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PATRZĄC WSPÓLNIE W KIERUNKU JEDYNEGO BOGA

Ponad trzydzieści lat temu, 30 kwietnia 1986 r., św. Jan Paweł II, jako pierwszy papież, odwiedził synagogę większą w Rzymie, spotykając się z Elio Toaffem, naczelnym rabinem Rzymu. Wówczas pierwszy głos zabrał gospodarz, zauważając, że Kościół w sposób radykalny zmienił swoje nauczanie na temat Żydów i traktuje ich z szacunkiem i powagą. Ojciec Święty zaś wypowiedział słynne już dziś słowa, nawiązując do nauczania II Soboru Watykańskiego: „Po pierwsze, wgłębiając się we własną tajemnicę, Kościół Chrystusowy odkrywa więź łączącą go z judaizmem (*Nostra aetate* 4). Religia żydowska nie jest dla naszej religii rzeczywistością zewnętrzną, lecz czymś wewnętrznym. Stosunek do niej jest inny aniżeli do jakiegokolwiek innej religii. Jesteście naszymi umiłowanymi braćmi i – można powiedzieć – naszymi starszymi braćmi” (nr 4).

Jak ważny jest dialog pomiędzy religiami, nikogo chyba nie trzeba przekonywać. Dialog ten prowadzony jest również w przestrzeni naukowej. Redakcja postanowiła się włączyć w to dzieło, podejmując się publikacji serii artykułów poświęconych studiom hebraistycznym. Po raz pierwszy całość zeszytu zawiera materiały będące wynikami badań uczonych w znakomitej większości spoza Papieskiego Wydziału Teologicznego we Wrocławiu. Po raz pierwszy również wszystkie artykuły są opublikowane w języku angielskim, co wpisuje się w tendencję rozwojową naszego czasopisma i podwyższania jego standardów, z ambicją wejścia na światowy rynek wydawniczy i badawczy.

Pierwszy materiał, autorstwa Daniela J. Laskera (Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva), zatytułowany „Jewish Anti-Christian Polemical Treatises in Early Modern Central and Eastern Europe: Where Are They?”, jest poświęcony rzadkim polemicznym traktatom antychrześcijańskim pisanym przez Żydów w środkowej i wschodniej Europie pomiędzy XV a XVIII w. po Chr. Drugi artykuł, autorstwa ks. Rajmunda Pietkiewicza (Papieski Wydział Teologiczny we Wrocławiu), zatytułowany jest „Jews and Their Language in Wujek’s Bible 1599”. Autor przedstawił w nim wiedzę na temat Żydów i ich języka zawartą w komentarzach i wstępach do Biblii w przekładzie Jakuba Wuj-

ka z 1599 r. oraz jej źródła i oddziaływanie na czytelnika. Autorem kolejnego opracowania jest Vassili Schedrin, który zatytułował je „The Russian Jewish Question, Asked and Answered. Virtual Polemics Between Moisei Berlin and Yakov Brafman in the 1860s”. Na postawioną kwestię integracji wyznawców judaizmu z rosyjskim społeczeństwem udzielił odpowiedzi, opierając się na opiniach i poszukiwaniach dwóch wybitnych postaci świata judaizmu dziewiętnastowiecznej Rosji – Moisei Berlina and Yakova Brafmana. Pierwszy był zdania, że integracja ta jest możliwa i że to ona umożliwi Żydom i nie-Żydom życie w pokoju. Drugi był zdania, że dalsza separacja pomiędzy Żydami a nie-Żydami będzie postępowała, prowadząc do nowych antagonizmów i alienacji. Artykuł zatytułowany „The Translation of the New Testament into Hebrew in the Eyes of Franz Delitzsch: Philology, Mission, Theology” przygotował Eran Shuali (University of Strasbourg). Podkreślił on znaczenie przekładu Nowego Testamentu na język hebrajski z 1877 r. dla badań filologicznych nad językiem Biblii Hebrajskiej oraz językiem hebrajskim używanym w czasach Jezusa. Opracowanie Daniela Soukupa (Institute of Czech Literature of the CAS, Praga) pt. „*Oh, Bestia Synagoga! The Representation of Jews in Czech Sermons at the Turn of the 17th and 18th Centuries*”, poświęcone zostało wykorzystaniu motywu Żyda w czeskich kazaniach na tle antysemitycznej polityki rządu. Autorką kolejnego z prezentowanych artykułów jest Sheila A. Spector. Zatytułowała go „The Role of the *Jew* in Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont’s *Adumbratio kabbalae christianae*”, a przedstawiła w nim w formie dialogu pomiędzy chrześcijańskim filozofem a kabalistą, utożsamianym z Żydem, swoje poglądy inspirowane dziełem Franciscusa Mercuriusa van Helmonta pt. „*Adumbratio Kabbalae Christianae*”. W ostatniej pracy, zatytułowanej „Judaizing and Identity in the Earliest Transylvanian Sabbatarian Writings (1588?–1621)”, zamieszczonej w niniejszym tomie Réka Újlaki-Nagy (University of Erfurt) przedstawiła ruch Sabatarian zamieszkujących Transylwanię oraz ich, odkryte w XIX w., pisma, kładąc akcent na ich pochodzenie oraz stosunek do Żydów i judaizmu.

Oddając do państwa rąk pierwszy w historii anglojęzyczny zeszyt Wrocławskiego Przeglądu Teologicznego, wyrażam radość, że dzięki współpracy z wieloma środowiskami naukowymi doszło do tak ważnego kroku na drodze prowadzącej do umiędzynarodowienia naszego czasopisma. Pragnę również wszystkich poinformować, że kolejne numery będą już w całości przygotowywane i wydawane w formie cyfrowej. Spoglądajmy wszyscy wspólnie w kierunku Jedynego Boga.

Ks. Sławomir Stasiak
Redaktor naczelny

LOOKING TOGETHER IN ONE DIRECTION OF ONE GOD

More than thirty years ago, on April 30th 1986, Saint. John Paul II, as the first Pope, visited the greater synagogue in Rome, meeting with Elio Toaff, the chief rabbi of Rome. At that time, the householder spoke as the first one, noting that the Church radically changed her teaching about Jews and treats them with respect and seriousness. The Holy Father told the words – famous today – referring to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council: “First of all, getting deep into your own mystery, the Church of Christ discovers the towers that connect him with Judaism (*Nostra aetate* 4). The Jewish religion is not an external reality for our religion, but something internal. The attitude towards it is different than any other religion. You are our beloved brothers and – we can say – our older brothers” (No. 4).

It's needless to convince about the importance of the inter-religious dialog. This dialogue is also led in the scientific space. The editorial board has decided to contribute to this activity by publishing a series of articles about Hebrew Studies. It was the first time the entire volume has included materials that are the results of research done by scientists, the majority of whom, are mostly from beyond The Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław. It was the first time all articles have been published in English. It goes in accordance with the way our journal is growing and increase of its standards, as well as ambitions of introduction into the international publishing and research market.

The first material written by Daniel J. Lasker (Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva) is entitled “Jewish Anti-Christian Polemical Treatises in Early Modern Central and Eastern Europe: Where Are They?” It discusses rare polemic anti-Christian treatises written by Jews in the Central and Eastern Europe between the 14th and 18th century A.D. The second article by the Fr. Rajmund Pietkiewicz (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław), is entitled “Jews and Their Language in Wujek's Bible 1599.” It presents the knowledge of Jews and their language included in the comments and introduction to the Bible translated by Jakub Wujek, from 1599, its sources and influence

on the reader. The author of the next piece of work is Vassili Schedrin who entitled it “The Russian Jewish Question, Asked and Answered. Virtual Polemics Between Moisei Berlin and Yakov Brafman in the 1860s.” Taking into account the issue of integration of Judaism followers with the Russian society, he answered to the question on the basis of opinions and search done by two remarkable figures of Jewish world of the 19th century Russia – Moisei Berlin and Yakov Brafman. The first one of them believed integration was possible and enabled the Jews and non-Jews to live a peaceful life. The second one believed that further separation between the Jews and non-Jews would become bigger and finally result in new antagonisms and alienations. Eran Shuali (University of Strasbourg) has prepared an article entitled “The Translation of the New Testament into Hebrew in the Eyes of Franz Delitzsch: Philology, Mission, Theology.” He highlighted the importance of the translation of the New Testament into Hebrew from 1877 for philological studies concerning the language of the Hebrew Bible as well as Hebrew language used in times of Jesus. The article by Daniel Soukup (Institute of Czech Literature of the CAS, Praga) entitled “*Oh, Bestia Synagoga!* The Representation of Jews in Czech Sermons at the Turn of the 17th and 18th Centuries” was dedicated to the use of Jewish motif in Czech sermons regarding the anti-Semitic government policy. Sheila A. Spector is the author of the next work entitled “The Role of the *Jew* in Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont’s *Adumbratio kabbalae christianae*.” She presented here, in a form of a dialogue between the Christian philosopher and a cabbalist identified with a Jew, her point of view inspired by the piece of work by Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont entitled “*Adumbratio Kabbalae Christianae*.” In the last paper entitled “Judaizing and Identity in the earliest Transylvanian Sabbatarian Writings (1588?–1621)” published in our journal Réka Újlaki-Nagy (University of Erfurt) presented the movement of Sabbatarians who inhabited Transylvania as well as their – discovered in the 19th century – writings focusing on their origins as well as attitude towards Jews and Judaism.

Giving to the audience the first issue of Wrocław Theological Review written in English, I am very grateful that thanks to the cooperation with numerous scientific communities, we have taken such a meaningful step towards the internationalization of our scientific periodic. I would also like to inform that next issues of our journal are going to be prepared and published entirely in a digital form. Let’s look towards our One and Only God together.

Fr. Sławomir Stasiak
Editor-in-chief

FR. RAJMUND PIETKIEWICZ

JEWS AND THEIR LANGUAGE IN WUJEK'S BIBLE 1599

The Bible in the translation of Jakub Wujek (1541–1597) was the most popular old Polish translation of the Holy Scriptures. In 1593 he published the New Testament.¹ In 1599, two years after his death, the whole Bible was published, after a review by a committee of Jesuits.² It is, therefore, legitimate to conclude that the text of the translation of the whole Bible is that of Wujek, albeit corrected by the committee. The comments on the text were made by Wujek, and as far as the New Testament is concerned, they are almost identical with those of the Bible of 1599 and the New Testament of 1593. The Bible had an extensive preface, titled *Apparatus sacer*, expanded probably by Marcin Łaszcz.³ Both the commentary and *Apparatus sacer*, contain a lot of informa-

¹ *Nowy Testament Pana naszego IESVSA CHRISTVSA. Z nowu z Łacińskiego y z Greckiego na Polskie wiernie a szczyrze przelożony: y Argumentami abo Summariuszami każdych Książ / y Rozdziałow / y Annotacyami po brzegach objaśniony. Przydane są Nauki y Przestrogi malo nie za każdym Rozdziałem : Porownanie Ewangelistow SS. Dzieie y drogi rozmaite Piotra y Pawła S. y Registr rzeczy gównieyszych na końcu. Przez D. IAKVBA WVYKA, Theologa Societatis IESV. Z dozwoleniem Starszych. Pod rozsądek Kościoła S. Powszechnego Rzymskiego wszystko niech podlęże, Kraków, A. Piotrkowczyk, 1593, 4° (copy: National Ossoliński Institute in Wrocław, catalogue number XVI.Qu.3065) [hereafter abbreviated as NT 1593].*

² *BIBLIA TO IEST KSIĘGI STAREGO Y NOWEGO TESTAMNETV WEDŁV G ŁA-CINSKIEGO przekładu starego, w kościele powszechnym przyiętego, na Polski ięzyk z nowu z pilnością przelożone, Z DOKŁADANIEM TEXTV ZYDOWSKIEGO y Greckiego, y z wykładem Katholickim, trudnieyszych mieysc do obrony Wiary świętey powszechney przeciw kacerztwóm tych czasów należących: PRZEZ D. IAKVBA WVYKA Z WĄGROWCA, THEOLOGA SOCIETATIS IESV. Z DOZWOLENIEM STOLICE APOSTOLSKIEY, a nakładem Iego M. Księdza Arcybiskupa Gnieźnieńskiego, etć. wydane, Kraków, Drukarnia Łazarzowa, 1599, 2° (copy: Warsaw University Library, catalogue number Sd. 612.49) [hereafter abbreviated as B 1599].*

³ See Smereka, „Wstęp,” XXXIII.

tion concerning the Hebrew language, the Jews and their writings, helping to understanding better how Polish Catholics (particularly the Jesuits) at the end of the 16th century perceived the Jews and their languages.

The research problems identified are: What did Polish Catholics know about the Hebrew language at the end of the 16th century? How did they perceive the Jews? Which were the sources of their knowledge? What was the influence on Polish society (mainly the Catholics) by the mere fact that they had been reading mainly Wujek's translation the Bible for 366 years? This research will refer to Wujek's Bible of 1599 and supplement of the New Testament of 1593. First, I am going to present the knowledge of the Jesuits about the Hebrew language (1) and Jewish holy writings, their canon and interpretation (2). Second, I will deal with the image of the Jews in Wujek's Bible (3), the knowledge of their customs and festivals (4). Finally, I am going to present the issue connected with Christian-Jewish relations (5).

The Knowledge of the Hebrew Language

The Jesuits were fascinated by the biblical languages which they learned in their colleges.⁴ As far as the Hebrew language is concerned, they were of the opinion that along with Greek and Latin it belongs to the three "most eminent and outstanding"⁵ languages of the world. It is in these languages that the Bible was written,⁶ and, according to the Gospel of John, they were used to make an inscription on the cross of Jesus. According to the Jesuits, the Hebrew language is the oldest and the most important of them all. It is the language that has been spoken by people since the beginning of the world, what is more, it is the language which God chose Himself to communicate with the first people.⁷ It was the language that the whole humanity spoke until they were all confounded at the Tower of Babel. The very term "Hebrew language" stems from Eber (Hebr.: *'ēḇer*), who was the descendant of Sem (Gen 10:24-25; 11:14-17). After the

⁴ See. Pietkiewicz, *W poszukiwaniu „szczyrego słowa Bożego,”* 75–78, 152–160; Piechnik, *Dzieje Akademii Wileńskiej*; Piechnik, *Powstanie i rozwój jezuickiej „Ratio studiorum.”*

⁵ B 1599, p. **2r.

⁶ The Jesuits were of the opinion that Latin was a biblical language. According to the authors of *Apparatus sacer*, St. Mark wrote his Gospel in Latin and translated other parts of the Bible (or maybe the whole of the Bible) into Latin. It is in this way that the authors understood the words of St. Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus Stridonensis, *De viris illustribus*, caput 1) that St. Mark was the translator of St. Peter "he was so-called for the reason that the Latin Holy Scripture was made by him" (B 1599, p. **3r, **3v). They also thought that the Letter to the Hebrews was originally written by St. Paul in Hebrew and then translated into Greek (B 1599, p. **3r). See also B 1599, p. ***1r.

⁷ B 1599, p. **2r-v.

events under the Tower of Babel, only the family of Eber could use Hebrew.⁸ God used the Hebrew language and its letters to pass on His Word onto mankind. Hence, the Hebrew language is known to be the divine language.⁹ The reader of Wujek's Bible receives a little more of the basic information about the Hebrew language. For example, he learns that the Jews used two alphabets: the Samaritan and the Square script. Ezra changed the alphabet because he did not want the Jews to use the same system of writing as the Samaritans.¹⁰ The Jesuits inform the reader that some Hebrew letters are very similar and that is why they can be easily mistaken, they can also be written with or without the so-called vowel points, which can help with the deciphering the words.¹¹ With respect to the custom of using holy writings with or without vowel points, the author of *Apparatus sacer* introduce to the readers to some customs he met in synagogues of his time: The Jews were aware that the so-called points do not belong to the Holy Scripture. In order "to testify this up till now ... in their synagogues during solemn festivals, when they take out the Scrolls from their shrine which they show them written without vowel points."¹²

Holy Jewish Writings, Their Canon and Interpretation

The Jesuits held Jewish holy writings in high esteem. They were of the opinion that they went through three redactions. (1) Before Ezra they had been written by means of "Mosaic letters" that is in the Samaritan way. (2) In the times of Ezra the change of the alphabet from the Samaritan to the square one took place. Ezra collected the dispersed Hebrew holy writings in one book and removed the mistakes of copiers. (3) Around the 5th century AD the Masorettes added vowel points to the Hebrew letters given in the form of consonants by Ezra, keeping them intact. The motive behind the Masorettes' action was an anti-Christian one: the vocalization of the text was to deprive the Hebrew Bible of its Christological sense – on account of that the Masoretic text used in the 16th century differed from Latin Vulgata.¹³ The Jesuits claimed that "the points do not belong to the Holy Scripture."¹⁴ Even rabbis themselves sometimes dissent from Masoretic vocalization.¹⁵ Because of all that, the Catholics preferred the Vulgata, which they regarded as the Christian interpretation of

⁸ B 1599, p. 13–14.

⁹ B 1599, p. **2r-v, **6v.

¹⁰ B 1599, p. **2r.

¹¹ B 1599, p. **2v.

¹² B 1599, p. **4r.

¹³ B 1599, p. **2v, **3v, **4r.

¹⁴ B 1599, p. **2r.

¹⁵ B 1599, p. **4r.

the consonantal text produced by St. Jerome in the pre-Masoretic period. According to the Jesuits, it is possible to change individual words which are determined by the Masoretes by eliminating their vocalizations.¹⁶ Moreover, the knowledge of biblical Hebrew was much better among the Jews at the time of Jerome's translation of the Holy Scripture.¹⁷ St Jerome became acquainted with Hebrew through personal contacts with the pre-Masoretic generations of Hebrew scholars.¹⁸

The Jesuits did not trust the philological skills of the Jews living in the 16th century. Those Jews themselves, while being involved in a continuous dissemination all over the world, lost the competence of the Hebrew language. Therefore, the Protestants and the Antitrinitarians, who learned from them, cannot in any way be sure of this acquired knowledge.¹⁹ These allegations constitute a pretext for the criticism of heretical philological studies and their interpretation of the Bible, as well as for the undermining of the validity of the scholarly contacts between Christians and Jews.²⁰ The Jesuits also had a low opinion of the practices of their opponents (the Protestants and the Antitrinitarians), who had translated the Bible from the original languages, but not from Vulgata. The scepticism of the heretics towards the Vulgata was understood by them as a lack of trust in St Jerome's knowledge and his competence, who must have known the biblical languages, including the Hebrew language, much better than the 16th century Jews for whom Hebrew was not their mother tongue but an acquired language learned at school.²¹

According to the Jesuits, the contacts of heretics with the Jews brought about one more negative result. The Protestants accepted, as canonical, only those writings in the Old Testament which were considered holy by the Jews. The Jesuits are acutely critical of this kind of approach, treating it as yet another example of the Judaization of Christianity.²² Wujek was of the opinion that although the Jews and the heretics read the holy writings, they still did not understand them in the right way.²³ The author of *Apparatus sacer* thinks that the knowledge of biblical languages including the Hebrew language is not enough to read the Bible correctly. The Jews themselves along with the heretics are the perfect example of that, as they read the Bible, but somehow cannot find the Christian faith in it.²⁴ The commentaries provide clear hints

¹⁶ B 1599, p. **2v.

¹⁷ B 1599, p. ***1r.

¹⁸ B 1599, p. **4r, **5v.

¹⁹ B 1599, p. **4r.

²⁰ B 1599, p. **5r-v, ***1r, ***2v.

²¹ B 1599, p. **4v, ***1r.

²² B 1599, p. **6r-v.

²³ NT 1593, p. 324; B 1599, p. 1239; cf. NT 1593, p. 337 and B 1599, p. 1244.

²⁴ B 1599, p. ***2r.

to the situation of the 16th century: some representatives of the radical Reformation movements rejected the Truths of the Christian Faith and adopted Jewish beliefs by rejecting the divinity of Christ and His messianic dignity, by celebrating the Sabbath and performing circumcision (the so-called Sabbatar-ians). The reason for their fall was the improper reading of the Holy Scripture, which did not take into consideration the teaching of the Church and the authority of Church Fathers. In their opinion sole reading of the writings is not sufficient but the application of appropriate interpretations is necessary.²⁵ It should be noted that the polemics against the Jews was connected with the ones of the Catholics against different fractions of the Reformation. Wujek's Bible appeared at the end of the 16th century (1599). At that time the negative results of the study of different Jewish writings had already being known, which created a threat of Judaization of Christianity (for example the Sabbatarian Movement).²⁶ The Jesuits were well aware of the danger and aimed at presenting it as the result of the Reformation which had rejected the authority of the Church and her Tradition of the interpretation of the Holy Scripture. They resorted to the study of the holy writings in the original versions on the basis of their own principles, or even in a totally arbitrary way, which is indicated by the lack of unity among the Reformers.²⁷ According to the Jesuits, the Judaization of Christianity constituted the next logical step in the process. While associating Reformation movements with the Jews, the Jesuits showed their readers the consequences resulting from accepting the views of Luther, Calvin, the Anabaptists and the Antitrinitarians, namely one turns into a follower of Judaism.²⁸

The Image of the Jews

Wujek used several terms to describe the Jews. The most popular of them was the very word "the Jew." He also used the word "Hebrews," explaining that the term "Hebrews" refers to the Jews who lived in Judea.²⁹ Wujek also uses the expression "the nation of Israel."³⁰ These words appear in the Wujek's Bible with different designations which express his unfavorable attitude toward the Jews. The following are some examples of the vocabulary used: "the

²⁵ B 1599, p. ***2r.

²⁶ See more: Pietkiewicz, *W poszukiwaniu „szczyrego słowa Bożego,”* 60–63, 64–66, 68–70, 78–81.

²⁷ B 1599, p. ***2r, ***2v, ***3r, **5r.

²⁸ B 1599, p. ***2v.

²⁹ NT 1593, p. 751; B 1599, p. 1419.

³⁰ NT 1593, p. 393; B 1599, p. 1268.

ungrateful,”³¹ “the enemies of Christ,”³² “unfaithful people, greedy people, cruel murderers full of every maliciousness,”³³ “resistant and irredeemable.”³⁴ These expressions refer mainly to the Jews of the New Testament era; however, the saturation of the commentary with denigrations could not go unheeded in the formation of the negative image of the Jews in the eyes of the readers of Wujek’s Bible of the 16th and the 17th centuries.

Yet, the picture of the Jews in Wujek’s Bible is not one-sidedly negative. This image stems not from ethnic motivators but religious ones. Wujek systematizes the teaching of the New Testament about the Jews by dividing them into three groups: The first one consists of the believers in Christ. The second group consists of those who believed in Christ but kept Jewish traditions at the same time. Finally, the third group comprises those who rejected Christ and who persecuted the Christians.³⁵ Wujek criticizes the two latter groups. Only the first group is fully acceptable to him. The Jews believing in Christ were also persecuted by the Jews, who stuck steadfastly to Judaism, and by the so-called “false Apostles,” that is Judaizers.³⁶ As it has been mentioned above, the complicated and turbulent religious atmosphere in Europe of the 16th century had great influence on the image of the Jews presented in Wujek’s Bible. The supporters of the Reformation with its factions (Lutherans, Reformed, Polish Brethrens) were all univocally equated with heretics and dissidents. The followers of Judaism or Islam were perceived in a similar way.

Jewish issues appeared also in the context of the discussion on justification at the time of Reformation. The Protestants were teaching that justification is realized only through faith, whereas the Catholics believed it happened as a result of “faith and good works.”³⁷ Wujek defines “God’s righteousness” (Gr. δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) as the one “which is exercised in man by God who makes man really just”³⁸ and he contrasts it to “Jewish self-righteousness,” “supported by the Law, without any assistance of faith in Christ’s grace,”³⁹ “attributing too much to their own deeds, according to the Law, having no intention or desire to admit that the death of Jesus the Lord was absolutely crucial for them and for the pagans to obtain salvation.”⁴⁰ The Jews still celebrate the solemnities of the Old Law not understanding that “the solemnities ceased to exist.”⁴¹

³¹ NT 1593, p. 392; B 1599, p. 1267.

³² B 1599, p. ***2v.

³³ B 1599, p. ***2v.

³⁴ NT 1593, p. 392; B 1599, p. 1267.

³⁵ NT 1593, p. 517; B 1599, p. 1321.

³⁶ NT 1593, p. 751; B 1599, p. 1419.

³⁷ NT 1593, p. 518; B 1599, p. 1321.

³⁸ NT 1593, p. 559 and B 1599, p. 1338.

³⁹ NT 1593, p. 559 and B 1599, p. 1338.

⁴⁰ NT 1593, p. 517; B 1599, p. 1321.

⁴¹ NT 1593, p. 517; B 1599, p. 1321; cf. B 1599, p. 946.

Knowledge of Jewish Customs and Festivals

Wujek's commentary also contains much information about the Jews, their festivals, faith and lifestyle. The information refers mainly to the biblical times, but it contains updated elements as well, allowing a Christian reader to associate, for example, Jewish festivals with his own calendar, pointing out that some of them heralded the events of the New Testament. In this very way Wujek describes the feast of Passover and the Day of Atonement, which he regards as the proclamation of the Passion, death and resurrection of Christ, the New Year and Sukkot.⁴²

Christian-Jewish Relations

Wujek was aware of the long-lasting Christian-Jewish feud and tried to show its origin. According to the Jesuit the ultimate cause of the conflict is the person of Jesus of Nazareth, regarded by Christians as the Messiah (Christ) and the preaching of faith in Christ among the pagans. The conflict dates back to the times of the New Testament.⁴³ The Jews did not admit that Jesus was the Messiah, because they could not come to terms with His death on the cross. They had different expectations: "they waited for a Christ who could be akin to other secular kings, and who could make them great and wealthy in this world."⁴⁴ God tried to convince the Jews to believe in Christ, but they took the liberty to reject the call, which was announced by the prophets and is being realized up till the 16th century.⁴⁵ The history of the relation between the Jews and the Church did not end with that. Once all the pagans had entered in the Church by then "the whole Israel will be saved and then the Last Day will come"⁴⁶ (cf. Romans 11:25).

Conclusion

As far as the sources of the commentaries and prefaces are concerned, the Jesuits refer to the text of the Bible itself, reading it in a strictly literal way (hence their statements that Hebrew was used in Paradise). The majority of information about the Jews in the commentaries was provided by the New Testament for exegetical purposes. The works of the Church Fathers and other ancient Christian and Jewish writers constituted another important source of

⁴² B 1599, p. 132; NT 1593, p. 337 and B 1599, p. 1244.

⁴³ NT 1593, p. 517; B 1599, p. 1321.

⁴⁴ NT 1593, p. 517; B 1599, p. 1321.

⁴⁵ NT 1593, p. 560 and B 1599, p. 1339; NT 1593, p. 391, 517; B 1599, p. 1267, 1321; B 1599, p. ***1v.

⁴⁶ NT 1599, p. 560.

information about the Jews. The Jesuits also made use of the writings of contemporaneous Jewish grammarians, e.g. Elias Levita (1469–1549). However, it should be mentioned that Wujek was not alone in writing the commentaries. He relied extensively on already existing works, e.g. the works of St Jerome,⁴⁷ St Augustin,⁴⁸ St Robert Bellarmin⁴⁹ or the English New Testament issued in Rheims in 1582.⁵⁰ With respect to the range of influence of Wujek's translation of the Bible on Polish society, its impact was very wide. Yet the situation was different with the commentaries and the prefaces. In the 19th century, editions without commentaries or editions with newly updated commentaries started to appear. The extent of the influence of a commentary from the editions of the 16th and the 18th centuries is considerably limited, because until 1821 the whole Bible was issued only three times (Kraków 1599, Wrocław 1740 and 1771).⁵¹ It has been estimated that over that long period of time (222 years) the number of copies of those editions amounted to about 3000.⁵²

As far as the influence of Wujek's Bible on Polish society is concerned, it is worth considering the way and intensity of its use in the developed and popular education run by the Jesuits. Jesuits' schools were putting particular emphasis on the study of the Holy Scripture and different commentaries to the Bible, especially of the Fathers of the Church. Already in 1578, the Bible was taught as a separate subject. However, the text of Latin Vulgate and Latin commentaries constituted the core of the studies. In Jesuits' schools the Polish language played only a secondary role in the process of education and formation. Hence, it can be concluded that Wujek's Bible, so popular in the Jesuits' environment,⁵³ must have played some role in their formation and education. Nevertheless, it was still a supplementary role. Other biblical translations into national languages functioned in a similar way in Jesuits' schools. For example, in the 90's of the 16th century, that is before Wujek's translations appeared, the Holy Scripture was commented in Polish in lower classes in Vilnius Academy

⁴⁷ See e.g. B 1599, p. 2, 9, 12, 39, 40 and more.

⁴⁸ See e.g. B 1599, p. 2, 3, 4, 6, 14, 23 and more.

⁴⁹ See NT 1593, p. 27.

⁵⁰ See NT 1593, p. 27.

⁵¹ See Sieg, "Jakub Wujek," 10–12; Sikora, „Reedycje Biblii ks. Jakuba Wujka,” 101–123.

⁵² Average circulation of prints in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Renaissance amounted to 500 copies. Few books, for instance, translations of the Bible, might have been printed in larger quantities, about 1000–1500 copies. See Siess-Krzyszowski, "Warianty typograficzne Biblii brzeskiej," 52, 80; Pilarczyk, "*Biblia Radziwiłłowska* vel *Brzeska*," 75.

⁵³ The second and third edition of the whole Bible was published in the Academic Printing House in Wrocław. Those editions contained elaborated critical apparatus and extensive commentaries, being to a great extent a compilation of the texts of Church Fathers.

on Sundays and on public holidays. As one can see, the influence of Wujek's Bible had its limitations, here as well.

The radical and "undiplomatic" language, as we would put it today, was conducive to the negative image of Judaism. In order to understand it fully, we must take into consideration the conditions of the epoch, marked by very intense and emotional religious polemics. The language used in Wujek's Bible in the comments regarding the Jewish issues was not very different from the one used in disputes and arguments between Christians of the time.⁵⁴ What is more, because of the sacred character of the text, the language itself was much softer and more diplomatic than in the real polemics.

Summary

The author, on the basis of the study of the commentaries and prefaces to Wujek's Bible of 1599, depicts the image of the Jews, their language and their customs as it was presented by Jakub Wujek and his contemporaneous fellow Jesuits. The author refers to the sources of the information contained in Wujek's Bible, evaluates it in the context of the religious situation in the Renaissance Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and attempts at establishing the realm and power of the influence it had on readers.

Keywords: Wujek's Bible, Jews, Hebrew, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation

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⁵⁴ Piechnik, *Dzieje Akademii Wileńskiej*, vol. 1: *Początki Akademii Wileńskiej (1570–1599)*, Rzym 1984, 87–88; vol. 2: *Rozkwit Akademii Wileńskiej w latach 1600–1655*, Rzym 1983, 137–140; vol. 3: *Próby odnowy Akademii Wileńskiej po klęskach Potopu i okres kryzysu 1655–1730*, Rzym 1987, 223.

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DANIEL SOUKUP

**OH, BESTIA SYNAGOGA!
THE REPRESENTATION OF JEWS
IN CZECH SERMONS AT THE TURN OF THE 17TH
AND 18TH CENTURIES**

Among the most progressive genres of the Early Modern Czech literature was homiletics. The allure of the Baroque preaching especially lied in a performative character of its rendition (elocution); moreover, a gradual spread of literacy among the population of the Czech lands secured popularity also to the printed collections of the Sunday and festive sermons or occasional prints used for special events. In Baroque homiletics, connection between its persuasive and aesthetic function was a guarantee of its far-reaching impact on the society and at the same time of its influence on forming its ethic, religious and cultural values.

The following paragraphs focus on an area which has played in the Czech homiletics of the 17th and 18th century rather a marginal role so far. The study discusses the ways the characters of Jews are construed on the pages of several, mainly Sunday Czech-language postils and trace the tension between the real Jewish community of the time and the so called textual, fictional or literary Jews. The main aim of this study is thus to explore the discursive reality, that is, the then concept of “Jewish presence in the midst of the Christian world”.

In the paper, the argumentation mainly follows the propositions made by Jeremy Cohen, who, using medieval texts, showed that in the Christian literature, the Jews were for centuries depicted according to how a Christian learning wanted them to be and not according to the reality.¹ To a considerable degree, this premise can be applied even to the corpus of Czech sermons at the turn of the 17th and 18th century. Christian theology perceived Jews as witnesses proving the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible (in Christian terminol-

¹ Cohen, *Living letters of the Law*.

ogy, the Old Testament); such was their theological-historical part as already defined by St. Augustine.²

In view of these facts, besides demonstrating the continuity of this medieval perception of the Jews, we will also try to turn the attention to the current approaches to the Jewish community, reflecting the social situation of the time. The vast majority of the Czech sermons where the Jews appear in the form of brief mentions, invectives or exempla, continue in the tradition of conventional preaching methods. Texts paying more detailed attention to the Jews, or even using some elements of Judaism as a subtle rhetorical concept are incomparably less frequent and therefore we will leave them out of our discussion as they represent a certain anomaly in the context of Czech literary production.

Early Modern preachers perceived the Jews as a marginal group. On the pages of approximately a dozen mainly Sunday Czech-language postils which I analysed, the Jews were given minimal attention even though after the Thirty Years' War, they constituted almost the only legally tolerated non-Catholic group in the country. Hand in hand with the growing Catholic triumphalism also grew the pressure on the Jewish community as well as efforts aiming at its reform, separation and limiting the number of its members.³ Homiletic texts at the turn of the 17th and 18th century thus reflect the era of the so called bureaucratic anti-Semitism which culminated in tightened anti-Jewish legislation (the Familiant Laws and the Translocation Rescript of 1726–1727) which had a devastating impact on the Jewish community in the Czech lands.⁴ Especially since the 1690s, characteristic of its dramatic case of a “made-up” Jewish martyr and convert Šimon Abeles (allegedly killed by his father *ex odio fidei*, that is in hatred of the Christian faith), efforts increased to continuously exert influence upon the Jews and convert them to Christianity.⁵

Traditional portrayal of the Jews which had its origin in the medieval hagiography was petrified in the domestic homiletics by repeatedly quoted miraculous stories – miracula – usually used as exempla.⁶ Miracula became the main narrative texts in which an Early Modern Catholic believer could have encountered a rather diverse range of Jewish characters, from the die-hard enemies of Christianity to potential converts.⁷

² Blumenkrantz, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins*; Fredriksen, “Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei,” 299–324; Fredriksen, “Divine Justice and Human Freedom,” 29–54; van Oort, “Jews and Judaism in Augustine’s Sermones,” 243–265.

³ Putík, “The Prague Jewish Community,” 4–140.

⁴ Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 29–40.

⁵ Carlebach, *The Death of Simon Abeles*; Soukup, “Šimon Abeles,” 346–371; Loutchan, *Converting Bohemia*, 300–316; Greenblat, *To Tell Their Children*, 161–165; Greenblat, “Saint and Countersaint,” 61–80.

⁶ Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews*, 169–235. For a case study see Marcus, “Images of the Jews,” 247–256.

⁷ For a comprehensive overview of conversions from Judaism see Carlebach, *Divided Souls*.

Among the wealth of these texts, especially popular was, for example, the miraculum on the purported desecration of the hosts which took place in the upper Hungarian town of Pressburg in 1591. In this miraculum, the Czech preachers describe a dramatic profanation of a Eucharist allegedly perpetrated by the Bohemian Jews. According to the story, a certain Jew Lev of Prague, a convert to Christianity, supposedly stole three hosts and after a short stay in Nikolsburg, the seat of the Moravian Chief Rabbi, sold them to his former fellow believers in Pressburg. When the Jews tried to torture the host, a lightning killed some of those present. As a punishment for their blasphemy, the rest was arrested and executed by impalement.

Different versions of this legend were inspired by the German graphic sheet by the Nuremberg printer Lucas Mayer.⁸ The renowned Jesuit poet Friedrich Bridel (1619–1680) even put this miraculum into verse and included it in a section on Eucharist in his versed Catechism.⁹ Similarly, the Jesuit Matěj Václav Šteyer (1630–1692) or, in a later period, Bohumír Josef Bilovský (1659–1725) who quoted this miraculum in their sermons on Maundy Thursday¹⁰ respectively on the Feast of Corpus Christi¹¹ used it to illustrate the Catholic Eucharist doctrine and in this way stressed one of the crucial constituents of pietas Austriaca.¹² The use of exempla thus also had a significant dimension of confessionalization or recatholization. It cannot be ruled out that this exemplum was chosen by the preachers also for its regional context. As a matter of interest, let us add that this miraculum can be found even in the handbook for missionaries and formators of Jewish converts by the Hebraist and Jesuit Franz Haselbauer (1677–1756) from the beginning of the 18th century.¹³ In a missionary catechism, printed in German and also in mirror Hebrew characters showing elements of Judendeutsch (Yiddish), this anti-Jewish narrative plays an important role. It represents a cautionary tale about insincere conversion whose function was to deter a Jewish neophyte from such a false conversion and at the same time it was to become a part of his memory and mediated experience.

In a traditional Catholic homiletics, the Jews were repeatedly characterised as “unfaithful (i.e. unbelieving) and obstinate” because they committed “the most grievous of all sins when the Messiah came into the world and the

⁸ Strauss, *The German Single-leaf*, 703.

⁹ Bridel, *Básnické dílo*, 377–379.

¹⁰ Šteyer, *Postila katolická*, 210–211.

¹¹ Bilovský, *Cantator cygnus*, 360.

¹² The miraculum is also mentioned by Beckovský, *Katolického živobytí nepohnutelný základ*, 374–375; most of the authors draw from Antonius Davrouitius, *Florum exemplorum sive Catechismi historialis*, 122–124.

¹³ Franciscus Haselbauer, *Kurtzer Inhalt deß Christlichen Gesetzes*, 176–177. About Haselbauer see Segert and Beránek, *Orientalistik an der Prager Universität*; Kvačil, „Die deutsch-böhmische Barockliteratur,” 65–72; Maciejko, „The Rabbi and the Jesuit,” 147–184.

Jews refused to accept him as their Redeemer.”¹⁴ Characterization of the Jews as a religious group reflects traditional religious-polemical topoi – the Jewish law is described as yoke; the Jews are predestined to condemnation. Motive of damnation, resulting from the rejection of Christ, repeatedly appears in the sermons like a refrain.

In this context, the sermons of the Jesuit Antonín Koniáš (1691–1760) seem therefore rather surprising.¹⁵ Koniáš, notorious in the Czech cultural space for his missionary work among the non-Catholics as well as for burning of heretical books, explicitly verbalizes in these sermons Augustine’s theological concept of Jewish presence in the midst of the Christian world and even invites the listeners to pray for Jews.

Holy father Augustine says about the Jewish nation: That prophesy is now fulfilled that a greater number of repudiated Jews will serve to a smaller number of chosen Christians: since now the Jews serve us, Christians; they praise the Old Testament and as our servants they place the Old Testament into our hands and bring it to us, and we then learn from their own books that Christ is the true God and the promised Messiah¹⁶ ... Since Christ, our Saviour from the Abraham’s line, is of a Jewish ancestry, as is the Virgin Mary and all holy apostles, let us draw a lesson from this – that we are not to scorn the Jewish race nor cause it any harm but ardently pray for these people that the God would enlighten them with the Holy Spirit and let them thus know the true Messiah. If their souls cannot be won with words, let us win them with good example.¹⁷

Yet let us linger a bit longer on the traditional anti-Jewish portrayals. If one was to name one of the most frequently used topoi than it surely would be the symbolic pair of the Synagogue and the Church (*Synagoga et Ecclesia*) which in Baroque homiletics conveys a comprehensive message on the clear-cut dichotomy and a clear distribution of the positive and negative attributes. A shift in the theological interpretation of the relation between Judaism and Christianity gradually manifested itself in the iconography of the Synagogue as represented in the fine arts, in her gestures, clothing or movements. Some depictions contain explicitly negative features: a broken banner staff, a crown falling from her head, blindfolded eyes signifying spiritual blindness. There are cases where the Synagogue is depicted with her eyes open yet her gaze is full of indignation, even contempt for the crucified Christ. The Synagogue did not only embody the Old Testament and the Jewish inability to accept Christian-

¹⁴ Šteyer, *Postila katolická*, 17.

¹⁵ There exist only Czech studies about this preacher. See Sládek, “O skryších převzácných darů ducha,” 81–91; about his anti-Jewish attitudes see Arava-Novotná, *The Bydžov’s “Israelites,”* 2.

¹⁶ Koniáš, *Vejtažní naučení*, 49.

¹⁷ Koniáš, *Vejtažní naučení*, 52.

ity, it also personified hatred towards it.¹⁸ This was an important interpretation shift which can be traced also in the texts used by the local Czech preachers.

The motive of a fierce Synagogue (*bestia Synagoga*) can be found in the works of many Bohemian preachers, most often in discourses found in the Passion cycles which provided space for emotive description of the Christ's Passion as well as the motives of the other protagonists featuring in the whole set of Easter plays.¹⁹ The juxtaposition of the Synagogue and the Church was most often and in the most ingenious manner used in the sermons written by the diocese priest Tomáš Xaverius Laštovka (1688–1746/47). In several of his sermons he elaborates on the image of Christ as a repudiated groom, abandoned by his wife: “The Jewish Synagogue gave a letter [Hebr. *get*, it is divorce document] to her heavenly groom in which she repudiated him” and instead begged Pilate to release from prison the blackguard Barabbas she fell in love with. The Christ's new bride therefore became the Church.²⁰

On the mount Zion, the last supper took place, the wedding glee of the loveliest new groom Lord Jesus with his beloved bride, the Catholic Church, after he had been repudiated with a letter given to him by his mean beloved, the Jewish Synagogue. On the mount of Cavalry, the wine mixed with gall indeed proved a very bitter and disgusting sleep remedy which the ungodly Jewess gave to her beloved ...²¹

According to the preacher, it was this malevolent behaviour that caused the repudiation of the Jewish people and lead to the choice of the new bride – the Church. The allegory of marriage and divorce, rivalry between the Synagogue and the Church, the tension between the Jews and the Christians represent in the texts of the Baroque preachers a historical turning-point which, according to the Christian authorities, was to happen at Golgotha and which unequivocally determined the inferior status of the Jews in history.²²

However, when compared with the Easter and Passion plays, the anti-Jewish tone in the Czech homiletics is significantly hushed. While the popular dramas were usually free from any tolerant aspect,²³ homiletics, whose designated space was the church, tried to avoid of vulgar anti-Judaism. On the one

¹⁸ Faü, *L'image des Juifs*, 29–54; Lipton, *Dark Mirror*, 42–43, 119–122.

¹⁹ For instance Jan Kleklar (1639–1703), and Jan Táborský (1696–1748). Kleklar, *Semen verbi Dei*, 438–443; Táborský, *Tria tabernacula*, 101–102.

²⁰ Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článěk*, 258–259.

²¹ Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článěk*, 479.

²² For a general overview of this theological imagination see Cohen, *Christ Killers*.

²³ Havelka, *Komika českého*, 152–171. For a detailed example describing Bavarian *Passionspiel* (performed for the first time in 1634 in Oberammergau) see Cohen, *Christ Killers*, 211–229. For other cases of anti-Jewish drama (Passion Plays) see Martin, *Representations of Jews*, 33–105.

hand, preaching actively spread anti-Jewish stereotypes, on the other hand, it restrained and moderated them and thus adjusted the traditional – religiously motivated negative portrayal of the Jews.

As we will demonstrate in the following part, demographic rise of the Jewish community in the Czech lands and a social tension even had the opposite effect on the domestic preaching and forced the preachers to adopt a critical stance towards these phenomena. The portrayal of the Jewish community was not always shaped just on the grounds of medieval pretexts but also in confrontation with actual problems encountered within the society. If we want to explore how the Jews were represented in Czech preaching, we must not forget to take into account the demographic stratification and distribution of the Jewish population in the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Margraviate of Moravia. A brief glance at the Baroque postils reveals that the regional origin of a preacher, the place where he was active and possible presence of a Jewish community all influenced the frequency of themes related to the Jews in his works. Preachers mostly active in Prague where at the beginning of the 18th century lived more than 11 thousand Jews, that is, almost a half of all Jewish population in Bohemia,²⁴ could have more serious reasons to thematize the Jews in their discourse.

This is certainly true of the Cyriac²⁵ František Štěpán Náchodský (1676–1721) who joined his career with Prague and paid unusual attention to the local Jews. He is one of the few preachers who used Jewish themes (e.g. ethnographically accurate description of circumcision or Jewish feasts) to elaborate on a wider homiletic concept.²⁶ The fact that his two-volume postil *Sancta curiositas* includes a relatively large number of texts regarding the Jews and Judaism is closely related to the location of the Cyriac convent of The Holy Cross in the Old Town adjacent to the Prague Jewish ghetto. Since the beginning of their mission in Prague, the canons regular came into everyday contact with the Jewish inhabitants and their coexistence was not without conflicts. These disputes were ignited, for example, by arguments about stole fees, of which were the friars, due to expanding Jewish households, deprived, or by kosher abattoir and loud meat markets which lessened convent's comfort and disrupted peace on Sundays and during feasts.²⁷ In this context it is not surprising that Náchodský repeatedly commented on the situation of the Prague Jews.

²⁴ Putík, “The Prague Jewish Community,” 8; Wolf, “Statistik der Juden in Böhmen,” 819–82, here 820; Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 3.

²⁵ The Canons Regular of the Order of the Holy Cross with Red Heart (Canonicus Ordo crucigerorum cum rubeo corde), commonly called Cyriacs, are a Roman Catholic religious order. In 1256, the order was invited to enter the Czech Lands by the king Přemysl Otakar II.

²⁶ For ethnographic literature about the Jews see Deutsch, *Judaism in Christian Eyes*.

²⁷ Novotný, *U staropražských cyriáků*, 66, 69, 74–75; 110, 123, 182.

However, strict evaluation of social conditions could often be heard also in the sermons of the village preachers. Criticism of close relationships between the aristocracy and the Jews can be found in sermons severely attacking the nobility for failing to abide by Christian teaching, for their easy way of life and superficial piety. These texts not only became a regular part of domestic preaching anthologies but, as Magda Teter proved in her research, they were even more prominent in the homiletic works of the Polish clerics.²⁸

In the Early Modern era, the situation in Poland significantly differed from that in the Czech lands. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth where in the 18th century lived as many as 750 thousand Jews,²⁹ the ruler's status was significantly weaker than in the Habsburg monarchy and the connections of the Polish nobility with the Jewish community was therefore traditionally much stronger. The nobility used the services of wealthy leaders of the Jewish community and in return granted them privileges that would be undreamt of within the borders of the Habsburg state. The saying „Polonia Purgatorium Clericorum, Infernus Rusticorum, Paradisum Iudeorum”³⁰ would not apply to the Czech-Moravian space, however, this does not mean that similar problems were not encountered also by the local clerics. It is also thanks to these clerics that we have a record that the nobility used the capabilities and especially the capital of the wealthier Jews.

One example of such a cleric can be the priest active in the South Bohemia Ondřej František Jakub de Waldt (1683–1752) who in the town of Strakonice delivered a sermon fiercely condemning the liaisons between the nobility and the court Jews (*Hoffaktoren, Hofjuden*):

Each Haus-Jud in the house is like a devil pestering a man; both are unhappy fellows, both smell of a billy-goat and slyness, both only care about gain – one about the worldly one, the other one about the eternal one, one cares about possessions, the other about a soul, the one sooner or later deprives his lord of his earthly possessions, the other eventually of his redemption ... Jews are welcome by many, by men and women alike ... many nobles treat the Jews like lords yet many treat them like slaves.³¹

A similarly harsh criticism can be found in the works of the aforementioned vicar and deacon in Uherské Hradiště (Moravia) Tomáš Xaverius Laštovka, an ardent critic of élite circles of society. He even calls the Jews “privileged scoundrels.” In his opinion, the nobility tolerates the Jews on their estates because of the profit they bring them, and the court Jews exert greater influence over them than their confessors. Laštovka points out that the nobility demands money from the Jews and because of that the Jews even more exploit their sub-

²⁸ Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 80–98.

²⁹ Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 3.

³⁰ Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 97

³¹ Waldt, *Chválořeč neb kázání*, 251.

jects through usury and other “crooked deals.” This is why he likens the Jews to the moths in a fur coat.³²

The Czech preachers were not so much concerned with the business liaisons with the Jews but rather with the fact that the Church was not able to control and regulate it in any way. The object of the social criticism was therefore especially the nobility, not so much the Jews themselves. Comparison with Poland shows that at the turn of the 17th and 18th century, the tension between the nobility and the clergy can be viewed as a certain invariable valid in a wider geographical space.³³

In contrast, the financial profit and business intercourses with the Jews were defended by the already mentioned Prague preacher Náchodský. He describes himself as a patron of the Jews and admits that the princes can permit Jewish usury so that the Christians themselves would not have to soil their hands with it. Moreover, if usury was banned for good, it might have led to other social problems, e.g. to robberies and exploitation of the poor. According to his reasoning, the nobility and the municipality are only to control that the usury is, if possible, fair and the interests not too high.³⁴

By his overall stance, Náchodský openly rejects extirpative politics which was one of the main topics of the Prague municipality since the 1680 and which culminated with the real (though temporary) expulsion of the Jews by the empress Maria Theresa in 1744/1745.³⁵ Among one of the motives for his defence of the Jews, Náchodský mentions also economic reasons which surely must have played a crucial part in the decision making of the town officials who were afraid of losing gains flowing from the Prague Jewish community.

However, this does not mean that this preacher was not in any way critical towards the Jews. On the contrary, his texts contain many anti-Jewish invectives and negative stereotypes including accusation of ritual murders of the Christian children.³⁶ He therefore recommends punishing every transgression against the Christian religion as severely as possible.³⁷ Thus he condemns everything that would transform the inferior status of the Jewish community and would harm the majority society as well as disrupt the social hierarchy.³⁸

³² Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článek*, 40, 187–188.

³³ Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 97.

³⁴ Náchodský, *Sancta curiositas*, 34.

³⁵ Bergl, “Die Ausweisung der Juden,” 263–331; most recently see Guesnet, “Textures of Intercession,” 355–375.

³⁶ However, it must be stressed that the Czech sermons only rarely contain accusations of ritual murder. It almost seems as if the Czech and Moravian preachers were trying to avoid mentioning this theme in their sermons. Compared to Poland, there are almost no records about ritual murder cases in the 17th and 18th Century Bohemia and Moravia. For the situation in Poland, see Wijaczka, “Ritual Murder Accusation,” 195–210.

³⁷ Náchodský, *Sancta curiositas*, 52.

³⁸ For medieval roots of the concept of social order, see recently Tolan, “Of Milk and Blood,” 139–149.

When on the 21st of June 1689 a fire broke out in Prague and the whole Jewish town was reduced to ashes, some wealthy Jews were allowed a temporary shelter in the Christian houses. However, the Church uncompromisingly rejected it, fearing it would disrupt the given social order and the whole thing would lead to forbidden and unacceptably close contacts between the two communities. The archbishop Jan Fridrich of Valdštejn (1642–1694) even forbade the priests to visit the houses which were also inhabited by the Jews, to celebrate masses there in the private chapels and to administer any sacraments, including baptisms and the last rites.³⁹ The archbishop's stance was also shared by Náchodský who complained in one of his sermons that after the fire, shelter was granted to the wealthy Jews rather than to poor Christians.⁴⁰

The preachers thus generally strived to maintain the existing social conditions and were strongly opposed even to the slightest of hints pointing at the possible emancipation of the Jewish community. For every deviation from the established social order they put the blame especially on the nobility which, in their eyes, acted as the protector of the Jews. By its lax attitude towards religious life and disrespecting the Church authorities, the nobility allegedly gave bad example to the ordinary believers. In the Bohemian homiletics, bad Christians also become the subject of criticism, surprisingly put in contrast with the Jewish population, as will be demonstrated in the following part.

Another one of the popular stylistic devices was the figure of contrast "Christians worse than the Jews." As proved by Magda Teter, Polish preachers at the turn of the 17th and 18th century complained that Christ's suffering caused now by the bad Catholics is much greater than that inflicted earlier by the treacherous Jews and heretics.⁴¹ This topos can be interpreted as the manifestation of the frustration the Catholic clergy experienced due to the gradual loss of their influence and power. Also in the Czech and the Moravian postils, the Christian piety of the time is compared with the eagerness of the Jews, Muslims or other non-Catholics.⁴² The local preachers fulminated that the believers do not pay attention to the sermons and are very lax in attending religious ceremonies. Repeated moans that people do not honour Sunday and prefer entertainment instead naturally needs to be perceived as a literary cliché common to the preachers all over Europe. Yet having said this, some details can nevertheless reveal remarkable regional differences.

As becomes clear from the local Church accounts and synodal regulations, in Poland, the Jewish arendators, that is, the leaseholders of distilleries, breweries and pubs were accused of allowing the villagers to rather sit in a pub than

³⁹ Putík, "The Prague Jewish Community," 15–17.

⁴⁰ Náchodský, *Sancta curiositas*, 52.

⁴¹ Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 59–79.

⁴² For instance Bilovský, *Pia quadragesima aeterna veneratione*, quoted according to Kopecký *Starí slezští kazatelé*, 110; Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článek*, 141, 143, 144, 229, 253, 299.

in the church.⁴³ Surprisingly, such invectives are not to be found in the works of the Czech preachers even though the system of Jewish leases was so common after the Thirty Years' War that it had to be repeatedly addressed by the local rabbinic authorities.⁴⁴ The explicit accusation of the Jews of having their share in the alcoholism of the population appears much later, in the sources and literature of the 19th century.⁴⁵

However, Baroque homiletics did not portray the Jews only in a negative light: the sins and lukewarm faith of the Christian believers provided the preachers with inspiration to depict an impressive contrast, using a comparison with the religious rigorousness of the Jews and the heretics.⁴⁶ Tomáš Xaverius Laštovka, for example, writes:

You go to the church, and likewise the Jew goes to his synagogue, the Turk to his mosque and also the heretic to his house of prayer [*bethauz*] and there they all stay much longer than you – several hours while you are there but half an hour ... Do you observe feasts? So does the Jew and the Turk and they are much better at it than you are. The Jew on Shabbat [*šábes*] does not touch any money, refuses to work, but you do whatever you like; you do not care; a feast or an ordinary day, it is of small difference to you with the little exception you go to a church for a little while. Do you fast? So does the Jew and the Turk, and much better than you, for they have much stricter fasts; they do not eat all day long and you deem yourself a saint when you avoid meat during fast. What is then, I say, the difference between us and the Jews, the Turks and the heretics?⁴⁷

While Christians work on Sundays and feasts, the Jews carefully observe their religious duties. The preacher criticized such behaviour of his parishioners and partially blamed the nobility for it because it failed to secure rest during feast days among their subjects.⁴⁸

Therefore, we can conclude that the Czech preaching at the turn of the 17th and the 18th century was not significantly anti-Jewish and the Jewish themes occurring in sermons were rather marginal. Medieval anti-Jewish legends aside, religious anti-Judaism was moderated in sermons; instead, it was the social criticism aimed at ruling classes which found its verbal outlet in this medium.

In spite of the fact that almost every Baroque postil contains anti-Jewish invectives and passages which were fully intended, didactic and were a conscious part of the preacher's persuasive method, it cannot be simplistically

⁴³ Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 60–63.

⁴⁴ Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 34–35.

⁴⁵ However in protocols of the Episcopal consistory in Olomouc we can find several complaints against Jewish inns which attracted Christians during lent. See Zuber, *Osudy moravské*, 484, 486.

⁴⁶ Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 76–79.

⁴⁷ Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článek*, 460–461. Other examples see also pp. 394, 119.

⁴⁸ Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článek*, 463.

claimed that these were always displays of the anti-Judaism and the Judeophobia of the time. In rare examples, like in the ethnographical passages found in the postils by Štěpán František Náchodský which he derived from the Hebraistic manuals of the time, we can even find a conscious effort to educate the preacher's audience.⁴⁹

As shown in the printed texts produced at the turn of the 17th and the 18th centuries, the pulpit was far from trumpeting anti-Jewish repressive politics; it, in fact, seems to downplay negative stereotypes rather than endorse them. Not a single sermon is to be found which would call for the Jews to be expelled from the Czech lands or would demand limiting their numbers or segregation which legislatively took place at the beginning of the 18th century. In this respect, the homiletics significantly differed from the official state politics as well as from the polemical texts, pamphlets and leaflets, country fair songs and popular dramas which channelled the social need "to transgress taboo" as well as xenophobia and drastic comic.

Summary

The main aim of this study is to present how early modern preaching in the Czech lands shaped the image of the local Jewish community in Christian eyes at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. Bohemian and Moravian preachers, drawing from medieval literature, were fundamentally influenced by the traditional theological concept of Jews as a living witness to the Christian truth. At the same time, Baroque sermons reused medieval exempla and miracula preserving typical anti-Jewish narratives. Due to the increasing number of Bohemian and Moravian Jewry at the end of 17th century, and the socio-economical tension between Christian and Jewish communities, catholic preachers pursued contemporary topics and criticized unpermitted contacts, allegedly leading to the inferior status of Christians. On the other hand, these critical notes usually were targeted primarily on Christian believers and their laxity in the observance of religious life, as well as ignorance of social hierarchy. Although the Czech Catholic sermons constructed the hostile perception of Jews, the preachers endeavoured to avoid vulgar anti-Judaism and partly smoothed popular anti-Jewish sentiments.

Keywords: Image of Jews, Early Modern Homiletics, Catholic Sermons, Representation of Jews in Literature, Anti-Jewish Rhetoric, History of Jews in the Czech Lands

⁴⁹ In *Sancta curiositas* the descriptions related to circumcision or the Sabbath rituals were to show the harmless nature of Judaism, in the Christian minds often surrounded by superstition. This part of his pulpit oratory is examined in papers by Soukup, "Obraz Židů," 72–106, here 93–99; Soukup, "Sancta curiositas. Židovská obřízka v kázání Štěpána Františka Náchodského," conference talk (forthcoming paper).

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SHEILA A. SPECTOR

THE ROLE OF THE *JEW* IN FRANCISCUS MERCURIUS VAN HELMONT'S *ADUMBRATIO KABBALAE CHRISTIANAE*

Historically, in Christian Europe, the *Jew* has performed the function of *other*, serving as the negative example by which the majority could define itself. By the seventeenth century, however, what might have been a relatively clear binary opposition had become very complicated. Most obviously, during the Thirty Years' War, when the Protestants and Catholics cast each other in the role of antagonist, the *Jew* by default became the enemy of an enemy, on occasion making him the putative, if not actual ally of either or both, depending on the sectarian attitude and doctrine under consideration at a given time. As if that weren't confusing enough, as a result of the Spanish policy of forced conversions in the sixteenth century, there were what Richard H. Popkin has called "Christian Jews" and "Jewish Christians," people with divided loyalties who mined each other's doctrine to support what became a kind of amalgamation between the two. Finally, there were the adherents of what was called the *prisca theologia*, who believed that there had existed a pure form of Christianity, dating back to Moses, which was supposed to have been suppressed by the original Church, beginning in the third century with Constantine. These people believed that through Kabbalism, popularly defined as the mysticism of the Jews, they could gain access to this tradition which could then be used as the means not only of uniting Catholics and Protestants, but of bringing along the Jews, as well, into a universal faith. While to us, their efforts seem salutary, they proved threatening to church officials who ascribed the desire to study ancient Jewish texts to "judaizing." Defined as "follow[ing] or adopt[ing] Jewish customs, religious practices or beliefs; [and] behav[ing] in a manner considered typical or characteristic of Jews" (*Oxford English Dictionary*), "judaizing" was deemed by the Inquisition a punishable offense. Thus, Christians who wished to explore the origins of their own faith ran the risk of arrest and imprisonment. Under the circumstances, true believers had no option but to develop a

strategy by which they might camouflage their interest in what amounted to unapproved Christian history. One way, the one I wish to discuss today, was to turn the accusation of “judaizing” against itself. Specifically, by presenting the material in the guise of a text ostensibly designed to convert the Jews, these seekers intended neither to convert Jews to Christianity nor Christians to Judaism, but, what was considered worse by religious authorities, their activities threatened to undermine orthodox doctrine and subvert religious institutions.

The particular case I will be discussing today is the *Adumbratio kabbalae christianae*, in English the *Sketch of Christian Kabbalism*, appended to the second volume of the *Kabbala denudata*, in English the *Kabbalah Unveiled*, a two-volume compendium published in Sulzbach between 1677 and 1684. Although the *Adumbratio* was published anonymously, it was written by Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, the epitome of a free-thinking “Chrétien sans église,” Christian unaffiliated with any church. For those unfamiliar with van Helmont, I will first provide a brief biography, followed by an analysis of his version of Christianity, as influenced by Kabbalism.

One could say that it was almost inevitable that van Helmont – his dates are 1614 to 1698 – would become a Christian free-thinker. Born in Belgium, he was the son of Jean Baptiste van Helmont, a leading sixteenth-century Paracelsian whose interests extended beyond the conventional curriculum. Having been disappointed with his own university experience, Jean Baptiste home-schooled his son who, in addition to receiving a strong esoteric education, taught himself Latin and German by reading the New Testament in both languages. At his father’s death in 1644, Franciscus Mercurius, then thirty, began traveling throughout Europe, seeking the company of other enlightened thinkers, including followers of Jakob Böhme, Kabbalists, Collegiants and Quakers. In 1650, he was invited to Sulzbach by Duke Christian August to help resolve the conflict between Lutherans and Catholics in his territories. Although van Helmont pleased Emperor Leopold, who in 1658 awarded him a patent of nobility, his efforts threatened religious authorities, and in 1661, van Helmont was arrested by the Roman Inquisition on two charges: his supposed attempt to subvert the faith of Christian August; and “judaizing.” As Allison Coudert – the leading authority on van Helmont – points out:

The very things the Inquisitors most hated about van Helmont’s beliefs and behavior – his intellectual curiosity, especially when it came to religion, his tolerance, and his lack of class consciousness – were the most characteristic and memorable things about him. The Inquisitors view van Helmont’s tolerant outlook in the worst possible light, as a sign of his duplicity, amorality, and essential atheism. He is, in their opinion, a dangerous radical, whose ideas undermine the institutional authority and hierarchical relationships essential in any well-ordered society.¹

¹ Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, 47.

Among the preliminary charges, van Helmont was accused of asserting the existence of an innate gnostic faculty through which anyone could save himself. He also questioned the validity of Bible translations, insisting on the need to learn Hebrew if one wished to understand its true meaning. As Coudert notes, “the greatest threat arose from the liberal theology and ecumenism that characterized van Helmont’s thought.”² Among the formal charges that were finally lodged, the Inquisition accused van Helmont of denying the basic Catholic doctrines of Christ’s incarnation, passion and resurrection, and of interpreting them allegorically, rather than literally.³ Van Helmont was imprisoned for a year and a half before, finally, being acquitted of the charges and released in 1663.

Around the time of his release from prison, van Helmont met Christian Knorr von Rosenroth – his dates are 1636 to 1689. A scholar and statesman in his own right, von Rosenroth collaborated with van Helmont on three books: Octavius Pisani’s *The Italian Lycurgus*; Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*; and the book van Helmont had begun working on while in prison [in German *Kurtzer Entwurff des eigenlichen Naturalphabets des heiligen Sprache*], in English, *Short Sketch of the Truly Natural Alphabet of the Holy Hebrew Language*. During that period, van Helmont introduced von Rosenroth to another friend of his, Gottfried Leibniz. Several years later, in 1670, van Helmont went to England, where he served as physician to Lady Anne Conway. While there, he met leading intellectuals of the day, including Henry More, Robert Boyle, George Keith, Henry Oldenburg, then Secretary of the Royal Society, and notably, philosopher John Locke. After Anne Conway’s death in 1679, van Helmont returned to the Continent.

Eventually, van Helmont went to Sulzbach, where he worked on the *Kabbala denudata* with von Rosenroth. In 1688, they were joined by Leibniz, and the three became close friends and collaborators. Leibniz is believed to have ghost-written van Helmont’s last book [*Quaedam praemeditatae et consideratae cogitationes super quattuor capita libri primi Moisis*], first published in Amsterdam in 1697, and then translated into English in 1701, as *Premeditate and Considerate Thoughts, on the Early Chapters of the Book of Genesis*. Van Helmont died in 1698.

Early on, van Helmont developed a core set of six esoteric beliefs that remained constant throughout his life. First, he accepted a correspondent view of the cosmos, based on the assumption of an organic whole in which all of the parts mirror and correspond to each other. Second, he viewed nature as being alive, with no essential difference between matter and spirit. Third, he saw the universe as constantly changing, with everything ultimately being regenerated to return to its prelapsarian state. Fourth, he considered human beings, who were created in God’s image, as participating in cosmic restoration. Fifth,

² Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, 50.

³ Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, 52.

through gnosis, he thought humans could access different levels of reality, even divine knowledge. Finally, sixth, he advocated the *prisca theologia* as the means by which the ecumenical vision of universal harmony could be achieved.⁴

These beliefs were consolidated through the kabbalistic myth. While we do not have van Helmont's specific source for his knowledge of Kabbalism, his early wanderings did take him to Amsterdam, at that time the site of various unorthodox traditions. We know he traveled among various free thinkers who created a kind of brotherhood of letters that transcended sectarianism. Moreover, when he first moved to the court of Christian August, he invited many of these thinkers to join him, a point of contention among those who reported him to the inquisition. Later on, he had access to the numerous kabbalistic treatises that von Rosenroth collected and had translated for the *Kabbala denudata*. Regardless of his source, his belief in Kabbalism to justify his unorthodox version of Christianity remained strong throughout his life.

Of the various strands of Kabbalism available to him, van Helmont was most influenced by the myth of sixteenth-century Jewish mystic Isaac Luria – his dates are 1534 to 1572. In his response to the Iberian expulsion at the end of the fifteenth century, Luria took a positive view. Structuring his myth in terms of a cycle of exile and return, Luria focused on three phases of existence. The first, which he called “Contraction,” described creation not *ex nihilo*, but through emanation, in which the Godhead put forth a series of divine lights through which the idea of creation could be actualized. The first completed entity was *Adam Kadmon*, primordial man, identified as Christ by Christian Kabbalists. He is balanced out by the last completed entity, *Adam Rishon*, biblical Adam. At the time of creation, biblical Adam was said to have been of enormous stature, containing within him all souls.

In the second phase, called the “Breaking of the Vessels,” an error occurred, yielding a cosmic crisis. The vessels into which the lights were emanated shattered, and the lights were contaminated by the shards of dross. Cosmically, the lower planes were affected, and our world, which had been intended to be purely spiritual, became corporeal. On the microcosmic level, Adam was reduced in size, and most of the souls broke away from him, becoming contaminated as well. This crisis precedes Adam's disobedience in Genesis. According to the myth, had Adam resisted his temptation, then the cosmos would have immediately reverted to its intended state. However, because he did not, we all must experience the entire cycle.

The third phase, Restoration, describes the process by which the cosmos can be restored to its originally intended function. On the macrocosmic level, *Adam Kadmon* is to separate out the shards so that the lights can rise again. Microcosmically, man is to purify the soul by fulfilling his religious obligations. Because no soul can complete this requirement in a single lifetime, each

⁴ Summary from Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah*, 20.

must undergo a series of revolutions in which it is successively purified, until it can come to rest in the Upper Eden. When all of the shards are separated, and when all of the souls are purified, then the cosmos will revert to its originally intended condition. The significant point here is that man's contribution is essential for cosmic restoration; in other words, God needs man to help compensate for an error He Himself committed.

In its original form, the myth was inimical to the basic tenets of Christianity. First of all, it posits the existence of a divine spark, the gnostic faculty through which the individual himself can gain access to higher spiritual planes, without the need for any form of intercession. Also, the belief in the preexistence of souls within Adam undermines the concept of original sin. After all, how would a just God hold man accountable for an error committed before his creation? Moreover, if men themselves actively contribute to cosmic restoration, then what need is there of Grace? Finally, if ultimately, the cosmos will be restored, then there can be no eternal hell. Thus, the myth confronted van Helmont with a challenge to his own Christian beliefs. Though he considered himself a non-sectarian, still he did believe in the *prisca theologia*, that there was a true form of Christianity that existed before the consolidation of the organized church, and that the pure form could be used to unify Christians and Jews. Therefore, he had to reconcile two opposing theologies. To that end, he wrote the *Adumbratio kabbalae christianae*, a point-by-point demonstration of how the two could be made compatible with each other.

In his treatise, van Helmont remains fairly close to Luria's original, with one major exception: he explicitly carves out a place for the Christian saviour. In general, Christian Kabbalists had already associated the kabbalistic *Adam Kadmon*, primordial man, with their Saviour. In particular, they considered the coincidence that in his active manifestation, *Adam Kadmon* was called the *Son*, as further proof of the Christian interpretation of Kabbalism. Going even further, in his christianization of the myth, van Helmont created a specific function for Christ by expanding Luria's three-phase structure into four. The first two phases of both systems remain consistent, Luria's Contraction being re-presented as van Helmont's Primordial Institution, and the Breaking of the Vessels as the State of Destitution. The difference is that van Helmont divides Luria's Restoration into two parts. The first, which he calls the Modern Constitution, focuses on the activities of man in the corporeal cosmos, especially in terms of transmigration. As previously mentioned, kabbalists believe that each soul is to undergo a series of incarnations in which it successively fulfills its obligations until it is purified. At that point, it comes to rest in the Upper Eden while awaiting the other souls to complete their own process of purification. When all are finished, then, the final phase, Supreme Restitution, will be initiated. As van Helmont's innovation, the final phase is devoted to the Christian saviour, who will confront the most stubborn of the shards, in a manner consistent with the Christian apocalypse.

The treatise itself is presented in the form of a dialogue between a Christian Philosopher, the epitome of the open-minded intellectual, and a Kabbalist, whose own religious affiliation is pointedly omitted. In the text, the Kabbalist explains the Lurianic myth, and the Christian Philosopher demonstrates how each point can be supported by a reference to the New Testament. The Christian Philosopher uses a Syriac version of the Bible, presumably because as a dialect of Aramaic, Syriac is not only closer to the language of Jesus, but predates the consolidation of the organized church. Still, there is one fundamental inconsistency: regardless of language, the New Testament would be dispositive only to someone who already believed in the New Testament.

Compounding the inconsistency is the conversionist overlay of the text. In the introduction, the Kabbalist challenges the Christian Philosopher:

You know, friend, even though nothing is more important than our conversion, it will be impossible as long as we differ in our methods and terminology for explaining dogma. Knowing this, I will explain our philosophical dogma that, as you are aware, are fairly obscure, to see if we cannot find some method that will make it possible for us to understand your doctrine better, or else to familiarize you with our way of explaining mysteries.⁵

Accepting the challenge, the apparently orthodox Christian Philosopher then explains his goal:

... which is nothing other than to illustrate God's infinite goodness and favorable inclination towards humanity, to exalt as much as possible the life of that person we call the Messiah, and to promote the sincere imitation of the cult of the pure God, and finally, to inspire followers of this hypothesis, which constitutes the most sublime study and action.⁶

At the end of the text, the Christian Philosopher seems to be satisfied with his defense of Christianity. As he concludes:

"And now, the little that we have said here should be sufficient for you. Its brevity is the only thing that can be censured without difficulty, while everything can be accommodated with your beliefs: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, etc. etc. (Ephesians 1:17-20)". Amen.⁷

⁵ Helmton, *Sketch of Christian Kabbalism*, 31.

⁶ Helmton, *Sketch of Christian Kabbalism*, 31.

⁷ Helmton, *Sketch of Christian Kabbalism*, 161.

Like bookends, the first and last comments create a conversionist veneer for the *Adumbratio*, an attitude anticipated by the introductory epigraph:

I inquire, and never rest: nothing can limit the boundaries of my
speech:
I conjecture: I strive: I compile: I test: I question:
I capture the Jews: if you have a better path to lead in that direction,
I concede: In the search for salvation.⁸

Significantly, this will be the *only* explicit reference to the Jews until Chapter 7, where van Helmont includes Jewish scholarship, along with that of *all* other religions, to justify his belief in the preexistence of souls. Consequently, the epigraph and ambiguous first and last paragraphs seem deliberately to have been used to create the veneer of conversionism, a strategy designed to avoid the accusation of “judaizing.” Rather, van Helmont seems to have been more interested in converting Christians, not to Judaism, but to the *prisca theologia*. Thus, the fiction of Jewish conversion provided a convenient subterfuge for self-protection. Ultimately, as Jonathan I. Israel notes, “most non-Jews who preoccupied themselves with matters cabbalistic, including More and Knorr’s associate, the Flemish mystic Frans Mercurius van Helmont (1614–98), evinced no further interest in Judaism and principally saw cabbala as a mystical aid to the general reconciliation and reunification of Protestants, Catholics and Jews.”⁹ In other words, Jews as Jews were irrelevant to their enterprise.

Summary

While the use of the Jews as scapegoats is well documented, less noted is how they have provided a pretext for exploring and writing about heterodoxical ideas that otherwise might cause problems for the author. A case in point is the *Adumbratio kabbalae christianae*, by seventeenth-century esoteric thinker Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont. Although ostensibly designed to convert the Jews, a close examination reveals that the text was intended to inform like-minded Christians about an esoteric mode of thought that, at the time, was repudiated by Church authorities.

Keywords: Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, *Adumbratio kabbalae christianae*, Judaizing, Kabbalism, conversionism

⁸ Helmont, *Sketch of Christian Kabbalism*, 29.

⁹ Israel, *European Jewry*, 230.

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RÉKA ÚJLAKI-NAGY

JUDAIZING¹ AND IDENTITY IN THE EARLIEST TRANSYLVANIAN SABBATARIAN WRITINGS (1588?–1621)²

One cannot deny the challenges of discussing concepts like religious and national identity with reference to the early modern period, as these did not exist in the way the 21st century people tend to impose them on earlier periods, neither is it likely that such concepts were clearly delineated in the head of early modern writers. The outset of the conference, however, is the proposal: “Jews through Christian eyes.” Adapting such a title to Transylvanian Sabbatarianism naturally calls for the discussion of the problem of identity, and for asking the question which side did the Sabbatarianism occupy in this contrast between Christians and Jews, or more precisely, on which side did they place themselves?

As far as it is possible, I will try to examine the identity of Sabbatarianism not from an external viewpoint according to which they are sometimes Jews, sometimes Christians, at other times they are ‘colourful dogs,’ ‘bats’ (neither bird, nor mouse – neither Jew, nor Christian), depending on the different national and denominational biases at play in the respective cases. My purpose is not to put them into this or that group. My paper will focus on the key terms relating their identity appearing in their own texts, and I also hope to identify the roots of the identity problems of the Sabbatarianism and tell something about

¹ The most famous expert of the Transylvanian Sabbatarianism, Róbert Dán wrote a thorough comprehensive essay on the “career” of the term ‘judaizing,’ however, a more detailed discussion of the term with relevance to the Sabbatarianism is missing from this work. See Dán, *Judaizare’ – The Career of a Term*, 25–34.

² The present paper has a basically similar version written in Hungarian language, published in Keresztény Magvető, (2017) with the title: *Zsidózás és identitás a korai szombatos szövegekben...*

their own perception of Christianity and Jewishness in this very first period (from the beginnings until roughly 1621, before the literary contribution of the Transylvanian ex-chancellor Simon Péchi).

Signs of an Identity Crisis

16th–17th century Hungarian Protestants often voiced their concerns for their homeland and their nation, mostly in their Psalms and Jeremiads. One way to do this was to draw a parallel between the fate of the Jews and the Hungarians. Concern with the homeland and the nation significantly contributed to the shaping of an identity, it became an integral part of the writers' and singers' perception of themselves and their communities. The social and political events and the natural disasters began to make sense through the lens of the divine promises and punishments received by the elect nation.

However, this was completely different among 16th–17th century Sabbatar-ians. Although their songs are not translations but their own compositions, in which the history of the Jews, and the graces and curses they encountered play a considerable role, the parallel between Jews and Hungarians, but even the parallel between Jews and Sabbatarians is conspicuously missing. Neither is this the only absence: the songs are virtually devoid of references to either the homeland or to ethnicity (be it Hungarian, Szekler, or anything else). Beginning with the middle of the 19th century, with the first wave of research carried out in the field of Sabbatarianism, the problem of Sabbatarian religious and national identity also emerged. The first scholars already noted the absence of a concern for the motherland, and that there are no allusions to national sentiment. After a comparison of Sabbatarian songs and the liturgical heritage of other Hungarian Protestant churches, researchers regarded the difference concerning national attitude expressed in them as something unusual and striking. One out of the numerous examples where Sabbatarians face accusations in this regards:

We are searching in vain amidst the harmony of religious feelings for the sounds of the noble and great emotion... of the love of the motherland. The songwriters of other denominations, following the traditional approach, melted a strong patriotic feeling in their church lyric and connected religious and patriotic motifs with one another; but the Sabbatarian poet, as if refusing his social obligations, keeps silent about his nation and homeland. In other denominations, the degree of patriotism corresponds with the degree of their Protestantism... These people are, however, merely devout believers without the smallest connection to home, as if the very earth on which they live would not be their motherland.³

³ Nagy, *Szombatos codexek*, 29.

A number of researchers tried to find excuses for the Sabbatarians (for example, hinting at the fragmentary nature of the sources) until several new songbooks were discovered, and it became clear that the group of their didactic songs and their festivity songs can be regarded as almost complete. Among the excuses, one finds references to their millenarism, to the persecutions against them, or their Turkophil attitude – everyone according to his or her concept and above all, according to his or her biases – but in all cases, without completely satisfactory answers.⁴

Keywords of Identity in Early Sabbatarian Texts

The most important Sabbatarian texts concerning a community identity must have been the congregational songs. These texts did not simply give voice to the thoughts of a handful of songwriters, but during the frequent sessions of collective singing, the sung ideas were internalized, and provided a communal experience for the participants of the church service. Therefore, I think it is quite remarkable that the mention of the *Jews* is the most frequent in these songs, and particularly in those composed for feast days. Compared to other Hungarian Protestant songs, it is clear that Jews and Judaism as subjects are much more prevalent, and also that this subject fulfils a different role in Sabbatarian songs.

In Protestant, and above all, in Calvinist songs, the spiritual identification with the Jews is a result of the Biblical language and paraphrases. This is not the case among the Sabbatarians. Although the songs – similarly to the Protestant tradition – offer a great opportunity to confess the identification with the Jews, this opportunity is not utilized, or rather it is utilized differently than among other Protestant denominations. On several occasions, the songs contain a prayer to God asking him to admit them into the tribe of Israel, and to treat them exactly like he treats the Jews. However, this prayer is not sung on behalf of the Hungarian nation or of certain people from a clearly defined geographical area, but it is the wish only of the ‘little troop’ of Sabbatarians. By phrasing this wish, the songs at the same time make it clear that participation in the tribe of Israel is not a given, but something that you

⁴ The first scholar, József Lugossy, who discovered one of the oldest songbooks, explained the mentioned shortcoming with the eschatological anticipations of the Sabbatarians. According to him, the anticipation of the Messiah’s kingdom resulted in indifference towards their earthly motherland, focusing instead on an imaginary world. This focus was largely the result of their persecution and the pressure that society exerted on them, eventually suppressing the national sentiment in them. See Lugossy, „Egy szombatos énekes könyvről,” C–CXXXVIII. Other opinions on this subject: Kardos, „A XVI. század magyar lyrai költészete,” 196–197; Császár, „A protestáns kor költészete,” 2–20, 76–88, 142–152; Thúry, „Adalék a szombatosok történetéhez,” 60–61.

have to wish for, pray for, act for and wait for.⁵ These songs are not informed by an already existing parallel, similarity, and they do not compare the events from the relatively short history of the Sabbatarians and the history of the Jews, and – which is probably the most important – they do not think of the Jews as a rejected people, to be supplanted by a new elect nation.

In my opinion the frequency of the word “Jew” (Hungarian “zsidó”) in opposition to the mention of other nations, or even religions and denominations, is significant. For example, the word appears 161 times (on approximately 146 pages) in a modern edition⁶ which contains, with a few exceptions, the whole body of the currently extant early Sabbatarian prose literature. Besides this, phrases like “sacred nation,” “your Nation,” “sons of Israel,” or simply, Israel are also highly frequent. At the same time, none of the texts contain the word “székely/Szekler,” and in the few cases when “Hungarian” is mentioned, it is not relevant from our current perspective.⁷

According to the conviction transmitted by Sabbatarian texts, the Jewish nation is the only sacred nation. Other nations are “Pagans” who live among shameful conditions.⁸ Therefore, it seems likely that Sabbatarians had an uneasy attitude to their own nation, which they would have preferred to change. “Pagan” means a heritage from which you must purify and sanctify yourself, but in my opinion, they themselves were not convinced that such a complete break is possible.⁹ The fact that they regarded themselves as ‘spiritual Jews’ (this is not a frequent phrase, though), and the spiritual sons

⁵ For example see in *Szombatos énekek*, 61–62. Henceforth, RMKT V. Where I quote several verses, I provide the song’s number, too, while in the case of shorter quotations, I only provide the page numbers.

⁶ Újlaki-Nagy, ed., *Korai szombatos*.

⁷ See an example for a neutral mention of the Transylvanian Hungarian and Saxon nations, and the ‘Vlachs’ in the apology *Az Szentírás panaszolkodása*, edition: Máté, ed., *A Szentírás Apológiája*, 189–207, 201.

⁸ The condemning perception of Pagans is suggested by the following passage from the mentioned apology. The author is arguing for the authenticity of the Scriptures and its revelation among the Jews, and explains the absence of historical narratives akin to the Old Testament with the indifference of other nations, but also with the varying characteristics of the different nations: “Is it a wonder that the lion-natured Turk, the bear-statured Moscow, Tartar and other such wicked Pagans did not examine the heavenly histories [*res gestae*] and did not write histories [chronicles] about them? Because they could have done that only if they had been concerned about them. But the Ethiopians and the Persians were principal historians, as you are wise when you deny God. One hardly finds a nation except the Chaldeans more ready to preserve the holy histories from the creation on through *aetas* to *aetas*... Every nation transmitted the glory of his own nation in the histories and not that of the strangers.” *Az Szentírás panaszolkodása*, 203.

⁹ It is a maxim of earthly life that “in all times the seeds of the saint will be saint, but the seeds of the wicked will be wicked” RMKT V., 491.

of Abraham, also suggests that they felt a distance between themselves and ‘real’ Jews.¹⁰

Let me cite one example from a song written for their Day of Atonement, in which the desire to participate in the company of ‘saints’ is expressed. They pray to God in the following manner:

Extend your grace on the converting Pagan / Your grace is infinite, let us receive it ... Did the Pagan have to lose your favour / If they returned to you through your great grace? / Even if you did not make the covenant with them from love, / You promised them a share in the goods of your house. // Show, my Lord, thy goodness in these, / Whoever converts to you, do not look at their fathers / Do not look at the deformity of their nations in your greatness, / Because you are their creator, and they will become good if you drag them.¹¹

As a control material, I also examined the frequency of the words ‘keresztény’ (Hungarian for ‘Christian’) and the Latin ‘christianus.’ The results are once again undisputable. There are a combined total of 12 occurrences of the two terms, and this number covers not only the mentioned edition but the complete body of prose works. Out of these, there are two instances when the word ‘christianus’ is used, always with a positive connotation, and the songs also fea-

¹⁰ “We bless our Lord... / Who took spiritual Jews for Himself from among the Pagans... If we regard ourselves Abraham’s sons,/ Let us preserve the memory of the miracles made with his seeds” RMKT V, 141. “When the many promises, the Saint Lord to Israel/ delivers to the tribes of Jews,/ Let him see that we too abide his Law.” RMKT V, 153, see also p. 280. Jesus’ role in the call of Pagans to conversion is not entirely clear. Although belonging to the old law was open for everybody from the beginning, and this was often emphasised in Sabbatarian texts, yet they claim that „[Christ], in whom not only Jews, who learned from Moses, but believers from all the Pagans and nations became sons of Abraham, and they become their son now, too, and they became blessed, and they become blessed now, too...” The text refers to Gen 22:17 and Heb 2:16. See *Korai szombatos*, 151.

¹¹ RMKT V, song 68, verses 14–15, p. 160. Other examples: “We are praising You,/ For taking such Pagans to You,/ As though they were good,/ Showing thus your own goodness.// You admitted us into your Israel,/ Counted us among your saints,/ Admitted us from your own will.// Though in our Pagan nature/ We were far from sainthood,/ Born from sinful ancestors.// Yet with our lapses/ And our many shortages,/ ... / With ungraceful condition,// Please, dear God,/ Carry on teaching us in your grace, like You did before...” RMKT V, song 57, verses 26–29, pp. 134–135.

“holding these same days together with them...,” “...with whom we too... [should celebrate and give praise], that He gave his law to the Jewish believers, from them to us, poor people, too...” RMKT V, p. 151.

“So that we be together with the saints,/ and participate in bliss,/ we should keep God’s orders for this.” RMKT V, p. 120.

“That in your mercy, my Lord, you admitted us,/ Counted us among your saint people...” RMKT V, p. 112; see also pp. 109, 129.

ture positive uses of this adjective.¹² In all of these cases the respective passages deal with the following questions: who are really entitled to be described with this word, and what were the beliefs of those people in the Apostolic times who were described with this name. Though only in an explicit fashion, the author seems to suggest that while the name ‘Christian’ might be denied from them, true ‘christianus’ people still held the same beliefs about God and pursued the same faith as the Sabbatarians. Instead of refraining from the use of this term, the authors in fact demand it for themselves in these cases. However, the word ‘Christian,’ which occurs 10 times in the whole body of their prose works, receives a negative connotation in 6 cases,¹³ neutral in 3 cases and positive in one case only.¹⁴ In most cases, the word ‘Christian’ is used as a synonym of ‘Pagan,’ and the two phrases appear side by side together in the texts (‘kereszténység vagy pogánság’ – ‘Christianity or Pagandom’). Although both phrases appear with negative connotations, the word *pogány* (‘Pagan’) is not always used in a strongly negative, condemnatory tone. A good example of this is that in many cases they describe themselves with this word (in the footnotes, several examples are included), obviously not to boast, but rather to describe an inherent state which they would happily leave behind – if it were only possible.

Therefore, this question seems to be a bit ambivalent. In most cases, Sabbatarians talk about Christianity in a condemning tone, as a group foreign to them, to which they do not belong. But because of the few positive examples in which the author seems to regard themselves as the true Christians, one cannot talk about a complete turn from Christianity. It is probably fair to say that Sabbatarians turned away from the Christianity contemporaneous with them,

¹² “Thus you claim falsely about us that we profess that Christ spent his time in vain, and it is also false that we would deny the Christ, since we do not profess along with you that he is God. But from the beginnings, the true *christianus* was not the one who professed that Jesus is not God, but the one who, like us, professed that he is Christ, the Son of God, and the King of Jews.” *Korai szombatos*, 46.

“Understand reader, whom are truly called the disciples of Christ in this present time too, who profess the name *christianus*, whom respect his teachings, and try to live and act according to the teachings of the apostles as much as they can.” *Korai szombatos*, 175.

‘Old true Christians’ RMKT V., p. 204.

¹³ Examples: “Satan possesses and controls Christianity and Pagandom since then etc.” *Korai szombatos*, 74. “...if no sooner does Christianity believe that only God is the God of Jews, then it will learn it through his own vicissitudes, as it was prophesied by Isaiah,... when the fullness of the Pagans come, as it was told by Jesus, and apostle Paul, too, that is, when Pagans fulfill their measures, just like the Jews did... these are claimed about Pagans by God. Thus he talks about Pagans inclined to the happiness of his people, so that he saves his people... Do you, Christianity, see that God does not deliver Pagans to the land of Canaan then..., since it is already possessed by Pagans.” *Korai szombatos*, 92. In negative sense, see also pages 82, 91, 92, 134.

¹⁴ In neutral sense, see *Korai szombatos*, 80, 172. In the cases mentioned in the last two footnotes, it appears 4–5 times along with the word ‘Pagan.’ Another neutral example: *Az Szentírás panaszolkodása*, 196, and one positive: *Az Szentírás panaszolkodása*, 204.

but thought that true Christianity should be just the same as the true, fully enlightened Judaism.

Context of the Use of the Term ‘Jew’

According to Sabbatarian texts, the most regularly mentioned and debated error of the Jews is what these texts refer to as their ‘spiritual blindness.’¹⁵ This was one of the most widely voiced anti-Jewish accusation in the Christian world, whose solid foundation laid in the New Testament. Contrary to this, the Sabbatarian stance on this generally debated accusation is partly affirmative, partly defensive.¹⁶ This means that while Sabbatarian writers do acknowledge the blindness of the Jews, they also emphasise its ‘partial’ nature. They try to refine the question, clarifying in what sense are Jews blind, and what the things are that they see in a better way than everyone else.¹⁷ The texts do not simply mitigate their error, and stress its partial character, but often contrast it with the blindness of Christians, which is represented as something even more blatant and condemnable.¹⁸

¹⁵ Rom. ch. 11. is the referred biblical locus.

¹⁶ Opposed to the present, the blindness of the Jews was not remissible in the time of Jesus. The Jews rejecting the Messiah remained in darkness, because God saw their sinful motifs, their selfish mercenary nature, and did not let Jesus reveal himself the way they expected, that is, a king. See for example *Korai szombatos*, 52, 73–74.

¹⁷ “It is the case, that elsewhere apostle Paul says that the Jews are blind, but in the same place explains, in what lies their blindness, that is, it is a partial, and not a complete blindness, but similar to how Christ cries for them that they did not recognise the day of his visitation, and that they have a desire to see that day, but they will not be able to see it until they do not reach a state where they can joyfully tell if they see it: Blessed is he who came in the name of the Lord. This was brought on them by their blindness, because they did not believe Christ, because if they would have believed him, they could have lived the way Zacharia sing it, till the end of times. But since they missed this opportunity, now they are in exile according to the curse of Moses, and when the time of Pagans fulfills, as it is claimed by Paul, then whole Israel will be set free, because Moses’ veil will be removed from their heart... the blindness of Jews is not that they do not know God, neither that they do not explicate the Scriptures truthfully...” *Korai szombatos*, 33–34. See also RMKT V., song 80, pp. 43–46, 202.

¹⁸ “What’s your response to this? Those Jews are blinds! Hypocrite! Cast away the plank from your own eyes, because you are completely blind, you are without God, because you worship a human instead of God, you are without Christ, because you confess that Christ is God, you are without law, because after Martin Luther, you don’t say anything to God’s law, so that you could live with that. You are without covenant when you are without God, yet you still judge others.” *Korai szombatos*, 66.

Another example: “Apostle Paul claims that Jews suffered a partial blindness, because they did not recognise *Christ* [meaning the anointed Messiah] in Jesus, from which it is clear that if it was blindness in the Jews that they did not recognise Christ, it is a much greater blindness in the Christians that they brag with the name of Christ, although they do not know Jesus as the real Christ.” *Korai szombatos*, 134.

In their view, the Jews are blind only in that they fail to acknowledge the person of Jesus as the Messiah. The reason for this is comprehensible, though, and is a result of Christian idolatry, that is, the precept of the Trinity, and other human traditions. During the course of their history, Jews often suffered as a consequence of idolatry, and thus they cannot be blamed if they do not want to repeat the same mistakes again, and refuse to worship Jesus. It took centuries to build the strong ‘rails’ which defend their monotheism, and these rails guard them from accepting the Messiah. This blindness, which was called in Pauline terms the ‘veil of Moses,’ will disappear with the second coming of Jesus. On that day, the Jews will recognize their Messiah, and will cry aloud with the words of King David: “Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.”¹⁹ Since the faith in Jesus is not among the terms of the covenant made with God, it thus cannot serve as a reason to break up the covenant, and is thus not an essential requirement for salvation for them.²⁰ So nothing changes, the covenant made with the Jews is still valid, and just like before, people converting from Paganism are welcome to join it.²¹

As it was mentioned before, the Sabbatarian’s idea was that the Jews were only blind as to the person of the Messiah, while in other respects, their eyesight surpasses that of Christians. Only they possess the right knowledge of God,²² and they are blessed with exceptional light and wisdom regarding the

¹⁹ In connection with this, see the original textual context in the previous footnotes. In all cases, translations of the quoted biblical passages are from the New King James Version.

²⁰ “... and if any [of the converted Pagans] would deny Christ, he will be again without God, but the Jew, because he did not become the people of God through the belief in Christ, thus, his failure to believe in Christ did not mean a break with his God, only that bliss wandered away from them...” *Korai szombatos*, 34.

²¹ “Those laws from the commandments were equally given and written to the Pagans according to the saying: Jews and newcomers should face equal laws... in the Jewish language, newcomer often means converted, meaning, converted from Paganism... and it is clear from the prophet’s writing that this does not only cover the Jews who live among Pagans... If say a Pagan or someone from a foreign nation adopts my covenant, understands my law, sanctifies my feast, that man will be like the Jew... It is not here that this is true only of Pagans amongst you, but could relate to any place and any person.” The rest of the text lists further arguments and references to support the claim of the author. *Az zsidó hűtön valók közül kirekesztett ember ellen*, RMKT V, pp. 485, 498.

Other examples: “God favors the converted Pagan,/ Who takes up his covenant,/ And who respects his saint feast.” RMKT V, p. 111.

“Never did he do this to any nation,/ Neither did he lead anyone like this/ One elect nation... The company of the saint nation,/ Its everlasting bliss,/ He also promised this good to us,/ Together with other blessings,/ If we keep His tradition.” RMKT V, song 48, verses 4, 7, p. 116. See also RMKT V, song 80, verse 102, p. 153 and *Korai szombatos*, 63.

²² “From the beginning, Jews knew God the same way as they know Him now. What relates to God’s being, reality, and the true explanation of Jewish writing was with them from the beginning.” *Korai szombatos*, 62.

interpretation of the Scriptures. This wisdom cannot be despised or dismissed, since a correct interpretation of the Scriptures is impossible without it. In accordance with Paul, and with a reference to Jesus, the Sabbatarian texts claim that God entrusted the Jews with his Word, and only they have the key to its correct interpretation.²³ The law and the prophets were given to the Jews, but if we only adopt their translation without the Jewish wisdom, then we will not be able to get to the Scriptures' correct interpretation. The Jews are the 'leaders of the blind' in the exegesis and interpretation of the Bible. In this sense, 'salvation comes from the Jews.'²⁴ Another passage claims that "... the philosophers... look for wisdom until the end of their life, but they never find it, because they don't seek it where it is to be found, that is, God has only granted this wisdom to one nation out of all the nations under the Sun."²⁵ After this short overview, everyone should be able to guess which that one nation was.

An important element of Jewish wisdom is an expertise in the *Hebrew tongue*. This language is "the foremost language above the rest, or a fountain."²⁶ In Matthias Vehe-Glirius' view, who was an authority and a spiritual 'leader' for the Sabbatarians, a theologian without a knowledge of the Hebrew language cannot access the accurate true meaning of the biblical text. Interpretation by such a theologian is like a blind man's opinion about colours.²⁷ The biggest error of the Christians was the 'discovery' or rather 'invention' of the

"See in the same writing of that János Sommerus about justification, *quinti* books before, from which you will clearly learn that the blindness of the Jews was not that they did not know God, neither that they did not explicate the Word truly... but as King David says, 'In Judah is God known' [Psalm 76, 2], which referred to: it was always known by Jews like this, like now." *Korai szombatos*, 34; see also 91. The reference probably points to a tract in the volume *Tractatus aliquot* written by Johann Sommer, whose title was *De iustificatione hominis coram Deo* (25a–81a). This collection was published in 1583 in Cracow.

²³ "... they are trusted with the divine revelations." *Korai szombatos*, 33. Biblical locus is Rom 3, 1–2.

²⁴ "Lord Jesus looks at this, when he talks about salvation in the following manner: salvation comes from the Jews, which Jews are usually called the leaders of the blind as in Rom 2." *Korai szombatos*, 132; see also 33. See also RMKT V, 129.

²⁵ In more details: "Lactantius touches upon this when he writes the following: Rightly we call the wise people of the world philosophers, because they search for wisdom until the end of their life, but they never find it, because they don't seek it where it is to be found, that is, God has only granted this wisdom to one nation out of all the nations under the Sun." *Divinarum institutio libri VII*, 3, probably referring to the first chapter. Marginal note: "Psal. 113, *hebraeis data est sapientia et ab illis nos habemus.*" *Korai szombatos*, 33. An excerpt summarising Glirius' commentary to the Prolegomena of John's Gospel transmits the precept originating from the Jewish *agada* according to which the wise Jews were with God before the creation, together with the Messiah, the law, the manna and God's royal throne. See *Korai szombatos*, 48–49.

²⁶ *Korai szombatos*, 37.

²⁷ See Vehe-Glirius, *Declamatiuncula contra*, 240.

Trinity, which is based on mistranslations of the Scriptural text, resulting from the lack of expertise in the unique Hebrew language and thought.²⁸

If my interpretation is correct, then another constituent of Jewish wisdom for the Sabbatarians is the rabbinic literature. Sabbatarian writings explicitly claim that everything that is related to the Jewish interpretation of the Bible is correct, except for the assessment of Jesus' person. Let me quote one example for this relationship, which argues for the continuity of the Pharisaic interpretative tradition (in their use and interpretation, Pharisaic means – and this is not groundless – the rabbinic literature. The speaker is the personified Scripture):

... as my *textus* was preserved by one nation fully, so was my sense, too. What does the man know from his own thinking, like Luther, Calvinus, the Popes and the others? They thought and explained my sense from their brains. Inspired by God, Moses explained me for forty years, and several prophets followed this lead, this was the *Pharisaica secta*. The exegesis of Christ and the apostles relied on this. This was preserved in memory, transmitted from son to son, kin to kin, and through the prophets to the people in each *aetas* ... my people was not lost...²⁹

Jewish wisdom is a necessary and inescapable tool not only for the interpretation of the Old Testament, but also for the texts of the New Testament. In the footsteps of their spiritual leader, Glorius, Sabbatarians stress the Jewish character present in the New Testament, they try to identify and explain unique Jewish terms and perspectives even behind the Greek phrases³⁰ and

²⁸ “But those professing the Trinity, and those professing one God but still worshipping Christ, are lost in error because of an untruthful interpretation of the true current of the Word. Sometimes because of being unfamiliar with the Jewish phrase, which differs from all other languages. One reason is the false translation of Jewish laws into the Latin tongue, because the Pagan philosophers did almost the same as when a truly shining, pure piece of gold is given to the treacherous goldsmith, but the treacherous craftsman takes away from the pure gold, and replaces it with ore... and as it was translated falsely, it was also explained falsely, and this was handed down from the idoltrous fathers to their ancestors.” *Korai szombatos*, 35–36.

²⁹ *Az Szentírás panaszolkodása*, 202. Although the life of the Pharisees was wicked, their teachings are still right, since Christ instructed his disciples to avoid following their acts and example, but to adhere to everything that they say. Another example: “...but those for whom especially and specifically God had me written and explained, those people equally and truthfully understand me, to wit, the Jews, in everything, except for that one point that they deny the Christness of Jesus, the reason for which is the audacity whose *poena* they too have to bear with.” *Az Szentírás panaszolkodása*, 201, see also 204.

³⁰ A few examples where the Sabbatarians try to call attention to what is written above: “Blind world, hear this, and keep it in your mind,/ What enormous error is this in you,// That you so much hate the name of the Jew,/ And that you scold the Jewish faith so much,// Remember saint Jesus Christ,/ Who was Jewish by both his birth, and his religion,// And preached the Jewish law,/ Moses and the other prophets he let us hear... The

to emphasise that the writers themselves were Jews.³¹ Sabbatarian polemical literature warns the readers about this also as a means of defending the Jews and Judaism.

Quotation: “Jewish writing can be best explicated with the help of a Jewish method, because the apostles themselves were Jewish. Thus we cannot think that the river is richer than the spring, that is, we cannot put Pagan ignorance above Jewish wisdom etc.”³²

The wisdom given to Jews is not only profitable in the spiritual domain, but in the physical, *material domain*, too, it can be utilized in everyday life as well. In Sabbatarian terms, the reward for keeping the law is the ‘reward of two lives,’ referring to rewards in the afterlife and in the earthly life, in which others can also participate similarly to the Jews.³³ A Sabbatarian writer

apostles were all Jews,/ Preached the Jewish faith, professed that faith themselves,/ Jews who at that time believed in Christ,/ They kept that very same law then// Afterwards like before, too// Yet followed that more completely and more saintly// Then also the Pagans who converted,/ were purified from Paganism, and converted to Judaism// They both believed and acted-/ And in all means and way of salvation//Both Jews and Pagans agreed,/ They did not differ from each other in their Jewish faith.” The quotation comes from didactic song no 71, which is the paraphrase of another song, see RMKT V, verses 3–12, pp. 174 and 156. See also p. 230.

Another example: “...many people are in the darkness and in error, so much so that they don’t even know that the saint fathers, saint prophets, and the saint kings, and the saint apostles were all Jews, and the Lord Jesus Christ was also of Jewish origins, it is proved by the Scripture that he was from the seed of Abraham and the kin of King David.” *Korai szombatos*, 130.

³¹ This idea comes directly from Matthias Vehe-Glirius, who published his observations and critique concerning the Apostolic writings in his book *Mattanjab*. See for examples the pages 392–393 in Dán, ed., *Matthias Vehe-Glirius*.

³² *Korai szombatos*, 59.

³³ Quotation from one of their songs, written for the Sabbath: “In his sacred book of Laws, God often wishes and commands/ That his people should keep the law as a monument of His great deeds,/ And invites Jews and Pagans with the same love to keep that law,/ The rewards in both lives he promises from his law to both Jews and Pagans// Those rewards are such that people cannot receive them from their own power,/ Like the grease of the Earth, richness of grass, corn,/ Abundance of oil and wine, beautiful plenty of all fruits,/ Good rain and dear dew for the growth of these,/ Seeds and their growth like stars in the sky,/ Dear peace, health, great plenty, possessing all goods,/ Fear and terror from the heart banished, fortitude against everything,/ No harm by enemies, or the wronging of enemies if they come// Possessing riches of earth, growing the country to distant borders,/ Defended by borders of the seas, would collect tax from others,/ Would be feared by islands, Would receive presents from all corners of the world,/ Nice fat sheep, different beasts that could not be counted// The pleasures of the body are these and more, with which God visits the faithful,/ According to his promise, blesses the Pagan with his goods just like the Jews,/ For the keeping of the sacred law, says this to both these people, besides these,/ Would give them a life which no human mind can think of.” This is followed by the list of the rewards of the second life, that is the life after resurrection. RMKT V, song 2, verses 1–5, p. 20; see also p. 41.

talks about this in a tone of approval nearing admiration, building on the stereotype of the rich Jew:

You claim that the Jews are mad. Cheat him, if he is mad. If he is mad, why do you borrow money from him? Why does he have more money than other nations, when it has no heritage at all? For he does not want to press clay for noble people, that is why he does not ask for his inheritance. In his madness, he does not even want to resurrect, seeing that not one, not two nations, but probably all the nations under the Sun hate him for his *Religio*, and he does not want your lies turned into truth, because then they would go mad. They see how mad Pagans waste each other because of the huge confusion. And from experience, they have learned the profit of peaceful sufferance...³⁴

However, we must refrain from attributing too much importance to the promise of material promises. In my opinion, the reason for the conversion to Sabbatarianism was not the outlawed Szekler's hope for material riches. Although the promise of blessings frequently appears in their texts, the realities of earthly life, the hardships, contempt and mockery they have to face is more prominent, and they stress that they follow their faith despite all the hardships. The principal reward for their faith is, besides the blessings of earthly life, the approaching realm of the Messiah.³⁵

³⁴ *Az Szentírás panaszkodása*, 205–206.

³⁵ According to a song written for Sabbath: "I don't know why lazy Pagans wonder about the corruption of the lost Jews,/ Whom, taking into account the great covenant of holy fathers,/ He [God] keeps in such a state that not one of them spies on others' doors." RMKT V., 57. Contrary to this, Pagans are engaged in debates and struggles with each other, and unlike the Jews, after a "terrible corruption" they are not able to get back to their feet. This quotation was the primary ground for Róbert Dán's presumption that the outlawed Szeklers were attracted by the company of Jews whom – in the absence of physical contact – they imagined as people living in plenty. According to his theory, they could only encounter wealthy and influential Jews in the Turkish Porte, and this produced a naive image about the conditions of Jews. Cf. Dán, *Az erdélyi szombatosok és Péchi Simon*, 34–35, 89, 110–112. I agree with the renowned researcher of Sabbatarianism to the extent that because of the lack of direct contact with the Jews, Szeklers indeed maintained a distorted view on the conditions and the rituals of them. In my view, however, it is not probable that Szeklers would have been unfamiliar with all the contempt and hardships Jews had to face. Although the text mentioned here, for example, paints a rather positive portrait about them, in other places, they discuss the Mosaic curses which they had to endure, and the contempt with which the world regarded them. Thus, in my opinion, it is highly questionable that without true religious conviction, driven solely by mercenary considerations, a contemporary Szekler Sabbatarian writer would have wished the condition of the Jews for himself. Dán tries to resolve the contradictions between texts, and the discrepancy between the idealised image about the Jews and the troublesome reality by locating the belief in the "rewards of two lives" in the early period of Sabbatarianism, which was later replaced by an emphasis on afterlife rewards. Since the dating of Sab-

Sabbatarian texts do not always talk about the situation of the Jews in a positive light. They are aware of their unpopularity in Europe, and clearly think that their problems are a result of the numerous repeated breaches of the law.³⁶ Their condition precisely reflects the curses promised in the book of Moses, which described the consequences of breaking the covenant. Rejecting and murdering Jesus was the final step in this process, a result of their previous obstinacy, which were carried on from generation to generation. The present Jews are suffering for the evil accumulated during the centuries, as God is a vengeful God who punishes the fathers' sin in their sons.³⁷ In such a context, Jews were clearly discussed with a voice of condemnation in the Sabbatarian texts, which called them evil in several cases.³⁸

Notwithstanding the depth of their sins and the extent of the punishment, these had no bearings on the covenant with God, or on the promises made to them. At the arrival of the Messiah, God will forgive them, collect them from the four corners of the world, and lead them back to Canaan.³⁹ This is warranted mainly not by the Jews but by God, because in Him there is no change.⁴⁰

batarian songs is even today characterised by questionable results, I do not think that this presumption of Dán can be supplied with satisfactory arguments.

³⁶ *Korai szombatos*, 57, 196.

³⁷ "Furthermore, this God entered into the covenant with His people in such a way that His help will be constantly present if they keep his commandments, ... but if they do not observe them, then the dreadful curse of God will be on them, as it is written in Levit 28, Deut 28. Foreseeing that they will break His covenant, God made this testimony to be written against them, for the reason that when the curse will come over them, this testimony would answer to them, and make them understand why they were banished by God. And about such words like: it is hard for them, for the Jews, that they killed Christ, yet they did not kill him unexpectedly, but they have previously detached themselves from God repeatedly... The murder of Christ was not the only reason for their captivity, but also their idolatry from the beginning on, and the shedding of the blood of the prophets, too. Besides those, they also committed this [the killing of Christ] afterwards. Christ speaks about this too, saying: fill up the measure of your fathers [Mat 23:32], from which it is clear that it was the forefathers in former times who started the countless sins, and how the sons did fill the measure up. But God is a strong revengful God who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the grandchildren. This is happening to the Jews now." *Korai szombatos*, 90.

³⁸ For example "But the Jewry got fat in good luck kicked to the backside,/ Even though it had a share in every earthly goods,/ from where God threw him out/ for the transgression of His law, turning all His blessings to curses over them." RMKT V, 21. See also *Korai szombatos*, 43, 155.

³⁹ *Korai szombatos*, 92. *Az Szentírás panaszolkodása*, 201, 205.

⁴⁰ "Apostle Paul also comments on this, when he says: In what are the Jews better than the Pagans? In a lot of things, for sure. First, that they were entrusted with the divine revelations. Even if some of them, say, were faithless among them, would their faithlessness undo the covenant of God? Not at all! You should understand what kind of covenant Paul is talking about here, about which God says the following with the prophets: My covenant with my people ends when the Sun and the Moon expire." *Korai szombatos*, 33.

Sabbatarian's Self-perception

Contrary to the blindness of Jews and Christians, the only group walking in the light, on the one true path is the 'little troop' of Sabbatarians – as they were called in the songs.⁴¹ This declaration, however, was less confident than one would assume.⁴²

Quote: "... our faith is more intact and purer in this: that in what the Jews are blind, we are all the more sightful. But we should only brag with this if we also own those other goods that the Jews possess, because without them, this one will also be fruitless."⁴³

Besides familiarity with rabbinic literature, which is only indirectly accessible for them, the other means to reach the state of full light – or to even surpass the Jews – was the appropriate handling of the apostles' writings, in which the 'true leaders' were of immense guidance. For these writings are a means to understand the mission of Jesus, but they also give us a hand in interpreting the books of the Old Testament – in fact, they serve as a Pagan Talmud.⁴⁴

A didactic song attributed to András Eóssi places the Sabbatarians and their knowledge in relation to Jewish wisdom.⁴⁵ The author describes them-

⁴¹ See for example RMKT V., 83, 107, 'your little troop, small flock' 155, 'little troop,' 'small troop,' 'handful of people' 279.

⁴² When András Eóssi writes that "we find true religion in hiding" (RMKT V., 40.) in my interpretation he does not refer to Sabbatarian faith, but to the appropriately "complimented" Jewish faith. The reason for this is that the Jews are part of the divine covenant, and even despite their partial blindness, possess deeper knowledge of God than the otherwise immaculate Sabbatarians who are on the right path. Although Sabbatarians head in the right direction, they still need the "company" of the Jews, and they need to share in their wisdom, because they own the true faith, although a small side of it has remained in the dark for the Jews.

Further examples: "Whoever wants to find salvation and live,/ Has to keep to the Jewish faith, and not else.// We have to differ from present-day Jews/ In the article that we recognise Jesus as Christ./ But in the way of salvation,/ Apart from this one article, I say, you need concord.// Just like the Jews the good Pagan/ must believe, live, and understand salvation." RMKT V., song 71, verses 18–21, p. 175. *Az Szentírás panaszkodása*, 201.

⁴³ *Korai szombatos*, 173–174.

⁴⁴ "... because we possess the whole core of the Law, and its explanation in the apostles instead of the Talmud, which if you follow, you will become the son of God and a saint. Those who truly understand the writings of the apostles with all their limits, as I said, can become better and wiser through them than without them, as they can completely discover order and truth regarding religion, life and morality in them, which not only make them devout, but as I said, they turn them into saints, so that they might surpass many Jews now, like it was in the apostles' times." *Korai szombatos*, 173.

⁴⁵ Let me quote a longer passage from one of their didactic songs, which sheds light on the main features of the Sabbatarians' attitude to the Jews:

"You hid it [true wisdom] from the wise men of this world,/ But revealed it to the smallest,/ To the humblest people of this world,/ To us, the poor, despicable vermins.// They wonder about it, they don't understand/ Where we could have understood and

selves as “little”, with a diminutive, and he also claims that they are “the humblest people of the world,” and “poor, despicable vermins.” These depreciative adjectives obviously follow a biblical example,⁴⁶ but at the same time also signal the distance dividing the knowledge esteemed by the world and the true divine knowledge, which becomes manifest among the low-ranking, untrained social group, the little troop of the Sabbatarians.

In extant Sabbatarian writings, there are two references where the term “Sabbatarian” is used, and both mentions appear in an apologetical context. One of these passages is a defense against the accusation that Sabbatarians do not accept the generally held beliefs about the Apostolic writings and decrees, and claim the one and only right interpretation for themselves.⁴⁷ The second example comes from a song written for the Sabbath. Probably this song is the most revealing as to how the Sabbatarians perceived themselves, and how they positioned themselves in the surrounding world:

Let me quote from this text:

Do not let your youthful plant be plucked,/ Whom you started to grow amidst
the Pagans,/ Get it to his feet,/ To tie him to yourself with your everlasting
covenant.

Your so nicely commenced little heritage/ Do not allow the collapse of this edi-
fice,/ Your work so beautiful,/ From wild trees to suffocate your heritage.// We
have never seen truth but in the Jew,/ Never known salvation but through your
law,/ The truth of which,/ The everlasting reward of which is only found in
them.// Thus we chose your law to obey,/ Israel’s tribe to favour and to approve
[jovaltuk],/ Ourselves to them joined,/ Notwithstanding their distressed fate.//
In this freedom you let us remain,/ Anyone voluntarily adopting thy covenant,/
Thy truest bond,/ With the Jew might share in everlasting life.// Although
Christianity holds high his own feathers, persecutes us and the Jews etc.

This is followed in the text by the mentioned reflection over the name Sab-
batarian [‘szombatos’], in the form of a response to external mockery and the
pejorative use of the term by others. The songwriter does not offer a rebuttal

acquired/ The true path to salvation,/ If we haven’t lived in Padua, nor in Paris.// As if
salvation would consist/ In knowing a lot of Pagan writings,/ In explaining a lot of Pagan
languages,/ Rhetoric, and strumming music.// We learned it where you placed it,/ Injected
it into the sons of Jerusalem,/ Left your revelations to them,/ Dedicated your covenant
to them.// From the teachings of your holy son/ We learned it and memorised it,/ As He says
that salvation is from the Jews,/ and they are the leaders of the blind.// As for the partial
blindness/ Regarding knowledge of your holy son,/ In that we won’t follow them till the
grave,/ But everything else we learn from them.// If in one peasant language we might
know/ The meaning and true use of the sacred language,/ The true path to our salvation/
Through a true leader and expositor... Though they know all the false wisdoms,/ For us
your wisdom is just enough...” RMKT V, song 80, verses 73–80, p. 205.

⁴⁶ See for example Job 25:6; Ps. 22:6; Esa 41:14.

⁴⁷ See *Az zsidó hiütön való k közül kirekesztett ember ellen*, RMKT V, 485.

of this accusation, but accepts the name, and in contrary to the negative connotation joined to it, interprets it in a positive way, and praises it as something honourable that others associate him and his fellows with the ‘sign’ of God’s people, the Sabbath. Quote⁴⁸:

Although they do not know, we are happy about the fact that they scold us by the name of thy law that you gave as a sign to your sons and servants. We do not shake the name of thy holy Sabbath off from ourselves; we will be Sabbatarians [‘szombatosok’], because we resist Satan’s power, we resist his great poison, we overcome his cruelty with bearing. It makes us glad that we can wear the seal of thy holy law and thy mighty word, the Sabbath feast, so that we are people of thy noble majesty.⁴⁹

The end of the song contains a few words about their desires and their present state, namely that they hoped to become a complete part of Israel’s tribe with the coming of the Kingdom of the Messiah.⁵⁰ If the use of the term “judaizare” is justified in their case, then, in my opinion, this desire to belong to the people of Israel is one of the main reasons.⁵¹

Further Perspectives

Later Sabbatarian literature is characterized by an ever-growing advancement towards the Jews – both in their religious and their national identity. As a consequence of Simon Péchi’s role as an organizer and translator, the Sabbatarian’s rituals became more and more similar to those of Jews. Their own songs and prayers were gradually replaced by pieces translated from Hebrew, sung on

⁴⁸ According to Jürgen Kaiser: “Das Halten des Sabbats schmiedet eine abgesonderte Gemeinschaft zusammen indem es ihr kontinuierliche rituelle Strukturen verleiht. Je ungewöhnlicher sich diese Riten ausnehmen, desto stärker ist das Erwählungsbewußtsein der Gemeinschaft. Der Sabbatismus ist also auch die Vergewisserung einer besonderen Erwählung.” Kaiser, *Ruhe der Seele*, 253–254.

⁴⁹ In the song’s translation the original verses are turned into prose. RMKT V, song 19, verses 11–13, pp. 61–62.

⁵⁰ “You bless us together with the hosts of Jacob./ Let us share in the lot of Israel./ Admit us into the Kingdom of the holy Messiah ...”, RMKT V, 62.

⁵¹ Surviving Sabbatarian texts shed no light on the term “judaizer.” Probably they did not see as much offense in it as in the adjective “heretic,” to which they responded on several occasions. Maybe they even accepted the “judaizer” label. In the course of the huge Sabbatarian court case of 1638, Simon Péchi expressed his objection in a letter to the Prince, writing that “whereas we were not judaizing” („holott mi nem judaizáltunk”). Keresztény Magvető, 1880, no 6, p. 390. However, the background for this statement might have been a lot of different things besides the direct danger of death, but I cannot go into details here.

behalf of Israel. But neither in that age, nor in later ages could the bond with the Hungarian nation completely disappear.

The Sabbatarian identity problem is an intriguing process which culminated in the second half of the 19th century with the conversion of Sabbatarians to Judaism. By then, at least according to people writing about the subject, many of them claimed an obviously unfounded Jewish ancestry. With the conversion to Judaism, this confusion did not dissolve, though. Even after this, in fact, up to the end of their history, they were mocked by both Hungarians and Jews, and their affiliation was constantly challenged, meaning that a shame felt because of their unstable identity was an integral part of their daily life. The extent, or so to say, the percentage of their Jewishness (as it was qualified during the Second World War), had been a matter of debate throughout their history. However, for them this was not merely a theological debate, but often a question of life and death.⁵²

Conclusion

No matter how hard we try to refrain from using concepts like religious and national identity in connection with the early modern period, the ever recurring question concerning Sabbatarians has not changed: where did they belong, were they Christians or Jews? The situation was exacerbated in the 19th century with the recognition of the alleged unpatriotism of Sabbatarian songs, since compared to contemporary Protestant poetry the absence of a patriotic voice was striking. This absence gave further impetus to questions regarding identity. However, not only the critical literature on Sabbatarianism, but the Sabbatarian texts themselves beg for an inquiry into the subject of identity.

At the same time, reading about the essence and affiliations of Sabbatarianism, one cannot escape the impression that opinions are almost always biased and mythicising, while even critical literature tends to stick to an external point of view. Driven by the desire to alleviate this situation, the current paper set out to explore the communal identity of the Sabbatarians based on an internal investigation focusing on the group's self-concept. The results will hopefully dissolve some of the general fallacies regarding Sabbatarians and their judaizing, and contribute to a more balanced view of them. In order to achieve this, I studied the relevant keywords of surviving early Sabbatarian texts. I observed the frequency and the context of words like "Jewish," "Christian," "Pagan," and "Sabbatarian." The proportion of these words, as well as the positive and negative connotations clearly tell us a lot about the affiliation of Sabbatarians, and the problems with and changes in their communal identity.

⁵² About the accusations emerging during World War II, and the apology of Sabbatarians, see Kovács, *Útfélen fejfa*, 70–72; Kovács, "Akik egy székely falut elraboltak," *Székely Nép* 62 (1944); Pál, *A magyar jövő vallása* 1.

The extant texts do not reveal an effort by Sabbatarians to define themselves as a separate denomination. Although they accepted the derogatory ‘Sabbatarian’ (and perhaps ‘Judaizer’) name coming from the outside, they preferred to call themselves the ‘little troop’ in their songs, which referred more to the numbers than to a unique theology or separation. Based on the examination of the keywords, they saw themselves as true Christians originating in Pagandom, who would like to belong to the covenant between God and the Jews. They did not overemphasize their Christianity at all. The reason for this was their generally negative view of the condition of contemporaneous Christianity, which they held too closely intertwined with Pagandom. Although true Christianity in their view was devoid of any Pagan additions, but in itself, without Jewish wisdom it was deficient, and represented no stakes in terms of salvation. Therefore they tried to assimilate with the Jews in every theological and ritual point except for one (until even that final theoretical point, accepting Jesus, did not fade away slowly). They followed this path, while probably even they held the actual assimilation with the Jews improbable. We might see this in the constant, inflated apologies for their Pagan origins in the Sabbatarian songs, and the even more frequent articulations of the desire to belong to the Jews.

Summary

The denominational and national identity of Transylvanian Sabbatarians (‘Judaizers’) has been constantly debated since the mid-19th century discovery of Sabbatarian literature. The question has always been haunted by mythologizing tendencies. The absence of something that was a given in the case of other denominations – that is, reflection on their native land and their nationality – was explained in terms of denominationally and nationally biased standpoints. Although most scholars had their own opinion about this question, no one has tried to perform a detailed inquiry into the problem, based on the texts themselves, and within a context of the Sabbatarians’ attitude to Jews. The present essay tries to address this problem. Utilizing a relevant set of keywords, I try to identify the signs of identity-creation in the earliest extant texts, and I also try to explore the Sabbatarian perception of Jews. My investigation reinforces the hypothesis that the absence of a patriotic voice is rooted in the theological advance towards Jews. Although the perception of the Jews is not entirely positive in Sabbatarian texts, their role is unique, making them essential for salvation. This indicates the later direction of the formation of Sabbatarian national and denominational identity, which is a gradual movement towards Jewishness, leading to ‘assimilation’ later.

Keywords: Judaizing, Communal Identity, Religious Identity, Sabbatarian, Pagan

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DANIEL J. LASKER

JEWISH ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICAL TREATISES IN EARLY MODERN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: WHERE ARE THEY?

The simple answer to the question posed in the title is that there are almost no Jewish anti-Christian polemics in early modern Central and Eastern Europe. This is true for those areas which are considered part of the Ashkenazic Jewish realm, including Germanic lands, Bohemia, Poland-Lithuania, Ukraine and the like. Since that is the case, other questions follow: Why should one expect such treatises? Why do they not exist? Is the early modern period different from the medieval one? Are there such treatises outside areas of Ashkenazic cultural domination? Answering these questions will help us understand better the history of the Jewish critique of Christianity in the medieval and early modern periods.

The first question to be answered is why we should expect to find Jewish anti-Christian treatises in early modern Central and Eastern Europe. Polemical literature was a common literary feature produced by medieval Jews, who produced a significant amount of literature devoted to the refutation of Christianity, in addition to embedding anti-Christian materials in works of other genres. If we accept the common wisdom, what I call the traditional narrative of the Jewish-Christian debate, Jews attacked Christianity in the context of Christian pressure, especially conversionary pressure; when Christians left Jews alone, Jews ignored Christianity and certainly did not attack it. Thus, Jewish composition of anti-Christian treatises in Christendom from the twelfth century on is a reaction to a Christian missionary campaign. At those times and places where anti-Jewish pressure was particularly acute in the Middle Ages, such as in Franco-Germany, Provence and Spain from the thirteenth century on, we find such treatises in abundance. This genre includes free-standing polemical

works, such as the twelfth-century Jacob ben Reuben's *Wars of the Lord* or the anonymous thirteenth-century *Nizzahon Yashan*, as well as accounts of public disputations, such as those of Paris, 1240, written by Joseph ben Nathan Official, and Barcelona, 1263, written by the chief Jewish representative, Nahmanides. The treatises produced are important parts of the Jewish literary heritage and reflect Jewish attitudes towards Christianity and refutations of its major doctrines.¹

In the early modern period, the dynamics between Jews and Christians changed, and the power of the Catholic Church, and the mendicant orders which were at the forefront of conversionary campaigns, diminished in light of the Reformation and the rise of the nation-state. Nevertheless, Christians were still attacking Jews and Judaism, especially with help from Christian Hebraists and former Jews who had converted to Christianity; Jewish literature and practices were common targets.² Jews suffered legal disabilities and the censorship of their books, and leading Christian scholars, such as Johann Christoph Wagenseil and Theodor Hackspan, published Jewish anti-Christian polemics in order to refute their arguments. There were attacks on the Talmud such as those of Johann Pfefferkorn and Johann Andreas Eisenmenger. In light of ongoing Christian attempts to delegitimize Judaism and convert its adherents, one would expect to find anti-Christian treatises from this period, yet, as noted, they are almost non-existent in Ashkenazi areas.

We do find many polemical works in other parts of Europe at this time. Thus, if we look at early modern Amsterdam, we see that indeed there is abundant Jewish polemical material, especially in the seventeenth century. This literary production, produced mainly by Jews of Sephardic background, seems to have been stimulated mostly by the struggles of the returning Iberian Conversos who were caught betwixt and between the Inquisitorial forces in their native country and their desire to return to their ancestral religion. Having been cut off from Rabbinic Judaism for over 100 years, many of these New Christians were unaware of contemporary Jewish practice, and they often approached Rabbinic Jewish beliefs and practices with the prejudices instilled in them by the Church. In this environment, we find a healthy production of polemical works, many based on medieval Jewish anti-Christian treatises. The medieval compositions were used as a partial basis for composing original polemical books, many of which were written in the vernacular, such as the *Marrakesh Dialogues*,³ or the works of Orobio de Castro⁴ and of Saul Morteira.⁵

¹ On the Jewish critique of Christianity, see, e.g., Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*; Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*; and Krauss – Horbury, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy*. An overview of the literature on both sides of the debate is provided by Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*.

² See, e.g., Deutsch, *Judaism*.

³ Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*.

⁴ Kaplan, *From Christianity*.

⁵ Saperstein, *Exile*; Kaplan, *Arguments Against the Christian*.

We also have a polemical exchange, in Hebrew, between a Jew of Amsterdam and the Christian Hebraist Johann Stefan Rittangel, who was in that city to publish his edition of *Sefer Yezirah*.⁶ Even Benedict Spinoza, certainly no friend of traditional Judaism, made use of the Jewish anti-Christian tradition in his critique of Christianity.⁷

Another area of intense Jewish polemical literary output was Italy. Recent research by Karoly Daniel Doboš has turned up at least 56 Hebrew anti-Christian treatises from Italy, in addition to those which were written in the vernacular.⁸ Post-medieval Italy, the home of the first official ghetto in 1516, was not a Garden of Eden for Jews, and Jews were forced to hear Christian missionizing sermons in Rome from the late sixteenth until the eighteenth century. There were also some Italian Jewish converts, but there was no constant anti-Jewish missionary campaign in all areas of what is now Italy. It is hard to conceive that Christian pressure was sufficient to cause the writing of 56 Hebrew responses, even if we take into account the presence of former Conversos in Italy.⁹ Whatever the case, it is still significant that in Italy, Jews wrote so many polemical treatises, whereas in Central and Eastern Europe, we find almost no such literature.

Since there were Jews who responded to the challenges of Christianity in early modern Western and Southern Europe by writing polemics, we might expect to find a comparable Jewish reaction to parallel Christian challenges in Central and Eastern Europe during the same period. Yet, as mentioned, we do not see analogous polemical treatises to the east of Amsterdam and north of Italy. I would explain this lack by noting that the traditional narrative that Jewish anti-Christian literature was written in response to a Christian threat on Judaism is not the only narrative that explains this literature. In fact, I have devoted a number of years of my academic career to an attempt to undermine the traditional narrative.¹⁰ First of all, I have discussed at length the Jewish critique of Christianity in Muslim countries where there was no Christian mission to the Jews.¹¹ My work included co-editing the earliest extant Jewish anti-Christian work, the ninth-century *Account of the Disputation of the Priest*, written in Judaeo-Arabic, which eventually became the Hebrew *Book of Nestor*

⁶ Wagenseil, *Tela Ignea Satanae*, Vol. 1, 327–373 (with Latin translation). An English translation is available in Rankin, *Jewish Religious Polemic*, 89–154.

⁷ Lasker, “Reflections of the Medieval”; Popkin (ed.), “Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments”; Carlebach, “Amsterdam and the reversion.”

⁸ I thank Dr. Doboš for that information; see also Lasker, “Anti-Christian Polemics.” And see <http://www.jcrpolemicsinitaly.at/> (accessed September 30, 2018).

⁹ On Jewish conversions in Italy, see, e.g., Mazur, *Conversion to Catholicism*. The question remains as to whether there is a correlation between specific areas of anti-Jewish missionary activity in Italy and the Jewish polemical output. I thank Emily Michelson for discussing this issue with me. On the place of Conversos in Italian Jewish polemical literature, see Doboš, “The Impact of the Conversos.”

¹⁰ Lasker, “Narrative.”

¹¹ Lasker, “The Jewish Critique.”

the Priest.¹² In addition, I have also explored eighteenth-century Italian Jewish polemics and edited one of them.¹³ The examples of the Jewish critique of Christianity in the medieval Islamicate and in early modern Italy should suffice to demonstrate that in contrast to the traditional narrative that Jews attacked Christianity only when they, themselves, were attacked, Jewish polemical treatises were not necessarily responses to a direct Christian threat to Judaism. In addition, there is evidence that even in medieval Christian Europe the Jewish critique of Christianity was not always motivated by a perceived need to refute Christianity.¹⁴

Why then did Jews engage in anti-Christian polemics when there was no Christian missionary threat or other such pressure? I think the answer is that refutations of Christianity are part of Jewish self-reflections on theology. Those Jewish thinkers who engaged in rational speculation, namely Jews from Islamic lands, and Sephardic and Italian Jews, also engaged in inter-religious polemic. Thus from the dawn of Jewish anti-Christian polemics in the ninth century, with the first medieval Jewish philosopher Dawud al-Muqammaṣ; through Saadia Gaon in the tenth century; Nahmanides in the thirteenth; Hasdai Crescas in the fourteenth; and Joseph Albo and Isaac Abravanel in the fifteenth; anti-Christian polemics was an integral feature of Jewish theology. Occasionally there was a confluence of factors that led to Jewish anti-Christian literary activity, such as occurred in the century between the anti-Jewish riots and the expulsion of Jews from Spain (1391–1492). It was during this period that the Jewish philosophical critique of Christianity was particularly well developed in a significant body of literature.¹⁵

In contrast, what emerges from a study of Franco-German Jewry is the dearth of specific treatises devoted to attacks on Christianity. In fact, if we look at the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, there are basically two periods of polemical activity: the second half of the thirteenth century, in the wake of the Disputation of Paris, 1240, and the attacks on the Talmud; and in Prague in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The Prague polemicists were not typical Ashkenazi intellectuals, since they were quite aware of Sephardic modes of theology and polemics. In addition, the anti-Christian authors in Prague were leading luminaries, led by Yom Tov Lipmann Muhlhausen.¹⁶ In contrast, the polemicists in High Medieval France-Germany were relatively minor figures, even anonymous, such as the author of *Nizzahon Yashan*. Rabbi Yehiel of Paris, the main Jewish participant in Paris, and one of the Tosafists, did not write the account of the disputation; this was left to Joseph ben Nathan Official who apparently was what I call a professional polemicist who also

¹² Lasker – Stroumsa, *The Polemic of Nestor*.

¹³ Lasker, “Herev Pifiyyot.”

¹⁴ Berger, “Mission to the Jew.”

¹⁵ See Lasker, “Jewish Anti-Christian Polemics.”

¹⁶ See Lasker, “Jewish Philosophical Polemics.”

wrote *Sefer Yosef ha-Meqanne*. This can be contrasted to the case of Nahmanides, the leading Iberian luminary of his generation, who did write an account of his participation in the Disputation of Barcelona. In sum, leading Ashkenazic Jewish intellectuals did not author anti-Christian treatises; at most, they engaged in invective against Christians in their religious poetry, or included anti-Christian comments in their other writings, such as commentaries, and even here, I believe the claims of anti-Christian motives in Ashkenazic exegetical works are exaggerated.¹⁷

If Christian pressure leads to a Jewish response, we would expect Ashkenazi Jewry to respond by writing specifically anti-Christian treatises, which they did but only during a window of approximately fifty years in the second half of the thirteenth century. But otherwise they were silent, because, as noted, anti-Christian polemics is a sub-category of Jewish theology or philosophy. To the extent that Jews did not engage in systematic reflection on their beliefs, namely the situation in Ashkenaz, they did not write anti-Christian polemics; in contrast, Jewish theologians, in other parts of the world, who did engage in such speculation, also attacked Christianity, even in the absence of a so-called Christian threat and even if they did not devote specific treatises to the subject.¹⁸ If one were an Ashkenazi Jew, one just did not partake in the same activity.

A corollary to this observation about Ashkenazic polemics is the difference in literary genres between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jewry. Among Sephardic Jews, an important genre is the dialogue, as can be seen in two major Jewish philosophical works, Solomon ibn Gabirol's *Fountain of Life*, and Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*. There is a dialogical nature to most polemical works, such as Jacob ben Reuben's *Wars of the Lord*, Nahmanides' account of the Disputation of Barcelona, or Shem Tov ibn Shaprut's *Touchstone*.¹⁹ In contrast, Ashkenazic Jews did not write dialogues. Moses Mendelssohn wrote the dialogue *Phaedo* in 1767, a take-off on the Platonic dialogue, but this exception proves the rule. Mendelssohn initiated a newfound interest in philosophy among the German branch of Ashkenazi Jewry. Thus, he engaged in reflections upon Jewish theology; he used the dialogical genre; and he also published refutations of Christianity, such as his response to Lavater and his letter to Karl-Wilhelm, the hereditary prince of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel.²⁰ My generalization remains valid: a Jewish community which does not reflect on theology and does not

¹⁷ See, e.g., Lasker, "Joseph ben Nathan"; and the further references provided there. I use the term "professional polemicist" to denote someone who devoted his major intellectual energies to studying Christianity, e.g., mastering Latin and reading Christian sources for the purposes of polemicizing and not as an incidental part of his intellectual profile.

¹⁸ Saadia Gaon, for example, included anti-Christian arguments in both his theological and exegetical works; see Lasker, "Saadia."

¹⁹ See Hughes, *The Art of Dialogue*.

²⁰ Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, 113–127. Ram Ben-Shalom informs me of a text he discovered in which a Polish Jew, Elazar Shalom, wrote a polemical dialogue against Christianity but only after moving west and being influenced by Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment.

use the dialogue as a genre is not very likely to produce literary works of inter-religious polemics.

The Ashkenazic situation did not change much in the early modern period. Central and Eastern European Jews generally continued not to be interested in theology, not to write dialogues, and not to write anti-Christian polemics. There are no major anti-Christian polemics produced by Ashkenazic Jewry in the early modern period; no *Nizzahon Yashan*²¹ and no *Nizzahon*.²² This is despite the growing pressure on Jews, especially in the works of Christian Hebraists, some of whom used their erudition to attack Jewish beliefs and practices. In contrast, in the same period, Amsterdam Jewry was mainly Sephardic and it simply continued the Sephardic tradition of anti-Christian polemics. And, as mentioned, Jewish anti-Christian treatises were flourishing in Italy, another area where Jews engaged in theological self-reflection.

Despite what was written until now, we can find a few exceptions to the generalization that Central and Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews eschewed the writing of anti-Christian treatises. For instance, we could look at the lost work of Jacob of Belzyce, known to us from the refutation of it by the Socinian Martin Czechowic published in 1581. From Czechowic's account of Jacob's arguments, it would seem that we have here an example of a Polish-Jewish treatise devoted specifically to anti-Christian polemic. We have almost no information about Jacob the author, and whether he was an actual historical figure, but Judah Rosenthal, who brought Jacob's lost work to scholarly attention, speculates that he may have been "one of the physicians of Spanish origin living in Lublin". According to Czechowic, Jacob cited the story of the conversion of the King of the Khazars as proof of the truth of Judaism. That story is, of course, the basis of Judah Halevi's *Book of Kuzari*. Thus, even if Jacob of Belzyce was a Polish anti-Christian polemicist, he was not a typical Ashkenazic Jew and seems to have had Sephardic connections.²³

Or consider Zalman Zvi of Aufhausen's *Yudisher Theriak* (Jewish Theriac) written in Yiddish in 1615, in order to refute accusations against Jews of the apostate Samuel Friedrich Brenz in his *Juedischer abgestreiffter Schlangenbalg* (*Jewish Stripped-off Snakeskin*), from 1614. Brenz's accusations were more social than theological, namely Jews hate Christians, blaspheme Jesus, and the like. Zalman's response was a refutation of those accusations, not a discussion of Christian doctrines or even biblical exegesis. It is mostly a work of apologetics with no refutation of Christian doctrines.²⁴

²¹ This major work was edited by Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*.

²² Muhlhausen, *Sefer Nizzahon*.

²³ Rosenthal, "Marcin Czechowic"; Rosenthal, "Jacob of Belzyce." Familiarity with the *Kuzari* was apparently not widespread in early modern Eastern Europe; see Shear, *The Kuzari*, 180–193. Jacob could have known of the story of a king and the three religions from *Nizzahon Yashan*; see Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, 216–218.

²⁴ Faierstein, *Yudisher Theriak*.

In 1704 in Hanover there was a public disputation between an unnamed Jewish convert to Christianity and Rabbi Joseph Stadthagen. Polemical interchanges between Jews and Christians were not necessarily rare in early modern Central and Eastern Europe, since they were mentioned by such Jewish luminaries as Judah Loew of Prague, Hayyim Yair Bachrach of Koblenz, Worms and Mainz; and Jonathan Eybeschuetz of Prague and Altona-Hamburg.²⁵ What makes Stadthagen different is his short Hebrew-Yiddish account of this public disputation, called *Minḥat Zikkaron* (“The Offering of Memory”). While other Jewish-Christian encounters were mentioned by the Jewish protagonists, they generally did not make a written record of them. Stadthagen’s thirty-page booklet was published from manuscript over 200 years after the event and obviously did not have much contemporary resonance or serve as an example to other authors.²⁶

A later Eastern European treatise which includes an anti-Christian polemical section is Dov Ber of Bolechów’s *Divrei Binah* (“Words of Wisdom”), written in 1800, most of which has remained unpublished. Along with criticizing Christians for abolishing observance of the commandments, Dov Ber refutes blood libel and host desecration accusations. In this work as well, we see Sephardic influence as the author records his investigation of Christian writings as having been stimulated by the admonition of a number of writers, including Judah ben Samuel Lerma, Isaac Arama, Maimonides and Isaac Abravanel, that one should learn how to answer an adversary. All these authors are Sephardim.²⁷

A writer cited by Dov Ber as a source for the refutation of Christianity is Tobias Cohen, author of the important medical treatise *Ma’aseh Tuvyah*. Cohen was born in Metz in 1652 to a father who came from Poland and he, himself, returned to Poland to study in Cracow. Yet Cohen was not a typical Eastern European Ashkenazi Jew either. His grandfather was originally from the Land of Israel. After beginning his medical studies in Frankfurt, he transferred to Padua in Italy and spent most of his career in the Ottoman Empire until his death in 1729. His book begins with a theological introduction which reads like a typical medieval rationalist work, and he writes that his defense of the immutability of Judaism builds upon the works of such authors as Saadia Gaon, Judah Halevi, David Kimhi, Isaac Abravanel, and some of the Jewish anti-Christian polemicists. Thus, any anti-Christian polemics in *Ma’aseh Tuvyah* is probably a function of its author’s exposure to rationalism and science, not of his family origins in Poland.²⁸

²⁵ Katz, *Exclusiveness*.

²⁶ Berliner – Hirsch, *Religionsgespräch*; a summary of this disputation is provided by Krauss – Horbury, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy*, 180–183.

²⁷ Hundert, “*Divre Binah*.”

²⁸ *Ma’aseh Tuvyah* has had multiple editions since it was first published in Venice, 1707–1708; see also Ruderman, “Medicine.”

So, where is there a significant early modern Jewish anti-Christian polemic written by an author with deep roots in early modern Eastern Europe which can compete with the medieval literature in providing a wide-ranging defense of Jewish beliefs and exegesis along with major criticism of the New Testament? In fact, such a work does exist and it is one of the most important Jewish anti-Christian polemics ever written, one which influenced some of the authors I have just mentioned. This book was translated into different languages (Dutch, German, Ladino, Latin, and English) and was the occasion of a number of Christian refutations, including by such luminaries as the aforementioned Wagenseil and A. Lukyn Williams. I am referring to *Hizzuq Emunah* (“Faith Strengthened”), of Isaac ben Abraham of Troki, completed by his student, Joseph ben Mordecai Malinowski, soon after Isaac’s death in 1594.²⁹ *Hizzuq Emunah*’s popularity was a function of its comprehensiveness, providing an exegetical roadmap to refuting Christian interpretations of the Hebrew Bible and providing criticism of the New Testament. Its language is clear and easy to understand.

Isaac was an Eastern European Jew, but, he was not, however, an Ashkenazi Jew; he was a Karaite who lived in the major Lithuanian city of Troki, or Trakai. Eastern European Karaites lived among Ashkenazim but they were certainly not Ashkenazic Jews. They spoke the Turkic Karaim language and not Yiddish, did not engage in the study of Talmud, and they maintained their own separate existence, a separation which eventually led to Karaite denial of any Jewish identity.³⁰ Most importantly for my purposes, Karaites had a long tradition of interest in theology and in anti-Christian polemic.³¹ Isaac of Troki was well conversant with Jewish philosophical theology as can be seen from the list of authors he cites, such as Maimonides, Judah Halevi, Joseph Albo, and Isaac Abravanel. He was also acquainted with internal Christian disagreements which were prevalent in Poland-Lithuania in the wake of the Reformation. We have one other Eastern European Karaite anti-Christian polemic as well, Solomon ben Aharon of Troki’s *Migdal ’oz* (“Tower of Strength”), written approximately 100 years after Isaac produced *Hizzuq Emunah*.³² Thus, even if Rabbanite Jews in Central and Eastern Europe did not generally produce anti-Christian works, their Karaite brethren certainly did.

My review of the dearth of Central and Eastern European Jewish polemical literature in the early modern period should not be interpreted as saying that Jews did not respond to Christianity in those areas at this period. There are many Jewish references to Christianity and Christian accusations, and the

²⁹ See Isaac of Troki, *Hizzuk Emunah*. For the multiple editions, translations, and Christian refutations, see Walfish – Kizilov, *Bibliographia*, 560–565. On the author, see Akhiezer, “The Karaite Author.”

³⁰ For a general background on Karaism throughout history, see Polliack, *Karaite Judaism*. For studies concerning specifically Eastern European Karaism, see Shapira – Lasker, *Eastern European Karaites*.

³¹ See Lasker, *Judah Hadassi*; Lasker, “Karaism and Christianity.”

³² See Akhiezer – Lasker, “Solomon ben Aaron.”

unique challenges of the period found expression in works composed by Ashkenazi Jews.³³ Central and Eastern European Jews were certainly aware of the challenges presented to them by Christianity and were not indifferent to them. Yet, other than *Hizzuq Emunah*, we find no major anti-Christian polemical works in Central and Eastern Europe in this period. This fact reinforces my assertion, in contrast to the accepted wisdom, that there is no necessary relationship between a Christian threat and a Jewish response in form of polemical, anti-Christian treatises. The composition of Jewish refutations of Christianity is a result of many factors, mostly having to do with Jewish rational self-reflection, an enterprise which was missing in Central and Eastern Europe.³⁴

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Summary

Jewish anti-Christian polemical treatises comprise a well-known genre in medieval Jewish literature. It is generally thought that these books were written in response to Christian missionary pressure. Yet, when considering Central and Eastern Europe in the early modern period, one sees that this genre is almost non-existent, despite continuing Christian attempts at converting Jews. An analysis of medieval Jewish anti-Christian writings shows that rather than being necessarily a response to Christian missionary pressure, many of them are part of the larger Jewish theological enterprise. Hence, such works are prevalent in areas where Jews engaged in theology – the Islamic world, Iberia, Provence, and Italy – and almost non-existent in northern Europe (Ashkenaz), where there was little interest in theology.

³³ See, e.g., Ben-Sasson, “Jewish-Christian Disputation.” See also Carlebach, “Jewish Responses.”

³⁴ My friend and colleague Ted Fram reminds me that in the second half of the sixteenth century there was a slight efflorescence of Polish Jewish rationalism, reflected, for instance, in *Torat ha-’olah* by Moses Isserles (Rema 1520–1572) and in interest in Joseph Albo’s *Book of Principles*. This rationalism was soon replaced in the seventeenth century when Kabbalah went “mainstream” in the Polish Jewish communities. At the same time, Catholics turned more of their attention to Protestants and basically left Jews alone for over a century, perhaps another reason for a lack of Jewish polemical activity specifically in Poland. Rosenthal, “Martin Czechowic,” 94, is of the opinion that “the debates of Jacob of Belzyce and Isaac of Troki reflect the age of religious tolerance in Poland in the second half of the sixteenth century.” Yet, interreligious polemic is not necessarily a product of religious tolerance.

One might also mention the public Jewish-Christian disputation in Lviv/Lviv, 1759, which was instigated by the anti-rabbinic Frankist movement, and, thus, was not typical of Jewish-Christian relations in general.

This pattern continued into the early modern period, at which time Ashkenazic Jews still produced almost no anti-Christian polemical works. The most important early modern, Central and Eastern European anti-Christian book, the very popular *Faith Strengthened*, was written by a Lithuanian Karaite Isaac of Troki (died 1594), reinforcing our knowledge that Central and Eastern European Karaite Jews did not share the Ashkenazi intellectual ethos of their Rabbanite neighbors.

Keywords: Polemics, Jewish-Christian; Relations, Jewish-Christian; Early Modern, Central and Eastern Europe; Interreligious Polemics; Karaism

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VASSILI SCHEDRIN

THE RUSSIAN JEWISH QUESTION,
ASKED AND ANSWERED.
VIRTUAL POLEMICS BETWEEN MOISEI BERLIN
AND YAKOV BRAFMAN IN THE 1860s

“Brafman. From my grandfather’s stories I expected to meet someone with the profile of a vulture, with fleshy lips, the lower lip heavily protruding like a Negro’s, deep-set watery eyes, eyelids less open than those of other races, wavy or curly hair, ears sticking out ... Instead, the man I met had a monkish appearance, a fine gray beard and thick bushy eyebrows with those Mephistophelean tufts at each corner that I had seen among Russians and Poles. Religious conversion evidently transforms not just the soul but also facial appearances.”¹ Thus, in his novel “The Prague Cemetery,” a fictional story of the emergence of “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” the most influential antisemitic text of the twentieth century, Umberto Eco describes Yakov Brafman, the “grandfather” of “The Protocols.”²

Yakov Brafman (1824–1879) – a Russian Jew from Minsk province, who at the age of 30 converted to Protestant Christianity and – a few years later – to Russian Orthodox Christianity, started his career as a pioneering photographer in Minsk. Later, he entered the government service, starting as a Biblical Hebrew instructor at the Minsk Orthodox Ecclesiastical Academy and eventually reaching the position of censor of Polish and Jewish literature in St. Petersburg. Both his followers and opponents doubted Brafman’s traditional Jewish learning, while his obvious lack of general education was not even a question. Moreover, as a recent study shows, Brafman himself

¹ Eco, *The Prague Cemetery*, 196.

² Expression of John Klier. See Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish question*, 263.

authored merely one third of his infamous “Book of Kahal” (1869) and “Jewish Brotherhoods, Local and Universal” (1868).³ Notwithstanding his mediocre intellectual ability and bad repute, Brafman’s ideas revolutionized modern antisemitic thought. According to John Klier, the title of the “Russian Johannes Pfefferkorn” given to Brafman by one of his contemporary Jewish opponents, is “simultaneously apt and misleading” because it fails to recognize Brafman’s conceptual innovation, that is, his idea about covert international Jewish government and its anti-human political conspiracy, the core axiom of today’s antisemitic ideologies and politics.⁴ In addition, Brafman’s texts became a frame of reference for contemporary and later Jewish authors, ranging from journalists to serious academic experts in Jewish studies, who conceived their work as a response to Brafman’s denunciations and alleged forgery. Many pioneering Russian Jewish scholars, such as Il’ia Orshanskii and Daniel Chwolson, devoted much of their attention to Brafman, seeking to repudiate his dilettante approach and neutralize his harmful attitude.⁵ “The Book of Kahal” was not conceived in a vacuum, nor was emerging Russian nationalism and judeophobia its only context. Long before Brafman, Jewish life in Russia has been studied and very different conclusions made. This study also continued after Brafman, unaffected by the controversy he caused, tackling the same material and coming to new, impactful conclusions. This wider context of Brafman and “The Book of Kahal” is the focus of my article.

What Came before Brafman?

The studies of *uchenyi evrei* (“expert Jew,” a Russian government expert on Jewish matters) Moisei Berlin, including his official memoranda such as “The History of Hasidism” (1854),⁶ and the pamphlet “Essay on the ethnography of the Jewish population in Russia” (St. Petersburg, 1861), exemplify the embryonic stage of Jewish studies in the Russian language.⁷ Berlin’s works built upon the research and methodology of German *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and anticipated the research interests, concepts, and approaches

³ Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish question*, 266–267.

⁴ Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish question*, 263.

⁵ See Orshanskii, *Ocherki ekonomicheskogo i obshchestvennogo*, 346–367 and the second edition of Chwolson, *O nekotorykh srednevekovykh obvineniakh protiv evreev. Istoricheskoe issledovanie po istochnikam* (St. Petersburg, 1880).

⁶ Russian State Historical Archives in St. Petersburg (RGIA), f. 821, op. 8, d. 331, ll. 20–64.

⁷ Berlin’s life and work are discussed in detail in Schedrin, *Jewish Souls, Bureaucratic Minds* and Schedrin, “Neizvestnaia istoriia khasidizma,” 169–192.

shared by Russian Jewish scholars of the succeeding generations.⁸ Moisei Berlin (1821–1888) was born in Shklov, Mogilev province. Having received a traditional Jewish education along with the basics of a secular education, including several European languages, Berlin went on to complete his studies at the universities of Königsberg and Bonn, where he earned a doctorate with a dissertation on logic. From 1853–1866, Berlin held several appointments as an expert Jew under the governors of various Russian provinces and under the director of the Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Faiths at the central offices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in St. Petersburg. Berlin combined his service with active literary and research work. In 1859, he published his Russian translation of a Jewish historical chronicle describing the mass execution of Jews during the Cossack uprising in Ukraine in the 1640s.⁹ Berlin's studies and publications brought him prestigious membership in the Society for Russian History and Antiquities and in the Imperial Russian Geographic Society. In 1859, Berlin seized the opportunity to continue this work in a more scholarly fashion. The ethnographic division of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society commissioned the expert Jew to prepare an ethnographic survey of the Jewish population in Russia for the Society's larger survey of ethnic and religious groups residing in the empire. The resulting study – “Essay on the ethnography of the Jewish population in Russia”¹⁰ – written by Berlin and published by the Society, described the historical background and current status of two million Russian Jews for the educated Russian readership. The structure of the “Essay” made it a practical and accessible reference work designed for the general reader.

Thus, ten years before Brafman, Russian officialdom and the general Russian public had already discovered the Jews. In order to distinguish Brafman's later contribution from this discovery, Berlin's “Essay” must be compared with Brafman's “Book of Kahal.” Such a comparison is complicated by the differences in the authors' backgrounds reflected in both the structure and substance of their works. The scholarly, erudite, and highly systematic Berlin is obviously incongruous with the dilettante, biased, and chaotic Brafman, as demonstrated by the contents of the “Essay” and the “Book” compared side by side.

⁸ This development is analyzed in Schedrin, “Wissenschaft des Judentums,” to be published by De Gruyter, Berlin in 2019.

⁹ “Bedstiviia vremen. V pamiat' bedstvii, postigshikh evreev v 1648 i 1649 godakh v Ukraine, Podolii, Litve i Belorussii ot soedinennykh buntovshchikov pod nachal'stvom Bogdana Khmel'nitskogo. Sostavleno Egoshieiu, synom L'vovskogo ravvina, pravednika Davida iz Zamost'ia. Pechatano v Venetsii v 1656 godu. Perevedeno M. Berlinym,” in *Chteniia Obshchestva istorii*, Vol. 1.

¹⁰ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*.

Brafman's "Book of Kahal"	Berlin's "Essay on the ethnography of the Jewish population in Russia"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Factors, principal agents of <i>kahal</i>. - Slaughterhouses, kosher, and treif. - Jewish brotherhoods. - Ritual of aliyah (call to reading Torah in synagogue). - Local powers of <i>kahal</i>. - Holiday of Rosh ha-Shana. - Synagogue compound. - Beit Din (Talmudic court). - Kabbalat-kinion, a ritual of purchase and sale agreement. - Jewish wedding. - Ritual of circumcision. - Title and official power of moreinu. - Melamdim and Jewish education. - Holiday of Yom Kippur. - Ritual of kapporot. - Mikvah (ritual of purification). - Rituals of kiddush and havdalah. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General appearance of the Jews. - Language. - Everyday life (clothing, food, occupations, customs, and rituals). - Social life (social categories and classes, communal administration, professional and charitable associations). - Intellectual and moral skills, education (religious life, traditional education). - Folklore (popular beliefs, songs, and legends).

Because of this evident structural incongruity, I will focus on the main aspects of Jewish life discussed by both authors, namely – power, society, institutes, ritual, status and the role of the Jews in contemporary Russia. We shall start with an examination of Berlin's and Brafman's method, source material, and their approach to Russia's Jewish question.

At the outset, Berlin emphasized political import of his discovery of the Russian Jews for both the Russian government and society. Only complete and accurate information about Jewish life would help to shape adequate policy toward the Jews and to implement it in the most efficient way. However, according to Berlin, before the publication of his "Essay," the "life of two million Russian subjects [i.e. Russian Jews] had been largely unknown not only to the general educated public, but also to the officials entrusted with the care of the wellbeing of this nation." Berlin pointed out that before his publication, in their deliberations on the Jewish question, Russian bureaucracy and public opinion were misguided and misinformed by information derived not from "transparent, publicly accessible" sources, but from "secret, shaky data based on denunciations." It's not surprising then, that the "results of policies based on such information had little relevance to actual circumstances."¹¹ Brafman echoed Berlin, claiming that the main goal of his pioneering publication was

¹¹ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 47.

to replace common perceptions about “theoretical” Jews with knowledge of actual Jews based on the hard empirical data that he had discovered. This data “reveals actual Jewish praxis that, at present, does not conform, in most part, to its source – Talmudic theory.” Thus, Brafman argued, his material provided a much better “exposition of the insular world of Jewish communal life than all scholarship to date.”¹²

Berlin acknowledged that because his “Essay” was the first systematic study on Russian Jews, it was hindered by an obvious lack of “previous studies and published sources,” so, he was compelled “to create a coherent and systematic work out of chaos” often tapping his own memory and experience for data.¹³ In particular, Berlin regretted that “no one yet took care of publishing” pinkasim – Jewish communal and organizational chronicles and minute books – “including the interesting historical records ... dating back as far as two centuries or more.”¹⁴ Thus, in fact, Brafman merely fulfilled Berlin’s desideratum by publishing the pinkas of the Minsk *kahal* including “more than 1,000 decrees, acts, and bylaws,” which, in Brafman’s expression, “exposed the hidden internal driving forces of Jewish society” not found even in the Talmud.¹⁵

What Kind of a New Window on Jewish Life did Brafman Open Compared to Berlin?

According to Berlin, the ultimate authority in the Jewish community lay in what he called “legal decrees,” but more adequately described as local communal custom or “*minhag*.” Its authority was derived neither from the Written Law of Torah, nor from the Oral Law of the Talmud, but from its status as ancient tradition to be strictly implemented without questioning its origins. The authority of *minhag* rested on its observance by many generations and was confirmed by the Talmudic dictum “*minhag mevatel halacha*” – custom supersedes religious law.¹⁶ Like Berlin, Brafman was also interested in a practical rather than theological explanation of the Jews, but in striking contrast to the nuanced explanation of Berlin and his balanced attention to multiple aspects of Jewish life, Brafman was bent on unearthing the one secret source of power and authority within the Jewish community, the singular driving force of Jewish life. “Upon comparative analysis of Talmudic law and *kahal* decrees,” Brafman found that the authority of the *kahal*, the Jewish communal administrative organ, which is “much more important to

¹² Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 1.

¹³ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, viii.

¹⁴ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 57.

¹⁵ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 1–2.

¹⁶ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 21.

any Jew than the Talmud,” reigned supreme in Jewish public and private affairs and beyond.¹⁷

Describing the structure and institutions of the traditional Jewish community, Berlin noted the observation, made by “German writers of the past century,” that Jews in medieval Europe constituted a “status in statu” (state within a state, one of the medieval corporate estates), which engendered debates and the eventual institution of a policy of Jewish emancipation. This observation prompted European governments “to take a closer look at the social organization of the Jews and to reshape it in accordance with the civil organization and social norms of a given country.” In Berlin’s words, the Russian government had adopted and was currently implementing a similar policy with the full and eager support of “loyal and influential people within Russian Jewry.”¹⁸ Establishing this position as a clear positive historical fact, Berlin just left it without further discussion and moved on to his next topic. However, for Brafman it was just the beginning. Friedrich Schiller’s words – “Die Juden bilden einen Staat im Staate” – open “The Book of Kahal” as the epigraph. The idea that Jews still constituted a state within a state was Brafman’s main thesis and the leitmotif of his book, serving as extensive proof that Schiller’s words were not merely a figure of “poetic expression,” but actual “historical truth.”¹⁹ For Brafman, the Jewish state was real. Its secret transcontinental “Talmudic republic” had emerged at the end of the first millennium CE in Babylonia. Now, it had “reached the peak of its development, just slightly changing its external form,” taking the institutional shape of the *kahal*, the locus of political and administrative power, and of the *beit din*, the no less powerful Jewish judiciary.²⁰

Brafman was not the pioneering discoverer of the *kahal* and *beit din* – the two most important institutions of medieval Jewish autonomy. To be sure, Berlins’ “Essay” detailed the history, functions, and contemporary status of the *kahal* and *beit din* in Russia. Berlin pointed out the historical role of these institutions as intermediaries between the autonomous Jewish communities and the non-Jewish state, and the special kind of influence these institutions wield within the Jewish community as organs of both “civil” and “spiritual (religious)” power, which were intertwined with one another and had the same authority for the Jews.²¹ Berlin also pointed out the positive social impact of the *kahal* administration, which based its administrative power on religious ethos and law. In Berlin’s words, “the kahals did their job conscientiously ... working side by side with religious authorities, they main-

¹⁷ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 2.

¹⁸ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 46–47.

¹⁹ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 10.

²⁰ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 26.

²¹ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 51.

tained social order and piety through the softest means ... they took great care of the people's morality, so they could justly be called a civil-religious administration."²² Berlin even regretted that after the official abolition of *kahals* in Russia, direct bureaucratic supervision of the Jews proved to be much less effective than the *kahal* administration had been.²³ According to Brafman, who did not even bother mentioning the official abolition of the *kahal* in Russia in 1844, the *kahal*'s despotic power did not disappear; conversely, it grew to become a major factor in the shaping of Jewish life in Russia. In Brafman's picture, the secret *kahal*, by means of its administrative power, subjugated and bound the Jews, forcing them to enslave and exploit Christians,²⁴ while the *beit din*, by means of its judicial power, maintained the social and cultural alienation and political isolation of the Jews in Christian societies.²⁵

Describing the social organization of the Russian Jews, Berlin noted that traditional Jewish society was essentially amorphous with porous social borders and ephemeral social status. Berlin described the traditional classifications of Jews, such as historical (Cohen, Levite, Israel), educational (*talmid chacham*, *balabos*, *am ha-arets*), and economical (*gevir*, *katsin*, *kabtsan*). However, he emphasized that these classes did not play a considerable social role and by no means constituted a tangible social hierarchy. The historical classification was only relevant in ritual matters, while the educational and economical classes were fluid, because any Jew might achieve significant improvement of his social status through education and marriage, and the economic status of an individual Jew and any Jewish household was likely to change radically during the lifetime of one generation. Therefore Berlin concluded that "a Jew rarely enjoys the same status for his entire life ... so, in a strict sense, Jews have no castes."²⁶ By contrast, for Brafman, the rigid social hierarchy of the Jews was obvious, and the *kahal* was the principal beneficiary of this social inequality and pertinent social injustice. Moreover, according to Brafman, social inequality was essential to Judaism, because the synagogue – the fundamental Jewish institution – divided Jews into patricians and plebeians through the ritual of *aliyah*, when the "higher classes" of Jews were called to read the Torah before the "lower classes," both manifesting and enforcing social stratification.²⁷

Berlin's "Essay" included a survey of *chavurot* – the traditional Jewish voluntary benevolent societies. In Berlin's words, such societies – *chevra*

²² Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 55.

²³ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 56.

²⁴ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 12–13.

²⁵ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 15.

²⁶ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 51.

²⁷ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 9–10.

kadisha, *bikur holim*, *talmud tora*, and others – were established in every Jewish community “despite the scarcity of Jewish communal resources, or maybe because of this scarcity.”²⁸ According to Berlin, *chavurot* were the main form of mutual aid among Jews. These essentially democratic institutions provided material aid and moral support to any Jew, regardless of his social or economic status. Brafman repeated after Berlin that “there is no Jewish community ... without a few Jewish brotherhoods [i.e. *chavurot*], and it’s hard to find a Jew who does not have membership in one of them.”²⁹ However, according to Brafman, the real meaning of the membership was far from philanthropy. For Brafman, *chavurot* were branches of the secret *kahal* government, the “arteries of the *kahal* heart.” The disparate goals of the different *chavurot* merely masked their common “nationalist-talmudist” goals and their subordination to the *kahal*.³⁰

Berlin described the key Jewish life-cycle rituals – circumcision, wedding, burial – in much detail, explaining the meaning and significance of every ceremony, rite, and prayer. In addition, Berlin explained the ritual component of the everyday life of the Jews, whose kitchen, in Berlin’s expression, “is subordinated to the dictates of the rabbi as much as synagogue is.”³¹ Brafman added nothing to Berlin’s description, although for Brafman, the subordination of the Jewish kitchen to the rabbi was not a metaphor at all. For Brafman, ritual was not neutral. It was both a manifestation and enforcement of the *kahal*’s power over the everyday life of ordinary Jews: preparations for a wedding show “slavery to the *kahal*,”³² and immersion in the mikveh reveal the “despotic arm of the *kahal* reaching the most intimate spheres of family life,”³³ etc., etc.

Finally, on the current status and role of the Jews in Russia, Berlin was full of optimism about the future of Russian Jews. In his opinion, “in Russia, thanks to the tolerant attitude of the Greek [Orthodox] church and the inborn good nature of the Russian people, the Jews suffered immeasurably less than in other European lands.”³⁴ Therefore Berlin believed that Russia would be a hospitable new home for the Jews. Brafman, in his turn, was full of pessimism about the future of Christian Russians, because Russia, currently the “main encampment of the Talmud,” had inadvertently become the capital of the “Talmudic republic.” Thus Russia was turned into essentially a

²⁸ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 56.

²⁹ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 9.

³⁰ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 9.

³¹ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 14. On Berlin’s treatment of the ritual of Jewish wedding see Le Foll, “Moïseï Berlin,” 243–252.

³² Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 23.

³³ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 38.

³⁴ Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii*, 76.

Jewish home inhospitable to Russians, where the *kahal* manipulated the Russian government into protecting Jews, while harming Russians.³⁵

As I have tried to show, in terms of information about Jewish life, Brafman added nothing to Berlin. This is especially evident in the aggregate survey of the Jewish population in Russia, published in 1872 by the Imperial Russian Geographic Society, based on both Berlin's "Essay" and the "remarkable," in the editor's expression, books by Brafman.³⁶ The survey included lengthy quotes from Berlin, while Brafman was only referred to as "repeating Berlin." However, Berlin's and Brafman's conceptualization of the same material differed greatly. Berlin believed that Jews and Russians had a lot in common in their everyday life (housing, food, popular superstitions, and folk legends). In order to recognize these similarities, the Russian government and society needed complete and reliable information about Jewish life, which they could obtain from Berlin's "Essay." Brafman believed that Jews were and would be not only alien but essentially inimical towards Russians. Jewish alienation and isolation was perpetuated by the *kahal*. Because it operated secretly, no one could perceive its true import for Jewish life and impact on non-Jews. In order to protect themselves, the Russian government and society needed an analysis of the *kahal*, which they could obtain from Brafman's book.

What Came after Berlin and Brafman?

Not much in terms of methodology and material, but a lot in terms of conceptualization.

In 1883, St. Petersburg University professor Sergei Bershadskii published his highly original and richly documented historical study of the Jews in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from 1388 to 1596.³⁷ Bershadskii singled out the institution of the *kahal* as the locus of Jewish political and social life, and identified Jewish communal autonomy, embodied by the *kahal*, as the foundation of Jewish historical continuity.³⁸ In his study, Bershadskii linked the periodization of the history of Polish-Lithuanian Jews with the development of the *kahal* organization – non-existent in the fourteenth century; consolidated "under the aegis of the Talmud" in the sixteenth century; and reaching its apogee by the mid-seventeenth century.³⁹ Bershadskii sincerely believed that his historical

³⁵ Brafman, *Kniga kagala*, 8.

³⁶ *Trudy etnograficheskoi-statisticheskoi*, Vol. 7.

³⁷ Bershadskii, *Litovskie evrei*. For detailed analysis of Bershadskii's life and work see Soifer, *The Bespectacled Cossack*.

³⁸ Bershadskii, *Litovskie evrei*, v–vi.

³⁹ Bershadskii, *Litovskie evrei*, vi–vii.

analysis of Jewish life in fourteenth – to eighteenth-century Lithuania and Poland would contribute to the solving of the Jewish question in late nineteenth-century Russia.⁴⁰

The dean of Russian Jewish historians Simon Dubnow, who started to publish his work in the 1880s, considered the study of the internal life and institutions of Jewish communities a major priority in his pioneering project of the history of the Jews in Russia and Poland. Like Berlin, Dubnow emphasized the key role of sources – the pinkasim of Jewish communities and organizations – in this work, quoting Bershadskii, who once exclaimed: “Give me the pinkasim and I will write the history of the Jews in Russia.” Like Brafman, Dubnow boldly moved from word to deed, collecting hundreds of pinkasim and publishing the most important ones, such as the Pinkas of the Council of the Four Lands.⁴¹ To be sure, Dubnow fully understood that he was working in the dark shadow cast by “The Book of Kahal,” nonetheless he conceived his work as a foundation for future Jewish scholarship and for the future of the Jewish people in Russia. The historical institution of the *kahal* and the idea of Jewish national cultural autonomy were key concepts for both his historiography and politics.

Dubnow as historian is inseparable from Dubnow as politician, as Viktor Kelner put it.⁴² Dubnow’s political thought was based on his study of the history of the Jews in Russia. In his historiography, Dubnow argued that the institution of the *kahal* represented the “apotheosis of Jewish nation building ... an example of wide autonomy ... that should make us proud ... because only civilized peoples, endowed with original spirit and capable of organizing their life on their own terms, could appreciate and use political and social autonomy.” For Dubnow, the *kahal* was a socio-political institution that “used the full force of its power to protect Jewish interests and the limited human rights of the Jews, either purchased for money or granted by the authorities.”⁴³ Dubnow sought to explain the *kahal* in historical terms based on a wide array of historical sources. Pinkasim stood out among these sources, as if Dubnow had answered the call of Berlin and followed the example of Brafman. In Dubnow’s opinion, national pride should defy the self-preservation instinct to overcome the fear that “the publication of the *kahal* pinkasim would trigger an outcry from the judeophobic press about the *kahal* – the Jewish status in statu.”⁴⁴ As a historian, Dubnow did not idealize the *kahal*, arguing that in the first half of the nineteenth century the policy of the Russian authorities “destroyed the essential integrity of the *kahal*, thus this organ aimed at serving society was

⁴⁰ Bershadskii, *Litovskie evrei*, v.

⁴¹ Published in *Evreiskaia starina*, Russian language journal on Jewish history founded by Dubnow, in 1909–1912.

⁴² Kelner, “Ot istorii k politike” (accessed on April 15, 2017).

⁴³ Dubnow, *Ob izuchenii istorii russkikh evreev*, 54.

⁴⁴ Dubnow, *Ob izuchenii istorii russkikh evreev*, 52.

turned into an organ of domination, oppressing [society] by means of brutal police power.”⁴⁵ However, the political upheavals in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century prompted Dubnow, as a politician, to revisit the *kahal* as an archetypical institution of national-cultural autonomy and national self-determination. In his opinion, the time had come to acknowledge “the inalienable historical right to organize internal social life [of the Jews], to develop our national culture, to create institutions in accordance with our needs and with the needs of our time.”⁴⁶ In short, in Dubnow’s view, a common form of national existence and a common socio-political organization – the Diaspora and the *kahal* – made the Jews a distinct modern nation like other nations.

To conclude. Asking and answering the Russian Jewish question – how to integrate Jews into the Russian state and society? – Berlin optimistically believed that the dissemination of complete and accurate knowledge about all aspects of Jewish life would help both Jews and non-Jews make peace and live together. However, both Brafman and Dubnow, based on the same knowledge, pessimistically envisioned further separation between Jews and non-Jews – either through growing alienation and antagonism, in Brafman’s view, or emerging Jewish autonomy and national self-determination, in Dubnow’s view.

Summary

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Russian authorities had very limited knowledge of their Jewish subjects. The government relied more on its enlightened perceptions of the Jews and Judaism than on empirical observation. This situation changed radically in the 1860s, when at the onset of the Great Reforms era the government sought full and veritable information about all imperial subjects, including Jews, to facilitate the efficient policymaking by framing and answering Russian Jewish question. As a result, Russian language studies – written by Jews, Russian Christians, and Jewish converts to Christianity – on Judaism, Jewish history, society and culture started to appear. The article focuses on two such studies: Moisei Berlin’s “Essay on the ethnography of the Jewish population in Russia” (1861) and Yakov Brafman’s “Book of Kahal” (1869). Virtual polemics between Berlin and Brafman highlights fundamental differences between Russian studies of Judaism and Jewish life and classical Western European Christian Hebraism, namely, Russian scholars’ general lack of interest to the Talmud and to its alleged anti-Christian thrust, and almost exclusive focus on Jewish communal, social, and political institutes – *kahal*, *chavurot* (voluntary societies), *beit din* (rabbinical court) and others – and on their alleged anti-government nature.

Keywords: Antisemitism, Christianity, Jews, Judaism, Russia, Talmud

⁴⁵ Dubnow, “Problema obshchiny,” 10.

⁴⁶ Dubnow, “Problema obshchiny,” 11.

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ERAN SHUALI

THE TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT INTO HEBREW IN THE EYES OF FRANZ DELITZSCH: PHILOLOGY, MISSION, THEOLOGY

Franz Delitzsch had a brilliant academic career. After receiving his Habilitation in Theology from the University of Leipzig in 1842 at the age of 29, Delitzsch held professorships in Faculties of Protestant Theology at the University of Rostock from 1846 to 1850, at the University of Erlangen from 1850 to 1867 and from 1867 until his death in 1890 back at the University of Leipzig.¹ He became most known for his numerous academic works on the Old Testament, namely his commentaries on Habakkuk (1843), the Song of Songs (1851), Genesis (1852), the Psalms (1859, 1860), Job (1864), Isaiah (1866), Proverbs (1873), and the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes (1875). In addition, he published several books on post-biblical Judaism: a wide-ranging book *On the History of Jewish Poetry* (1836),² an edition of the Karaite book *’Ēš Ḥayyim* by Aharon ben Elia.³ Delitzsch also published properly theological works: *A System of Biblical Psychology* (1855),⁴ and *A System of Christian*

¹ Wagner, *Franz Delitzsch*, 65–119. For a more concise description, see Delitzsch’s short autobiography which exists in two different English translations in Hilprecht, “Franz Delitzsch. Autobiography,” 212; and in Curtiss, *Franz Delitzsch*, 84.

² Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poësie*.

³ Delitzsch, ed., *’Ēš Ḥayyim*. See Lasker, “Moritz Steinschneider,” 357–358. I thank Daniel Lasker for drawing my attention to this work by Delitzsch.

⁴ Delitzsch, *System der biblischen Psychologie*. In the introduction to this book, Delitzsch explains: “under the name of biblical psychology I understand a scientific representation of the doctrine of Scripture on the psychical constitution of man as it was created,

Apologetics (1869)⁵; as well as a volume of personal prayers entitled *The Sacrament of the True Body and Blood of Jesus Christ: Confession and Communion Prayers* (1844);⁶ and much more.⁷

Alongside his academic work, Delitzsch dedicated much effort to the mission to the Jews. In his book *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judenthum* published in 1838 when Delitzsch was 25 years old, he wrote:

It is in order to preach to you the gospel of Christ crucified, and for no other purpose and with no other motivation, that I have begun to learn your languages and to examine your literature. And now too, apart from the supreme purpose of my studies which is to serve the church of God, I know no other goal than to exhort you untiringly, with confident reasoning, to accept Jesus Christ, the one whom you rejected.⁸

In 1863, Delitzsch founded the journal *Saat auf Hoffnung: Zeitschrift für die Mission der Kirche an Israel* (Seed in Hope: Journal for the Church's Mission to Israel), which he edited until 1886 and in which he frequently wrote.⁹ He also wrote a longer missionary treatise entitled *Ernste Fragen an die Gebildeten jüdischer Religion* (Serious Questions to the Educated Members of the Jewish Religion [1888]).¹⁰

In Delitzsch's *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judenthum* from 1838, we also find the first mention of Delitzsch's plan to produce a new Hebrew translation of the New Testament. In this book, following his critique of the existing Hebrew translations of the New Testament,¹¹ Delitzsch offered a Hebrew translation of the Hymn to Love from 1 Corinthians 8:1–13.¹² This translated text was given the title "Probe einer neuen hebräischen Übersetzung des Neuen Testamentes, von ***" (Sample of a new Hebrew translation of the New Testament, by ***). Delitzsch actually set to work on his transla-

and the ways in which this constitution has been affected by sin and redemption." *A System of Biblical Psychology*, 16.

⁵ Delitzsch, *System der christlichen Apologetik*.

⁶ Delitzsch, *Das Sacrament*.

⁷ For a bibliographical list of Delitzsch's works, see Wagner, *Franz Delitzsch*, 470–494. A brief and useful description of Delitzsch's writings may be found in Driver, "Professor Franz Delitzsch," 197–201.

⁸ Delitzsch, *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judenthum*, 8; Trans. Smend, "A Conservative Approach" chap. 18 of *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Volume III From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries). Part 1 The Nineteenth Century – a Century of Modernism and Historicism*, 516.

⁹ See Jean Carmignac's introduction to *Die vier Evangelien*, IX.

¹⁰ Leipzig: Centralbureau der Instituta Judaica (W. Faber).

¹¹ Delitzsch, *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judenthum*, 277–312.

¹² Delitzsch, *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judenthum*, 313–314.

tion some twenty-six years later, in 1864.¹³ He began by translating what he considered to be the “Jewish-Christian Books of the New Testament”: The Gospel of Matthew, the Epistle of James, the Epistle to the Hebrews and Revelation,¹⁴ all of which he had finished by June 1865. In 1870, he published his translation of the Epistle to the Romans, with a forty-page introduction presenting his translation project.¹⁵ And in May 1874, Delitzsch wrote that his translation was completed and ready for press. A year later, in 1875, the British and Foreign Bible Society agreed to publish the translation, which finally came out in 1877. Only a few months after the publication, however, Delitzsch wrote to the British and Foreign Bible Society: “My translation seems to me a very incomplete work still. The second edition will remove many incorrectnesses, adjust many hardnesses and uneven(n)esses, and reproduce the original text more faithfully and clearer here and there.”¹⁶ And indeed in the following years, Delitzsch worked continuously on improving his translation, and published revised versions of it every year or two.¹⁷ In his revision work, Delitzsch benefited from remarks regarding his translation that he received from both Christian and Jewish scholars, among whom we may mention Jacob Levy of Wroclaw, author of influential dictionaries of Aramaic and Rabbinic Hebrew,¹⁸ David Kaufmann, professor at the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest and owner of the famous Kaufmann collection, and Samuel Rolles Driver, eminent Hebraist of the University of Oxford.¹⁹ In 1890, after the publication of ten successive editions of the translation and shortly before his death, Delitzsch entrusted his friend and colleague Gustaf Dalman with the completion of the preparation of an eleventh revised edition, which was published in 1892.²⁰

In this article, I will examine how Franz Delitzsch himself conceived of what he called “one of the greatest and holiest tasks of my life,”²¹ that is,

¹³ On the advancement of the translation, see Dalman, “The Hebrew New Testament,” 145–147.

¹⁴ Delitzsch, “Eine Neue hebräische Übersetzung,” in *Eine Uebersetzungsarbeit von 52 Jahren*, 18.

¹⁵ Delitzsch, *Paulus des Apostels Brief an die Römer*.

¹⁶ Letter from 14 November 1877, quoted by Carmignac, *Die vier Evangelien*, XVI.

¹⁷ Data on the different editions may be found in an article by Gustaf Dalman quoted in Carmignac, *Die vier Evangelien*, XXVII.

¹⁸ See Brisman, *History and Guide*, 104–105.

¹⁹ The names of other scholars whose remarks Delitzsch consulted are mentioned in Carmignac, *Die vier Evangelien*, XVII–XVIII, XX–XXI; and in Dalman, “The Hebrew New Testament”, 145–146.

²⁰ Dalman, “The Hebrew New Testament”, 146–147.

²¹ Delitzsch’s letter to the British and Foreign Bible Society, quoted in Carmignac, *Die vier Evangelien*, XIV.

the making of his Hebrew translation of the New Testament, on which he worked continuously for more than twenty-five years. I will attempt to elucidate his conception on the basis of his writings regarding his translation, and I will also show how his conception influenced the translation work itself.

The Two Aims of the Translation

In many of his writings on his translation, Delitzsch stated that this endeavor had two aims: a practical one and a scientific one. Hence, in the first paragraph of the introduction to his translation of the Epistle to the Romans, a paragraph entitled: “Der praktische und wissenschaftliche Zweck” (The Practical and Scientific Aim), Delitzsch explained the nature of these two aims. He wrote:

The great practical aim we had before our eyes is to provide to Israelites knowledge and experience of the New Testament writings in a more attractive, easier, more thorough manner than before ... We hope that the persuasive power of the Gospel will prove effective on one or the other of these noble spirits who will read it in the Hebrew tongue, but we leave this up to God and renounce all unworthy tricks in order to force such an outcome. But the practical aim is combined with a scientific one ... A translation of the New Testament into Hebrew ... does not only presuppose an understanding of the New Testament text, but it also furthers its understanding by rethinking it in the same language that governed the thinking and the thought-expression of the holy writers even though they wrote in Greek.²²

Hence, the practical aim Delitzsch attributed to his translation was for it to be used in the mission to the Jews, whereas the scientific aim was to recon-

²² “Der große praktische Zweck, den wir dabei im Auge haben, ist der, dem Israeliten Kenntniß und Prüfung der neutestamentlichen Schriften in anziehenderer, leichter, gründlicherer Weise als bisher zu ermöglichen. (...) Daß an einem oder dem andern dieser edleren Geister das in hebräischer Zunge redende Evangelium seine Ueberzeugungskraft bewähre, hoffen wir, überlassen es aber Gott und entsagen allen unwürdigen Künsten, solche Erfolge zu erzwingen. Mit dem praktischen Zwecke aber verbindet sich ein wissenschaftlicher (...). Eine Uebersetzung des Neuen Testaments ins Hebräische ist nun zwar keine solche Erweiterung des sprachwissenschaftlichen Gesichtskreises, aber sie leistet ungleich mehr als das, weil sie nicht blos, wie die Uebersetzung in andere Sprachen, gründliches Verständniß des neutestamentlichen Textes voraussetzt, sondern selber das Verständniß desselben fördert, indem sie ihn in die Sprache zurückdenkt, welche das Denken und den Gedankenausdruck der heiligen Schriftsteller trotz dem daß sie griechisch schrieben beherrschte.” Delitzsch, *Paulus des Apostels Brief an die Römer*, 8–10. I thank Fränz Biver-Pettinger for helping me to translate this text.

struct the Hebrew that underlies the New Testament writings.²³ Both of these aims may be clarified by other statements made by Delitzsch.

As for the practical aim, we find in Delitzsch's writings three reasons for which he thought that a Hebrew translation of the New Testament may be useful for the mission to the Jews. First, he claimed that Jews all over the world know Hebrew and may therefore read the New Testament in this language. Thus, Delitzsch wrote: "... any person of the present time understanding the Hebrew language and able to speak it to some extent can have intercourse with the Jews of Asia and Africa, yea, of all parts of the world. Therefore it was most important that the New Testament should be translated into Hebrew, so that the Jews of the immense Russian empire, as well as the Jews from Spain to China, the Jews of Arabia, Malabar and Burmah, might be able to read the same."²⁴

Second, he believed that a Hebrew version of the New Testament was necessary in order for the Jews to view the New Testament as tightly connected to the Hebrew Bible. This may be deduced from the following statement by Delitzsch: "And the New Testament, as the new Thora, the complete half of God's revelation, must be translated into Hebrew; if we intend to make it a reading book for the Jews of all countries and a constituent part of the worship of the future Israel ..."²⁵

Third, he believed that reading the New Testament in Hebrew will make Jews perceive it as Jewish. Thus, he wrote: "We have cause to say, that our translation has contributed somewhat to bring the New Testament nearer to the Jews, as a prominent work of their literature."²⁶ And also: "But there are also others who feel that the history of Christianity's emergence is a piece of the history of their own people, that it puts us in one tent, to which even a few sparse notes from Talmudic and Midrashic literature point back, and that it is proper for the thinker and the researcher that the new religion came from Israel ..."²⁷

Now, as for Delitzsch's idea that the translation of the New Testament into Hebrew consists of reconstructing the language that underlies the New

²³ Delitzsch also mentioned the two aims of his translation in *Saat auf Hoffnung* 1865, part. i, 62, translated into English in Curtiss, *Franz Delitzsch: A Memorial Tribute*, 74; Delitzsch, "Das letzte Wort. 29. Januar 1890," in *Eine Uebersetzungsarbeit von 52 Jahren*, 30–33, translated in Curtiss, *Franz Delitzsch: A Memorial Tribute*, 77–78; "Announcement of a Second Edition of the Heb. New Test. By Prof. Franz Delitzsch," Carmignac, *Die vier Evangelien*, XVI.

²⁴ Delitzsch, "The Hebrew New Testament," 136.

²⁵ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 31.

²⁶ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 6.

²⁷ "Aber es gibt auch Andere, welche fühlen, daß die Entstehungsgeschichte des Christenthums ein Stück der Geschichte ihres eignen Volkes ist, daß sie uns in eine Zelt versetzt, bis in welche nur einige spärliche Notizen der Talmud- und Midrasch-Literatur zurückreichen, und daß es dem Denker und Forscher ziemt, die von Israel ausgegangene neue Religion (...)" Delitzsch, *Paulus des Apostels Brief an die Römer*, 9.

Testament writings, this relied on his wider views regarding language use in Judea at the turn of the era, and more precisely, regarding the languages used by Jesus and his disciples. Hence, Delitzsch thought that Hebrew was widely used by Jews at the time of Jesus both in writing and orally, namely in what he called “the higher form of speech”. He stated this in the following passage: “The Hebrew remained even after the exile the language of Jewish literature ... The Aramaic dialect of Palestine ... was the language of daily life, the vulgar language, in which the people and also the learned were wont to converse and to hold controversies ... the holy language continued to be the language of the higher form of speech ... Knowledge of Hebrew was then as now universal among the educated of the nation. Aramaic, on the contrary, was understood only by a small part of the Diaspora.”²⁸ In the rest of this passage, Delitzsch attempted to substantiate this view on the basis of a variety of evidences from ancient Jewish and Christian writings.

In light of his conception of the linguistic situation in Judea at the turn of the era, Delitzsch thought that Hebrew was the main language used during the historical events described in the New Testament books. He wrote: “The Shemitic woof of the New Testament Hellenism is Hebrew, not Aramaic. Our Lord and his apostles thought and spoke for the most part in Hebrew.”²⁹ And: “Jesus Christ is prophesied in this language.”³⁰ Moreover, he believed that not only the oldest oral tradition was in Hebrew, but also some of the original writings of the New Testament. He stated this explicitly regarding the Gospel of Matthew: “Since Matthew wrote his Gospel for Hebrews in Hebrew, the New Testament writings began according to ancient tradition.”³¹ And elsewhere: “it is quite unlikely that Matthew wrote in Aramaic ...”³² It is also possible that Delitzsch had a similar conception regarding the three other books that he called the “Jewish-Christian books of the New Testament”: the Epistle of James, the Epistle to the Hebrews and Revelation.³³ Finally, Delitzsch thought that even the New Testament writers who wrote in Greek were thinking in Hebrew, the “language that,” according to the passage quoted previously, “governed the thinking and the thought-expression of the holy writers even though they wrote in Greek.”³⁴

²⁸ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 30–31.

²⁹ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 31.

³⁰ “Jesus Christus ist in dieser Sprache geweissagt.” Delitzsch, *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judenthum*, 281.

³¹ “Damit, dass Matthäus sein Evangelium für Hebräer hebräisch schrieb, hat nach alter Ueberlieferung das neutestamentliche Schrifttum begonnen”. Delitzsch, “Eine neue hebräische Uebersetzung,” in *Eine Uebersetzungsarbeit von 52 Jahren*, 19.

³² Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 30.

³³ Delitzsch, “Eine Neue hebräische Übersetzung,” in *Eine Uebersetzungsarbeit von 52 Jahren*, 18.

³⁴ Delitzsch, *Paulus des Apostels Brief an die Römer*, 10.

Delitzsch thus intended for his translation to be a reconstruction of the original Hebrew words uttered by Jesus and the Apostles, of the original Hebrew text of some of the New Testament books, or of the Hebrew mental form of the New Testament writings as they were conceived by their authors. And these he thought would be formulated in what he called a “peculiar Hebrew” that was a mixture of biblical and rabbinic, or, as he called them, post-biblical elements. He wrote: “... it was my plan to reproduce the New Testament in that peculiar Hebrew, without affected elegance, in which it has been thought and would have been written by the New Testament writers themselves, that is, without intentionally avoiding post-biblical words and phrases.”³⁵ And Delitzsch believed that the reconstruction of the Hebrew substrate of the New Testament could be achieved by “continued study of the New Testament and of biblical and post-biblical Hebrew, especially of the Hebrew syntax.”³⁶

Delitzsch’s Translation Technique

After having seen Delitzsch’s aims for his translation: the missionary aims of connecting the New Testament to the Hebrew Bible and of making it look Jewish, as well as the scientific aim of reconstructing in it the mixed biblical-rabbinic Hebrew that underlay, in his view, the text of the New Testament writings, we should note that these aims structured Delitzsch’s translation technique and shaped the translated text itself. What Delitzsch attempted to do throughout his translation was to render the contents of the New Testament writings using biblical and rabbinic words, expressions and phrase structures that are as “genuine” as possible, that is, as close as possible to the ones found in the Hebrew Bible and in rabbinic literature. This is easiest to illustrate through the philological comments that Delitzsch made in relation to the production and revision of his translation and that he published on different occasions as scholarly works.³⁷ Several examples will be given of his efforts to bring the language in his translation as close as possible to the language of the Hebrew Bible or to that of rabbinic literature.

³⁵ Delitzsch, “The Hebrew New Testament,” 137.

³⁶ Delitzsch, “In Self-Defence,” 140.

³⁷ See his series of articles entitled “*Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*. Ergänzungen zu Lightfoot und Schöttgen” published in *Zeitschrift für die gesammte lutherische Theologie und Kirche* from 1876 to 1878; *The Hebrew New Testament of the British and Foreign Bible Society: A Contribution to Hebrew Philology*; “In Self-Defence: Critical Observations on my Hebrew New Testament”; and the series of articles entitled “Neue Beobachtungen über hebräische Spracheigentümlichkeiten,” published in *Theologisches Literaturblatt* from 8 November 1889 to 10 January 1890.

First, in a booklet describing the changes that were introduced in the fifth edition of his translation, Delitzsch offers the following remarks:

Matth. XVI. 24 אִישׁ אֶם־יִהְיֶה פֶּן *if any man will*. The revised text has כִּי אִישׁ like Lev. XXVII. 2. It sounds more biblical.³⁸

2 Cor. VIII. 22 הַרְבֵּה פְּעָמִים *oftentimes*. The biblical Hebrew says always רַבּוֹת פְּעָמִים, now presented by the revised text.³⁹

1 Petr. I. 13 וְקִוְיָה קִוּוּ *and hope perfectly* (τελείως). I am now informed, that the *infin. intensivus*, when combined with an imperative, always follows it, therefore וְקִוּוּ קִוְיָה ...⁴⁰

In these three examples, as in many more, Delitzsch explains that the changes he made were designed to make the Hebrew of his translation correspond more closely to the language of the Hebrew Bible. And we may note Delitzsch's utmost precision and attention to detail in this quest, as he reflects at length on complex and sometimes very technical issues related to vocabulary, syntax, vowel-points and cantillation accents.⁴¹

Other remarks made by Delitzsch attest to his efforts to bring the Hebrew of his translation close to that of rabbinic literature. Hence, he explained that, in Acts 14:2, in the phrase וְהִקְעִיסוּ אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹת הַגּוֹיִם נֹגֵד הָאֲחֵים – “and they made the souls of the Gentiles angry *against* their brethren,” he replaced the preposition נֹגֵד – “against” with the preposition עַל – “on”, since “in the postbiblical literature כָּעֵס עַל is frequent for ‘to be angry at one’, e. gr. *Aboda zara* 54^b.”⁴²

Elsewhere, he wrote that the phrase “ἐξεπορεύετο ἄχος περὶ αὐτοῦ” – “a sound went out regarding him” in Luke 4:37 corresponds to the Mishnaic expression: “יֵצֵא קוֹל עֲלָיו”, which has the same meaning and which Delitzsch chose to use in the translation.⁴³

And regarding the phrase: “And lead us not into temptation” in the Lord's Prayer, Delitzsch vehemently claimed that it should be translated using the rabbinic expression הַבִּיא לִידֵי נִסְיוֹן – “to bring into trial”, which appears in two places in the Babylonian Talmud and is included in the Shaḥarit prayer⁴⁴:

³⁸ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 8.

³⁹ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 12.

⁴⁰ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 15.

⁴¹ E.g. Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 7, 10, 13, 14, 16.

⁴² Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 11.

⁴³ Delitzsch, “*Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*. III Lucas,” 596. In fact, Delitzsch used this rabbinic expression only in the two first editions of his translation. He later replaced it with an expression from the book of Esther: וְשָׂמְעוּ הוֹלֵךְ (Est 9:4).

⁴⁴ *b. Ber.* 60b; *Sanh.* 107a.

The words uttered by the Lord's mouth were without any doubt ואל־תביאנו לידֵי נִסְיוֹן. And what nobler task can a translator of the N.T. have than to think back (zurückdenken) the words of Jesus, which were transmitted in Greek, in the original Hebrew or Aramaic?⁴⁵

This example shows again that, according to Delitzsch, the use of rabbinic sources may enable one to find the actual words spoken by Jesus.

Delitzsch's Theological View on the Hebrew New Testament

In spite of all of his efforts invested in the production of the translation and of the long collaborative work on its revision, Delitzsch wrote as late as 1889, after the publication of nine consecutive editions of his translation: "Continued study of the New Testament and of biblical and post-biblical Hebrew, especially of the Hebrew syntax, and the careful consideration of critical reviews which in rich abundance lie before me, have led me ever more and more to the humbling conclusion that I am still very far short of reaching the ideal of a Hebrew counterpart of the Greek New Testament."⁴⁶ And even a month before his death, he wrote on January 29, 1890: "The main contribution with which I wished to close my life, was the completion of a fresh revision of the Hebrew New Testament more thorough and complete than ever before, corresponding to the high ideal which I had placed before me, – a final edition, the utmost which my intellectual power and length of life would permit."⁴⁷

Delitzsch claimed then that he did not reach his *ideal* of a Hebrew New Testament, and other statements he made show that this ideal was not merely a metaphor. This seems clear in the following passages that he wrote several years earlier, in 1883:

I am far from presuming that I have realized the ideal. A true and satisfactory version of the N. T. is a thing of the future, and only will be produced, when the new Thora of the Gospel has been received into its heart of hearts by the regenerated remnant of Israel.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ "Die Londoner Uebers. hat ואל־תביאנו לְמִפֶּה, was die Zeitschrift *The Hebrew Christian Witness*, Januar 1875, mit Recht a *sorry substitution for the expression* לידֵי נִסְיוֹן *in the preceding version* nennt. Denn die Worte im Munde des Herrn lauteten ohne allen Zweifel ואל־תביאנו לידֵי נִסְיוֹן, und welche höhere Aufgabe könnte ein Uebersetzer des N. T. haben als die griechisch überlieferten Worte Jesu in die ursprünglichen hebräischen oder aramäischen zurückzudenken?" Delitzsch, "*Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*. I. Matthaeus," 403.

⁴⁶ Delitzsch, "In Self-Defence," 140.

⁴⁷ Curtiss, *Franz Delitzsch: A Memorial Tribute*, 77. This is an English translation of a passage from Delitzsch, "Das letzte Wort. 29. Januar 1890," in *Eine Uebersetzungsarbeit von 52 Jahren*, 30.

⁴⁸ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 29–30.

But it shall come to pass in the last days, that they shall acknowledge Him whom they have so long despised. Israel will then become confessor and interpreter and apostle of the New Testament, and the new Thora, which is gone forth out of Zion, will then be gloriously transfigured into the holy tongue. Jacob shall then take root, Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit.⁴⁹

Delitzsch believed then that, in an eschatological future, the Jewish people will become Christian and accept the New Testament, and that, at that time, the New Testament will be transfigured into Hebrew by divine intervention. It may be noted that he seems to have considered his own efforts for the conversion of the Jews and for the production of a Hebrew New Testament as a manly approximation to the future actions of God.

* * *

To conclude, I would simply like to remark that Franz Delitzsch's views and method of work on his Hebrew translation of the New Testament illustrate how cutting-edge philological knowledge and abilities, a zeal for the mission to the Jews and profound and original theological speculation all combined in structuring the activity of this nineteenth-century German Christian Hebraist.

Summary

In this article, I examine the way in which Franz Delitzsch envisioned his masterpiece translation of the New Testament into Hebrew, first published in 1877. I focus on the aims Delitzsch attributed to his translation and on the way in which the translation project was embedded in the wider views held by Delitzsch as a Hebraist and a theologian. Furthermore, I show how Delitzsch's conception of his endeavor structured the translation work itself.

Keywords: Christian Hebraism, Jewish-Christian relations, Translation studies, Eschatology

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⁴⁹ Delitzsch, *The Hebrew New Testament of the British*, 33–34.

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

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THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHRISTIAN HEBRAISM IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

Wrocław, 27–28 kwietnia 2017 roku

W dniach 27–28 kwietnia 2017 roku w gościnnych murach auli Domu Notre Dame we Wrocławiu odbyła się konferencja naukowa pod tytułem *Jews in Christian Eyes. Between Inspiration and Hostility*. Była to już trzecia międzynarodowa konferencja poświęcona studiom hebraistycznym (*Christian Hebraism*) w Europie Wschodniej i Środkowej, zgodnie z inicjatywą zapoczątkowaną na Uniwersytecie im. Marcina Lutra w Wittenberdze w 2012 i kontynuowaną w 2014 roku na Uniwersytecie im. Károli Gáspára w Budapeszcie. Tegoroczne spotkanie, zorganizowane przez Papieski Wydział Teologiczny we Wrocławiu i Uniwersytet Wrocławski, zgromadziło 15 uczestników z 13 ośrodków akademickich oraz dwóch badaczy niezależnych, wśród których znaleźli się przedstawiciele uczelni krajowych i zagranicznych, łącznie z dziewięciu krajów (Izrael, Czechy, Polska, Słowacja, Węgry, Kanada, USA, Rosja i Francja).

Podczas konferencji wygłoszono 15 referatów przygotowanych w języku angielskim, podzielonych na cztery bloki tematyczne: 1) *Chrześcijańscy hebraiści, akademickie ośrodki studiów hebraistycznych (Hebrew Christians, Academic Centers of Hebrew Learning)*; 2) *Przekłady (Translations)*; 3) *Obraz Żydów (Images of the Jews)*, cz. 1 i 2; 4) *Polemiki (Polemics)*.

W pierwszym dniu, po otwarciu konferencji przez jej gospodarza ks. Rajmunda Pietkiewicza, wykład wygłosił Franz Posset, inaugurujący pierwszą sesję dotyczącą *Chrześcijańskich hebraistów oraz akademickich ośrodków studiów hebraistycznych*. Wystąpienie tego niezależnego badacza (*The Jews, Their Sacred Language, and the Holy Name of God in the Eyes of Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522)*) dotyczyło osoby Johanna Reuchlina, katolickiego znawcy języka hebrajskiego żyjącego na przełomie XV i XVI wieku, i jego spojrzenia na kwestię Żydów, ich świętego języka, a zwłaszcza hipotezy dotyczącej tetragramu יהוה – imienia Boga i jego związków z imieniem Jezusa – יהושע, które Reuchlin odczytywał jako יהוה.

W drugim referacie zatytułowanym *Lipót Huber (1861–1946). A Unique Christian Hebraist in Modern Hungary* Dora Lantos (Central European University in Budapest) skupiła się na postaci arcybiskupa Kalocsa Lipóta Hubera, który jako pierwszy na terenie Węgier zajmował się studiami nad Talmudem na poziomie akademickim, a ponadto interesował się szeroko rozumianą tematyką żydowską i popularyzował wiedzę na ten temat w licznych publikacjach, dotyczących m.in. języka hebrajskiego, żydowskiego kalendarza, historii czy teatru.

Sesję zamknęła prelekcja Tally Gur (Haifa University), która w swoim referacie „*Or La’Goyim*” (*A Light to the Nations*): *Jewish Studies in Post-World War II West-German Academia (Academic Centers of Hebrew Learning in Religious and Antisemitic Debates)* zajęła się kwestią akademickich studiów nad judaizmem – *Wissenschaft des Judentums* – w Republice Federalnej Niemiec, które przez wzgląd na Holokaust uległy przekształceniu po II wojnie światowej.

Druga sesja, skupiona wokół kwestii tłumaczeń, rozpoczęła się wraz z wystąpieniem *The Slavonic-Russian Octateuch and Pentateuch Edited According to the Masoretic Text: Structure and Language Features* przygotowanym przez Alexandra Grishchenko (Moscow State University of Education), poświęconym staro-cerkiewno-słowiańskiemu przekładowi Oktateuchu – tłumaczeniu pierwszych ośmiu ksiąg Pisma Świętego – którego ostatnia zredagowana wersja została pod koniec XV wieku okrojona do Pentateuchu i poddana rewizji na podstawie tekstu masoreckiego Biblii Hebrajskiej i innych semickich źródeł.

Dávid Benka (Comenius University, Bratysława) z kolei podczas swojego wykładu *Ján Lajčiak and His Slovak Translation of the Book of Psalms (1904)* ukazał znaczenie postaci Jána Lajčiaka, żyjącego na przełomie XIX i XX wieku słowackiego luterańskiego teologa i znawcy hebrajskiego, który przetłumaczył z języków oryginalnych na słowacki Księgę Psalmów.

Kolejna prelekcja *Hebrew Translations of the New Testament in the Early Modern Period*, którą przygotował Yaacov Deutsch (David Yellin College, Jerozolima), dotyczyła tłumaczeń Nowego Testamentu na język hebrajski, począwszy od wersji przygotowanej przez Erasmusa Oswalda Schrekenfuchsa w 1563 roku, po co najmniej cztery inne kompletne tłumaczenia w ciągu kolejnych 100 lat.

Podobną tematykę podjął Eran Shuali (University of Strasbourg), który zaprezentował referat *The Translation of the New Testament into Hebrew in the Eyes of Franz Delitzsch: Philology, Mission, Theology*, podkreślający znaczenie Franza Delitzscha i jego przekładu Nowego Testamentu na język hebrajski z 1877 roku oraz pobudek skłaniających go do podjęcia tego zadania – badań filologicznych nad językiem Biblii Hebrajskiej oraz językiem hebrajskim używanym w czasach Jezusa, a także chęcią przyczynienia się do nawróceń Żydów na chrześcijaństwo.

Po przerwie obiadowej rozpoczęła się trzecia sesja zatytułowana *Obraz Żydów*, w czasie której wygłoszono kolejne trzy wykłady. W wystąpieniu *The Role of the Jew in Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont’s “Adumbratio Kabbalae*

Christianae” Sheila A. Spector zwróciła uwagę na dzieło *Adumbratio Kabbalae Christianae Franciscusa Mercuriusa van Helmonta*, w którym w formie dialogu pomiędzy chrześcijańskim filozofem a kabalistą (utożsamianym z Żydem) przedstawia własne, nie zawsze zgodne z nauką Kościoła, poglądy.

W kolejnej prezentacji pod tytułem *Judaizing and Identity in the Earliest Transylvanian Sabbatarian Writings (1588?–1621)* Réka Újlaki-Nagy (University of Erfurt) przybliżyła słuchaczom ruch Sabatarian zamieszkujących Transylwanię oraz ich odkryte w XIX wieku pisma, kładąc akcent na ich pochodzenie oraz stosunek do Żydów i judaizmu.

Ostatnia prelegentka tego dnia, Sarit Cofman-Simhon (Kibbutzim College, Tel-Aviv), przygotowała opracowanie *Representing Interfaith Marriage in Romanian Theatre*, w którym zapoznała zebranych z trzema rumuńskimi sztukami: *The Village Leeches* Vasila Alexandri, *Manasse Ronettiego-Romana* oraz *Take, Ianke, and Cadâr* Victora Iona Popa, przyglądając się im przez pryzmat pojawiającego się w nich motywu małżeństwa mieszanego – tj. między chrześcijaninem/chrześcijanką a Żydem/Żydówką.

Otwierające czwartą sesję, kontynuującą tematykę z poprzedniego dnia, wystąpienie *Jews and Their Language in Wujek’s Bible 1599* wygłosił ks. Rajmund Pietkiewicz (Papieski Wydział Teologiczny we Wrocławiu). Przedstawił w nim wiedzę na temat Żydów i ich języka zawartą w komentarzach i wstępach do Biblii w przekładzie Jakuba Wujka z 1599 roku oraz jej źródła i oddziaływanie na czytelnika.

Daniel Soukup (Institute of Czech Literature AS CR, Praga) w swojej prelekcji *“Oh, Bestia Synagoga!” The Representation of Jews in Czech Sermons at the Turn of the 17th and 18th Centuries* podzielił się różnorodnym wykorzystaniem motywu Żyda w czeskich kazaniach, począwszy od kwestii cudownych nawróceń przez morderstwa rytualne i profanacje hostii po obronę przed różnego rodzaju niesprawiedliwością, zwłaszcza wobec antysemitkiej polityki rządu.

Ostatnią, piątą sesję zadedykowaną polemikom rozpoczął Daniel J. Lasker (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva) prezentacją pod tytułem *Jewish Anti-Christian Polemical Treatises in Early Modern Central and Eastern Europe: Where Are They?* Próbował w niej znaleźć odpowiedź na pytanie: dlaczego polemiczne traktaty antychrześcijańskie pisane przez Żydów w środkowej i wschodniej Europie pomiędzy XV a XVIII wiekiem są tak rzadkie. Prelegent wymienił tylko dwa traktaty z tego okresu powstałe w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim: *Wiara umocniona (Faith Strengthened)*, napisany przez Karaimitę Izaaka ben Abrahama z Trok (1594), oraz *Wieża mocy (Tower of Strength)*, również autorstwa Karaimity Salomona ben Aarona z Trok (początek XVII wieku).

Kolejna prelegentka, Lidia Jerkiewicz (Uniwersytet Wrocławski), swoje wystąpienie *Abbé Luigi Chiarini (1789–1832) and His Projects of Reforming Judaism* poświęciła postaci ojca Luigi Chiariniego, profesora historii i języków orientalnych na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim na przełomie XVIII i XIX wieku,

który jako członek Komitetu Starozakonnych szykował reformę statusu Żydów w Królestwie Kongresowym, a także pragnął zreformować judaizm.

Ostatnia prelekcja pod tytułem *The Russian Jewish Question, Asked, and Answered. Virtual Polemics Between Moisei Berlin and Yakov Brafman in the 1860s*, przygotowana przez Vassilego Schedrina (Queen's University, Kingston), dotyczyła dzieł Moiseiego Berlina *Essay on the Ethnography of the Jewish Population in Russia* i Yakova Brafmana *Book of Kahal*. Porównanie koncepcji obu myślicieli orientowało się wokół szeroko rozumianej kwestii żydowskiej, a uściślając, życia Żydów w Rosji oraz rosyjskich studiów nad judaizmem. Pomimo podobnego punktu odniesienia – skupienia się na żydowskich społecznych i politycznych instytucjach – twórcy ci rozumieją je i wartościują odmiennie, dochodząc do różnych wniosków.

Po każdej sesji był przewidziany czas na pytania, dopowiedzenia i polemiki, który został w pełni wykorzystany przez uczestników konferencji.

W podsumowaniu konferencji, którego dokonał ks. Rajmund Pietkiewicz, zauważono, że u podstaw organizacji obrad leży założenie, iż zagadnienie studiów hebraistycznych w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej jest słabo opracowane, zwłaszcza w tzw. językach kongresowych. Dlatego podkreślono, że w przeciwieństwie do poprzednich dwóch konferencji wybrane materiały z obecnej konferencji zostaną wydane drukiem, ale nie jako osobna monografia, lecz numer specjalny *Wrocławskiego Przeglądu Teologicznego*. Ponadto poddano pod dyskusję kwestię stopniowego rozszerzania problematyki konferencji.

Anna Kryza

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Daniel J. Lasker – the Norbert Blechner Professor of Jewish Values (Emeritus) in the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought at Israel's Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in Beer Sheva. In addition, Prof. Lasker has taught at Yale, Princeton, Ohio State, and Yeshiva Universities; University of Toronto, University of Texas, University of Washington; Boston, Queens, Ahva and Kirkland Colleges, and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. His areas of interest are medieval Jewish philosophy (including the thought of Rabbi Judah Halevi, Maimonides, and Rabbi Hasdai Crescas), the Jewish-Christian debate, Karaism, and selected issues in Jewish theology and law. He is the author of *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (1977; 2nd ed., 2007); *The Refutation of the Christian Principles by Hasdai Crescas* (1992); *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi: Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy* (2008); *The Sage Simhah Isaac Lutski. An Eighteenth-Century Karaite Rabbi. Selected Writings* (2015; Hebrew); (with Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis and David Sklare), *Theological Encounters at a Crossroads: A Preliminary Edition of Judah Hadassi's Eshkol ha-kofer, First Commandment, and Studies of the Book's Judaeo-Arabic and Byzantine Contexts* (2019); and many other publications.

Rajmund Pietkiewicz – born on 19 February 1970 in Oleśnica (Poland), PhD in humanities (bibliology) – the University of Wrocław (2003); PhD in theology (biblical theology) – Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław (2004); licence in biblical sciences – Pontifical Biblical Institute “Biblicum” in Rome (2008); post-doctoral degree in theology (biblical theology) – Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław (2012). The Director of the Chair of the Old Testament Exegesis at Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław. The lecturer of Old Testament Exegesis and Hebrew language. He specialises in the study on biblical translations, especially Polish ones dating back to the period of Reformation and Renaissance. Since September 2014 the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic and Educational Matters at Pontifical Faculty of Theology in

Wrocław. The main publications: „*In the Search of a Genuine God’s Word*”. *Reception of Western Hebrew Studies in Christian Research in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of Renaissance period* (2011), *Biblia Polonorum. The History of the Bible in the Polish Language*, vol. 1: *From the Beginnings to 1638* (2016); vol. 5: *The Millennium Bible (1965–2015)* (2015). The last book have received from Committee of Theology of the Polish Academy of Sciences the award “The Book of 2015”.

Vassili Schedrin – received PhD in Modern Jewish History from Brandeis University in 2010. Since then, he taught Jewish history at many campuses in North America and overseas, including Virginia Tech, Ohio University, Franklin and Marshall College, University of Florida, and St. Petersburg State University in Russia. He has just finished his first book *Jewish Souls, Bureaucratic Minds. Jewish Bureaucracy and Policymaking in Late Imperial Russia 1850–1917*, that examines political and social aspects of the official Jewish policies in the late Russian empire. Currently, he is Alfred and Isabel Bader Post-Doctoral Fellow in Jewish History at Queen’s University in Canada.

Eran Shuali – is a lecturer at the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Strasbourg. His PhD dissertation was entitled: “Translating the New Testament into Hebrew: A Mirror of Jewish-Christian Relations” (Strasbourg 2015). He is preparing a new translation of the New Testament into Modern Hebrew for Tel-Aviv University Press.

Daniel Soukup – is Head of the Department for Research into Old Czech Literature (Institute of Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences), and currently, he is Assistant Professor at the Kurt and Ursula Schubert Centre for Jewish Studies (Palacký University, Olomouc). In 2014–2015, he was post-doctoral fellow at the Centre for Jewish Studies (CJS) supported by the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe. He has been published in English and Czech in several international journals and books. Since 2016, he is editorial board member of the journal *Judaica Bohemiae*. His area of interest are representation of Jews and Judaism in medieval and early modern literature from the Czech Lands, anti-Jewish violence in the Middle Ages, and the history of Jews in the Czech Lands, especially Moravia.

Sheila A. Spector – is an independent scholar who has devoted much of her career to studying Christian Kabbalism. As the foundation for her work, she compiled *Jewish Mysticism: An Annotated Bibliography on the Kabbalah in English* (Garland, 1984), still the only book-length resource available. In addition, she translated Francis Mercury van Helmont’s *Sketch of Christian Kabbalism* (Brill, 2012), the only fully developed Christianization of the kab-

balistic myth. She also published the companion volumes – “*Wonders Divine*”: *The Development of Blake’s Kabbalistic Myth*, and “*Glorious Incomprehensible*”: *The Development of Blake’s Kabbalistic Language* (both Bucknell University Press, 2001) – two studies that demonstrate van Helmont’s far-reaching influence.

Réka Tímea Újlaki-Nagy – has been dedicated to the research of the phenomenon called Transylvanian Sabbatarianism since her Bachelor studies on the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Her ongoing PhD work, conducted on the University of Szeged and on the University of Erfurt focuses specifically on the emergence and the first period of Sabbatarianism. Currently she is assistant research fellow on the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History. Here she is involved in an interdisciplinary project dealing with Christian-Muslim-Jewish interactions in the 16–17th century Ottoman Hungary and Transylvania. Within the framework of this project her objective is the edition of a Sabbatarian Talmud-translation and commentary (1630–1640). Besides this she is working on a publication of the existing 18–20th century sources concerning Transylvanian Sabbatarianism and on a documentary about the history and the tragic fate of the mentioned movement.

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