



UCSIA/IJS-CHAIR Jewish-Christian Relations 2013-2014

International Workshop

Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition?

February 12th-13th 2014

University of Antwerp | Hof van Liere
Prinsstraat 13 | 2000 Antwerpen

Organization

Institute of Jewish Studies (University of Antwerp)
University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp (UCSIA)

Conference in English

Participation is free but registration is required

Although the term "Judeo-Christian" is used frequently and in many contexts, it is by no means a self-evident concept and has a fascinating and loaded history. This workshop will explore the historical and present usage of the term as well as its theological, philosophical and political implications for an understanding of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity and for other religions as well as other intercultural and interreligious dialogues.

The UCSIA/IJS-Chair for Jewish-Christian Relations was founded at the University of Antwerp in 2008 by the University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp and the Institute of Jewish Studies as an expression of their common interest in Jewish-Christian relations. The aim of this chair is to foster the study of Judaism and Hebraism from the perspective of Jewish-Christian dialogue in contemporary Europe.

Opening Session | Wednesday February 12th

20.00 - 22.00 | Hof van Liere, Tassiszaal

The Contribution of Christianity to Rabbinic Judaism

Keynote speaker: Israel Yuval (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Chair: Vivian Liska (IJS)

- 20.00-20.10 Words of welcome by Jacques Haers (UCSIA), Vivian Liska (IJS) and Itzhak Benyamini (University of Haifa, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design)
- 20.10-21.00 Keynote lecture
Israel Yuval (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
The Contribution of Christianity to Rabbinic Judaism
- 21.00-21.30 Respondent
Bernd Witte (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)
- 21.30-22.00 **Discussion**
Followed by a reception

Workshop | Thursday February 13th

09.00 - 17.00 | Hof van Liere, Elsschotzaal

09.00-11.00 1. Critical Theology and the Judeo-Christian Tradition

Chair: Dennis Baert (IJS)

- 09.00-09.30 **Itzhak Benyamini** (University of Haifa and Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design)
Beyond the Hyphenated Jew: The "Judeo-Christian" in the Wake of Jean-François Lyotard
- 09.30-10.00 **Michael F. Mach** (Tel-Aviv University)
Modern Jewish/Christian Theologies
- 10.00-10.30 **Jacques Haers** (KU Leuven and UCSIA)
Theology: Critical when Attempting to Discern Emerging Creativity
- 10.30-11.00 **Discussion**
- 11.00-11.15 *Coffee break*

11.15-13.15 2. Law and Love in the Jewish and Christian Tradition

Chair: David Dessin (IJS)

- 11.15-11.45 **Emmanuel Nathan** (KU Leuven)
Two Pauls, Three Opinions: The Jewish Paul between Law and Love
- 11.45-12.15 **Yitzhak Melamed** (Johns Hopkins University)
Spinoza and Paul: Christians and Pharisees
- 12.15-12.45 **Vivian Liska** (IJS, University of Antwerp)
Readings of Kafka and the Law from Walter Benjamin to Giorgio Agamben
- 12.45-13.15 **Discussion**
- 13.15-14.30 *Lunch (speakers only)*

14.30-16.30 3. The Judeo-Christian Tradition and Other Religious Traditions

Chair: Jacques Haers (KU Leuven and UCSIA)

- 14.30-15.00 **Warren Zeev Harvey** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
The Judeo-Christian Tradition's Five Others
- 15.00-15.30 **Elizabeth Harris** (Liverpool Hope University)
Idolatry or a Path of Compassion? Jewish and Christian Attitudes to Buddhism
- 15.30-16.00 **Anya Topolski** (KU Leuven)
The 'Judeo-Christian' Tradition: A Genealogy of Europe's Identity Crisis
- 16.00-16.30 **Discussion**
- 16.30-17.00 *Coffee break*

Closing Session

17.00 - 19.00 | Hof van Liere, Tassiszaal

Jewish and Christian Female Mystics

Keynote speaker: Ada Rapoport-Albert (University College London)

Chair: Vivian Liska (IJS)

- 17.00-17.10 Words of welcome by Jacques Haers (UCSIA) and Vivian Liska (IJS)
- 17.10-18.00 Keynote lecture
Ada Rapoport-Albert (University College London)
"They laud his Mother Mary, entreat her and pray to her, for she is the counterpart of the Holy Shekhinah": A Sabbatean View of Divine Femininity against the Background of Marian Piety
- 18.00-18.30 Respondent
Veerle Fraeters (Ruusbroecgenootschap, University of Antwerp)
- 18.30-19.00 **Discussion**
- 19.00 *Conference dinner (speakers only)*

Israel Yuval

The Contribution of Christianity to Rabbinic Judaism

Most of the Talmudic sources are silent about Christianity. However, it can be argued that this silence does not reflect an indifferent stand to Christianity, but rather an attempt to ignore it. Even more so: there are good reasons to assume that while the articulated discourse ignored Christianity, the challenge posed by Christianity motivated the Rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud to create counter-institutions and discourses. Self-definition is a lengthy and open process that is based not only on rejection, but also on the acquisition of ideas, religious rites and symbols from competitive surroundings. The unique creativity of Rabbinic Judaism in a rural and small population within the constrained space of the Galilee between the third and the fifth centuries is the result of the blurred borders between the two religions.

Indeed, the origin of some central religious ideas in Rabbinic Judaism - such as the creation of the Oral Law - can be related to the existence of Christianity as a rival religion. The adoption of the Old Testament by Christianity obliged the Rabbis to create a new sign of distinction. Whereas Christianity defined itself by the New Testament, the Rabbis responded by creating their own new, second Torah, the Oral Law, that was given orally to Moses at Mount Sinai together with the Written Torah.

In my lecture I will discuss a few more examples of new Rabbinic religious ideas, whose origins can be traced to Early Christianity: the creation of a new sacred text, the organization of sacred time and the ideology of atonement and salvation in Rabbinic Judaism.

Israel Jacob Yuval is Professor of Jewish History and Academic Director of the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. His research focuses in particular on the mutual perception of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Yuval believes that the confrontation with Christianity was the driving force behind the Judaism of Midrash and Talmud: "Where similarities between Judaism and Christianity are always observed, it is likely to be Christian influence on Judaism and not vice versa, unless the Jewish roots of the phenomenon in question are demonstrably earlier than the Christian." His seminal book on the topic is: *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (University of California Press 2008).

Respondent: **Bernd Witte**

Bernd Witte is Professor Emeritus of German Literature at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf. From 2002 to 2006 he served as Dean of the Division of Humanities. From 2000 until 2010 he was President of the International Walter Benjamin Society. In 2007 he was elected Chair of the Board of the Freundeskreis des Goethe Museums Düsseldorf. Professor Witte has published extensively on a wide range of literary and cultural topics. His latest book publication is *Jüdische Tradition und literarische Moderne. Heine, Buber, Kafka, Benjamin*, 2007.

Ada Rapoport-Albert

"They laud his Mother Mary, entreat her and pray to her, for she is the counterpart of the Holy Shekhinah": A Sabbatean View of Divine Femininity against the Background of Marian Piety

The lecture begins with a review of recent scholarly opinion on possible Christian influences on the kabbalistic construction of a feminine hypostasis of the divine. It then proceeds to examine the overt associations between the Virgin Mary and the female Shekhinah in the messianic Kabbalah of several seventeenth century Sabbatian heretics, and the eighteenth-century syncretistic cult of Jacob and Eva Frank.

Ada Rapoport-Albert is Professor Emerita of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London, where she headed the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies for the past decade. Her doctoral dissertation was a study of the process by which the Hasidic movement developed from a small, loosely affiliated group of charismatic individuals into a fully institutionalised mass movement of spiritual revival in Judaism. Since then Prof. Rapoport-Albert has published many studies of Hasidism. She is currently a member of the international team of scholars engaged in the collaborative production of a major new history of Hasidism, working under the auspices of the Simon Dubnow Institute in Leipzig. Her other interests include gender issues in the history of Judaism, especially the gendered perception of the ascetic life and its implications for the Jewish mystical tradition. She is currently completing a book entitled *Female Bodies - Male Souls: Asceticism and Gender in the Jewish Mystical Tradition*, and her *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi, 1666-1816* was published by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in 2011.

Respondent: **Veerle Fraeters**

Veerle Fraeters is Associate Professor at the Ruusbroec Institute of the University of Antwerp. Her research is in medieval mysticism and alchemy, with a special focus on the Dutch tradition and on visionary literature. Recent publications include, as author, the chapter *Visio* in the *Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism* (2012), and, as editor (with M.-E. Gongora and Th. de Hemptinne), the volume *Speaking to the Eye. Sight and Insight through Text and Image (1150-1650)* (Brepols, 2013). She is also editor (with Frank Willaert) of the new edition with Dutch translation and commentary of Hadewijch's *Verzamelde Werken (Complete Works)* of which the prize winning first volume *Liederen (Songs)* came out in 2009 (Historische Uitgeverij Groningen).

Itzhak Benyamini

Beyond the Hyphenated Jew: The “Judeo-Christian” in the Wake of Jean-François Lyotard

In my lecture I will discuss the concept of "the Jews" and inquire about the compounding hyphen in the concept of the "Judeo-Christian" in the work of Jean-François Lyotard. I will explore the wonderment that forms the basic axis of Lyotard's discussion of this concept and will then analyze the specific function the hyphen serves in connecting the concept "Judeo" with the term "Christian" and will address the possibility of disconnecting the two terms.

In light of the theological and historical co-dependency that has inextricably interwoven these two religious traditions, I will suggest thinking about the relations between Judaism and Christianity in a manner more complex than focusing on either their connectedness or their disconnectedness via the hyphen. Additional relations, which are not bound to the graphics of the compounding hyphen or its negation through strict separation, must be considered if we are to fully understand these two traditions. These alternatives allow for a more nuanced and multidimensional approach that circumvents the graphic and linear nature of the hyphen. This perspective attempts to take into account the repressed, accepting that no simple graphic sign can do justice to the embroiled relations between these two legacies.

Itzhak Benyamini lectures at University of Haifa and at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. The author (in Hebrew) of: "Paul and Birth of the Sons' Community" (2007), "Lacan's Discourse - The Revision of Psychoanalysis and Judeo-Christian Ethics" (2009) and "The Laughter of Abraham: Interpretation of Genesis as Critical Theology" (2011). In English: "Narcissist Universalism", 2012. Forthcoming a German translation to "Narcissist Universalism", 2014.

Michael F. Mach

Modern Jewish/Christian Theologies

Since the rise of the "Wissenschaft des Judentums", several attempts have been made amongst German and English speaking Jewish scholars to develop "Jewish Theology" - be it in a broader understanding of the term or restricted to the (mostly) rabbinic corpus of writings. Yet, these "theologies" actually follow a structure that traces back to the "Summa theologica" of Thomas Aquinas. This structure served Christianity so well that later Protestant theologians, up to this day, have not veered from it: From the preliminaries, via de Deo, de creatione up to de salvatione, and so on ..

Yet does such a structure serve Jewish theology well? Judaism, at least from the rabbinic period onward, does not aim primarily at salvation (though not denying it either, but minimizing its significance as much as possible) because there are other far more urgent concerns within Jewish theology.

Three exceptions to the above-mentioned rule deserve special attention: the writings of Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig and Jacob Neuser. Their different structures offer a contrast to the more typical approaches.

Michael F. Mach: studies in Tübingen, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv. Ph.D. 1987 in Tel Aviv, "Development of the Jewish Belief in Angels in Second Temple Period". Since 1987 lecturer, later senior lecturer at Tel Aviv University, Department for Jewish Philosophy (today part of the Department of Jewish Cultural Studies). 1998 – 2003 head of the department. Main interests: Jewish Thought in Second Temple Period (Apocalypticism, Qumran, New Testament, early Jewish Mysticism) and some modern Jewish thinkers (as Freud and Buber).

Jacques Haers

Theology: Critical when Attempting to Discern Emerging Creativity

Theologies become critical when they display willingness to enter conflicts within religious institutions and with societal injustices. Such conflicts may be very painful, but often also allow for renewed understandings of religion and creative articulations of the tensions between religion and society. Within the Christian traditions, many of such critical theologies have developed over time. I want to have a look at some recent examples (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dorothee Sölle and Ignacio Ellacuría) so as to better understand how such critical theologies are constructed and develop. Here, the perspective of conflict-studies will provide us with a methodological tool.

I will argue for a critical theology concerning the idea of a "Judeo-Christian tradition" that can shed light on the creative potentials of Judeo-Christian conversations and on the question of the meaning of reconciliation between traditions.

Jacques Haers (Leuven, 1956) is a Jesuit. He is academic director of UCSIA and member of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven. There he belongs to the Research Unit Systematic Theology. Since 2001, he chairs the Faculty's Centre for Liberation Theologies. Between 2001 and 2007, he was responsible for the KU Leuven's interdisciplinary and international Advanced Master Programme in Conflict and Sustainable Peace. He studied mathematics, philosophy and theology, and obtained his doctorate in theology at Oxford University on the idea of creation in Origen's thought. He has been teaching at the Centrum for Kerkelijke Studies (Leuven), at the Centre Sèvres (Paris) and at the pastoral institute Lumen Vitae (Brussels).

Emmanuel Nathan

Two Pauls, Three Opinions: The Jewish Paul between Law and Love

It is hard to imagine biblical studies ever having disputed the Jewishness of such key figures as Jesus and Paul. But the sad fact is that the notion of 'Jesus the Jew' only became a commonplace in New Testament studies in the latter half of the twentieth century. The same can be said of the Apostle Paul, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, paradigm shifts in Pauline studies, and contributions from scholars in early Jewish studies playing key roles. My question, however, is whether the 'Jewish' Paul that has now become trendy does not cover up a continuing fundamental debate: the 'halakhic', proto-rabbinic, Paul opposite a more 'apocalyptic', mystical, Paul suggests a continuing struggle in Pauline studies to situate the Apostle between 'Law' and 'Love', and – within such a dynamic – goes to the heart of the struggle between demarcating the supposed differences between Judaism and the Christianity that has emerged from it.

Emmanuel Nathan is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow of the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO – Vlaanderen) and a member of the Research Unit of Biblical Studies at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. His doctoral research was a study of Paul's 'new covenant' language in Second Corinthians viewed in terms of the later parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. His post-doctoral research focuses on studying the Pauline language of affliction and suffering from the perspective of disability studies, as well as whether Paul's use of prophetic motifs can be better understood within the framework of evolving notions of prophecy in Second Temple Jewish movements. In July 2013, Emmanuel will take up a position as Lecturer in Biblical Studies at the Australian Catholic University in Sydney.

Yitzhak Melamed

Spinoza and Paul: Christians and Pharisees

In this presentation I argue that Paul was Spinoza's most appreciated biblical author. I show that Spinoza considered himself and Paul as the only true Christians who believed in "Christ according to the Spirit" (as opposed to modern Christians whom Spinoza presents as Pharisees or as believers in "Christ according to the Flesh"). Then, I will attempt to explain the reasons for Spinoza's deep sympathy for Paul.

Yitzhak Melamed is a professor in the philosophy department at Johns Hopkins University. He works on early modern philosophy, German idealism, medieval philosophy, and some issues in contemporary metaphysics (time, mereology, and identity). Recently he won the ACLS Burkhardt (2011), NEH (2010), and Humboldt (2011) fellowships for his next major book project: *Spinoza and German Idealism: A Metaphysical Dialogue*. His book, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, appeared recently with Oxford University Press.

Vivian Liska

Readings of Kafka and the Law from Walter Benjamin to Giorgio Agamben

References to the law pervade Kafka's writings, but their meaning remains elusive. This indeterminacy has inspired modernist thinkers from Scholem and Benjamin to Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben who invoke Kafka in their reflections on Judaism and justice. A critical exploration of their views about the role and function of the law in Kafka's writings challenges the notion that Judaism is a religion of a law so strict that its demands cannot be fulfilled, in contrast with Christianity, which is seen as a humane religion of love. A key part of this investigation focuses on the conjunction of the Halachic and the Haggadic – respectively the legal and the narrative – component in the Talmud.

Vivian Liska is professor of German Literature and Director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. She is also Visiting Professor at NYU since 2006 and Distinguished Visiting Professor at Hebrew University, Jerusalem on a regular basis. Her main academic work focuses on Modern German Literature, Literary Theory and German-Jewish Thought. Liska's critical work has dealt with, among others, Walter Benjamin, Franz Kafka, Hanna Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, Maurice Blanchot and Theodor Adorno. Her most recent book publications include: *Giorgio Agamben's leerer Messianismus* (2008), *When Kafka says We. Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature* (2009) and *Fremde Gemeinschaft. Deutsch-jüdische Literatur der Moderne* (2011). In 2011 she was awarded the Cross of Honor for Science and the Arts from the Republic of Austria.

Warren Zeev Harvey

The Judeo-Christian Tradition's Five Others

Since the term "Judeo-Christian tradition" became current in the USA in the 1940s, it has been used to contrast with five different Others: (1) the Christian tradition; (2) Hellenism; (3) modern secularism; (4) other religious traditions, e.g., Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, or Islamic; and (5) the Judeo-Christo-Islamic tradition, i.e., the Abrahamic or monotheistic tradition.

In the 1940s and 50s, the term was used by Jews and liberal Christians to counter Christian exclusivism. A Christian might have said, "The Christian tradition teaches love of neighbor." Such a statement could have been understood to mean that the Jewish tradition does not teach it. Jews argued that Judaism teaches love of neighbor, as in Leviticus 19:18. Thus, one should say, "The Judeo-Christian tradition teaches love of neighbor." This ecumenical use of the term was intended to combat anti-Semitism and give Judaism an equal status among American religions.

In recent years, as the Muslim population has grown in the West, the term has often been used to exclude Islam. Islamophobes argue that Western culture is Judeo-Christian, not Judeo-Christo-Islamic. However, Medieval philosophy provides a fine illustration of the Judeo-Christo-Islamic tradition.

Warren Zeev Harvey is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he has taught since 1977. He studied philosophy at Columbia University (PhD 1973), writing his dissertation on "Hasdai Crescas' Critique of the Theory of the Acquired Intellect" (1973). He taught in the Department of Philosophy at McGill University before moving to Jerusalem. He has written more than 150 studies on medieval and modern Jewish philosophers, e.g., Maimonides, Crescas, and Spinoza. Among his publications: *Physics and Metaphysics in Hasdai Crescas* (Amsterdam 1998). He is an EMET Prize laureate (2009).

Elizabeth Harris

Idolatry or a Path of Compassion? Jewish and Christian attitudes to Buddhism

This presentation will examine whether it is possible to speak of a Judeo-Christian approach to other religious traditions through the case study of Jewish and Christian encounters with Buddhism. It will begin with the nineteenth century, when Buddhism became the object of serious study in the West and will end with contemporary patterns of encounter. The nineteenth century encounter will be illustrated through the writings of scholar missionaries in Sri Lanka, who were among the first westerners to translate Buddhist texts. Their attitude was exclusivist and condemnatory. In the early twentieth century, a new attitude developed which spoke of the fulfillment of Buddhism through Christianity, an attitude that can broadly be categorized as inclusivist. As the twentieth century progressed, Christian and Jewish dialogue with Buddhism developed to such an extent that there developed a pluralist approaches towards the 'other' that was Buddhism, expressed through concepts such as complementarity, mutuality and co-operation for the common good. The phenomenon of a Buddhist-Christian perspective emerged and conversions to Buddhism from both Judaism and Christianity began to occur. The presentation will conclude by reflecting on whether the presented data suggests that divergences between Jewish and Christian approaches to the religious 'other' are greater than convergences and why this may be.

Elizabeth Harris is an Associate Professor in the Comparative Study of Religion within the Department of Theology, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Arts and Humanities Faculty of Liverpool Hope University specializing in Buddhist Studies. Previous to this, she was the Executive Secretary for Inter Faith Relations for the Methodist Church in Britain, whilst also teaching within the Graduate Institute of Theology and Religion of the University of Birmingham and, as a Visiting Lecturer, at the University of Lund. She also was a Research Fellow at Westminster College, Oxford. She has published in a wide number of areas but has a particular interest in Theravada Buddhism, Buddhist-Christian encounter and Buddhism in Sri Lanka. She is currently President of the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies and Moderator of the Inter Faith Theology Advisory Group of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

Anya Topolski

The 'Judeo-Christian' Tradition: A Genealogy of Europe's Identity Crisis

The descriptor 'Judeo-Christian', applied to tradition, heritage, faith, etc., had both a convoluted chronicle and content. Coined in Europe in the 1830's by F.C. Baur, the founder of the German Protestant Tübingen School, the term's popularity faltered in the late 19th century and was replaced by the descriptors Aryan and Semitic (peoples, races, cultures, etc.). At the onset of the First World War most traces of the term Judeo-Christian had disappeared, both in intellectual and popular discourse, which is why many scholars argue it was born in the US. This American re-birth also led to its re-definition. What Baur meant by Judeo-Christian is precisely contrary to its American usage. In a nutshell while the former term speaks of supersessionism, the latter seeks to overcome this violently antisemitic theological construction. However, a closer investigation of the term shows that even the latter "well-intentioned" usage is problematic. In the first part of my presentation, I will briefly consider the different origins of the term Judeo-Christian in order to demonstrate, in the second part of my presentation, how its current usage in Europe, as a means of excluding Islam, remains true to its European exclusionary genealogy, albeit masked by its supposedly inclusive American usage.

Anya Topolski is a FWO postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy of the Higher Institute of Philosophy at the KU Leuven, Belgium. She studied biochemistry and philosophy at McGill university in Canada and in 2008 defended her PhD thesis entitled: A Political Ethics of Intersubjectivity: Between Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas and the Judaic (KU Leuven). Her thesis was awarded the 2009 Auschwitz Stichting prize and is being prepared for publication. Her current research involves the deconstruction of the discourse of Judeo-Christianity in relation to European identity formation and its symbolic role in propagating Islamophobia.

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