕβριν καὶ *πνεῦμα*. τό σοι κακὰ πῆματα τεύξει. (Sib. Or. 6.21–25)

61 “ganz und gar christlich (auch stark anti-jüdisch: ‘sodomitisches Land’ v. 21),” (Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.1, 586.

62 εἰς ἀνόμων χεῖρας καὶ ἀπίστων ὕστερον ἤξει,
 δώσουσιν δὲ θεῶ ῥαπίσματα χερσὶν ἀνάγνοις
 καὶ στόμασιν μιαιοῖς ἐμπτύσματα φαρμακόμεντα.
 δώσει δ’ εἰς μάστιγας ἀναπλώσας τότε νῶτον. (290)

[...]

But when all these things which I said have been completed,
 Then each law until him will be destroyed, which from the beginning
 was given in ordinances to men on account of a disobedient people.
 He will spread out his hands and measure out the whole world.
 They gave (him) gall for food and vinegar to drink;
 They will show forth this table of inhospitality.
 The veil of the temple will be rent, and in midday
 There will be unnaturally dark night for three hours.
 For serving illusions of the world with a secret law and temple no longer,
 That which has been covered will be brought to light
 When the everlasting master comes down to earth.⁶³

Sib. Or. 8.299–309

Sib. Or. 8 interprets books 1–5 extensively, so we can read the resonances between Sib. Or. 8.287–309 and Sib. Or. 1.360–66 as strongly linked.⁶⁴ Although the vocabulary changes slightly, both texts accuse Israel⁶⁵ – in Sib. Or. 8, described as lawless and faithless ones⁶⁶ – of mistreating Jesus, administering blows⁶⁷ and poisonous spittings⁶⁸ with defiled lips or mouths.⁶⁹ Both texts

[αὐτὸς γὰρ κόσμῳ παραδώσει παρθένον ἀγνήν.]
 καὶ κολαφιζόμενος σιγήσει, μὴ τις ἐπιγνῶ,
 τίς τίνος ὦν πόθεν ἦλθεν, ἵνα φθιμένοισι λαλήσει.
 καὶ στέφανον φορέσει τὸν ἀκάνθινον· ἐκ γὰρ ἀκανθῶν
 τὸ στέφος ἐκλεκτῶν αἰώνιον ἐστὶν ἄγαλμα. (295)
 πλευράς νύξουσιν καλάμῳ διὰ τὸν νόμον αὐτῶν· (Sib. Or. 8.287–96)

63 ἀλλ' ὅτε ταυτὰ γε πάντα τελειωθῆ ἄπερ εἶπον.
 εἰς αὐτὸν τότε πᾶς λύεται νόμος, ὅστις ἀπ' ἀρχῆς (300)
 δόγμασιν ἀνθρώποις ἐδόθη διὰ λαὸν ἀπειθή.
 ἐκπετάσει χεῖρας καὶ κόσμον ἅπαντα μετρήσει.
 εἰς δὲ τὸ βρῶμα χολήν καὶ πιεῖν ὄξος ἔδωκαν·
 τῆς ἀφιλοξενίης ταύτην δεῖξουσιν τράπεζαν.
 ναοὺ δὲ σχισθῆ τὸ πέτασμα καὶ ἤματι μέσσω (305)
 νύξ ἔσται σκοτόεσσα πελώριος ἐν τρισὶν ὥραις.
 οὐκέτι γὰρ κρυφίῳ τε νόμῳ ναῶ τε λατρεύειν
 φαντασίαις κόσμου κεκαλυμμένον αὐτίς ἐδείχθη
 αὐθέντου καταβάντος ἐπὶ χθονὸς ἀνάοιο. (Sib. Or. 8.299–309)

64 Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 417.

65 Ἰσραήλ (Sib. Or. 1.360).

66 ἄνομοι, ἄπιστοι (Sib. Or. 8.287).

67 κολάφους (Sib. Or. 1.365); ῥαπίσματα (Sib. Or. 8.288).

68 πτύσματα φαρμακόμεντα (Sib. Or. 1.365); ἐμπτύσματα φαρμακόμεντα (Sib. Or. 8.289).

69 μυσαρῶς ἐνὶ χεῖλεσι (Sib. Or. 1.366); στόμασιν μιαρῶς (Sib. Or. 8.289).

denigrate them giving Jesus gall for food and vinegar for a drink⁷⁰ and describe Jesus as stretching out his hands and measuring everything.⁷¹ To this shared material, however, Sib. Or. 8 adds indictments of the law and the temple. In Sib. Or. 8.307, the sibyl predicts the end of a “secret law and temple” and connects them with “serving illusions of the world.” This coheres with the larger interests of the book, as in the passage shortly following this, the sibyl explains that God, being imperishable, does not accept perishable sacrifices.⁷² Harnack also commented on the antinomianism of this section from Sib. Or. 8, arguing that it was copied from the letters of Paul.⁷³

Taken together, these anti-Jewish passages from Sib. Or. 1, 2, 6, and 8 highlight the violence of anti-Jewish polemic but also the dangers of the Christian erasure of Judaism. Polemic is very clear here, including the trope of Jewish responsibility for Jesus’s death, and in the selection from Sib. Or. 8, denigration of the temple and the law. The anti-Jewish logic of Sib. Or. 8, in particular, begins to sound eerily familiar as we remember the themes of Jewish ritualism and legalism from Harnack, even though Harnack commented on the negative views of the law in this very text. In addition to overt anti-Jewish polemic, however, I have argued that these texts also demonstrate the Christian erasure of Judaism. Such erasure can occur through redaction, as in the case of Sib. Or. 1, but it can also occur more pointedly through Christian reappropriation of the sibylline voice for anti-Jewish prophecy. When the sibyl of Sib. Or. 2 lays claim to Jewish figures and texts from the Hebrew Bible to predict violent divine judgment against the communities to whom these traditions belong, this erases the Jewishness of both these texts and the earlier sibyls themselves. When the sibyls of Sib. Or. 1, 6, and 8 voice the insidious idea that Jews were responsible for the suffering of Jesus in continuity with the style and imagery of earlier Jewish Sibylline Oracles, they erase the literary innovation pioneered by these earlier writers, as well as propagating one of the most harmful and enduring logics of anti-Judaism.

70 εἰς δὲ τὸ βρώμα χολήν καὶ εἰς ποτὸν ὄξος ἄκρατον (Sib. Or. 1.367); εἰς δὲ τὸ βρώμα χολήν καὶ πιεῖν ὄξος (Sib. Or. 8.303).

71 ὅταν ἐκπετάσῃ χειρὰς καὶ πάντα μετρήσῃ (Sib. Or. 1.372); ἐκπετάσει χειρὰς καὶ κόσμον ἅπαντα μετρήσει (Sib. Or. 8.302).

72 οὐ θυσίαις προσέχει φθαρταῖς ἀφθαρτος ὑπάρχων. (Sib. Or. 8.334).

73 Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, II.1, 586.

5 Conclusions

This chapter began with an analysis of Harnack's portrayal of the Sibylline Oracles and then his use of these prophecies to describe ancient Judaism more broadly. I considered Harnack's view in *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius* that portions of the sibylline collection were Jewish alongside his denigration of these Jewish texts as stained with conscious forgery and responsible for later Christian literature of a poor quality. Turning to his larger portrayals of ancient Judaism in *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, I argued that his category of "Judaism" was anti-Jewish, and his location of the Jewish Sibylline Oracles within Hellenistic Judaism amounted, in his framework, to deeming them less than fully Jewish. I then considered the questions Harnack raises for modern debates about Jewish pseudepigraphic texts preserved by Christians, including interrogating our own definitions and hallmarks of Jewishness. Davila's signature features of Jewish authorship served as an example of the ways that centring one type of ancient Judaism can exclude others. Davila's reading also found several of the Sibylline Oracles to be less than Jewish. Lied's scholarship on Jewish pseudepigraphic texts preserved by Christians reoriented the ethical issues at stake in these debates, shifting the question from what markers count as Jewish to what communities stand at risk of being rendered invisible when we try to locate texts as Jewish or Christian.

Finally, I turned to ancient Christian anti-Judaism in the Sibylline Oracles, arguing that it engages in both violent polemic and erasure. Anti-Jewish polemic included Jewish responsibility for Jesus's death, accompanied by anti-temple and anti-law material. These texts demonstrated similar tendencies to the anti-Jewish passages in Harnack, even though Harnack himself recognized some of these Christian sibylline texts as anti-Jewish. Anti-Jewish erasure occurred through both redaction and reappropriation of the sibylline voice, and concomitant appropriation of the Jewish texts and traditions that many of the earlier sibyls interpreted.

The nature of the Sibylline Oracles as simultaneously Jewish and anti-Jewish makes them especially, although not uniquely, difficult to interpret. In my more optimistic moments, I am encouraged that so many scholars are producing research that names and traces the logics of anti-Judaism, teaching me and others to be more self-reflective about the ethical challenges of producing scholarship on these texts. As scholars continue to demarcate anti-Judaism in its various forms in our ancient texts and in modern scholarship, I am hopeful that we may be less and less likely to replicate the anti-Jewish polemics of many ancient Christian texts, such as the Sibylline Oracles. In my own work, I feel less easy about avoiding the ancient Christian erasure of Judaism, which

is more difficult to detect and counteract. I do hope, however, that by learning to recognize the logics of anti-Judaism and antisemitism in biblical scholarship, we might become more attuned to the voices, histories, and suffering that they have sought to erase.

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Anti-Judaism, Philosemitism, and Protestant New Testament Studies: Perspectives and Questions

Jörg Frey

1 Introduction¹

Exegetical work is often done in detail and with the magnifying glass. As exegetes, we elaborate the views of a single author, examine the micro-structure of a single text or phrase, explore the semantic field of a term, and argue for or against various interpretive options. But while engaged in such fine-grained and specialized work, we risk overlooking broader intellectual contexts and frameworks, those theological or scholarly traditions that have inspired interpreters to favour certain options or conclusions over others. Such general frameworks, however, are most often rooted not in insight into textual details, but rather in the scholarly affiliation or religious identity of the interpreter, located in particular scholarly traditions, discourse communities, or religious affiliations; arguing from Jewish or Christian, Roman Catholic or Lutheran, conservative or liberal, religious or non-religious perspectives. The problem is that exegetes are trained to be specialists handling micro-questions, the details of philology and history, whereas a wider knowledge of, say, patristics or of church history or systematic theology is not even a regular part of Biblical Studies curricula, at least in the English-speaking world.

So, instead of discussing the philological micro-issues of particular Pauline or Johannine phrases, I have decided to consider the broader contexts of history of theology and its interpretations in order to contextualize the issues raised within this conference. As a non-specialist in church history or Protestant systematic theology, I will sketch the major developments with regard to some Protestant positions towards Jews and Judaism, both past and present, before offering some glimpses into the exegetical discussion of select passages. And, finally, I will reflect upon some of the hermeneutical issues implied in those discourses.

¹ The present article largely has retained the form of the oral presentation, and the references in the footnotes have been limited to the essentials.

2 Perspectives from the History of Theology

2.1 *Before the Reformation*

The history of the perceptions and the constructions of “Judaism” in Christian theology and exegesis has largely been one of contrasting binaries and polemics, as well as one of ignorance and misapprehension. Of course, this did not begin with the Reformation, nor were all the Reformers exceptionally bad examples of that negative stance.² But the continuation of traditions *adversus Iudaeos* stems mainly from the fact that critical biblical scholarship developed primarily within Protestant contexts and was long confined to Protestant theology. Also, more than Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism stands at the focal point of the Christian exegetical debate about anti-Judaism. However,³ in Roman antiquity, increasingly Gentile Christian churches established and maintained the doctrine that Christian faith was true and, consequently, Jewish “unbelief” was wrong. This adversarial position defined the quintessence of numerous dialogues and tractates *adversus Iudaeos*,⁴ also defining the determinative ecclesiastical presuppositions of the many and

2 Exegetical scholarship on Paul often only looks at the “Lutheran perspective” in contrast with the so-called “New Perspective”: cf. the overview in Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New: The Lutheran Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Furthermore, the so-called “Lutheran perspective” is often in fact a “Bultmannian perspective,” far removed from the real view of Martin Luther. Equally important is the fact that there was no uniformity among the Reformers in their exegesis. Instead, there is a wide variety of positions in the interpretation of central passages as well as in the view of Judaism and Jewish elements in the New Testament. This is nicely demonstrated in the series of anthologies from Reformation period commentaries: ‘Reformation Commentary on Scripture’ (InterVarsity Press).

3 In spite of the questions that have been raised recently regarding this pattern, especially the early or late date, homogeneity or heterogeneity, and its historical reasons and circumstances, I still consider this term coined by the Durham New Testament scholar James D.G. Dunn useful; cf. James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991); idem (ed.), *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways Between Judaism and Christianity*, WUNT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992). For a new discussion of the concept, see most recently Jens Schröter, Benjamin Edsall, Joseph Verheyden (eds.), *Jews and Christians: Parting Ways in the First Two Centuries C.E.? Reflections on the Gains and Losses of a Model*, BZNW (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2021).

4 Cf. The collections by Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus Iudaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld* (1.–11. Jh.), 4th ed. (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1999); idem, *Die christlichen Adversus-Iudaeos-Texte* (11.–13. Jh.), 2nd ed. (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1991); idem, *Die christlichen Adversus-Iudaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld* (13.–20. Jh.) (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1994), and the classical study by Arthur L. Williams, *Adversus Iudaeos: A Bird’s Eye View on Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935).

unequal contests between European Christian and Jewish disputants of the Middle Ages.⁵ Polemical patterns defending and articulating Christian doctrine drew partly from Gentile Christian exegeses of Old Testament prophecies, relating these to the figure of Jesus; partly from polemical passages in Paul, Matthew, John, Revelation, and the other first-century texts eventually canonized later as the New Testament. While most of these Christian canonical texts originated in and emerged from intra-Jewish debates, once framed by later forms of Gentile Christianity, their hostility was dangerously amplified, especially when wed to late Roman imperial power.

This polemical rejection of Judaism was further fuelled by convictions that Jews, not Romans, were the ones truly responsible for the death of Jesus;⁶ that the loss of Jerusalem's temple and the subsequent (notional) dispersion of the nation after 70 CE were divine punishments fulfilling some of Jesus's own prophecies;⁷ that the Gentile Church had superseded the Jews, or that the Jews had been cast out of the covenant.⁸ Preachers and theologians like John Chrysostom and Augustine fervently railed against the synagogue, although,

5 Two examples from many more are the disputations of Barcelona (1263) and Tortosa (1413/14), see the discussion with quotations from the sources in Willehald P. Eckert, "Hoch- und Spätmittelalter. Katholisches Humanismus," in *Kirche und Synagoge: Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden*, ed. K.H. Rengstorf S. von Kortzfleisch, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett, 1968/70), 1:209–306 (240–247), and the comments by Erwin I.J. Rosenthal, "Jüdische Antwort," *ibid.*, 1:307–362 (307–312 and 338–347).

6 The fundamental text is Matt 27:25 which has a particularly dangerous effect in the history of reception. The verse could be read as a general assumption of guilt by the (whole) Jewish people. The effect was even dramatically intensified when the texts of the passion narrative were staged in medieval and later passion plays, often with the effect that the people were stirred up in anger, and Jews were insulted or even expelled. On the reception history, see Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus: 4. Teilband (Mt 26–28)*, EKK 1/4 (Düsseldorf: Patmos, and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002), 285–288.

7 Cf., e.g., Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 13; for the prophecy of Jesus, see Matt 24:1–2. See S.G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London: SPCK, 1957); Helmut Schwier, *Tempel und Tempelzerstörung: Untersuchungen zu den theologischen und ideologischen Faktoren im ersten jüdisch-römischen Krieg (66–74 n.Chr.)*, NTOA 11 (Freiburg and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989); Simon Lauer, *Tempelkult und Tempelzerstörung (70 n.Chr.): Interpretationen*, JudChr 15 (Bern u.a.: Peter Lang, 1994); Hans-Martin Döpp, *Die Deutung der Zerstörung Jerusalems und des zweiten Tempels in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten n. Chr.*, TANT 24 (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 1998).

8 Thus most strongly, the Epistle of Barnabas, see Raidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant. The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, WUNT 2/82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), and Ferdinand R. Prostmeier, "Antijüdische Polemik im Rahmen christlicher Hermeneutik: Zum Streit über christliche Identität in der Alten Kirche," ZAC 6 (2002): 38–58.

quite often, their polemics against “Jewish” unbelief coded covert attacks against their Gentile Christian opponents.

The first groups to fall victim to this polarized rhetoric were those Judeo-Christians whose identity still embraced both sides.⁹ They wanted to remain Jews, observing the Law and the Sabbath while also maintaining faith in Jesus, but by late antiquity, such a position grew increasingly untenable. By the late fourth or early fifth century, these groups disappear, disavowed both by the synagogue and by the Byzantine church.

2.2 *Luther and Reformation Theology*

Given that the 16th-century Reformers inherited long traditions of Christian Anti-Judaism, replete with numerous anti-Jewish clichés and myths,¹⁰ how did the Reformation affect Protestant views on Jews and Judaism? Without any claim to comprehensiveness, I would like to point to a number of aspects.

(a) The Reformation, as a Renaissance phenomenon, was connected to Christian Hebraism.¹¹ Humanists sounded the summons to the Christian study of Hebrew, and the Reformers harkened to that call to read the Bible in its “original” form, not merely in later versions and languages. Martin Luther availed himself of Johannes Reuchlin’s Hebrew grammar to study the Masoretic text of the Bible, and many other Reformers communicated and collaborated with Hebraists as they worked on biblical texts.

9 On the history of Judeo-Christianity, see Oskar Skarsaune and Raidar Hvalvik (eds.), *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The First Centuries* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007); Edwin Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus. Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity*, WUNT 266 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

10 Some of those dangerous stereotypes that often caused hostile actions against Jews in Medieval Europe were the accusations that they murdered Christ (or God), ritually murdered children, poisoned wells, desecrated the holy sacrament, and blasphemed Christ and Christians. See Ben-Zion Degani, “Die Formulierung und Propagierung des jüdischen Stereotyps in der Zeit vor der Reformation und sein Einfluß auf den jungen Luther,” in *Die Juden und Martin Luther. Martin Luther und die Juden. Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte, Herausforderung*, ed. H. Kremers, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987), 3–37. On the image of Jews in the Reformation era, see Hans-Martin Kirn: *Das Bild vom Juden im Deutschland des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989; idem, “Israel als Gegenüber der Reformatoren: Zur christlichen Sicht von Juden und Judentum im 16. Jh.,” in *Israel als Gegenüber*, ed. F. Siegert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 290–321.

11 On Christian Hebraism in the 16th century, see the comprehensive presentation in Stephen G. Burnett (ed), *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500–1660): Authors, Books, and the Transmission of Jewish Learning*, Library of the Written World 19 (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

Christian Hebraism, however, was in a difficult position. Hebraists had received their language skills and rabbinic knowledge from Jews or from Jewish converts to Roman Catholicism. Their knowledge of Jewish writings led them to argue against those who called for the destruction of Jewish “heretical” books.¹² But Christian Hebraists were also suspect in the eyes of church authorities and anti-heretic activists, so that Hebraists often had to justify their interest in these texts and to assert the bona fides of their own orthodoxy, by themselves composing refutations of Jewish views. The main tenor of Christian Hebraism in these centuries remained apologetic and adversarial: these scholars sought to demonstrate the truth of Christian doctrine about the Messiah from Jewish traditions in Hebrew, drawing also on their deepened knowledge of classical and contemporary Jewish views.¹³

(b) Although the Reformation was regionally various and theologically heterogeneous, Luther’s writings proved perduring and foundational. Significantly, he had alternated between two poles: an earlier, more positive view of the Jews, and a later, very bitter hostility toward them.¹⁴ Compared with his theological contemporaries, the early Luther seemed strikingly amiable.¹⁵ In his exposition of the Magnificat (1521) and particularly in his writing on Jesus Christ’s birth as a Jew (1523), he voiced his hopes for the Jews’ conversion and baptism. Such hopes were in part stimulated by the apocalyptic thinking of his time: Now, when the light of the gospel, thanks to the Reformers, had begun once again to shine unobscured by Papal error, so too might the Jews be liberated from the Law and drawn close to Christ. Accordingly, he wrote, to encourage their conversion, Christians should treat Jews amicably.¹⁶ At this point, Luther rejected all coerced conversion, as well as the current and common anti-Jewish

12 In 1510, Johannes Reuchlin had argued against the burning of the Talmud, with the consequence that he himself was accused of being a heretic. Luther, in an early writing from 1514, defended Reuchlin, albeit not due to a really tolerant stance toward the Jews, cf. Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Martin Luther und die Juden – neu untersucht anhand von Anton Margarithas “Der gantz Jüdisch glaub” (1530/31)* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 74–76.

13 Cf. William Horbury, “Die jüdischen Wurzeln der Christologie,” *Early Christianity* 2 (2011): 5–21, specifically 16f. on Christian Schöttgen, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae in universum Novum Testamentum*, vol. 2 (Dresden and Leipzig: Christoph Hekel & Son, 1733–1742).

14 Cf. Thomas Kaufmann, *Luthers “Judenschriften”: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer historischen Kontextualisierung*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); idem, “Das Judentum in der frühreformatorischen Flugschriftenpublizistik,” *ZThK* 95 (1998): 429–461; Hans-Martin Kirn, “Luther und die Juden,” in *Luther Handbuch*, ed. A. Beutel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 217–225.

15 Cf. P. G. Aring, “Judenmission,” *TRE* 17:325–330 (325).

16 See Kirn, *Luther und die Juden*, 219.

slanders about ritual murders and host desecrations. He even developed a didactic concept of joint reading of the Scriptures – albeit strictly within the parameters of Protestant New Testament interpretations. Jewish conversion, in this thinking, was a weapon within intra-Christian disputes. Such an event validated Reform: now finally offered the true Christian message unencumbered by Roman Pharisaism and legalism, the Jews would surely convert.

In 1525, however, after unsuccessfully disputing with some Jews, Luther waxed disappointed, then angry. Increasingly sceptical of the likelihood of mass conversion, he reviled Jews as obdurate liars who, in their continuing rejection of (authentic, that is Reformation oriented) Christianity, in effect, crucified the Lord yet again. When he learned that some Christians in Moravia kept the Sabbath, Luther suspected direct and active Jewish influence, accusing the Jews of proselytizing Christians.¹⁷ His late writings mirror this disappointment and anger, to the point that Luther ultimately demanded that Jews be denied any civic rights and that they face expulsion if they continued to refuse to convert.

(c) Even more vituperative than his direct statements on Jews and Judaism were the deep structures of Luther's theology. With his programmatic opposition of "law" and "gospel," inspired by his reading of Galatians, Luther cast his battle for freedom from the papacy as a fight against any kind of "legalism," old ("Jewish") or new ("Roman Catholic"), that might muffle the Gospel's message of grace and of justification "not by works but by faith." Of course, such "legalism" was predominantly to be found, in the Reformers' view, in the numerous ritual practices of contemporary piety. Against such an undue conflation of "divine" and merely human demands, or of "law" and "gospel," Luther fought tirelessly.¹⁸ Biblical texts, primarily Pauline, were applied to interpret the present situation of monastic and late medieval piety, construed as contemporary embodiments of those New Testament adversaries of Jesus and of Paul, the Jews, and especially the Pharisees. In his self-designation as a new Paul, Luther could even describe his discovery of "justification by grace" by appeal to Paul's conversion (as depicted in 1 Tim 1:15), thereby presenting his repudiated pre-Reformation self as a former zealot and persecutor of Christ (cf. Gal. 1:13–14).¹⁹ In his commentary on Galatians he writes: "I was a Pharisee,

17 Thus in his tractate "Wider die Sabbather" from 1538 (WA 50:312–337).

18 It is important to see that in Luther's view, "law" was not confined to the Old Testament, but could also be found, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7), and "gospel" was also found within the Old Testament, for example, in the Psalms or some texts of the Prophets.

19 See Volker Stolle, *Luther und Paulus: Die exegetischen und hermeneutischen Grundlagen der lutherischen Rechtfertigungslehre im Paulinismus Luthers*, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 10 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2002), 86.

and I was more zealous for the paternal traditions than are the False Apostles of today ...”²⁰ Here, the different strata all merge: Luther depicts his former monastic life by his appeal to his construct of “Jewish” (thus, Catholic) reliance on human works; and he applies and intensifies Paul’s polemic in Galatians to his grievances against the Roman Church. Just as Paul resisted Peter face-to-face (Gal 2:11–16), so also does the Reformer resist Peter’s papal successor. Galatians, with its polarizing agonistic rhetoric, framed Luther’s vision of his own controversies with Rome.²¹ The merging of hermeneutical levels is the root of the polemical distortion in Luther’s image of “Judaism,” which would go on to have a long afterlife in the Lutheran interpretation of Paul.²²

(d) Protestant deployments of “Judaism” shifted as Reformation religious cultures grew and varied. Some of the so-called “radical Reformers,” from Thomas Müntzer²³ to the Anabaptists,²⁴ called for a more terrestrial understanding of the Kingdom of God, an earthly establishment of a sort of theocracy. Their socially apocalyptic call to upheaval and revolution, as well as Müntzer’s political understanding of God’s earthly Kingdom, were inspired by their radical application of Old Testament texts to current circumstances. Luther adamantly opposed such attempts. In his view, they failed to draw the necessary distinctions between “Law” and “Gospel” and distorted the Gospel into a new, earthly legalism. Ultimately, he advised secular authorities to resist the radical Reformers. These conflicts, crystallizing in the foundational phase of the Lutheran Reformation, confirmed the need for a sharp distinction between a non-violent Kingdom of God and the realities of worldly power politics, consonant with the theological distinction between “spirit” and “flesh.” In consequence, the Radicals’ hopes for a realized terrestrial salvation, such as the expectation of an earthly 1000-year reign of the “saints” (that is, their

20 See Stolle, *Luther und Paulus*, 87.

21 A magisterial presentation and reflection of these fundamental polarities is Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: Einführung in sein Denken*, 5th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

22 Cf. also my discussion in Jörg Frey, “Hat Luther Paulus missverstanden? Reformation als Paulusinterpretation und die Diskussion um die Bedeutung der reformatorischen Rechtfertigungslehre,” in *500 Jahre Reformation. Rückblicke und Ausblicke*, ed. P. Opitz (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter 2018), 49–78 (64–71).

23 Cf. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer. Mystiker – Apokalyptiker – Revolutionär* (Munich: Beck, 1989); idem, *Thomas Müntzer. Revolutionär am Ende der Zeiten. Eine Biografie* (Munich: Beck, 2015).

24 Cf. Gunther List, *Chiliasmische Utopie und Radikale Reformation – die Erneuerung der Idee vom tausendjährigen Reich im 16. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Fink, 1973); Ralf Klötzer, *Die Täuferherrschaft von Münster. Stadtreformation und Welterneuerung* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1992); Hubertus Lutterbach, *Der Weg in das Täuferreich von Münster: Ein Ringen um die heilige Stadt* (Münster: Dialogverlag, 2006), and Carsten Fischer, “Die Täufer in Münster (1534/35) – Recht und Verfassung einer chiliastischen Theokratie,” *Forum Historiae Iuris*, August 12, 2004, <https://forhistiur.de/2004-08-fischer>.

own community; cf. Rev 20:1–6), were rejected in the Lutheran as well as in the Reformed confessions as “Jewish opinions” (*iudaicae opiniones*),²⁵ which were not in accordance with the truth of the Gospel (cf. John 18:36).

(e) Luther’s later hostile policies toward Jews and Judaism, shared by many of his 16th-century followers, endured long thereafter. In Matthias Flacius Illyricus’ hermeneutical handbook, the *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae*, the Reformation’s premier statement on biblical interpretation, the term “Israel” alternates in synch with the Pauline oppositions of “flesh” or “letter” versus “spirit.” Contemporary Judaism remained the *Vetus Israël* of Christian interpretation, the blighted, fleshly antipode of spiritual *Verus Israël*,²⁶ namely, the Church. This timeless view of Christianity’s replacement or “substitution” of Judaism, deeply rooted in early Christian texts such as the Epistle of Barnabas and reinforced by centuries of patristic writings, was confirmed and, indeed, revitalized by Reformation theology.

2.3 *Pietism and Modern Evangelical “Philosemitism”*²⁷

A much more positive stance towards Jews and Judaism, however, developed within the new 17th- and 18th-century movements known as Pietism, stimulated in part by a renewal of eschatological expectations.²⁸ This form of Lutheran revivalism was inspired by Philipp Jakob Spener’s *Pia Desideria* (1675), wherein he expressed “hope for better times”:²⁹ a revival of the (“true”) Christian Church and, together with that – indeed, as its validating result – the conversion of the Jews.³⁰ Spener considered the current conduct of the church as a chief obstacle to the Jews’ coming to Christian faith. Emphasizing Luther’s

25 *Confessio Augustana* 17:5; *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* 11; see Jörg Frey, “Was erwartet die Johannesapokalypse? Zur Eschatologie des letzten Buchs der Bibel,” in *Die Johannesapokalypse. Kontexte, Konzepte, Wirkungen*, ed. J. Frey, J.A. Kelhoffer, and F. Tóth, WUNT 287 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 473–552 (483–4).

26 See Kirn, *Das Bild vom Juden*, 291.

27 On this term, see Wolfram Kinzig, “Philosemitismus. Teil I: Zur Geschichte des Begriffs,” *ZKG* 105 (1994): 203–228; idem, “Philosemitismus. Teil II: Zur historiographischen Verwendung des Begriffs,” *ZKG* 105 (1994): 361–382.

28 Cf. Johannes Wallmann, “Der alte und der neue Bund. Zur Haltung des Pietismus gegenüber den Juden,” in idem, *Pietismus-Studien: Gesammelte Aufsätze 2* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 259–283 (260–1).

29 In German: “Hoffnung besserer Zeiten.” Cf. Heike Krauter-Dierolf, “Hoffnung künftiger besserer Zeiten: Die Eschatologie Philipp Jakob Speners im Horizont der zeitgenössischen lutherischen Theologie,” in *Geschichtsbewusstsein und Zukunftserwartung in Pietismus und Erweckungsbewegung*, ed. W. Breul and J.C. Schnurr, AGP 59 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 56–88.

30 Cf. Martin H. Jung: *Christen und Juden. Die Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), 168–69.

earlier statements over those of his later writings, Spener also explicitly contradicted him, interpreting Romans 11:25–26 as testimony of a still awaited, thus surely forthcoming, salvation of fleshly Israel – that is, of his Jewish contemporaries. Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf, the Lutheran leader of the Pietistic revival in Moravia, even “integrated Judaism as part of Christian tradition, opening up dialogue with Judaism in a new way,”³¹ while Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, one of the fathers of the Pietism of my own Swabian home region, taught ideas from the Kabbalah³² and expected an ingathering of Jews in the Holy Land, the redemption of the lost ten tribes, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem together with restoration of its sacrificial cult, and a leading role for Jews in the thousand-year earthly reign of the saints (again, as prophesied in Revelation 20:1–6). In this vision, Jerusalem would reign – in the Hebrew language, no less! – over the whole world.³³

I deliberately refer to this last tradition, rooted in Lutheran Pietism, since its influence has been felt not primarily in scholarly exegesis but in the enthusiastic piety of 19th-century Revivalist movements. Indeed, it continues up to the present in current Evangelicalism. Within theological and biblical scholarship, this conservative “salvation-historical” tradition, from the Lutheran August Tholuck and the Neo-Pietist Johann Tobias Beck through to those pioneers of 19th-century Protestant scholarship on Judaism, Franz Delitzsch, and Adolf Schlatter, has advanced an evidently benign view of Judaism. The relation of Old and New Testaments, these interpreters emphasized, was continuous, not contrasting. Jesus and Paul, they urged, stood in continuity with the Jewish Law, and contemporary Jews were to be considered as continuing in a covenanted relationship with God.³⁴ These interpreters, to be sure, also championed Christian missions to convert Jews to their own church. Nonetheless, they saw a place for Jews within a broad divine economy as presented in Scripture, particularly in Romans 9–11.

At the same time, the effects of Enlightenment thought and critical historiography began to be felt in biblical exegesis, as modern scientific and historical reasoning and principled secularism complicated any claim to divining God’s

31 Thus, Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20 (Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2009), 193; cf. also Christiane Dithmar, *Zinzendorfs nonkonformistische Haltung zum Judentum*, Schriften der Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg 1 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000).

32 Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, *Die Lehrtafel der Prinzessin Antonia*, ed. R. Brey Mayer and F. Häußermann (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1977).

33 Cf. Jung, *Christen und Juden*, 169.

34 Cf. Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 200–201 on the Lutheran theologian August Tholuck.

eschatological intentions in perceived patterns of current events. Nonetheless, these Revivalist interpreters promulgated a relatively positive image of Judaism and were – at least in part – opposed to the antisemitic ideas then rooting in the soil of 19th-century racialist nationalisms. Their theologies, true, were unapologetically supersessionist, and their approach to history as immediately transparent on scriptural prophecy perhaps uncomfortably outdated. Yet, these conservative traditions within Lutheran Protestantism represent a stance on Judaism that differed both from that of the 16th-century Reformers as well as from that of Enlightenment interpreters. And their theological perspectives, in their own way, took Paul's words in Romans 9–11 seriously.

Outside of academic theology, the ideas of Pietism and the various awakenings of the 19th century contributed to the eschatological views then developing in England and North America. It is particularly the concept of millennialism developed by John Nelson Darby and spread by the influential Scofield Bible that systematized biblical history into several periods or divine “dispensations.”³⁵ In the millennium reign of the saints as depicted in Rev 20:1–6, realistically imagined as an earthly kingdom centred in Jerusalem,³⁶ the biblical promises to Israel would finally be fulfilled. So, the present situation of division between Israel and the church is merely a temporary division because at the end of this period, with the Second Coming of Christ, Israel will, at last, recognize Jesus as its saviour. According to Darby and most later Dispensationalists, God still considers the Jews to be His chosen people, despite their rejection of Christ; and their earthly destiny will finally be achieved in the impending eschatological millennium. The church is, therefore, a parenthesis in the program of prophesized kingship that will achieve its predestined end with the miraculous celestial rapture of truly faithful Christians in advance of Christ's promised Parousia.

Dispensationalist theology embraces the teaching that Judaism – or more concretely, since 1948, the State of Israel – continues to enjoy God's protection until the end of time, and that the divine plans, confirmed in part by the foundation of the Jewish state, include the fulfilment of the covenantal promises preserved in Scripture. For many Evangelicals or Pentecostals, these biblical promises are immediately linked with the (secular) Israeli state's

35 On precursors of this view, in particular within Reformed theology, see William Watson, *Dispensationalism Before Darby: Seventeenth-Century and Eighteenth-Century English Apocalypticism* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2015).

36 On the problems of such a realistic interpretation see my articles Jörg Frey, “Das apokalyptische Millennium,” in *Millennium. Informationen zum christlichen Mythos der Jahrtausendwende*, Kaiser Traktate 171 (Gütersloh: Christian Kaiser, 1999), 10–72 and idem, “Was erwartet die Johannesapokalypse?” 534–39.

political situation, their fulfilment envisaged as a military victory, the final battle, Armageddon, scripted in the Book of Revelation 16:12–16. Others hold to a vision of direct divine intervention, a supernatural protection of Israel *qua* nation-state against its political and military enemies, construed by these convictions as eschatological enemies. For some in these circles, their Christian piety and Scriptural witness translates as unconditional support for current Israeli policies and activities since they frame the historical foundation of the State with their own understanding of realized, and about-to-be-realized, biblical eschatology.³⁷

From an academic historical-critical perspective, this position may appear to be strange and irrational, and, hermeneutically, the presuppositions of such a reading of the Prophets as well as of the book of Revelation are highly problematic. From an insider's perspective, grounded as a pious confidence in fundamentalist readings of scriptural prophecies, such Christian "Zionism" is, instead, an index of Christian faith. It is also, in fact, a most pronounced Christian declaration of a muscular "philosemitism," one that utterly denies the possibility of such a thing as a "secular" Jewish state. I am unsure, however, whether Jewish communities in Israel can really appreciate the nature of such support, or whether they rather get the impression that they simply play a role in an ultimately selfish eschatological program for some Christians. It is up to them whether or not they want to rely on such "friends."

2.4 *The Tradition of Enlightenment and the Call for Universalism*³⁸

After this brief look at Protestant traditions of Lutheranism, Pietism, and Evangelicalism, we must consider as well the tradition of Enlightenment-oriented theology, which has decisively shaped modern biblical exegesis. In the period of the Enlightenment, when critical readings of the Bible emerged, there was, on the one hand, a strong tendency toward religious tolerance for Jews

37 It is not unreasonable to interpret certain decisions within current US politics, for example the move of the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, against this background: In a campaign speech in August 2020, US President Donald Trump explicitly admitted that the respective decision was made to make his evangelical supporters happy. On May 14, 2018, the day of the opening of the embassy, which was broadcast live on social media by Haaretz, one could observe numerous expressions of approval, some of them linked with the words: "It is all prophesied!" This mirrors the immediate link Evangelicals see between current (and supposedly end-time) political events and a selection of biblical prophecies creatively assembled from various books of the OT.

38 In the following section, I adopt sections from Jörg Frey, "New Testament Scholarship and Ancient Judaism: Problems – Perceptions – Perspectives," trans. J.N. Cerone, in Jörg Frey, *Qumran, Early Judaism, and New Testament Interpretation. Kleine Schriften 3*, ed. J.N. Cerone, WUNT 484 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 19–44 (21–25).

and Muslims,³⁹ which ultimately led to the political emancipation of Jewish Europeans. On the other hand, the philosophical commitment to universalist constructs of enlightened “religion” undermined any claims to legitimacy as expressed in any sort of “particularism.” Unsurprisingly, what was “universalist” was Christianity. Judaism, in contrast, was “particularistic,” an ethnic and antiquated veneer that early Christianity had removed and set aside.

For Johann Salomo Semler,⁴⁰ one of the founders of critical biblical scholarship, Judaism was a particularistic, nationally limited religious expression that had to be removed in order to give way to the universalistic Christian religion. Jewish notions and concepts textually evident in New Testament representations of Jesus and the apostles could, therefore, be understood as simply their “accommodation” to their contemporary audience.⁴¹ Consequently, enlightened biblical interpretation had to distinguish between these mere accommodations to ancient Jewish auditors and Christianity’s true essence, the proclamation of the universalist gospel.

For Friedrich Schleiermacher, the “church father of the 19th century,”⁴² contemporary Judaism was a mummy, a dead⁴³ and merely external religion, from which Jesus could be categorically distinguished due to the “constant strength of his God-consciousness.”⁴⁴ Accordingly, many 19th-century interpreters considered post-biblical Judaism a phenomenon of “degeneration”⁴⁵ from the original and powerful religion of the biblical prophets to the failed ideals of

39 Thus, e.g., in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s piece *Nathan der Weise* from 1779.

40 Cf. Hans-Günther Waubke, *Die Pharisäer in der protestantischen Bibelwissenschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts*, BHT 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 28–42 and Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 39–49.

41 On the theory of accommodation, see G. Hornig, *Die Anfänge der historisch-kritischen Theologie. Johann Salomo Semlers Schriftverständnis und seine Stellung zu Luther*, FSTh 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 211–236, and Marianne Schröter, *Aufklärung durch Historisierung: Johann Salomo Semlers Hermeneutik des Christentums*, Hallesche Beiträge zur Europäischen Aufklärung 44 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

42 On Schleiermacher’s view of the Jews, see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 61–76.

43 Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, “Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern,” in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Vol I.2. Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1769–1799*, ed. G. Meckenstock (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 185–326 (314). See also Waubke, *Pharisäer*, 43 and 336.

44 Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, “Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt,” in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1.13.2 (ed. R. Schäfer; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 52 (§ 94); original German reads, “stetige Kräftigkeit seines Gottesbewusstseins.”

45 Thus Wilhelm M.L. de Wette, *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmatik, in ihrer historischen Entwicklung dargestellt. Erster Theil: Biblische Dogmatik Alten und Neuen Testaments oder kritische Darstellung der Religionslehre des Hebraismus, des Judenthums und des*

an ethnic theocracy, to messianic and apocalyptic delusions and legal rigidity. These spiritual dead-ends contrasted sharply to ideals of modern (Protestant) Christianity as a universal and enlightened religion.

These historical-philosophical and theological value judgments remained in effect when the anchoring of early Christian texts in their historical surroundings became clearer. Thus, Julius Wellhausen, rightly, phrased the thesis that Jesus was “not a Christian, but a Jew,”⁴⁶ but he still kept busy, distancing Jesus from his Jewish contemporaries since, in his view, Jesus opposed Jewish ways of thinking, based as these were on works, arrogance, and intellectual snobbery, in favour of “the highest moral ideal,”⁴⁷ the simple service to one’s neighbour.⁴⁸ This image of ancient Judaism, as drawn by Wellhausen and his contemporary Emil Schürer, was dark. According to Schürer, Judaism in the time of Jesus was essentially represented by the Pharisees, whom he characterized as motivated by casuistic legalism and driven by considerations of merit and reward – all attitudes “far from ... true piety.”⁴⁹

This monolithic view of ancient Judaism was partly due to the limits of the sources available at the time, when the pluriformity of Second Temple Judaism that we can see today (e.g., from the corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls) could not yet be imagined. But its systematic interests were also apparent: Judaism remained the dark background upon which the bright image of the liberal Jesus could be painted. That image of Jesus was inspired by various intellectual traditions: the Enlightenment ideals of universalism and rational universality of religion; the contempt for merely “external” religious practice, in particular for anything related to cult and cultic issues. This last point was inspired by the Protestant rejection of Roman Catholicism, Judaism’s modern proxy, and the rejection of “legalism” rooted in Reformation theology.

A structurally anti-Jewish tendency can even be shown in the view of a scholar widely viewed as far beyond any taint of anti-Judaism: Rudolf Bultmann. For him, the earthly Jesus was a Jew. But the historical appearance of Jesus, his Jewish identity included, was merely part of the presupposition of the Christian *kerygma* and New Testament theology. Bultmann’s presentation still distances Jesus (if more subtly) from Judaism. Jesus’s proclamation, Bultmann explained, was a protest against Jewish law: Jesus avoided the apocalyptic

Urchristenthums (Berlin: in der Realschulbuchhandlung, 1813), 114: “Judaism is a degenerate, rigid Hebraism.”

46 Julius Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: Reimer, 1905), 113.

47 Julius Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1894), 309.

48 Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 310–11.

49 Schürer, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* (Leipzig: Hinrich’sche Buchhandlung, 1874), 498.

speculations of his contemporaries. His life was not messianic (as defined by the messianism of his day).⁵⁰ Further, Bultmann traced the *kerygma*, the emergence of Christology in Paul and John, primarily to non-Jewish influences:⁵¹ Hellenistic mystery cults, gnostic redeemer myths, and other mostly non-Jewish sources. Thus, an ugly ditch exists between the Jewish proclaimer and the Christian proclamation: Jewish contexts and traditions remain ultimately irrelevant to the understanding of Paul and of John, and to the proclamation of the church. According to his existential hermeneutics, Judaism is a religion like any other, and as such, it exemplifies just one more faulty attempt of humans to secure their existence by themselves. Here, Judaism could also be replaced by Greco-Roman religions, or indeed by any other, as they ultimately lack any substantive significance for understanding the Christian *kerygma*. Bultmann's position instantiates the effect of a hermeneutic of "generalizing" from concrete history to abstract existence. But if history is considered irrelevant in favour of existential significance, Judaism is neutralized and again sacrificed on the altar of universality.

With these brief glimpses into various traditions of Protestantism, I have sought to show that Protestant positions on Jews and Judaism are not at all uniform. There are not only Luther's later writings, there are not only Schleiermacher, Wellhausen, and Bultmann, but there are also other voices and traditions of piety, some more visible in modern scholarship, some less so. A wide variety of factors have contributed to the shaping of these various attitudes, including the general human interest in having history conform to and validate one's own viewpoint. In the instances reviewed here, these would be the Protestant theological identity marker of justification by grace alone; the modern call for rational, universally intelligible religion (understood: "Christianity"); and, on the other side, eschatological enthusiasms drawn from particular readings of biblical prophecy. All these factors have shaped stances toward Jews and Judaism past and present, as also the interpretation of relevant texts through the centuries.

50 Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 9th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 33, in continuation of William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).

51 Bultmann draws on the views of the history of religions school, which are summarized by Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos. Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus*, FRLANT NF 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913; 2nd ed. 1921), where a deep ditch between the Palestinian-Jewish piety of Jesus and the conceptions of Gentile Christian communities is seen. Cf. also Wilhelm Heitmüller, "Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus," *ZNW* 13 (1912), 320–337.

3 The Changed Situation and Present Debates

3.1 *The Change to a Moderate Philosemitism in German Protestant Mainstream Churches*

In German Protestant churches, the process of a renewal of Jewish-Christian relationships after World War II⁵² has led to a number of doctrinal statements by church boards or synods, even to revisions of church constitutions, in a deliberate rejection of the anti-Jewish heritage. Most prominent was the 1980 decision of the synod of the Protestant church of the Rhine region (“Rheinischer Synodalbeschluss”) on the renewal of the relationship between Christians and Jews.⁵³ That text was prepared by a committee of theologians and laypeople that included some Jewish members and was finally ratified by the church synod. The text programmatically opened with a statement from Rom 11:18b on the branches and the root of the olive tree, understanding Israel as the olive tree and the church as its grafted branches.⁵⁴ The statement recognizes four reasons for this endeavour to create or renew a positive relationship between Jews and Christians: (a) the acknowledgment of Christian complicity in and culpability for the murder of Jews in the Holocaust; (b) new insights on the part of Christian biblical theologians into the lasting significance of Israel in the history of salvation; (c) the view that the continued existence of the Jewish people, their return to the land of promise, and the establishment of the state of Israel, are all to be considered as signs of God’s faithfulness to his people; and (d) the willingness of Jews to meet, learn together and work together with Christians despite the Holocaust.

52 Cf. Siegfried Hermle, *Evangelische Kirche und Judentum – Stationen nach 1945*, AKZ B 16 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), and G. Gronauer, *Der Staat Israel im westdeutschen Protestantismus*, AKZ B 57 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

53 The text is published in “Landessynode der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland, ‘Synodalbeschluss ‘Zur Erneuerung des Verhältnisses von Christen und Juden’ vom 11. Januar 1980,” in *Die Kirchen und das Judentum: Dokumente von 1945–1985*, ed. R. Rendtorff and H.H. Henrix, 2nd ed. (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1989), 593–596, also online <https://www.ag-juden-christen.de/synodalbeschluss-zur-erneuerung-des-verhaeltnisse,s-von-christen-und-juden/>. See also the explanatory volume *Umkehr und Erneuerung: Erläuterungen zum Synodalbeschluss der Rheinischen Landessynode 1980 ‘Zur Erneuerung des Verhältnisses von Christen und Juden’*, ed. B. Klappert and H. Starck (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1980).

54 We cannot discuss here the exegetical problem whether this is the correct reading of the metaphor of the olive-tree or whether the metaphor is aptly interpreted by such a clear identification, cf. Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer: Teilband 2 (Röm 9–16)*, EKK 6/2 (Ostfildern: Patmos, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 179–184. For explanation of the whole text of the synod, see Bertold Klappert, “Die Wurzel trägt dich,” in *Umkehr und Erneuerung*, 23–54.

The paper, then, as a church document, confesses the permanent election of the Jewish people as God's people, the indissoluble connection of the New Testament with the Old Testament, a common faith in God as creator, a shared hope for a new heaven and a new earth, and the power of this messianic hope for the witness and action of Christians and Jews for justice and peace in the world. Other important elements of the text are its renunciation of the view that the church has replaced the synagogue as "the people of God" and its repudiation of further Christian efforts to convert Jews,⁵⁵ at least in the same manner as the church runs its missions to others.

These statements were, of course, not uncontested, and numerous theologians criticized the decisions and their wording. The text's renunciation of missionary efforts was particularly protested, as was the interpretation that the foundation of the modern state of Israel represented a data point in the history of salvation. While the church of the Rhine region has always been more strongly influenced by the Reformed theological tradition (with its stress on covenantal theology) and, more recently, by the theology of Karl Barth, it is noteworthy that the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) – the overall organization which unites the Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches in Germany – withheld full agreement. In its paper of 2012, this group asserted its principled position that modern Israel, as a secular state, stands "under the condition of the unredeemed world."⁵⁶

55 The formulation, however, included a more precise qualification: "6. Wir glauben, daß Juden und Christen je in ihrer Berufung Zeugen Gottes vor der Welt und voreinander sind; darum sind wir überzeugt, daß die Kirche ihr Zeugnis dem jüdischen Volk gegenüber nicht wie ihre Mission an die Völkerwelt wahrnehmen kann." On the interpretation, see Paul Gerhard Aring, "Absage an die Judenmission," in *Umkehr und Erneuerung*, 207–214.

56 See the study text of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland from 2012, which is more cautious in its formulation: "Die Rückkehr von Jüdinnen und Juden in das Land Israel und dem folgend die Gründung des Staates im Jahr 1948 sind damit für Christen kein unmittelbar religiöses Ereignis. Wohl aber sind sie Grund zur Mitfreude am Überleben des von Gott erwählten jüdischen Volkes und Grund zur Dankbarkeit Gott gegenüber, der sein Volk bewahrt hat und bis heute bewahrt. Auch die Gründung des Staates kann als ein Mittel erscheinen, um unter den Bedingungen der unerlösten Welt und angesichts der realen Konflikte im Nahen Osten Jüdinnen und Juden ein Leben im Land Israel in Recht und Frieden zu ermöglichen. In diesem Sinn kann die Gründung des Staates Israel als ein 'Zeichen der Treue Gottes zu seinem Volk' gedeutet werden" (*Gelobtes Land? Land und Staat Israel in der Diskussion*, ed. in commission of Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, Union Evangelischer Kirchen, and Vereinigte evangelisch – lutherische Kirche in Deutschland [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2012; online https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/20121024_gelobtes_land.pdf], 107–8); cf. also Gronauer, *Der Staat Israel*, 368.

3.2 *The Change in the Global Exegetical Discourse and Its Impact*

This new “philosemitism” – a repudiation of long-traditional anti-Judaism in (mainstream) German Protestant churches – has not directly influenced exegetical debates on biblical texts, although theologians involved in that project have attempted to establish the newer views on an exegetical basis. The exegetical discourse, however, has changed for different reasons, though the recognition of the deadly effects of anti-Judaism, to which the church and theology contributed, was one of several factors. Other factors include the internationalization and de-confessionalization of biblical scholarship within the discipline of comparative religions and the new scholarly investigation of Judaism, which has been stimulated in particular by the discovery of new sources, both textual (such as the Dead Sea Scrolls) and archaeological.⁵⁷

In particular, new insights from the Scrolls and other non- and extracanonical ancient texts have helped develop a more accurate picture of pre-70 CE Judaism’s energetic diversity. New Testament texts can now better be read within the context of late Second Temple pluriformity and, within this changed context, these “Christian” texts can be recognized as evidence exactly *of* that pluriformity: in short, as being much more “Jewish” than earlier generations of scholars could see or admit.⁵⁸ Biblical scholarship, confined initially to Protestant theological contexts, now occurs internationally, inter-denominationally, and even inter-religiously, its agenda no longer set by confessional concerns. This change has had significant effects. The classical German exegetical tradition lost its priority within biblical scholarship; Lutheran positions have been criticized from various other perspectives (and by important Lutheran theologians as well); theological categories have been supplemented or even fundamentally displaced by interdisciplinary interpretive methods drawn from sociology, cultural anthropology, rhetorical criticism, and post-colonial studies. And not least, Jewish New Testament scholars also

57 On the history, see G. Stemberger, “Judaistik und neutestamentliche Wissenschaft,” in *Judaistik und neutestamentliche Wissenschaft. Standorte – Grenzen – Beziehungen*, ed. Doering and Waubke, FRLANT 226 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 15–31.

58 On the impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls on NT scholarship, see Jörg Frey, “The Impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls on New Testament Interpretation: Proposals, Problems and Further Perspectives,” in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Princeton Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 3 of *The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 407–461; idem, “Qumran Research and Biblical Scholarship in Germany,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Scholarly Perspective. A History of Research*, ed. D. Dimant, STDJ 99 (Leiden and Boston: Brill 2012), 529–564. Both articles are republished in Jörg Frey, *Qumran, Ancient Judaism, and New Testament Interpretation*, 527–578 and 85–120.

have a voice, contributing to the project of reading early New Testament texts as evidence of various types of early Roman-period Judaism, whether Judean or Diasporan. These shifts of academic geography, methodology, and demography have also affected exegetical discussion in Germany: Biblical scholars now investigate Jewish texts in cooperation with specialists of Jewish literature and generally incline to more historical or literary approaches. This reconfiguration also implies a gradual loss of the influence of academic biblical insights on the general theological position within the mainstream churches and, due to the West's increased secularization, within society as a whole.

3.3 *Hermeneutical Problems of the New Philosemitism*

In view of its continuous history of older and newer genres of anti-Judaism, New Testament scholarship's efforts to avoid polemically distorted images of Judaism and rephrase Christian theology liberated of its traditional anti-Jewish accents is to be applauded as a crucial moral task. But here, severe hermeneutical issues are at stake. Some of Christianity's earliest anti-Jewish statements stand in its canonical texts. The question looms: How can we deal with these foundational texts without repeating their anti-Judaism? Can we purge them by emendations or by source-critical distinctions? Can we redeem them by historical explanation and contextualization? (They preserve the disputes and polemics of arguments that were originally intra-Jewish, not anti-Jewish.) Can we solve the problem of Christian anti-Judaism by criticizing New Testament authors? How are we to deal with texts that explicitly contradict the new approaches and viewpoints advocated, post-Holocaust, by churches today? These problems remain stumbling stones with regard to the theological declarations on the Jewish-Christian relationships mentioned above.

Some examples. When a church synod confirms, as an issue of Christian theology, that Israel's covenant with God remains valid and unbroken, what can we do with the Epistle to the Hebrews? Hebrews cites from Jewish scripture in Greek a passage where Jeremiah prophesies about "new" or "renewed" covenant, explicitly stating: "They have left my covenant, and I did not care about them anymore" (Heb 8:8–12 = Jer 38:31–34 LXX)? Obviously, those Christian theologians interested in dialogue with Jews prefer the Hebrew text over the LXX. Still, the LXX represents the text usually received by New Testament authors. The question for the theological interpreter is: Can we, as Christians, simply prefer the Hebrew canon over against the LXX, which, as the biblical text of Greek-speaking Jews, was the Bible for most New Testament authors? Is Protestantism too easily inclined to adopt the Hebrew canon, which was never

the canon of the Greek-speaking early church? And what are the theological consequences, if the views of the Reformers on canon have to be revised?⁵⁹

The second statement in the new philosemitic tendency of Jewish-Christian dialogue has even more problematic implications. Can Christian theologians regard the foundation of the State of Israel as a salvation-historical event, without extending the same status to that preceding horror, the Shoah, which contributed significantly to the Jewish state's post-War establishment? Further: should not the morally supine behaviour of "Deutsche Christen" during the 1930s and 40s, obliging Hitler's program and the Nazi rise to power, caution current Christian theologians against the danger of seeing God's hand a little too clearly in the course of historical or contemporary political events? Finally: Evangelical Dispensationalists, the chief advocates of modern Israel's special revelatory status, ground their view in their prophetic constructions of salvation history. The mass death of humans – eschatological this time, not racist and nationalist – is just another item in their End-time scenario. If this is Christian theological "philosemitism," we might all wish for less of it. Perhaps true philosemitism would frame a Christian identity without requiring theological constructions of "Jews" to serve as its load-bearing pillar.

3.4 *Three Exegetical Examples*

How, then, can we deal with disturbing New Testament texts? We can look briefly at three examples and the scholarly strategies of coping with the problems.

(a) One of the most disturbing anti-Jewish texts in the New Testament is embedded in the probably earliest letter of Paul, whose Jewish origin and identity have been strongly confirmed in recent scholarship.⁶⁰ In 1 Thessalonians 2:14–16, Paul the Jew blames some of his fellow Jews not only for persecuting Judean Jesus followers but also for killing Jesus. He describes his fellow Jews as opposed to all humans, not pleasing God, accumulating sins, and recipients of an already fully-realized divine wrath (*ephthasen ...*

59 Cf. my article "The Contribution of the Septuagint to New Testament Theology," in *Epiphanies of the Divine in the Septuagint and the New Testament*, ed. R. Deines and M. Wreford, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming in 2022).

60 See Jörg Frey, "Paul's Jewish Identity," in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World. Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt*, ed. J. Frey, D.R. Schwartz, and S. Gripenrog, AJEC 71 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 285–321; idem, "The Jewishness of Paul," in *Paul: Life, Setting, Work, Letters*, ed. O. Wischmeyer; trans. H.S. Heron with revisions by D.T. Roth (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 57–95.

eis telos, v. 16). Given the role the charge of deicide played in the later history of Christian treatment of Jews, it is understandable that exegetes wish that Paul had not written this text.⁶¹ But the idea that the passage might be a non-Pauline interpolation must be dismissed.⁶² Can we, instead, assume that Paul adopted the polemical motifs from other Jewish Jesus followers, or from Gentile Jesus followers from Antioch, or both?⁶³ Can we lean back and see the Jew Paul condemn his fellow Jews with supposedly merely adopted materials, still in innocent ignorance of later centuries' anti-Judaism? Even if the rhetoric of the text intends to show that the way of the gospel cannot be hindered,⁶⁴ the text is a dangerous adoption of elements of ancient anti-Judaism, extended by additional arguments, that shows us more about the author Paul than about Christian doctrine. Can we exculpate Paul with the observation that the effective history of this single passage was not very strong?⁶⁵ Of course, we can infer that Paul later revised his views, particularly on the evidence of Romans 9–11, and that 1 Thessalonians 2 is not his last word on the matter. Of course, we can or even must criticize Paul, but we cannot deny that he seems to speak about experiences that some early Jesus followers had, and thus phrase his fervent anger against those Jews who had hindered the mission of Jewish Jesus followers in Judaea – and we must add – as the younger Paul had done himself. In any case, we cannot so easily get rid of this disturbing text within the Pauline corpus.

(b) Hebrews presents a different problem, where we have the strongest rhetorical comparison between the old and the new covenant, priesthood, and cult, or rather, between the salvific order of the Scriptures (in the holy tent) and the better, yet only effectively salvific one through Jesus.⁶⁶ In view

61 Thus Hans-Josef Klauck, *Die antike Briefliteratur und das Neue Testament*, UTB 2022 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998), 276.

62 Thus Rudolf Hoppe, *Der erste Thessalonikerbrief* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2016), 62–3. On the theories of interpolation, see also Eckart D. Schmidt, *Heilig ins Eschaton: Heiligung und Heiligkeit als eschatologische Konzepte im 1. Thessalonicherbrief*, BZNW 167 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2010), 125–132.

63 Such a combination is assumed in Jürgen Becker, *Paulus: Der Apostel der Völker*, UTB 2014, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 489–90; a Jewish-Christian background, especially for the motif of the killing of the prophets is considered in Odil Hannes Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten*, WMANT 23 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1967), 274.

64 Thus, the interpretation in Hoppe, *Thessalonikerbrief*, 181–2.

65 Cf. Hoppe, *Thessalonikerbrief*, 182.

66 On this *synkrisis* in Heb 7:1–10:18, see Jörg Frey, “Die alte und die neue διαθήκη nach dem Hebräerbrief,” in Jörg Frey, *Von Jesus zur neutestamentlichen Theologie: Kleine Schriften 2*, ed. B. Schließer, WUNT 407 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 489–539.

of this argument, the charge of a (most probably Gentile-) Christian supersessionism easily arises.⁶⁷ The Christological exclusivity argued for from the Scriptures of Israel, more precisely the Septuagint, seems to leave no space whatsoever for a continuing existence of a “people of God” apart from Christ so that Hebrews seems to show a kind of renunciation of Jewish Israel already by the third Christian generation.⁶⁸ In consequence, Hebrews is almost shamefully left aside in current Jewish-Christian dialogue. Exegetes have tried to “rescue” Hebrews either by assuming an early pre-70 CE date and an internal intra-Jewish originary context⁶⁹ or as still being part of an intra-Jewish discourse about the covenant.⁷⁰ Others wish to see in parts of the text at least an openness for the entry of Jewish believers into salvation or even a perspective of universal salvation without a Christological foundation.⁷¹ Only with a very thorough look at the “cloud of witnesses,” the large number of people from Jewish scriptures (Heb 11; cf. 12:1) whose belief is already described as analogous to belief in Jesus, can we discover the view that there is, in the end, only one people of God, consisting of two parts that will enter salvation together (Heb 11:39–40). Thus, in the end, there is even a positive perspective for the author’s Jewish contemporaries, albeit not totally apart from Christ.⁷²

If these observations are valid, Hebrews even comes close to the perspective given in Romans 9–11, although its rhetoric most strongly works by derogating and devaluing the old salvific order. Is this text still Jewish because of its relatedness to Jewish traditions, or is it anti-Jewish because of its supersessionist rhetoric, or is it even both at the same time? Perhaps this is not even the decisive question, and we can certainly not only answer it from the determination of the addressees, as it is hardly possible to clarify definitively whether they

67 Thus Schreckenberg, *Adversus Iudaeos-Texte* 1, 92.

68 Thus the study text of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland: *Christen und Juden II. Zur theologischen Neuorientierung im Verhältnis zum Judentum: Eine Studie der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 52.

69 A very interesting attempt is the dissertation by Gabriella Gelardini, “*Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht! Der Hebräer, eine Synagogenhomilie zu Tischa be-Aw*,” BIS 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), but her assumptions have not found much acceptance in scholarship because the source evidence is insufficient.

70 Richard B. Hays, “Here We Have no Lasting City: New Covenantalism in Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian theology*, ed. R.N. Bauckham et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 151–173.

71 Thus Martin Karrer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer: Band 2: Kapitel 5,11–13,25*, ÖTK 20/2 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), 298–306.

72 Thus the thorough investigation by my doctoral student Andreas-Christian Heidel, *Das glaubende Gottesvolk: Der Hebräerbrief in israeltheologischer Perspektive* WUNT 2/540 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

are Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians, and the argument about the text is largely independent of the ethnicity of its addressees. In any case, we cannot easily get rid of this text which, in its exegetical techniques, is so thoroughly linked with Jewish tradition but according to which the “first” covenant is not only broken (Heb 8:9) but also outdated (Heb 8:13) and ultimately ineffective (Heb 10:4). However, thorough exegetical investigation can help discover the space for further dialogue and for a positive perspective for Israel.

(c) A final case to be discussed is the Gospel of John⁷³ in which the group of Ἰουδαῖοι appears in a generalizing manner, and often as a hostile group in opposition to Jesus, who even calls them “Devil’s children” (John 8:44). How can we deal with this text, which has been so fundamental both for Christian doctrine (indeed, seen as “the climax of New Testament theology”⁷⁴) and for Christian anti-Judaism? Are its disturbing anti-Jewish expressions a marginal textual element, detachable like a shell from the actual core, or is its anti-Judaism the dark implication or consequence of the gospel’s high Christology? Do we have to state that, although the gospel draws intensely on scriptural and post-biblical Jewish traditions, it is also anti-Jewish, at least in effect if not in intent? Admittedly, there are also positive connotations of the term Ἰουδαῖοι, most prominently (indeed, solely) in John 4:22: “Salvation is from the Ἰουδαῖοι.” But can this very positive statement neutralize the pervasive anti-Judaism of the gospel?

This conundrum has been addressed in various ways and with different consequences. On one side, the famous phrase in John 4:22 was emended by exegetes from Julius Wellhausen to Emanuel Hirsch and Rudolf Bultmann, as they could not accept such a positive evaluation of Judaism within John.⁷⁵ On the

73 Cf., most recently Jörg Frey, “John within Judaism? Textual, Historical, and Hermeneutical Considerations,” in *Jews and Christians: Parting Ways in the First Two Centuries C.E.? Reflections on the Gains and Losses of a Model*, ed. J. Schröter, B. Edsall, J. Verheyden BZNW (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, forthcoming in 2021). See also my earlier contribution: Jörg Frey, “The Jews’ in the Gospel of John and the ‘Parting of the Ways,’” in *The Glory of the Crucified One. Christology and Theology in the Gospel of John*, trans W. Coppins and C. Heilig, BMSEC (Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, and Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 39–72. See the most thorough discussion of the problems in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (Louisville, Kn.: Westminster John Knox, 2001); cf. also the more recent account by Reimund Bieringer, “Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel Fifteen Years after the Leuven Colloquium: A Contested Relationship in Context,” in *John and Judaism*, ed. R.A. Culpepper and P.N. Anderson, RBS 87 (Atlanta, Ga.: SBL Press, 2017), 243–264.

74 Thus Jörg Frey, “Johannine Theology as the Climax of New Testament Theology,” in idem, *The Glory of the Crucified One*, 347–376.

75 See the discussion in Ferdinand Hahn, “Das Heil kommt von den Juden.’ Erwägungen zu Joh 4,22b,” in idem, *Die Verwurzelung des Christentums im Judentum* (Neukirchen-Vluyn:

other hand, redaction-critical exegetes even today attempt to ascribe alleged anti-Jewish statements to a secondary – and, hence, less relevant – stratum, a second edition, distinct from the original, more Jewish, version.⁷⁶ Several scholars have suggested that the term Ἰουδαῖοι should be rendered in a manner that does not imply the notion of “all Jews,” in order to avoid the generalization or even the use of these texts for present-day anti-Judaism. Thus, earlier scholars have suggested that Ἰουδαῖοι points to particularly stringent and legalistic Jews;⁷⁷ others wanted to limit its meaning in the modern interest of ethical and political correctness⁷⁸ to the geographically limited group of “Judeans”⁷⁹ or solely to the Judean authorities.⁸⁰ But both suggestions do not apply to all the passages, and, interestingly, there is substantial philological criticism even from Jewish scholars against rendering Ἰουδαῖοι with “Judeans.”⁸¹

In the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue, scholars have tried to see the polemical passages in John 8 as directed only against “believing” Jews (John 8:31), that is, Jewish Christians, in order to avoid a reference to the synagogue,⁸² or even against non-Johannine Christians, with the implication that Ἰουδαῖοι is

Neukirchener, 1999), 99–118.

- 76 Thus, e.g., Folker Siegert, *Das Evangelium des Johannes in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt: Wiederherstellung und Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 82–4 and 155–56, who assumes that the author of the “original” gospel was a Jewish Christian, but that the redactional additions in the later edition were shaped by a thorough anti-Judaism.
- 77 Thus in 1914 Wilhelm Lütgert, “Die Juden im Johannesevangelium,” in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Georg Heinrici*, ed. A. Deissmann and H. Windisch, UNT 6 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914), 147–54.
- 78 See Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, “Wrestling with Johannine Anti-Judaism: A Hermeneutical Framework for the Analysis of the Current Debate,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, 3–37 (17).
- 79 Cf. the dictionary entry in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. F.W. Danker, based on Walter Bauer’s *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 6th ed., by Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 478 with an explanatory remark. See also the presentation of views and discussion in Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel: Parallelism, Function, and Context*, WUNT 2/220 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 20–24.
- 80 James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus as Mirrored in John: The Genius in the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark 2019), 5.
- 81 Thus, with regard to Josephus, Daniel R. Schwartz, “‘Judean’ or ‘Jew’? How should we translate *Ioudaios* in Josephus?” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World: Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt*, ed. J. Frey, D.R. Schwartz, and S. Grippentrog, AJEC 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3–27.
- 82 Thus Matthias Rissi, “Die ‘Juden’ im Johannesevangelium,” ANRW II 26/3, 2099–2141.

just a fixed image without an external referent.⁸³ All these creative attempts to purge the Johannine text or its semantics are not convincing, and we cannot get rid of the offensive statements against the Ἰουδαῖοι by these procedures.

The most common attempt, of course, is to interpret the polemics as mirroring a traumatic experience of Jewish Christians being expelled from the synagogue or in the course of the alleged “parting of the ways.”⁸⁴ The interpretations vary according to estimates of the date by which John is thought to have been composed. Is the polemic formulated while the author was still within Judaism, in the heat of the separation, or retrospectively? But even if the precise historical contextualization could lead to different explanations of the phenomena, none of those explanations can prevent the texts from being dangerous in their effect. The text’s Ἰουδαῖοι remain potent as a literary entity, as a burdened “symbol,”⁸⁵ irrespective of which Jewish party they may have referred to historically and regardless of whether the gospel was formed within a Jewish context or in a context that had already separated from the local synagogue.

We cannot discuss the complex historical questions here, but we can observe that behind the hypotheses mentioned, there are always the ethical issues and the identity concerns of its (primarily Christian) interpreters: If the Gospel is still an intra-Jewish controversy, not a polemic from the Gentile-Christian church, the text might be considered more legitimate, less dangerous, or less anti-Jewish than a polemic from outside.

It is interesting that against all of the (predominantly Christian and often apologetic) attempts to locate not only Paul, but even John “within Judaism,” the Jewish Johannine scholar Adele Reinhartz takes the opposite position. After a life-long scholarly journey of “befriending the beloved disciple,”⁸⁶ Reinhartz, in her most recent book,⁸⁷ sets aside issues of community situation and audience and focuses, instead, on the rhetoric of the gospel that encourages readers

83 Thus Henk Jan de Jonge, “The Jews’ in the Gospel of John,” in *Antijudaism and the Fourth Gospel*, 121–40.

84 Thus, on the most influential suggestions by J. Louis Martyn and Raymond E. Brown, see my considerations in Frey, “The Jews’ in the Gospel of John and the ‘Parting of the Ways,’” 52–61.

85 This has been lucidly demonstrated by Tobias Nicklas, *Ablösung und Verstrickung. Juden’ und Jünergestalten als Charaktere des erzählten Welt des Johannesevangeliums und ihre Wirkung auf den impliziten Leser*, Regensburger Studien zur Theologie 60 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2001).

86 Cf. Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple. A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

87 Adele Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John* (Lanham: Lexington Press/Fortress Academic, 2018).

to affiliate themselves with a community Jesus' disciples, and to embrace a new identity as "children of God." This "rhetoric of affiliation"⁸⁸ is matched by a "rhetoric of disaffiliation"⁸⁹ with regard to the Ἰουδαῖοι or other aspects of Jewish life. Regardless of the historical relationship between those Ἰουδαῖοι and the "real Jews" in the world of the readers, the gospel's narrative rhetoric leads its readers to disassociate themselves from the Ἰουδαῖοι or "disciples of Moses" in their world and to associate themselves with Jesus and his disciples.

We may question whether we should call the gospel anti-Jewish or merely anti-synagogal and, thus, radically Jewish.⁹⁰ There is no need to decide that issue here. But we can see in this example, as well as in the two examples discussed before, that the numerous attempts to cope with the so-called anti-Jewish passages in the New Testament by textual emendation, by historical explanation, or by semantic correction, are inseparably linked with matters of identity and ethics for the scholars involved, in the effort to avoid anti-Jewish patterns in Christian exegesis and teaching, while also attempting to save a dear and valuable canonical text from the devastating charge of being anti-Jewish. The ethical struggle to avoid anti-Jewish effects in churches and society can only be applauded, but the desire to safely integrate those texts "within Judaism" can neither remove the dangerous elements from the text nor exculpate the texts or their authors from the dangers of undue generalization.

4 Concluding Perspectives and Questions

What is our interest in dealing with all of these anti-Jewish passages? Is it to rescue the ancient author by giving a historically more or less plausible explanation – thus, excuse – for the views expressed in the text, by censoring the narrative and its efficient symbolic world, or by distancing the "historical" text from its uses in contemporary discourse? Or is there an interest in accusing the "Christian" author from the perspective of identification with "the Jews" and their later history? Why do scholars look for evidence to favour the first or the second option, and how do their scholarly aims correspond with their own religious affiliation?

88 Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant*, 1–48 (1).

89 Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant*, 49–92 (49).

90 As Reinhartz (*Cast Out of the Covenant*, 160) lucidly observes, "the Gospel's Jewishness was itself mobilized to support the anti-Jewishness that is so deeply embedded in the Gospel's rhetorical project."

In my view, the most honest way is not to smooth over the challenges of these texts nor to minimize their theological claims, but to identify the problems as frankly as possible and to tackle them with historical precision and hermeneutical awareness. I join Bernard Levinson's plea, as expressed during the Oxford conference, to include in our considerations the issues of the theological motifs *behind* the historical and exegetical explanations – not only with regard to former scholarship but also concerning our own work. As historians of early Judaism and Christianity, as biblical exegetes and theologians, we are working not only within an academic framework in the way that, for instance, historians of the Italian Renaissance or Medieval music do. Instead, we deal with materials of enormous relevance to the religious identities of believing communities; materials that are used, and also misused, in public discourse and even in politics, thereby affecting not only inner beliefs but also public behaviours. Thus, our historical and exegetical work affects and even shapes religious identities. It therefore has ethical consequences. We interpret complicated texts against the background of a complicated, occasionally hideous history, and we must do so with contemporary ethical issues in mind. Our ethics of dialogue and debate luckily differ from those of former times – including that period during which the New Testament texts were written.

We cannot escape the hermeneutical circle, namely, that our interpretations involve us in matters of personal identity and group interests. My plea is that we should be openly aware of this rather than pretending to represent an objectivity that in reality cannot be maintained. I cannot speak on behalf of other identities. Of course, as a Protestant Lutheran theologian, I have some interest in maintaining that Lutheranism is not the only “bad guy” and that it is not entirely wrong in its theological perceptions, principles, and traditions. As a Christian and a New Testament scholar, I have a high estimation of the theological reasoning of Paul, of the author of Hebrews, and the author of the Fourth Gospel. I cannot simply dismiss them because of the problematic elements of their views or the problematic reception history of their texts. And as a historian and theologian who works with Jewish traditions, I also have an interest in a precise and, as far as possible, a sympathetic representation of those traditions too.

By phrasing this so personally, I certainly do not intend to abandon the call for the utmost historical and philological rigor, for the methodological self-distancing in which we have been trained and within which we train our academic successors. However, given the inevitable hermeneutical circle, only hermeneutical self-awareness will help us to better understand these debates and, not least, our own scholarly arguments and positions within them. This

striving for honesty is needed for genuine dialogue and encounter between various Christian and Jewish viewpoints.

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American Biblical Scholarship and the Post-War Battle against Antisemitism

Steven Weitzman

Despite signs of a recent resurgence in anti-Jewish prejudice, America's efforts to overcome antisemitism still counts as a success story. In the 1920s and 1930s, antisemitic attitudes were widespread in many sectors of American society, including within prominent universities like Harvard and Princeton.¹ While some degree of antisemitism has persisted in American culture, polling confirms it as far less common. According to the Roper poll from 1938, the first poll to gauge antisemitic attitudes in the United States, the percentage of Americans who believed Jews had too much power was 41%.² When American attitudes toward the Jews were surveyed in 2016 by the Anti-Defamation League, the number of Americans harbouring antisemitic attitudes was around 14%, half of what it was when the ADL began to poll for antisemitic attitudes in 1964. Dramatically diminishing antisemitism – not eliminating it, but significantly lowering it and discrediting it – was a major and enduring achievement of post-war America.

This transformation was not inevitable. Especially in the years immediately following World War II, it was not yet clear what kind of place America would be for the Jews. Indeed, not only did antisemitic prejudice remain widespread, but, as noted by Leonard Dinnerstein, between 1945–47 it seems to have increased.³ The 1938 Roper poll suggesting that 41% of Americans believed that Jews had too much power is shockingly high, but the situation was even more dire at the end of World War II: in a polling result from 1945, 58% of respondents agreed when asked whether Jews had too much power in the U.S. Antisemitism in the

1 On antisemitism in pre-War American academia, see Jerome Karabe, *The Chosen: the Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Stephen Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower: Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

2 The data is cited in Leonard Dinnerstein, "Anti-Semitism Exposed and Attacked, 1945–1950," *American Jewish History* 71 (1981): 134–49. For a more detailed analysis, see Susan Welch, "American Opinion Toward the Jews During the Nazi Era: Results from Quota Sample Polling During the 1930s and 1940s," *Social Science Quarterly* 95 (2014): 615–35.

3 Dinnerstein, "Anti-Semitism Exposed."

United States only began a clearly downward trajectory in 1948, a trend not foreseen from the unhappy response in the immediate post-war poll, when anti-Jewish bias was still widespread and even growing.⁴ The change resulted from the concerted efforts of a broad coalition – Jewish organizations, President Truman, legislators, the courts, filmmakers, returning GIs, newspapers, unions, intellectuals, and churches.⁵ This essay explores the role of academic biblical scholarship – especially Protestant-inflected biblical scholarship – as a part of the story of how America turned away from antisemitism.

American academic biblical scholarship in the first half of the twentieth century was not unaffected by the period's prevailing antisemitism, but it provided a place where Christians and Jews could develop respectful, collegial relationships that were personal as well as professional. The friendship that developed between Paul Haupt (1858–1926), a pioneering biblical scholar and Assyriologist, and Cyrus Adler (1863–1940), a formative figure in American Jewish cultural and intellectual history, is a case in point. Adler worked under Haupt as his first graduate student. Attaining his Ph.D. in 1887, Adler remained devoted to his doctoral advisor throughout Haupt's life. Jewish-Christian interfaith relationships in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often came about at the initiative of Protestants.⁶ Haupt's relationship with Adler was a part of that trend, though grounded in shared scholarship rather than theology. Adler even assisted Haupt with a plan, never realized, to assist Russian Jews fleeing persecution from the Pale of Settlement to resettle in Mesopotamia.⁷

Another even more famous student of Haupt's was William Foxwell Albright, one of the twentieth century's most influential American biblical scholars. Although Albright had his differences with Haupt, he embraced his teacher's openness to Jews as colleagues and friends, and it is Albright and his efforts to combat antisemitism that are the focus of this essay.

4 For the extent of antisemitism in the United States in the period between 1939–1945, the “high tide” of American anti-Jewish bias in America, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 128–149.

5 Dinnerstein, “Anti-Semitism Exposed,” 142–145.

6 Benny Kraut, “Towards the Establishment of the National Conference of Christians and Jews: the Tenuous Road to Religious Goodwill in the 1920s,” *American Jewish History* 77 (1988): 388–412; Lawrence Charap, “Accept the Truth from Whomsoever Gives It: Jewish-Protestant Dialogue, Interfaith Alliance and Pluralism, 1880–1910,” *American Jewish History* 89 (2001): 261–278; Yaakov Ariel, “Interfaith Dialogue and the Golden Age of Christian-Jewish Relations,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 6 (2011): 1–18.

7 Moshe Perlman, “Paul Haupt and the Mesopotamian Project, 1892–1914,” *Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society* 47 (1958): 154–172.

In contrast to many of the biblical interpreters featured in this volume, Albright did not understand himself as a biblical scholar in a Protestant mode. His approach to the Bible was scientific and intentionally ecumenical. Although Protestant in his personal life, he marked his own path, criticizing those more liberal than he, yet also distinguishing his position from a fundamentalist insistence on biblical inerrancy. He was open to the Catholicism of his wife and the Judaism of his friends; and when he referred to Protestant biblical scholars, he clearly saw them as practicing something distinctly different from the kind of scholarship in which he saw himself engaged. At the same time, however, as the son of Methodist missionaries, Albright had emerged from a Protestant subculture, and he carried some of its assumptions with him. He viewed himself as a humanist, and yet he also saw his work as addressing a crisis of faith that had set in among fellow Protestants, sometimes publishing in venues meant to reach them like *Christianity Today* and the *Christian Century*.⁸ Although he would have insisted that his approach was non-sectarian, his work clearly stands in the history of Protestant biblical interpretation, a twentieth-century American variant that enlisted scientific empiricism to advance Christian faith.

Beyond all that it revealed about the Bible and the ancient Near East, Albright's embrace of non-sectarian academic scholarship allowed him to develop professional and personal relationships across religious boundaries, including with many Jews, and it was one of those relationships that drew him into the effort to decrease anti-Jewish hostility still prevalent in the wake of the Second World War. An episode in Albright's life that occurred precisely in the transitional period of 1945–46, a moment when Albright had to confront anti-Jewish discrimination in his home institution of Johns Hopkins University, offers an opportunity to reflect on the role of academic biblical scholarship as a broker in the interfaith relationships that helped turn the tide against antisemitism in the United States.

1 Biblical Scholarship and Interfaith Alliance

By the time of his death in 1971, William Foxwell Albright was such a towering figure in biblical studies that it took until the 1990s before the field was ready to break free of his influence. The turning point, when it came, was doubly inflected: archaeologist William Dever mounted a methodological critique of

⁸ Some of the work I have in mind is republished in William Foxwell Albright, *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1959).

Albright's work, and Burke Long's critical biography dismantled Albright's persona as a benign and objective scientist.⁹ But our story begins earlier, in 1945, by which point Albright was already a giant in his field. After completing his doctorate under Haupt at Johns Hopkins in 1916, he decamped to Palestine, where he worked as an archaeologist and, from 1921, headed the American School of Oriental Research. That period ended in 1929, when he returned to Johns Hopkins as Haupt's successor as chair of the Oriental Seminary, retiring from that position almost thirty years later, in 1958. By 1945, he was renowned both for his pre-War archaeological work and for his publications, including his most important and remembered 1940 publication, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*.

Burke Long's biography challenged Albright's reputation for philosemitism. Long detected a certain condescension in Albright's interactions with Jewish colleague Harry Orlinsky – to be introduced below – and found some classic tropes of Protestant antisemitism woven into Albright's putatively historical descriptions of the Pharisees.¹⁰ Anti-Jewish bias undeniably shaped some of his scholarly production, such as his oft-noted claim that Christianity was in a better position than Judaism to penetrate the meaning of life and to address the challenges of the atomic age.¹¹ But the supersessionism that occasionally surfaces in Albright's writing should be viewed within the context of his decades-long support for Jews in an era when many American Protestants were openly hostile, convinced that conversion to Protestant Christianity was the only way that Jews could be redeemed.

A study of the American Protestant Press between 1933–46, the era of the Nazi-sponsored pan-European persecution and murder of Jews, revealed that Protestant news coverage displayed little sympathy for Jews, failing to register the gravity, scope, and systematic destruction of European Jewry, sometimes explaining Jewish misfortune as divine punishment for their rejection of Jesus.¹² By contrast, Albright condemned his German colleague Gerhard Kittel,

9 William Dever, "What Remains of the House that Albright Built?", *BAR* 56 (1993): 25–35; Burke Long, *Planting and Reaping Albright: Politics, Ideology and Interpreting the Bible* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1997).

10 Long, *Planting*, 83.

11 Albright, *Christianity, Archaeology, and Christian Humanism*, 322.

12 Robert Ross, *So it was True: The American Protestant Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1980). For more on antisemitism in American Protestantism in the 1930s and 40s, see Lee Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: the Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1983); Egal Feldman, "American Protestant Theologians on the Frontiers of Jewish-Christian Relations, 1922–1982," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. D. Gerber (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 363–385.

who embraced the Nazis and endorsed their attacks on the Jews. He assisted Jewish colleagues fleeing Germany, such as Assyriologist Julius Lewy, to find academic positions in the U.S. He advocated for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. And in his publications, Albright portrayed Jews in a positive light, either directly or through sympathetic historical descriptions of Israelites and of Moses, closely associated with Jews in Protestant minds.¹³ Whatever signs of antisemitic bias might be found in his scholarly thinking, Albright actively worked, politically and professionally, to integrate Jews into the mainstream of American academic culture, and to promote a positive understanding of Jews more generally.

It should be acknowledged that while Albright was greatly concerned about the rise of antisemitism in Europe, he scarcely addressed the rising danger of American antisemitism in his published work. His most extended treatment of the subject is a 1944 paper entitled “Some Functions of Organized Minorities,” wherein he advocated for the inclusion of minorities within broader society as a way to enrich its cultural vibrancy and to ensure its democratic character.¹⁴ Assyrians and other pre-modern cultures, Albright observed, had striven to eliminate minority populations, just as the Nazis currently (and successfully) did. Much wiser, he urged, to protect and integrate them into society without, however, compelling them to fully assimilate, for, he argued, the presence of such minorities, precisely by being a social irritant for the majority, would have an energizing effect on the broader society, keeping it from sinking into cultural inertia. Although it is clear that Albright had American Jews in mind as a model, he does not say that much about them even in this essay. Manifesting a tendency in 1940s American culture to think of victims of prejudice as interchangeable, the paper treats Jews as but one among many other minorities.¹⁵

As infrequently as he addressed the topic of American antisemitism in writing, however, Albright’s publication record does not tell the whole story of his engagement in this issue. Within a year of publishing his Minorities talk,

13 Brooke Sherrard, *American Biblical Archaeologists and Zionism: The Politics of Historical Ethnography* (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2011), 35–88. See also, Brooke Sherrard, “American Biblical Archaeologists and Zionism: How Differing Worldviews on the Interaction of Cultures Affected Scholarly Constructions of the Ancient Past,” *JAAAR* 84 (2016): 234–259.

14 William Foxwell Albright, “Some Functions of Organized Minorities,” reprinted in William Foxwell Albright, *History, Archaeology and Christian History* (London: A & C Black, 1965), 195–204.

15 Stephen Whitfield, “The Theme of Indivisibility in the Post-War Struggle against Prejudice in the United States,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48 (2014): 223–247. For the version of Albright’s Minorities paper delivered to a Jewish audience, see William Albright, “The Place of Minorities in Our Civilization,” *Jewish Forum* 7 (1944): 85–86.

Albright had to confront antisemitism in a direct way: his home university, Johns Hopkins, in 1945 imposed a quota limiting the undergraduate enrollment of Jewish students to 10%. Albright never wrote publicly about his fighting the quota, but we know from his correspondence that it came to a head during the summer and fall of 1945, affecting his relationship with his dean and with the president of the university. Decades later, he would recall what he did as a solitary campaign that ultimately ended the quota. That is a simplification, but he did show courage, and his actions illustrate the kind of behind-the-scenes activity that it took to combat antisemitism within academia.

That Johns Hopkins would introduce such a policy is surprising given its earlier history. In the pre-war period, the university, established as the first German-style research university in the United States, was a relatively hospitable place for Jews, especially when compared with other institutions like Harvard and Princeton. Because its founder, the entrepreneur Johns Hopkins, had stipulated that neither race nor creed should restrict admission, many Jews found a place there already in the nineteenth century, including Cyrus Adler.¹⁶ This open-enrollment policy continued into the period of Albright's early career. In 1932, not long after he became head of the university's Oriental Seminary, he reported in a letter to the archaeologist Nelson Glueck that all six graduate students in his department were Jews.¹⁷

But as World War II drew to a close in 1945, Johns Hopkins changed course, suddenly becoming a more hostile place both for Jewish students and for Jewish faculty, imposing a quota on Jewish student admissions at a time when other universities had already begun to relax or dismantle theirs. The new policy came at the initiative of the university's fifth president, Isaiah Bowman (1878–1950). A geographer who had achieved pre-eminence for his leadership as director of the American Geographical Society – a role for which he is honoured to this day by the Society through a research initiative called the Bowman Expeditions Program – Bowman was also an open antisemite. Before instituting the quota, he had blocked the hiring and promotion of Jewish faculty, firing at least one faculty member “because there are already too many Jews at Hopkins,” and refusing to offer refuge to Jewish scholars exiled by the Nazis.¹⁸ The quota that followed in 1945 was an attempt to staunch the flow of Jewish

16 See Lewis Feuer, “The Stages in the Social History of Jewish Professors in American Colleges and Universities,” *American Jewish History* 71 (1982): 432–465.

17 William Foxwell Albright to Nelson Glueck, 14 November 1932. APS, cited in Sherrard, “American Biblical Archaeologists,” 64.

18 For more on Bowman, including his antisemitism and opposition to Zionism, see Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), esp. pp. 246–248.

applicants, an ugly reiteration of European *numerus clausus* restrictions in the pre-War years.

Bowman was a complicated person: very successful academically but also, personally, anti-intellectual and contemptuous of faculty; an important advisor to Roosevelt as a liberal, but an authoritarian academic executive; an overt racist who also supported the United Negro College Fund. His notorious antipathy toward Jews, remembered at Johns Hopkins to this day, reflects some of this complexity, antisemitic both conventionally but also politically. Bowman sought to limit the Jewish presence at Johns Hopkins for the same reason that he opposed Zionism as an answer to the conundrum of post-War Jewish resettlement. In his view, highly concentrated numbers of Jews were noxious. The only reasonable policy was to disperse them widely, not to concentrate them in a single place (such as Palestine) but to ensure that their noxious presence was dispersed by being spread throughout the world. The same principles motivated his introduction of Hopkins' "Jewish quota." Bowman did not oppose granting admission to a limited number of assimilated Jews, such as those from the upper-class of Baltimore Jewish society who conveniently filled out the university's donor base. But large numbers applying from New Jersey and New York – in his view, unassimilated Jews seeking admission only in order "to make money and to marry non-Jewish women"¹⁹ – was just too much for the university to accept. If Johns Hopkins was to retain its status as a premier university, which meant not becoming a "Jewish school," their numbers, he maintained, had to be curtailed.

Albright squared off against Bowman and his policies. Having long felt a certain kinship with Jews, Albright could not but contest such a policy, and he immediately began to use his influence to undo the quota. Long's biographical account, curiously, does not mention the episode at all, but Leona Running and David Noel Freedman, two Albright students, briefly noted it in their 1975 biography. They quote there the biblical scholar Nahum Sarna, who recalled the following reminiscence:

In the 1940s the Trustees or the administration at Johns Hopkins made a decision to limit the number of Jews to be allowed into the University, and Albright led the opposition to this practically single-handed. He went to the President and to the members of the Board of Trustees, and without help from the rest of the faculty, including Jews on the faculty,

19 Bowman, as cited in Smith, *American Empire*, 247.

he got them to rescind this degree, as he called it. And he was extremely proud of that.²⁰

Student biographies of Doktorväter run the risk of tipping over from filial piety into hagiography. (Running and Freedman entitled their book *William Foxwell Albright: a 20th Century Genius*.) The reminiscence that they report does not, in this instance, get things quite right. Bowman himself never agreed to rescind the policy, for example, which was not voided until after his death in 1950. But we now know much more about Albright's role in this episode thanks to a study published in 2010 by Jason Kalman, a scholar at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and he has uncovered correspondence from that time, which confirms Albright's leadership in opposing the quota even as it reveals a much more complex backstory.²¹ So thoroughly does Kalman reconstruct the sequence of these events that I will not repeat his history here. Instead, I will build on the archival evidence excavated by him in order to situate Albright's actions within their larger context.

Compared to other contemporaneous efforts to confront or unveil the anti-semitism of the times – newspaper exposés; Hollywood films like *Gentleman's Agreement*; initiatives in state and federal legislatures to bar discrimination; public rallies; surveys of popular opinion undertaken to reveal the extent of antisemitism in America – Albright's personal campaign against Johns Hopkins' quota, pursued largely through back-channel meetings (thus invisible to the public at the time) is only a minor skirmish in America's post-War battle against antisemitism. But the success of that larger effort depended not just on highly visible public events, but also on people working in more local and less visible contexts: within families, schools, places of employment. Albright's efforts register among these.²² His behind-closed-doors campaign offers us a way to understand how Protestant biblical scholars and biblical scholarship abetted this larger cultural transformation of American society.

Archival correspondence confirm that Albright found practically no support among faculty colleagues, but he did have allies in another corner: Harry Orlinsky, a Jewish biblical scholar whom Albright had helped to place at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York; and Orlinsky's student Ellis Rivkin, then a graduate student in the history department. These two figures had little

20 Running and Freedman, *William Foxwell Albright*, 232–33.

21 Jason Kalman, "Dark Places Around the University: The Johns Hopkins University Quota and the Jewish Community, 1945–1951," *HUCA* 81 (2010): 233–279. I wish to thank Professor Kalman for sharing copies of some of the correspondence he uncovered.

22 Cf. Jacqueline Nelson, "Racism and Anti-Racism in Families: Insights from Performativity Theory," *Sociology Compass* 9 (2015): 487–498.

institutional or financial clout of their own, but they supported Albright's efforts, supplying him with information and encouragement. Orlinsky first wrote Albright about the quota in July of 1945, but Albright had already gotten wind of it a few months prior, in May, having begun what he referred to as a "crusade" on behalf of a Jewish boy who had been denied admission. And it is understandable why he would later recall that crusade as a solitary one: he was alone when confronting the dean and the head of admissions in a heated exchange; he was alone when he finally met with Bowman himself, an encounter that left things unresolved. But supporting Albright from a distance all along the way were Orlinsky and Rivkin, who encouraged him, provided him with data, and worked to recruit other allies to the cause from within the Jewish community.²³ Their contribution may seem secondary to Albright's, but it significantly nuances the narrative in the Running and Freedman biography: Albright was not a lone hero *but an ally* of Jews active in their own right.

This point bears emphasizing because it ties this campaign to a larger trend then emerging in the national fight against antisemitism. Other key factors in the success of this larger effort were the willingness of activists to go public with their protests, to call antisemitism out in the open; and to recruit non-Jewish allies through interfaith and inter-group collaborations and partnerships. Such alliances had already formed in the decades before World War II, but in the 1930s and 40s, they began to play a much more important tactical role. Prior to that period, as shown by Stuart Svonkin, the various self-defence organizations established to protect Jewish rights had relied on discreet diplomacy and rational argumentation in pursuit of their cause. It was the rise of Nazism and other European fascisms that spurred activists to much more energetic, organized, and visible outreach to Christian Americans in the hope of securing their advocacy with decision-makers and with the larger public.²⁴

Some of the initiative for these interfaith alliances came from Christian leaders like the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who was moved by what was happening to Jews in Europe, and by guilt for Christian complicity in Nazi crimes.²⁵ But often, such alliances were the work of Jews who actively fostered such relationships through organizations like the National Community Relations Advisory Council, established in 1944 by the Council of Jewish Federations, as a way to coordinate efforts to build interfaith organizations. American Zionists enlisted

23 Kalman, "Dark Places," 269–273.

24 Stuart Svonkin, *Jews against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 11–40.

25 See Egal Feldman, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 46 (1984): 292–302; idem, "American Protestant Theologians."

this approach too. The first attempt to encourage a Protestant pro-Zionist group was in 1925, when Emmanuel Neumann worked to create a Protestant advocacy organization, the American Palestine Committee. Its membership would eventually comprise a majority of the U.S. Senate, including Harry Truman before he became president. Another such organization, the Christian Council on Palestine, formed in 1942, drew members like Niebuhr and Albright himself.²⁶ The partnership between Albright, Orlinsky, and Rivkin, formed at Orlinsky's initiative when he first wrote Albright about the quota in the summer of 1945, illustrates how this organizational story was reproduced at a more personal level through collegial relationships among Christian and Jewish biblical scholars.

On his own, Orlinsky could not have expected to have an impact on the Hopkins' quota. Indeed, as Kalman argues, not even Jewish faculty members at the university felt they were in a position to exert any influence. Bowman was known to have retaliated against faculty who "embarrassed" the university, even firing the geographer Karl Pelzer because his wife had publicly criticized the university's discrimination against African Americans. Jewish faculty would have felt especially vulnerable given Bowman's efforts to derail their hiring or promotion.²⁷ (It was worth noting that the principles of academic freedom that govern university life were not yet solidified in 1945. When in 1940 the American Association of University Professors released a statement on academic freedom which included the principle that university teachers ought not to be retaliated against by their university for expressing themselves as citizens, it was *not* endorsed by a number of leading academic organizations. Johns Hopkins did not make its own formal statement in support of academic freedom, astonishingly).²⁸ Orlinsky was ready to fight, but he was even less well-positioned to influence university policy since he was not a member of Hopkins' faculty. Albright, who had access to the university's leadership,

26 For more on American Zionist use of interfaith alliances, see Amy Weiss, *Between Cooperation and Competition: the Making of American Jewish Zionist Interfaith Alliances with Liberal and Evangelical Protestants 1898–1979* (PhD diss., New York University, 2014).

27 On Pelzer's firing, see Smith, *American Empire*, 267. For cases where Bowman blocked the hire or promotion of Jewish faculty, see Kalman, "Dark Places," 243–44; For the thinking of faculty who declined to speak up against the quota, note Kalman's conjectures on pp. 265–67.

28 On the non-endorsement of the statement by many academic organizations, see Walter Metzger, "The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 53 (1990): 3–77, esp. pp. 4–5. For Johns Hopkins first ever statement on academic freedom in 2015, see Kaitlin Mulhere, "Making it Official," *Inside Higher Education* (April 8, 2015): <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/04/08/johns-hopkins-drafts-official-statement-principles-academic-freedom>. Last Accessed 8/19/19.

gave Orlinsky his opening. Although Orlinsky and Rivkin genuinely esteemed Albright, their focus on him as their champion was consciously tactical, as Rivkin observed to Orlinsky: Albright was probably the only faculty member with the stature and clout to be immune to retaliation.²⁹ By turning to him, they reproduced at a local level a tactic that Jewish organizations at the time were using at a national level: self-advocacy through the mediation of influential Christian allies.

Here then is one role that biblical scholarship played in the 1940s' struggle against antisemitism: it encouraged personal, collaborative relationships between Christian and Jewish scholars that could serve as a basis for inter-faith alliance. Orlinsky's relationship with Albright bears this out. It began as a scholarly relationship in 1937, when Orlinsky, a faculty member at the Baltimore Hebrew Academy, became affiliated with the Oriental Seminary as a post-doctoral fellow under Albright's supervision. By 1941, Orlinsky had become so admiring of Albright that, in honour of the latter's fiftieth birthday, he was moved to compile an indexed bibliography of his mentor's 500-plus publications. Albright in turn esteemed him, praising Orlinsky as "uncompromisingly honest" and acknowledging his constant reliance on him.³⁰

Long's biography describes at length a collaboration between Albright and Orlinsky that went sour – an effort by Albright to place Orlinsky as an editor of a theological dictionary – and he detects in Albright's treatment of Orlinsky an undertone of anti-Jewish condescension.³¹ But that is not how Orlinsky remembered their relationship. In the same period, in an episode that Long does not mention, Albright also intervened to have Orlinsky included in another project, the revision of the American Standard Version of the Bible that led to what would be known as the Revised Standard Version, published in 1952. In contrast to what happened with the theological dictionary, where the publisher had rejected Orlinsky because he was a Jew, Albright was able to persuade the translation committee to accept Orlinsky, and prevailed on Orlinsky to accept the role – a noteworthy diplomatic feat in the history of Jewish-Protestant relations given that, according to Orlinsky, this was the first time that a Jew had been officially invited to participate in the making of a Christian translation of the Hebrew Bible.³² Their alliance against the quota

29 Rivkin to Orlinsky, Sep 12, 1945. MS/661/13-3/Rivkin, Ellis/AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio, cited in Kalman, "Dark Places," 269, n. 168.

30 Long, *Planting*, 72–4.

31 Long, *Planting*, 76–109.

32 Harry Orlinsky, "A Jewish Scholar Looks at the Revised Standard Version and its New Edition," *Religious Education* 85 (1990): 211–221.

emerged out of this relationship, not their usual scholarly collaboration but one that involved a similar focus on the facts and how to find them.

Albright's collaboration with Orlinsky was not a solitary phenomenon in his career; in the 1950s, he accomplished something similar when asked to shepherd the Anchor Bible Commentary series, conceived by the chief editor at Doubleday, Jason Epstein, as an ecumenical scholarly biblical commentary that would include Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish voices. Overcoming the objections of his former student George Ernest Wright, a co-editor of the series, Albright supported the inclusion of Jewish scholars in the series: Ephraim Speiser, who wrote the commentary on Genesis; Moshe Greenberg, on Exodus; and H.L. Ginsberg, on Isaiah.³³ As Orlinsky later recalled of his role in the Revised Standard version, what had convinced him to join a Christian Bible translation project alongside fifteen Protestant scholars was Albright's reassurance that the committee would not impose its theological views but would stick to sound methodology, always subordinating theological doctrines to philological accuracy; and indeed the appeal to philology seems to have settled what theological disputes emerged from the committee's work.³⁴ With the Anchor Bible series too, the positivist scholarship that Albright championed and personified made it possible for Jews and Protestants, along with Catholics, to come together in a common quest to uncover the Bible's meanings.

Albright promoted this approach at a time when other disciplines and scholarly communities were also joining in the fight against antisemitism and other forms of prejudice. During the 1940s, biologists and anthropologists worked to discredit racism, their efforts leading to the UN's declarations against racism in 1950 and 1951.³⁵ In the same period, psychologists were laying a groundwork for inter-group cooperation between Jews and other minorities by showing that antisemitism, anti-Black racism, and other prejudices were all variations of the same psychology.³⁶ Albright put biblical studies and archaeology to work against antisemitism in his own distinctive way, promoting intergroup cooperation through academic publications to demonstrate that common values and interests united Judaism and Christianity. It should be acknowledged, however, that the scholarly community he created was by no means open to everyone. In the list of the 57 doctoral students directed by Albright, every

33 For more on Albright's role in the Anchor Bible series, see Running and Freedman, *William Foxwell Albright*, 338–74; Long, *Planting*, 59–69.

34 Orlinsky, "Jewish Scholar," 212.

35 See Anthony Hazard, *Post-war Anti-Racism: The United States, UNESCO, and 'Race,' 1945–1968* (New York: Palgrave and MacMillan, 2012).

36 Svonkin, *Jews against Prejudice*, 29–40.

single one is male, with women confined to outer circles.³⁷ Bowman resisted the admission of even a single black undergraduate,³⁸ and Albright launched no crusade on that front. Suspicious of liberal Protestants and of others whom he disagreed with ideologically, he also utterly dismissed Muslims.³⁹ But his outreach to Jews was path-breakingly ecumenical for the 1940s, and it made a difference in the struggle against antisemitism by influencing the translation and exposition of the Bible, through which many Christians formed their impression of the Jews.⁴⁰

Long rightly questions Albright's representation of himself as a scientist, arguing that his claims to objectivity masked self-interest and bias, including anti-Jewish bias, under the guise of a dispassionate commitment to the truth. I would not defend Albright's claim to be objective, but I would argue that that claim was important to his ability to be inclusive, serving his efforts to create a way of interpreting the Bible that involved Protestants, Catholics, and Jews as intellectual equals in a common quest for understanding. Albright was able to instill this mode of interpretation in his many students, who went on in many cases to work in Protestant, Catholic or Jewish institutions where they spread his ideas, which he also promoted more broadly through his innumerable publications and public talks; and by guiding reference works that incorporated the work of Jewish scholars like Orlinsky into how they represented and explained the Bible. At a time in American history when those fighting

37 For a list of Albright's doctoral students, see David Noel Freedman, with Robert MacDonald and Daniel Mattson, *The Published Work of William Fox Albright: a Comprehensive Bibliography* (Cambridge, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1975), 221–226. Albright did have a few female graduate students – his biographer Running was one of them – but none rose into the ranks of his doctoral students.

38 Smith, *American Empire*, 248.

39 For Albright, what distinguished the faith of Muslims from the faith of Jews, Catholics and Protestants (except for that of liberal Protestants which he also regarded as false) was its ahistoricism, the fact that it was not based on facts. See Sherrard, *American Biblical Archaeologists*, 60.

40 In a later reminiscence of his role in the Revised Standard Version, Orlinsky offered an example of how his role in the Revised Standard Version prevented a translation that might have been harmful to Jews. The committee had drafted a translation that rendered a phrase in Lamentations 3:1 “Judah left her country,” but Orlinsky persuaded them that the Hebrew – יהודה גלתה – was more correctly rendered as “Judah had gone into exile.” Orlinsky argued for his reading on the grounds that it was a more accurate rendering of the original, but it was also on his mind that the committee's original preference, which made it appear as if the Judean exiles had left voluntarily rather than being forced to leave, might undercut the argument of those trying to convince Great Britain to allow the thousands of Jewish refugees displaced by the Nazis to migrate to Palestine (Orlinsky, “Jewish Scholar,” 214).

antisemitism were looking to science to provide a rationale for inter-faith and inter-group alliance, Albright's creation of a mode of biblical interpretation that was both scientific and ecumenical was exceedingly timely.

The kind of alliance-building that made such a difference against antisemitism in the 1940s and 50s would soon run into challenges. By the 1960s, as the historian Stephen Whitfield has noted, it had become clear that the prejudices faced by different minority communities did not mirror each other precisely. In particular, White racism against Blacks was proving far more difficult to overcome than antisemitism, which by the 1960s had gone into sharp decline. As the unitary theory of prejudice broke down, so too did the alliances they justified, such as that between Blacks and Jews.

Something similar can be observed in the history of interfaith alliance after the 1940s, when former allies grew apart. Like many others at the time, Albright believed that Jews were bound together by something called Judeo-Christian tradition, a shared core of faith and values, and his own archaeological and textual research only seemed to further confirm that such a tradition traced back to antiquity. For him, this was the import of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, which he helped introduce to the world. As he wrote in a revised edition of *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, the Scrolls allowed him to "lay more stress on the ... indissoluble bond between pre-Christian Judaism and early Christianity than ever before."⁴¹ By the time he wrote this statement in the 1950s, the concept of a common Judeo-Christian tradition had long been working to sanction interfaith alliance – against Communism and against Christian forms of antisemitism. Albright's scholarship gave the concept further credibility among the audiences he reached by promoting the Dead Sea Scrolls as historical proof of the tradition's antiquity.⁴²

But by this point, the idea of a common Judeo-Christian tradition as the basis of interfaith alliance had also begun fraying, losing its capacity to relax tensions that emerged between Jewish and Christian groups after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Criticism of the idea of a Judeo-Christian tradition from Jewish and Catholic thinkers, among others, exposed persistent

41 From the 1957 edition. p. 23. For more on Albright's conception of Judeo-Christian tradition, see Daniel Hummel, *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and U.S.-Israeli Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 43–47.

42 Andrew Warne, *Making a Judeo-Christian America: The Christian Right, Antisemitism, and the Politics of Religious Pluralism in the 20th Century United States* (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 2012), 64–89. For the concept of Judeo-Christian tradition in the post-War period, see Mark Silk, "Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America," *American Quarterly* 36 (1984): 56–85; Deborah Dash Moore, "Jewish G.I.s and the creation of the Judeo-Christian tradition," *Religion and American culture* 8 (1998): 31–53.

fissures in Jewish-Christian relations that the concept could not overcome, and the idea ultimately went the way of the unified theory of prejudice. Its much diminished power to unify Jews and Christians by the end of the 60s is made evident in a widely-read essay by the Jewish theologian Arthur Cohen, who argued that it masked deep-rooted difference that Jews and Christians would do better to acknowledge.⁴³

By this point, however, America had turned a corner in the battle against antisemitism. Already by 1948, the ADL remarked on how little antisemitism had surfaced in that year's elections compared to earlier ones, and polling throughout the 1950s showed increasingly favourable attitudes toward Jews.⁴⁴ It is not possible to determine Albright's impact as a part of this transformation, but his influence should not be underestimated. His archaeological discoveries were of deep interest to evangelicals, and that, along with his avowed Christian faith, put him in a position to reach an American evangelical community subject during the 1930s and 40s to the influence of antisemitic preachers like Gerald L.K. Smith and Gerald Winrod.⁴⁵ It is important to underscore what it meant that Albright could reach evangelical readers. During the 1940s, there were far more significant scholarly efforts to counter and discredit antisemitism. One thinks, for example, of the path-breaking social-psychological research on antisemitism undertaken by Theodor Adorno, Friedrich Pollack, and Paul Massing of the Frankfurt School. But as important as their efforts were, it is hard to imagine that research associated with European Marxists could positively influence many American evangelicals. Albright's work did exactly that.⁴⁶

As we look back at Albright's career from the present, we do so, regrettably, at a time when what had once seemed an irreversible trend in American society may now be faltering. Aided and abetted by social media, antisemitism in the United States does appear to be on the rise, the situation reaching a point

43 On Jewish-liberal Protestant tensions following Israeli statehood, see Weiss, "Between Cooperation and Competition," 155–217. On the declining fortunes of the concept of Judeo-Christian tradition in the 1960s, see Silk, "Notes," 79–85. Arthur Cohen's essay is Arthur Cohen, "The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition," *Commentary* 48 (November, 1969), 73–77, later republished as part of a popular book with the same title.

44 Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 150–52.

45 Hummel, *Covenant Brothers*, 44–48. For more on evangelical antisemitism in the 1930s and 40s, see Yaakov Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 142–152.

46 For an example of Albright's appeal to evangelicals, note his book from 1932, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, was published by the Fleming H. Revell Company – a publishing house founded by the Christian Evangelist D.L. Moody and his brother-in-law Fleming H. Revell.

where some public officials feel they can get away with publicly questioning Jewish loyalty. Albright's fight against the quota – however we nuance the story as he remembered it – is a reminder that individual scholars can make a difference in the fight against such prejudice, and are even more effective when working with colleagues across religious difference. Interfaith biblical scholarship, his example teaches, lays the groundwork for interfaith action. Taking that lesson to heart, I see this volume's inclusion of Christians and Jews thinking together about antisemitism as reassurance that scholars' resolve to engage in interfaith partnership – and the corresponding resolve to enlist it against religious prejudice – remain strong.

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Jewish and Christian Approaches to Biblical Theology

John Barton

In this paper I want to examine some recent Jewish ventures into biblical theology, which until a few years ago had been largely a Christian interest, and suggest ways they could be fruitful for Christian biblical theology too. These thoughts are prompted by Jon Levenson's well-known article 'Why Jews are not interested in Biblical Theology', published in his collection *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism* in 1993, though the underlying original piece, 'Why Jews are not interested in the Bible' goes back to 1987.

1 Reading the Bible as Jews or Christians¹

In Christianity there is a well-established way of reading the Bible as a whole. The Bible is seen as telling a continuous and goal-directed story, a story of disobedience and redemption, of sin and salvation, of paradise lost and paradise regained, concerning the whole human race. The main characters in the story are Adam and Jesus Christ: Adam, who sinned in the garden of Eden, and Jesus Christ, whom St Paul called the 'last Adam' (1 Corinthians 15:45), who obeyed God and through his obedience, even up to the point of death, conferred salvation, potentially at least, on the whole of humanity. The Bible is thus seen as a story about a disaster followed by a rescue mission. Christianity is understood to be essentially about the salvation of the whole fallen world.

This idea of the central theme of the Bible is so ingrained in western culture that it seems to most people with any kind of Christian background to be simply obvious. It results in a very particular way of understanding the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible – though for this purpose we should call it the Old Testament. The Old Testament begins in history but ends in prophecy. It starts with the disobedience of Adam and then the tale of how the people of Israel continued to slide away from the moral values God demanded and ends

¹ For the themes in this section see also my *A History of the Bible: The Book and Its Faiths* (London: Allen Lane, 2019), ch 13.

with the predictions of the coming saviour, the texts such as those we find in Händel's *Messiah* from Isaiah 9, 11, and 40 (It fits with this way of thinking that the Christian Old Testament is often arranged so that the prophetic books such as Isaiah come at the end, immediately before the Gospels in which the prophecies find their fulfilment – though not too much should be made of this, as there are other arrangements).

This is how Christians have read the Bible since at least the second century CE, the age of Justin and Irenaeus. Many early Christians will not have had access to the whole Old Testament, but may have known it mainly through *testimonia*-books, whose contents they may have learned by heart, and which may well have contained some texts that are not actually in the Old Testament at all, such as the one quoted in Matthew 2:23, 'He will be called a Nazarene.'²

But the understanding of the story the Old Testament tells as a story of disaster calling out for rescue goes back well into the first Christian generation. It is there in Paul, for whom the Scriptures are teleological, running from Adam to Christ and then on to the second coming: the pattern is already implied in 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians in the first couple of decades after the crucifixion, and is later spelled out explicitly in Romans:

Sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.... If the many died through one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.... For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

NRSV Rom 5:12, 15, 19

Christ undoes Adam's sin, and this is in principle good news for the whole human race, Adam's descendants. The Old Testament is to be read as a description of the sin into which Adam precipitated humankind and as a prophecy of the salvation from that plight that would be brought by Jesus Christ. The Old Testament thus runs seamlessly into the new dispensation described in the New.

Christian theologians of the first few centuries CE take this scheme for granted and elaborate it. Not content with seeing disobedient Adam as

2 Testimony books probably pre-existed Christianity: one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, *4QTest* lists some messianic texts, Deuteronomy 5:28–9; 18:18–19; Numbers 24:15–17; Deuteronomy 33:8–11; and Joshua 6:26 (The messianic expectations of the Qumran community included a priestly as well as a royal messiah).

paralleled and reversed in the obedient Christ, they develop a more complex typology, a series of correspondences between the Old Testament and the Gospels. Take, for example, John Chrysostom (349–407 CE), in one of his homilies:

If you reflect upon the Scriptures and the story of our redemption, you will recall that a virgin, a tree and a death were the symbols of our defeat. The virgin's name was Eve: she knew not a man. The tree was the tress of the knowledge of good and evil. The death was Adam's penalty. But now those very symbols of our defeat – a virgin, a tree and a death – have become symbols of Christ's victory. In place of Eve there is Mary; in place of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there is the tree of the cross; and in place of the death of Adam, there is the death of Christ.³

To most Christians from the second century CE onwards this has seemed an obvious way of reading the Bible: the New Testament completes the story told in the Old by showing how God rescued the human race from the disaster into which it had fallen, and to which the Old Testament bears witness. Old Testament characters are often a foreshadowing of people and events in the New Testament and in Christian history. Of course the Old Testament had other kinds of importance too, for example as providing a basic moral code; but as a narrative it was taken to be about the human lapse into sin, sin's working out through the continuing history of disobedience in the life of Israel, and the restoration of the human race through the death and resurrection of Christ, who will then come again for the final judgement of the world.

Judaism has traditionally had a quite different way of reading the Bible. Partly of course this is because the Jewish Bible does not contain the New Testament; but the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible is also approached very differently. It can come as a shock to Christians when they first encounter a mainstream Jewish way of reading the Hebrew Bible.⁴ In so far as the Bible is seen as telling a continuous story in Judaism (an important qualification, as we shall see), the Bible is not a story of disaster and rescue, but much more of providential guidance. The main character is not Adam: in Judaism, as it has developed down to modern times, there is no great emphasis on the garden of Eden

³ Chrysostom, *De coemeterio et de cruce*, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 49, col. 396.

⁴ The status of the apocryphal or deuterocanonical books makes some difference to the themes of the Christian Old Testament for those who, like the early Fathers, accept them as authoritative; but the Jewish Tanakh and the Christian Old Testament still contain almost the same books. For Protestants the contents are identical, even though the arrangement is different.

story as an account of the 'fall' of the human race, as Christians call it. Much more central is Abraham, the founder of the people of Israel, and the biblical story is the story of how his descendants lived in the land that God gave them, were expelled from it when they sinned, but were afterwards allowed back and given an ongoing existence. There is no emphasis on 'salvation,' at least not in the otherworldly and individual sense that Christians have often given that word, but rather of divine leadership and guidance of the people as a corporate entity through the winding paths of history. The prophets are seen as guides for the path, with the predictions of the Messiah as a minority interest. The way the Bible is read can again be seen in how the books are arranged: the last book in the Bible is not a prophetic book but the book of Chronicles, which ends with the exiled Jews being given permission by the Persian ruler Cyrus to return to the Promised Land. The final word of the Bible on this arrangement is the Hebrew word *veya'al*, 'then let him go up', that is, let anyone who wishes return to the Land.

Marvin Sweeney puts the contrast as follows:

In Judaism, the tripartite division of the Tanak into the Torah, Prophets, and Writings entails a theological dimension in which the Torah portrays the ideals of ancient Israel and its life in the land of Israel, the Prophets portray the disruption of those ideals as Israel and Judah are taken away from the land of Israel to Assyrian and Babylonian exile, and the Writings portray the attempt to reestablish ideal Jewish life in the land of Israel under foreign rule. The Christian Bible ... points to its own theological view of history in which the earlier or old covenant/testament of Moses based on Torah/law is revealed followed by the revelation of the new covenant/testament of Jesus Christ.⁵

For Jews therefore, at least throughout much of history, the Bible has been not at all about fall and redemption, but about how to live a faithful life in the ups and downs of the ongoing history of the people of Israel. The first eleven chapters of Genesis, from creation through Adam and down to Abraham, are a prologue to the history of Israel, rather than setting the main themes of the collection of books that follow. Christians have tended to treat all of the Old Testament as a kind of prophecy – the Psalms have often been read as predicting the Messiah, and the books of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy, have been

5 Marvin A. Sweeney, "What is Biblical Theology? With an Example on Divine Absence and the Song of Songs," in *Theology of the Hebrew Bible, Volume 1, Methodological Studies*, ed. M.A. Sweeney, Resources for Biblical Study 92 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 31–55 (35).

mined for predictions. Jews by contrast tend to treat it all as a form of instruction in living a good and observant life, in other words as Torah.

This somewhat limits the extent to which Jews and Christians 'share' the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and differ simply in whether or not they regard the New Testament, too, as part of the Bible. Jews and Christians do indeed both acknowledge these books, but traditionally construe them in such different ways that they are almost different books: the difference in arrangement signals this diversity. In Judaism, the Torah or Pentateuch is overwhelmingly important; alongside it there are the Prophets and the Writings, but these are of far less significance. It would be an odd form of Judaism nowadays that foregrounded the Prophets in the way that Christians have done and treat them as the interpretative key to reading the Bible. The Jewish Bible is definitely not one but three collections, one of them far more important than the other two. This was certainly true by the third century CE at the latest, since the Mishnah presupposes this arrangement. For Christians the Old Testament is a single work, with the Pentateuch running on into the other historical books to make what some of the Fathers actually call an Enneateuch. Then, after a kind of interlude constituted by the 'teaching' books such as Psalms and Proverbs, the work usually finds its climax in the words of the prophets, foretelling the coming Messiah. The difference between the Christian scheme of fall and prophesied redemption, on the one hand, and the Jewish theme of providential guidance and instruction, on the other, means that it is indeed almost as though they were two different collections. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein summed the contrast up perfectly: for Christians, the Old Testament is about God, humanity, and salvation; for Jews, the Bible it is about God, people, and land.⁶ That was in one of the earliest references to Jewish biblical theology, in 1983.

The whole model of a disaster and rescue-mission, as I have called it, was not completely a Christian invention or discovery; elements of it occur especially in Hellenistic Judaism, for the Wisdom of Solomon attests the idea of the fall (Wisdom 2:23–4). But by making it the universal way of reading Old Testament Scripture, Christians ensured that Christianity would develop along quite different lines from rabbinic Judaism. Christians soon came to see Judaism as having thoroughly misread its own Scriptures and even, according to some writers, as having falsified those Scriptures, removing allusions to the Messiah and to Jesus Christ as the saviour of lost humanity. Justin Martyr

6 M. Goshen-Gottstein, "Tanakh Theology: The Religion of the Old Testament and the Place of Jewish Biblical Theology," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, eds. P.D. Miller et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 617–44. This is one of the earliest essays to thematize Jewish biblical theology.

insisted that the Jews had changed the text of Psalm 96, which had originally read ‘the Lord reigns *from the tree*’, a reference to the cross. He also claimed that they had deleted from Jeremiah a reference to what is called the harrowing of hell, Christ’s visit to Hades after his death but before his resurrection to preach to the pre-Christian righteous. According to Justin the text had read ‘The Lord God of Israel remembered his dead who slept in the earth of a grave, and he descended to them to preach to them his salvation.’⁷ There is no truth in either accusation, as there is no evidence that either of these passages was ever in the Hebrew Bible. But they confirmed the Christian feeling that Christians understood the Old Testament better than the Jews and could even correct its text.

2 Jewish Biblical Theology

It has often been observed that the study of biblical theology has been largely a Christian interest, and sometimes Jewish scholars have gone so far as to say that there cannot be a Jewish biblical theology. There are several alleged reasons for this. One is that Judaism is not so focused on the Bible as Protestant Christianity, and there cannot be an authentically Jewish theology that is a theology only of the Bible – Jews do not believe in *sola scriptura*, but affirm the whole corpus of rabbinic discussion in Mishnah, Talmud, and midrash and read the Bible only in its light. I do not think though that this necessarily rules out the production of *descriptions* of the theology implied in the Bible, as can be seen from the fact that Catholics, who also do not believe in *sola scriptura*, have written Theologies of the Old Testament, though admittedly not so prolifically as Protestants.

A more serious reason is that most existing Theologies of the Old Testament seem to lean towards the New Testament as their necessary completion: certainly that is true, to take the most salient example, of the *Old Testament Theology* of Gerhard von Rad,⁸ to which Jon Levenson in particular takes such violent exception in his now famous article of 1987.⁹ Von Rad seldom makes explicit the *telos* of the Old Testament as lying in the coming of Jesus, but it can easily be read between the lines as a hidden agenda, and indeed it is

7 Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 72:4.

8 Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2 Vols. (Munich: Kaiser, 1957 and 1962); translated as Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans D.M.G. Stalker, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962 and 1965).

9 Reprinted as Jon D. Levenson, “Why Jews are not interested in Biblical Theology,” in *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 33–61.

unlikely that he would have rejected such an interpretation of his work. He was a Christian theologian and saw the Old Testament as ultimately a Christian book, though needing completion through the New Testament.

Another point is that Jewish scholars are alleged not to be interested in theology at all. Undoubtedly the term is sometimes toxic in itself, implying perhaps an interest in probing into the divine nature in ways that are discouraged in rabbinic Judaism, or suggesting a rapprochement with Christianity that might threaten the integrity of Judaism by requiring an approach that distorts Judaism into the likeness of liberal Protestantism.

All these are important points that should prevent Christian scholars from blundering into the debate and telling Jews what kind of biblical study they ought to be doing. There are good reasons why the term 'biblical theology' has seemed an alien intrusion to many Jewish writers.

On the other hand, as many have pointed out, even if there are few Theologies of the (whole) Bible written by Jewish scholars (there are not all that many written by Christians, come to that), Jewish scholarship has nevertheless contributed hugely to understanding the religious ideas of many *parts* of the Bible: one may immediately think of Jon Levenson himself, with his study of *The Theology of Ezekiel 40–48*¹⁰ and his book *Sinai and Zion*,¹¹ which are theological works by any account. And in the last couple of decades there has emerged a school of thought among Jewish scholars that is willing to speak of biblical theology. In 1996 there was a conference in Chicago on 'Jewish Biblical Theology' under the moderation of Michael Fishbane and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, and since then there has been much writing on biblical theology by Jewish scholars.¹² This has been possible, I think, because they have not felt constrained any longer by the parameters of Christian biblical theology.

One important reason, I think, why many Jewish scholars had been put off biblical theology is precisely that the Christian paradigm had been felt to dictate the agenda of the subject, even if a necessary Jewish response might be to

10 Jon D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 10 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976).

11 Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985).

12 See, for example, Marvin A. Sweeney, "Why Jews Should be Interested in Biblical Theology," *Central Conference of American Rabbis* 44 (1997): 67–75; idem, "Jewish Biblical Theology," in *The Hebrew Bible: New Insights and Scholarship*, ed. F.E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 2008); idem, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2012); Marc Zvi Brettler, "Biblical History and Jewish Biblical Theology," *JR* 77 (1997), 563–83 (564); Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Emergence of Jewish Biblical Theology," in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, eds. A.O. Bellis and J.S. Kaminsky (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2000), 109–21.

negate it. The great Old Testament Theologies of the twentieth century, pre-eminently those of Eichrodt¹³ and von Rad, are quite pluralist in tone and do not drag the biblical material into a rigid pattern. Their leading concepts, respectively covenant and saving history, are broad enough to encompass the great variety of ideas in the Hebrew Bible, and even so are not applied in a procrustean manner – notoriously the wisdom literature does not easily fit in to either model, but neither of them tries to force it to do so. Yet, underlying both accounts, the Christian belief that the Bible tells a story of sin and salvation, and has in its purview the whole human race as the subject of both sin and salvation, is the unspoken assumption that enables them to make a satisfying synthesis. Fall, redemption, salvation, and eschatology are all taken for granted as the guiding principles, which give a certain unity to the whole even if there are admitted to be loose ends. The Old Testament tells a story – more obviously in von Rad than in Eichrodt; but even for the latter the essential Christian scheme is never far away, and the central theme, ‘covenant’, though Jewish enough in a way, does also happen to be a major pillar of the Calvinist Christianity to which Eichrodt adhered. Because they were both great and perceptive scholars, they do not force the material; but because they were both Christian scholars who saw the writing of an Old Testament Theology as a task within Christian theology, they have the Christian grand narrative, as we might call it, always at the back of their minds. This narrative includes, of course, the belief that the history in the Old Testament is a history of sin and failure, which requires rectification – and there are no prizes for guessing, even though the matter is not spelled out directly, that this rectification comes through Jesus Christ.

The new wave of Jewish biblical theology succeeds in freeing itself from this Christian paradigm, not by confronting it head-on as though it is Christianity that calls the shots and the Jewish task is to respond to that, but by insisting that a Jewish theology must start in a different place altogether. To the extent that the Bible does tell a story, Marvin Sweeney¹⁴ affirms that it is the story implied by the threefold arrangement of the Jewish canon, which does not have the kind of eschatological thrust that Christians detect in the Old Testament as they arrange it. Any Jewish biblical theology will therefore need to allow for this arrangement, by stressing the cyclic rather than linear character of the story. This is brought out in the clearest way in the liturgical reading of the

13 Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 3 Vols. (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1933–1939); translated as idem, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Trans. by J.A. Baker (London: SCM, Vol 1, 1960 (from sixth edition of the German, 1959), Vol. 2, 1967 (from fifth edition of the German of vols. Ii and iii in one volume, 1964).

14 Marvin A. Sweeney, “Jewish Biblical Theology: An Ongoing Dialogue,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 70 (2016): 314–25.

Torah. After Deuteronomy 34 has been read, the cycle begins again immediately at Genesis 1, on the Festival called *Simhat Torah*, the day of rejoicing in the Torah. The story does not continue into Joshua as it does in the Christian Bible: Joshua is the first book in the Prophets, the second, and less important, division of the Jewish Bible. The Christian idea that Deuteronomy is followed by Joshua just as much as Genesis is followed by Exodus is lacking in Judaism, which retains a sense that these are all separate scrolls, and that the Torah is in quite a different category from the Prophets.

3 Non-Narrative Approaches

But even more important is that the Bible should not be seen primarily as ‘telling a story’ at all. There is no Jewish grand narrative even by contrast with the Christian one, as though Judaism were primarily anti-Christianity, an alternative or contrasting answer to essentially the same questions. No, the Bible is important – as interpreted and received through rabbinic comment and not otherwise – as a source of halakhah. As Alexander Samely puts it:

Rabbinic texts contain details of a human project which could be described in modern terms as follows. Everyday life is an infinite series of opportunities for obedience to God, whose will is articulated and implied in Scripture, a book filled to the brim with instructions and information.¹⁵

The Bible is not, in this view, primarily a history, but guidance for a way of life: this comes out in the occasional use of the word *Torah* in Judaism to mean the whole Hebrew Bible, not just the Pentateuch, as well of course as referring to the oral Torah found in Mishnah and Talmud and in other rabbinic collections. And the guidance is not uncomplicated and unilinear, but highly complex, with many differences of opinion. This makes any attempt to find a centre, a *Mitte*, around which the theology of the Bible can be organized, more problematic in Judaism than it has seemed to be in Christianity. Several recent writers on Jewish biblical theology remind us of the principle *davar aher*, ‘another opinion’: texts are capable of multiple interpretations, and there is no presumption that they speak with a single voice.

Benjamin Sommer, whose work seems to me among the most exciting in this field, shows that even a ‘canonical’ reading of Scripture cannot arrive at a

¹⁵ Alexander Samely, *Forms of Rabbinic Literature and Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

single meaning.¹⁶ To take his major example: there is a dispute within Judaism over whether prayer or study is the most important activity. Of course, no one can do either to the exclusion of all other activities, but which, in an ideal world, would predominate? Hasidic Jews tend to think that prayer is the more important of the two: one would interrupt study for the sake of the obligation to pray. Another school of thought, which he dubs *mitnagdic* (from the *Mitnagdim*, the opponents of Hasidism), takes the opposite view: one could legitimately interrupt prayer in order to study. Neither perspective can be said to be unJewish, both are viable opinions. Both approaches can be found in the Psalter, and indeed in the way the Psalms are framed. It is a common critical opinion that Psalm 1 is intended as a prelude to the book of Psalms, and that Psalm 150 is intended as its conclusion, both placed where they are by the redactors of the book. But where Psalm 150 stresses prayer and praise and is thus a step on the way to the Hasidic preference, Psalm 1 is all about studying the Torah, and thus leans in the *mitnagdic* direction. The point is not to adjudicate between the two points of view, but to register that Scripture contains both, so that any biblical theology should try to do justice to both lines of thought even though they are, strictly speaking, incompatible. Sommer writes:

The biblical redactors ... did not so much provide an answer as an agenda concerning what issues are to be pondered. Consequently, a Jewish biblical theology need not – in fact should not – set for itself the goal of definitively stating what the Bible says; rather, it should look for what the Bible invites us to attend to, and it should examine how rabbinic and later Jewish literature pick up this invitation.¹⁷

Where Christian Theologies of the Old Testament typically seek unity and harmony, a Jewish biblical theology as Sommer conceives it might stress difference and variety. It might see the Bible as being more like later Jewish tradition in its lack of unity, even though, like that tradition, it shares certain common perspectives: monotheism, the centrality of the covenant, and so on, as Christian Old Testament theologians have not been wrong to bring out. The idea of the Bible as a site of creative tension rather than of dogmatic assertion is nearest, among all the Old Testament Theologies known to me, to that of Walter

16 Benjamin D. Sommer, "Dialogical Biblical Theology: A Jewish Approach to Reading Scripture Theologically," in *Biblical Theology: Introducing the Conversation*, eds. L.G. Perdue, R. Morgan, and B. Sommer (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 55–136.

17 Benjamin D. Sommer, "Psalm 1 and the Shaping of Canonical Jewish Scripture," in Isaac Kalimi, ed., *Jewish Bible Theology: Perspectives and Case Studies*, ed. Isaac Kalimi (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 199–221.

Brueggemann¹⁸ with its stress on advocacy and dialogue, but it goes further even than that in stressing a lack of agreement among the various voices to be heard in the text.

Jewish biblical theology, as several of the writers I have mentioned say themselves, is a comparatively new discipline compared with its Christian counterpart, but already it seems to me to be contributing important insights that ought to be listened to, and not just by Jewish scholars. In the rest of this paper I should like to ask what Christian Old Testament scholars could learn from it for their own task of studying Old Testament theology, in a spirit of what in Christianity is known at the moment as receptive ecumenism. Receptive ecumenism means that we ask not what we can teach people from another tradition but what we can learn from them – acknowledging that we have our own position, but looking for ways of incorporating their distinctive insights into our own tradition so far as that is possible (it should be distinguished from cultural appropriation). Christians are not going to abandon their quest for a master narrative in the Bible, but they could do well to incorporate insights from Jewish biblical theology as these are currently emerging – in a spirit of open-mindedness and a willingness to learn. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, indeed, argues that dialogue helps us to understand even *our own* tradition better:

When Christians stop seeing Judaism as legalism, they will be in a much better position to realize the importance of law in Christianity. And when Jews stop seeing Christianity as antinomian, they will be in a much better position to realize the importance of grace in Judaism.¹⁹

But my concern here is that Christians can learn from Judaism to improve their own tradition – in this case, the way they read the Old Testament – not to suggest any way forward for Judaism, which is not my business.

4 'Another Opinion'

One major insight that Old Testament scholarship – as practised by Christians – needs is the Jewish emphasis, on *davar aher*, 'another opinion.' Systematizing

18 Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1997).

19 Tikva Frymer-Kensky, et al. eds., *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 116. See also the discussion of Jewish approaches to Christian theology in Michael S. Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

is all very well but it has its limits with a work as long and variegated as the Hebrew Bible. The variety of the Bible has two clear implications for the study of biblical theology.

First, there is value in studying the theology of parts of the Bible, rather than trying to find overarching concepts that will unify the whole thing. Levenson's work on the last chapters of Ezekiel or Sara Japhet's study of the 'ideology' of Chronicles²⁰ are examples of the kind of thing that can be achieved, just as was, on the Christian side, a work such as von Rad's examination of the priestly corpus.²¹ James Barr in his *The Concept of Biblical Theology*²² made just this point in his examination of Jewish approaches to the theology of the Bible – that Jewish scholars have been on the whole happier looking at individual books or corpora than at the whole Bible. Building on this, it might be suggested that this is not only because of the Jewish tendency to stress variety, but because of the sheer facts of the case: the Bible simply is highly variegated (the same point might be made where the New Testament is concerned, of course, and New Testament theologians might also learn from Jewish approaches to the Hebrew Bible). There is no reason, other than conservative Christian theology, to think that all the books in the Bible should speak with a single voice, and biblical theology would benefit from becoming a celebration of variety.

But secondly, even within individual books there is often tension or dissonance, and this, too, needs to be attended to. Source criticism rests on seeing and registering discord within certain texts, and Sommer, again, has argued persuasively that Judaism is actually well equipped to handle that precisely because of its own tradition of discussion and dissent among commentators. In that, biblical criticism is in principle not a negation, but an heir, of the biblical tradition itself, even though we all know that biblical critics have sometimes in practice been anti-Jewish and even antisemitic. Christians tend to shy away from the idea that texts in the Bible can be internally discordant, as conservative resistance to source criticism shows. On the Jewish side too there has been opposition to the quest for sources, partly no doubt because of the suspicion that it has an inherently antisemitic slant. But both Jews and Christians could acknowledge dissonance without it calling in question the centrality of the biblical text if they were willing, as Sommer is, to see discussion and disagreement as a virtue rather than a vice – an idea that, he argues, is well

20 Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989); repr. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009.

21 Gerhard von Rad, *Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch literarisch untersucht und theologisch gewertet* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Kohlhammer, 1934).

22 James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1999).

embedded in the Jewish tradition of biblical study. The notion that biblical texts are *important* and *demand attention*, rather than that they are all *true* and *mutually compatible*, could have a liberating effect on Christian approaches to Scripture, New Testament as well as Old.

Another insight that the burgeoning interest in Jewish biblical theology can teach is that there is much to be said for a theology focused on action rather than on doctrine. I know that the contrast between Christian orthodoxy and Jewish orthopraxy is a tired cliché, but clichés exist because of underlying truths, and it is noticeable that the Jewish approaches to biblical theology I have been surveying do tend to foreground the aspect of Torah, instruction in living well, rather than conceptual theology or doctrine. As is clear right from the work of Maimonides, it is possible to extract doctrine from the Bible even in a Jewish context, belief in monotheism being perhaps the most obvious example. But even monotheism in the Bible is important not as an abstract belief, but as something that is honoured by practice – the worship of, and obedience to, one God alone, rather than merely an intellectual belief, which (as the Epistle of James reminds us) even the demons share with us! When the fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’ (Psalms 14 and 53), the result is that he abandons practical obedience to God (the closest Christian biblical theology to this aspect of the Jewish developments I have been describing is perhaps in the work of John Rogerson).²³

Christian Old Testament Theologies have tended to focus on themes such as promise and fulfilment, and salvation – both very clear in von Rad, but neither all that central to Judaism today or, arguably, for much of the period covered by the Hebrew Bible. So far as salvation is concerned, Christians often seem to misunderstand Judaism quite badly. An article in *The Church Times*, a weekly Church of England newspaper, began as follows:

Religions are concerned, above all, with salvation – with what is awry in the human condition, and its remedy. Their beliefs centre, therefore, on what we need to be saved *from* and *for*, and how this can be achieved.²⁴

But the case of Judaism shows how far this is from being universally true. Not all religions are about rescue from the human plight: it is perfectly possible to have a religion that does not see the human race or the individual as sunk in sinful misery from which salvation is needed, and Judaism is just such a

23 J.W. Rogerson, *A Theology of the Old Testament: Cultural Memory, Communication and Being Human* (London: SPCK, 2009).

24 Jeff Astley, “Only God can Cure and Free Us,” *Church Times*, 4(2016): 19.

religion. We might recall Raphael Loewe's important article "'Salvation' is not of the Jews."²⁵ As Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, 'the faith of the Old Testament is not a religion of redemption.'²⁶ Judaism, like many religions, recognizes human sin and weakness. But, unlike Christianity, it does not propose that these are at such a pitch that God needs to intervene dramatically to rescue humanity from them. On the contrary, it proposes that God has provided an ongoing means of dealing with sin through the sacrificial system and the liturgies that replaced it, especially of course those of the Day of Atonement. But the real emphasis, in any case, does not rest on getting rid of sin, but on living well. And this can be argued to be true of the Hebrew Bible read on its own terms, too.

The persistent side-lining of the wisdom literature in Old Testament Theologies is a symptom of how far Christian Old Testament scholars have missed this point. Of course, as Jewish scholars point out, this is partly because of a Protestant, more particularly a Lutheran, suspicion of 'works' – hence all the remarks about Jewish legalism that used to characterize, and deface, Old Testament scholarship, and to which Levenson reacted so critically in his article.

5 A Positive Suggestion

How would a Theology of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament look if one started from a Torah-centred perspective, seeing it as primarily about how life should be lived? As well as (obviously) the legal sections of the Pentateuch, the wisdom literature would then move into central focus, along with, importantly, Psalm 119, the great Torah-Psalms, whose theme is the sanctification of life by observance of God's statutes (from a historical point of view we do not know what exactly constituted Torah for this psalmist, though in a canonical perspective it has to be taken as referring to the Torah in more or less its current sense). Much less emphasis will fall on the story, or history, of Israel and of the world than has been usual in Old Testament Theologies. The anthological style of reading the Hebrew Bible that is characteristic of rabbinic commentary would seem less of a problem, from this point of view, than it has generally appeared to be for biblical theologians, since Proverbs to a great extent, and Psalms to a lesser one, are also anthological in character. As I said before, a Christian reader will not want to abandon the sense that the Old Testament has a grand narrative. But such a reader should still be able to see that this is

25 R. Loewe, "'Salvation' is not of the Jews," *JTS* 32 (1981): 341–68.

26 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 336.

not the whole truth about it, and – in accordance with the principle of *davar aher* – to appreciate other ways of thinking to which the Bible bears witness (it is worth recalling *sotto voce* that the teaching of Jesus himself is more like wisdom literature and rabbinic parable than it is like pentateuchal or deuteronomistic narrative). Narrative is not the only way of making sense of life, as I argued in my contribution to the Festschrift for John Collins, ‘Story or Style?’²⁷ where I tried to show that the Bible stresses how life is to be lived but does not necessarily present it as teleological: lives do not have to ‘tell a story’ to be meaningful. That takes us further afield than I can go now; but it is of a piece with wanting to rehabilitate the aphoristic style of advice on living that is typical of Proverbs but also, for example, of *Pirqe Abot*.

The point here is a general one. Christianity claims to be continuous with the Old Testament: the claim is a complicated one to make, but any Christian who is not a Marcionite needs to make it, even though the relationship is in so many ways a dialectical one. But Judaism is also continuous with the Hebrew Bible, not a radical divergence from it, as Christians have so often alleged with terrible consequences. And there are features in Judaism that will cause Jewish scholars to highlight different things from their Christian counterparts when they are writing about biblical theology, things that Christian scholars ought to take into their own system. If they can do so, then biblical theology will become, not indeed a collaboration between Jews and Christians, but the subject of fruitful dialogue, even fruitful argument, between them. The aim is not winning a race, but mutual illumination.

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