



ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION

The 2023 Annual Proceedings of the ASSR

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2023 Annual Meeting

March 3-5, 2023

The Year 2023 Proceedings of the ASSR

The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion

Presents

*The Year 2023
Annual Proceedings of the ASSR*

Edited by:

*Darren J. N. Middleton
and
Jon K. Loessin*

*Annual Meeting
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President's Note

I am delighted to bring you the *Proceedings* of The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion (ASSR). I am now in my second year as ASSR President, my first as editor of the *Proceedings*, and I would be remiss if I failed to celebrate the long and distinguished legacy of Jon K. Loessin, friend and colleague to so many of us across the years. His generous-hearted as well as wise approach to curating our work, and for so very long, has not gone unnoticed.

The *Proceedings* offer an instructive array of papers and presentations from both our perennial authors and presenters as well as a host of new academic talents who bring with them fresh topics and innovative approaches. In addition to our professional academic papers, the ASSR also includes student papers in the *Proceedings* as submitted and presented at the annual meeting, and in addition to the Frank P. Forwood Award for Excellence in Presented Research for professional papers, two student awards are now available—the Harry Hale Prize for Graduate and Undergraduate Research.

The quality of these *Proceedings* discloses the outstanding work that has been accomplished by the efforts of many who participate and promote our meetings through research, writing, attending our sessions, and sponsorship via generous donations and the purchase of this collection. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helps to make the ASSR what it has been, what it is, and what it hopes to become. Joining the ASSR only costs \$20.00 yearly (or a one-time \$100 lifetime membership) and we value your support and participation in our yearly sessions and helping to make them successful by writing and presenting papers, chairing sessions, contributing to the *Proceedings*, and attending the presentations of others. It is important for our future that every member of the ASSR not only encourages new membership at every opportunity but solicits scholars throughout the colleges, universities, and organizations at which you reside to become involved in our group through chairing sessions, writing and submitting papers, or serving as an officer.

I hope all of you have a productive year and the ASSR will be looking forward to your participation in the ASSR in 2023-2024. Be sure to visit us online at: www.assronline.org, complete with online publications of papers from past meetings (see the **Archives** on the site). Hopefully you will share this site with colleagues and students alike. Thanks.

Appreciatively,

Darren J. N. Middleton, 2023-2023 ASSR President/Co-Editor

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Hans Ehrenberg and Blaise Pascal: Enigmatic Witnesses to the Task of Faith in Past and Future

Jerry L. Summers
East Texas Baptist University

Hans Phillip Ehrenberg (1883-1958) was from 1925 to 1937 the pastor of an urban industrial German *Evangelische* Church parish with thousands of members. Loved and respected by his working- and middle-class parishioners during his twelve years as a pastor, for others he was “that Jew pastor” who should not be in a German pulpit. He suffered rising persecution, but he built up his congregation and witnessed to the truth during a period of national crisis. While he lived his contributions were important and his role in the German church struggle was clear. If, as a Christian of Jewish birth and heritage, his thinking and actions were wise and exceptional, then his life and service deserve our attention today. In recent years Ehrenberg’s life story and intellectual work have been emerging as scholars have begun to assess his contributions.¹

This essay is an attempt to explain Ehrenberg’s attention to three interrelated concerns for his time and ours: first, the “Jewish Question” and the integrity of the German Protestant Church from 1933 to 1945; second, his leadership as a founder of the Confessing Church movement; and third, his ecumenical engagements. Suited to these efforts he presents Blaise Pascal as a confessional model and companion in dialogue.

Hans Ehrenberg grew up in a *bürgerlich* or middle-class German Jewish merchant family. He received a privileged education, including early tutoring in religion and morals. He earned several University degrees, including two doctorates, and lectured in philosophy at the University of Heidelberg before and after the Great War. He was baptized into the German Protestant Church in 1909. He married Else Anna Zimmermann in 1912. He served Imperial Germany as an artillery lieutenant for four years. After the war he resumed his professorial duties and his habit of integrating theology with philosophy in richly humanistic lectures and publications. An active churchman, he wrote for lay discipleship. Politically engaged, he was a Christian Socialist. In 1925 Ehrenberg resigned his post as professor after receiving ordination in the Evangelical Church of the old-Prussian Union. On these events swung his great midlife change. After an internship period, having been made pastor of the Pauluskirche, Bochum and highly acclaimed at his installation ceremonies, he

¹The scholars series of the Hans Ehrenberg Society: For example, Günter Brakelmann, ed., *Hans Ehrenberg: Ein Judenchristliches Schicksal in Deutschland*, 2 vols., (Waltrop, Germany: Verlag Hartmut Spenner, 1997); a compendium: Traugott Jähnichen and Andreas Losch, eds., *Hans Ehrenberg als Grenzgänger zwischen Philosophie und Theologie*, Hans Ehrenberg-Studien 1 (Kamen, Germany: Hartmut Spenner, 2017); the scholars series of the Kirchenkrises Bochum; and the series Evangelischen Forums Westfalen and Evangelischen Stadtakademie Bochum: Manfred Keller and Jens Murken, *Das Erbe des Theologen Hans Ehrenberg: Eine Zwischenbilanz* (Berlin & Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009).

proved himself unusually capable as a preacher, teacher-catechist, public lecturer, and church district organizer until 1937. In that year the laws and insistence of the Third Reich achieved his removal from pastoral office, one of two Jewish-Christian pastors in Westphalia. Having endured years of official pressure to resign, he accepted retirement, despite his positive record and largely against the will of his parishioners.² He was then fifty-four and had been married twenty-five years to Else Zimmermann; their teen-aged children were Juliane and Andrew.

On the day after the Nazi national pogrom (*Kristallnacht*) of November 9, 1938, Ehrenberg was arrested and transported to the Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he remained until late March. He was the last of the *Kristallnacht* internees to be let go from Sachsenhausen, ill, having been near death twice. He and his family took refuge in England for seven years, escaped Germany through a rescue network coordinated with Bishop George Bell of Chichester. With kind support from the churches in England, Hans and Else found outlets for service and affirmation of continuing purpose for them. Their exile allowed Hans to return to his scholarship in practical theology. He served in the ecumenical movement, preached, led refugee recovery groups, taught discipleship, and published many articles and a few books. When he and Else returned to Germany in 1947; their children remained to make their way in higher education and service in England and India.³

In Germany he resumed his work not as a pastor but as a lecturer, ecumenist, occasional preacher, and mentor in adult education. He published frequently in the years before his death in 1958 at Heidelberg.

Reflecting on his life up to 1943, Ehrenberg prized the lessons of previous activities and service. He did not consider himself exceptional, only that he fully attended to the tasks given him along the way. His accomplishments did not define him, but his manner and strength of response to life's circumstances and events revealed his character and motivations. In his autobiography of the same year, he wished "to disclose myself as an inhabitant of the no-man's-land of to-day," whose responses could make him interesting and understandable.⁴ In no situation did Hans Ehrenberg's character and motivation play more important roles than in the three

² Interpretations differ as to whether Ehrenberg finally relented to retire or requested his retirement; both were probably true. His retirement, authorized May 8, 1937, took effect on July 1. "11. August: Brief des Konsistoriums an den EOK," in Hans Ehrenberg, *Autobiographie eines Deutschen Pfarrers*, Günter Brakelmann, ed. (Waltrop: Hartmut Spenner, 1999), 329. Also see "Hans Ehrenberg's Request for Retirement," *Widerstand!? Evangelische Christinnen und Christen im Nationalsozialismus*, Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelischen Kirche von Westfalen, February 7, 2023, <https://en.evangelischer-widerstand.de/html/view.php?type=dokument&id=263>.

³ Brakelmann, *Judenchristliches Schicksal*, 413-419, 442-445; Karl-Heinz Potthast, "Emigration und Heimkehr: Hans Ehrenbergs "Dritter Lebensabschnitt," in Keller and Murken, *Das Erbe des Theologen Hans Ehrenberg*, 114-127.

⁴ Ehrenberg, *Autobiography of a German Pastor*, 14-16. The personal scholarship and connection of the translator Geraint V. Jones with the Student Christian Movement suggest an active collegial relationship and affinity with Ehrenberg on ecumenism.

endeavors investigated here. His manner of embracing these endeavors as imperative commitments continued to reveal his finely formed mind and spirit.

The Seventy-two Theses on the Jewish-Christian Question

From the 1920s until his death, no problem of theology and church concerned Ehrenberg more than the struggle over the relationship of Jewish Christians to the German Church. During the *Gleichschaltung*, the forced mass coordination of society with the Nazi program, the church governing bodies were not exempt, for they complied too easily with the laws about Jewish Christians.⁵ Pastor Ehrenberg's identification as a dissident developed because in excluding baptized believers of Jewish heritage, the church was fracturing and denying its own foundations in Jesus Christ.⁶

Through persecution and his eventual rejection through forced retirement, Ehrenberg shared the experience of other baptized Germans of Jewish heritage.⁷ Concurrent with the anti-Jewish boycott of April 1, 1933, the new law to "re-establish" the Civil Service included the so-called Aryan Paragraph, the national mandate that the churches remove "non-Aryan" ministers from their official positions, just as Jews were being systematically removed from their places in society and the national economy. The provinces and cities added their own laws to the Reich exclusions for employment in education, the professions, the trades and fine arts, personal businesses. These Nazi measures, the exclusionary *Judenpolitik*, had a comprehensive shattering effect, embittering and benumbing Jews from the lowest to the highest classes. Jews who understood the dread prospects and could afford to leave Germany soon did so.⁸

⁵ Victoria J. Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 30-3.

⁶ Juliane H. John and E. C. John, *"To Tell of the Struggle is a Struggle": Resistance, Protest and Witness during the Third Reich* (Bangalore, India: St. Paul's printers, Author-published, 1999), 69-70. Juliane Hanna John (1923-1996) is the daughter of Hans and Else Ehrenberg. Also, Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 35; Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 35, 93.

⁷ Abbreviated copy of "The Law for the Restoration of Professional Civil Service" (1933, April 7), May 17, 2023, <https://www.yadvashem.org/docs/restoration-of-professional-civil-service.html>; Also at GHDI-German History in Documents and Images, at: https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=2159. The succession of new laws implemented the general principles of the Program of the National Socialist German Workers Party, especially Point 4, which demanded exclusion of Jews from citizenship: "Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party," May 17, 2023, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/nsdappro.asp>; Coren, Cina. "Nürnberg Laws." *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, 2020, May 1, 2023, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=ers&AN=89403079&site=eds-live>; John J. Michalczyk, *Nazi Law: From Nuremberg to Nuremberg* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018). On the pervasive influence of the international eugenics movement in combination with Antisemitism: Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill & London: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1995), 1-21, esp. 16-19.

⁸ "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (April 7, 1933), May 15, 2023, https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1520; "George Messersmith's

The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 and later listed new criteria for defining “non-Aryans”. The “First Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law” revoked full citizenship from full Jews and half-Jews. Decorated World War I combat veterans (Ehrenberg was one) and senior professionals were not exempted, and state pensioners were left with nothing. By 1936, when Adolf Hitler spoke frequently of the Jews as a “criminal race,” a genocide was already under way.⁹

Ehrenberg’s personal risks and reasons resembled those of others when the *Judenpolitik* transformed his personal and family life. Enforced against him, the Aryan Paragraph guaranteed his office as pastor would end. Yet with support from his congregation and other pastors, he withstood the Nazis’ threats of coercion and the church bureaucracy’s pressure on him until mid-1937. The direct threat to his family was most palpable. His wife Else was born of Evangelical non-Jews, so their children were *Mischlinge*, half-Jews as vulnerable as he. Worse still, the Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor prohibited marriage between Jews and half-Jews—what if it were invoked against them retroactively?¹⁰

In September 1933, Pastor Martin Niemöller initiated the *Pfarrernotbund* (Pastors’ Emergency League) as a response to the Aryan Laws and the Reich Church constitution’s “Aryan Clause” that excluded Jewish Christians from church offices. Most pastors rejected this obvious violation of the church’s confession, but most were silent. Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer sent a protest letter to Reich Bishop Müller. Some 2,000 pastors met in the Confessing Synod in 1934 and in late May signed the Barmen Declaration that the Swiss theologian Karl Barth had co-authored with Hans Asmussen and Thomas Breit among a larger committee. At Barmen many pastors balked at the Barmen statements that opposed the Aryan Laws, but most signed.¹¹

Report to the State Department on the ‘Present Status of the Anti-Semitic Movement in Germany’ (September 21, 1933)”, May 15, 2023, https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1522 .

⁹ Avraham Barkai, “Exclusion and Persecution: 1933-1938, and Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Jewish Life under National Socialism,” in Michael A. Meyer, ed., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 4, *Renewal and Destruction: 1918-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 199, 202-5, 211, 214-15; 284-5. The definition of genocide (including the term itself) most relevant to this account is that of Raphaël Lemkin, usefully introduced at “Lemkin on Genocide, Prevention, and the Law,” Raphaël Lemkin Genocide Prevention Program, Center for Peacemaking Practice of the Carter School, Retrieved 2023, May 17), February 15, 2022, <https://lemkinprogram.gmu.edu/lemkin>.

¹⁰ Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, September 15, 1935,” May 17, 2023, <https://www.yadvashem.org/docs/nuremberg-law-for-protection-of-german-blood-1935.html>.

¹¹ Friedrich Strickert, “The Pastors’ Emergency League and Authority,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 2:3 (June 1975), 159-66; Hans Ehrenberg, “72 Leitsätze zur judenchristlichen Frage,” in Brakelmann, *Evangelische Kirche in Bochum 1933: Zustimmung und Widerstand* (Norderstedt: Evangelische Kirchenkreis Bochum and Verlag Books on Demand, 2013), 104-5 (hereafter “EKB:Zustimmung”; also Brakelmann, *Judenchristliches Schicksal*, 2:138-56; full text of the *Theses* in Ehrenberg, *Autobiographie*, 354-62; “Hans Ehrenbergs 72 Leitsätze zur Juden-christlichen Frage,” in Kurt Dietrich Schmidt, ed., *Die Bekenntnisse und Grundsätzlichen Äusserungen zur Kirchenfrage des Jahres 1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934), 66-73.

One factor initially influencing the Barmen response to the “German Christians”¹² was Ehrenberg’s *Seventy-two Theses on the Jewish-Christian Question*. The *Seventy-two Theses* strengthened the determination of Protestant pastors to oppose the new law concerning the Jews. In the last instance, the Barmen Declaration, however, failed to address the Jewish Question, even for the church. Its unifying force went only so far, tripping on the Antisemitism present even in the church.¹³

Ehrenberg attached deep and urgent meaning to *The Seventy-two Theses*, knowing that its publication could further inflame the Nazis against him, especially his old acquaintances in the Gestapo. His quarrel was, appropriately, first with the church, and he knew to respond reasonably and confessionally to the fanatical German Christian. In the preface to the *Theses*, Ehrenberg identified the Right and Left-wing threats, Fascism and Marxism, as fruits of the Enlightenment, Liberalism, and Idealism. He stood against extreme politics. Conversely, he stood for proper church teachings. The scriptures and traditions did not tie the life of religious faith to one’s ethnicity in Race and Blood, to faith rooted in the German soil, and to Germany’s exaltation as manifest deity. The modern, nationalist German state that emerged from the authoritarian side of the “Spirit of 1789” accounted for Marxist and Nazi extremes, secularist creations that perverted the church and state relationship. Violating the sacred and revealed Scriptures and the souls of the people, they denied the role of the people of Israel in salvation history, and rewrote church history and traditions to suit their social and political agendas.¹⁴

The *Theses* focus on several themes. Theses 6-13 speak to the peculiar presence of Israel among the nations as the chosen people of God. Christ’s advent and the Christian millennia never dismissed or replaced Israel. It is right that Israel must be able to worship and live under the nations, even though they endure the oppression of Antisemitism and the seduction of “Philosemitism”, forms of disobedience to God. Christians will always debate about the validity of the Old and the New Covenants. Ehrenberg extended the Jewish dilemma of life among the gentiles to the crisis of the German Jews under persecution. Crucially, the objective of the National Socialists to expel the Jews completely, even from the church, fit the ultranationalist orthodoxy that Jews could be only Jews and no more. Christian conversion, confession, and baptism were suddenly nullified; a Jewish “baptized, confessed believer in Christ,” could not share in the life of the church. Under an autocratic government, “. . . the Christ-believing Jew has been included in national repudiation

¹² The term here refers to the members of the Nazi-aligned Faith Movement of German Christians—the *Deutsche Christen*.

¹³ Brakelmann, *Judenchristliches Schicksal*, 2:137-138. During the weeks after the Bochum Confession was published, Ehrenberg composed the original *Leitsätze* (the first thirteen) in the parsonage study, and a first draft edition in July 1933. The August second edition included textual revisions and supplemental comments indicating that Ehrenberg was fully ready “to take into account the results of his discussions with the brothers.” With other minor revisions, its publication in late summer 1933 showed its central importance for Ehrenberg.

¹³ Brakelmann, *EKB:Zustimmung*, 104-5; also *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 2:138-9.

¹⁴ Brakelmann, *EKB:Zustimmung*, 104-5; also *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 2:138-9.

and alienation.” Ehrenberg’s pleading question is, “Why has the church kept silent and said nothing?”¹⁵

Theses 14-22 tackle the contrast between Antisemites (to them the Jews are a calamity) and the Christian gospel that acknowledges “All salvation comes from the Jews.” It is the heart of the problem for the church. In God’s purposes Christ Jesus, the Son of God (“not a national messiah”), was crucified (No. 14). The anger of the Jews and the nations burns toward the nonnegotiable, unrestricted “unification through atonement” of Jew and gentile¹⁶ in Christ Jesus, spiritually and bodily is as between the man and wife in the body of Christ (No. 15). Christ is the same for the gentile and for the Jew. As one who belongs to “the kingdom of grace”, the Jew who believes in Jesus as the Messiah of God embodies and fulfills the entire biblical history of redemption; it is a grievance to the impenitent Jew, the nations, and the national churches (Nos. 18-20).¹⁷

The Seventy-two Theses find a central focus in numbers 58 and 59, which, Günter Brakelmann has observed, originated earlier in Ehrenberg’s writing from 1920 in *The Return of the Heretic: A Guidebook*.¹⁸ He continually admonished the church on these principles:

(No. 58) “The decision in the Jewish-Christian Question speaks to a church with the desire of the people: either a rotten church as a racial clique (without Jewish-Christians) or the true church (gentile Christian and Jewish-Christian, both of them the heirs of Abraham).”

(No. 59) “The church of the German Reformation stands or falls in 1933 with the attempt to alienate the Jewish Christians from itself, entirely or in part. In the last part of the church struggle, the Jewish-Christian Question will be its symbol and heart.”

Ehrenberg urged that the German churches keep historical continuity with the early church and with the place of Israel in salvation history. The struggle was between two conceptions of a national church, one placing nationalism properly in Christ within the church and not as a demonstration of power, soil, blood, and race. The German Christians’ redefinition of a Christian to fit Germanic standards of ethnic heritage offended the true heritage of Christians as children of Abraham, as heirs and worshipers of the God of Israel. The God of the Jews was the same God of Jesus Christ, a fact implicit in the disciples’ call to follow Jesus, their fellow heir, and

¹⁵ Brakelmann, EKB:Zustimmung, 105-111; Judenchristliches Schicksal 2:140-44; Schmidt, Die Bekenntnisse, 67-8.

¹⁶ “Gentile” instead of “heathen” throughout, except for particular emphasis.

¹⁷ Brakelmann, EKB:Zustimmung, 111, 139; Judenchristliches Schicksal 2:145-6.

¹⁸ Hans Ehrenberg, *Die Heimkehr des Ketzers: Eine Wegweisung* (Würzburg: Patmos Verlag, 1920).

not, as the German Christians wanted to have it, the warring hero and model of a Germanic Christianity (Theses 60-72).¹⁹

The Church and Israel

Five years later Ehrenberg repeated his strongest points on the Jewish Question in a document published on Trinity Sunday 1938. He and five other pastors from Bochum and Herne presented the pamphlet, "Church and Israel." They stated, "The church has a duty in the world to comment about the place the Jewish Christian (Christian of Israel) occupies in the church." The inability of the world to comprehend the goodness and firmness of God in election and non-election had produced a solely human understanding (a myth) about God's election of the Jews. The National Socialist narrative misunderstood Israel's election as a positive value-judgment that favored race. The Nazis' negative value judgment was a malicious misunderstanding that used race against the Jews. This contradictory narrative came from unbelief, and unbelief came from self-aggrandizement and blindness to God's true act of election.²⁰

"The Church and Israel" examines the relationship of the teachings on election and non-election in three propositions. First, "As witness to the Lord, the church cannot testify otherwise about the question of Israel, for the church has to bear witness about all questions of revelation." The purposeful mention of the Jewish Question was intended to remind contemporary heretics about the salvation history of Israel and the church. It was the only proper rejoinder to the claims of heretics.²¹

Second, "The church of Jesus Christ may and can never remove itself from its origin, without making itself disappear in this world. The saving reality of the gospel is based in the unity of the New Testament with the Old Testament." Salvation history is consistently whole. All scripture is the Word of God. Israel is the prototype of the church. The church's fundamental calling is the universal calling of the gentiles, but the Jewish-Christian still has remained the original universal and decisive focus of salvation history. The stability of salvation history protects the church from errant teaching and binds the church community to God's promises.²²

Third, "The test of this common theological reflection about the place of salvation history is again the Jewish-Christian Question, . . ." In its relation to the mission to the Jews, following Matthew 28 and the baptismal commission, salvation is extended to the gentiles as well.²³

¹⁹ Brakelmann, *EKB:Zustimmung*, 117.

²⁰ Hans Ehrenberg, "Kirche und Israel," *Autobiographie*, 363-4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 364-6.

²² *Ibid.*, 366-7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 367-370.

“The Church and Israel” posed a question that generally challenged the claims of officials and parishioners in the German Protestant Church, and specifically the German Christians. Why was the word of the church about its members out of Israel different from the word about their members from other ethnic groups? How could such a distinction remain important when the church as a whole had always been a gentile church except for its members with Jewish heritage? The Jewish-Christian Question targeted the question of conversion and was a confessional matter for the church.²⁴

The committee refused to accept the recent proposals for a compromise, a middle position that would handily relegate the “Christian of Israel” to a Jewish-Christian congregation outside of the church. Pastors and lay officials should be ashamed to put baptized members of the church in a corner, an annex, so to speak. The question itself and solutions to it, including segregation, cheapened Christian baptism; the German Christians dismissed outright that the church adopt as *in statu confessionis* (a matter of confessional status, and so vital) the treatment of their baptized brothers and sisters, the Jewish-Christians. “The Jewish-Christian Question has become a confessional question for the church,” they the committee declared. “Otherwise, it remains what it always was: a question of conversion.”²⁵

The timing of “The Church and Israel” must have provoked the Reich authorities as well as church administrators who wanted to avoid inciting conflict with the Nazis. The atmosphere of religion and politics was, if possible, more hostile than had it had been when Ehrenberg published *The Seventy-two Theses* in 1933. Certainly the document “The Church and Israel” was on file and offered further evidence against Ehrenberg before the national pogrom of the Gestapo occurred in November 1938, though it is hard to believe the Nazi authorities needed more “evidence” against the pastor they had troubled during the previous twelve years.

The program to create a solely gentile church (*Heidenkirche*), threatened the common identity of the church as a congregation of gentile and Jewish Christians. It broke with the Judeo-Christian history of redemption and the history and continuity of Christianity. What were the motivations? Besides the sheer discomfort of being seated with Jews in a worship service, a major reason was the fear of the impurity of Aryan German blood, “the danger of race-blurring and race-bastardizing” that might come from allowing Jews to mix with Aryan Germans. So it was in the German Christian churches as they embraced the increasingly restricted definition of “German” to exclude any Jew, regardless of German citizenship and patriotism. The pre-existing influence of these beliefs in German society meant their influence was major and predominant.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 371-2.

²⁵ Ibid., 372-3.

²⁶ Joachim Hossenfelder, “The Original Guidelines of the German-Christian Faith Movement (1932),” in Mary M. Solberg, *A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 50.

According to German Christian teaching, there would be no continuity with the history of Israel: “Christians would no longer be the Children of Abraham, but rather only “fellow Germans” holding a lesser citizenship status as National Socialists defined them. The effect was to damage the proper regard for and worship of the God of Israel. The relationship of Germans to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, Savior and model was stripped of its meaning and associations, so that Jesus himself was just another “fellow German.” Brakelmann writes, “A Germanized Jesuology supplanted Christology.”²⁷

The questions and confessional issues addressed in the “Seventy-two Theses” and “The Church and Israel” displayed Ehrenberg’s sense of personal purpose and mission. That he and any others, comparatively few, resisted by proclaiming truths that had been rejected during the church struggle commands attention because their acts of resistance and speech countered the priorities of the totalitarian state. Ehrenberg commented only briefly on the issue in his autobiography. He did not want the distraction; however, he was open about his own experiences as a non-Aryan minister, the only full non-Aryan pastor in the two-million-member diocese of Westphalia. For himself he fought “thoroughly the fight to retain a non-Aryan minister” with congregational help. Pointedly, he wrote, “I was the one non-Aryan pastor who spoke my mind frankly on this question. When in the summer of 1933 I published my *Seventy-two Theses on the Jewish Christian Question* I was furiously attacked.”²⁸

It was already the case for Ehrenberg and would be for Dietrich Bonhoeffer that the breathless pace of the Nazi takeover and the processes of the *Gleichschaltung* required not one but many statements and discouraged any sense of one’s effectiveness. Their influence did bear fruit, even if it could not overcome the unfolding juggernaut of the ultra-nationalist revolution. While they individually prayed, wrote, and conferred with others, the Reich convention of the Faith Movement of German Christians in Berlin, April 4-6, 1933, produced a spectacle of ultra-nationalist piety and maximal media coverage. As a Nazi mass meeting it appeared to Germans variously as an enthusiastic triumph or a terrifying spectacle, menacing symbolically and experientially in its full aspect. The *Deutsche Christen* meanwhile continued the pressure to combine the church with the *Volksstaat* (ethnic national state) of the national revolution. Vociferously and urgently they demanded the restriction of volunteer and ministry positions to church members of “pure Aryan blood.”²⁹

²⁷ Brakelmann, *EKB:Zustimmung*, 117; *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 2:150-153. Re “The Antidogmatical Church,” including the “myth of the *Volksdeutschen*,” (the dispersed ethnic Germans) see Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 44-54.

²⁸ Ehrenberg, *Autobiography*, 67-8.

²⁹ Marikje Smid, *Deutscher Protestantismus und Judentum 1932-1933* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1990), 430-431, citing Günther van Norden, “Der Deutsche Protestantismus,” in *Monarchie, Republik und Diktatur* 13:4 (1968): 160-64. In this paper I omit comparisons and contrasts between Hans

Developments after 1933 effectively blocked Ehrenberg's opportunities to continue his open witness against German Christian doctrines and their influence in the churches. New laws served to persecute and suppress dissent, and to prosecute contrary and outward opposition as criminal infractions. The Nuremberg Laws included catastrophic anti-Jewish legislation making Ehrenberg and all Jews members of the state but not citizens (singular *Reichsbürger*) with full political rights. "A man who all his life as philosopher, theologian, political publicist, military officer, and citizen," Günter Brakelmann writes, "who had shared responsibility to and for his fatherland, was excluded from full citizenship. He no longer had full national citizenship rights." The path to genocide was in view. Ehrenberg, who regularly published, preached, and spoke in public was forced to stop from late 1934 until he could resume these activities during his English exile after 1939. For the time being, only one refuge remained for him, so long as the church was willing and able to stand with its Jewish Christian officials and congregants. That time was short.³⁰

Ehrenberg and the Confessing Church – 1933-1938

In 1933 the German national election voted extremists into power. In position to do so, the Nazis seized the opportunity for illicit gains in the *Machtergreifung* by which Hitler then had full power. In the same brief period, the *Glaubensbewegung Deutsche Christen*, or "*Faith Movement of German Christians*," was formed from different Christian nationalist groups. Largely modeled on the National Socialist structure and modes, the German Christians still belonged to the German Protestant Church. Their goal was to achieve a comprehensive imperial church fully compliant with the Nazi order. These developments prompted a *Kirchenkampf* or "church struggle" that was to wrack the church from 1933 through the Second World War.³¹

As a Christian pastor of Jewish heritage, Hans Ehrenberg was doubly alarmed, for he already had long-time personal acquaintance with the Gestapo and members of other Nazi forces. It is not difficult to imagine, then, his thoughts and feelings upon hearing or reading the comments of Protestant pastors who applauded the new order and praised the new *Führer*. Their distinctive claims and confessions as Nazis often were hard to distinguish from normal Protestant piety, unless one listened or read carefully. For example, in a published confession, the pastor Johannes

Ehrenberg's work and the valuable contributions of Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer to the confessional witness of the church on the Jewish Question.

³⁰ "Reichsbürgergesetz und Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre ["Nürnberger Gesetze"], 15. September 1935, und die beiden ersten Ausführungsbestimmungen, 14. November 1935," 100(0) Schlüssel Dokumente zur Deutschen Geschichte im 20. Jahrhundert, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, February 8, 2023, https://www.100dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument_de&dokument=0007_nue&object=translation ; The Reich Citizenship Law, and Reich Citizenship Law: First Regulation (1935, November 14) Jewish Virtual Library, February 8, 2023, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-reich-citizenship-law>, and <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-reich-citizenship-law-first-regulation>; Brakelmann, *Judenchristliches Schicksal*, 2:316.

³¹ Solberg, *A Church Undone*, 19-20; re the German Christians: Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 2-20.

Lorentzen expressed his faith in God, the Holy Spirit, and his confidence in prayer. He agreed with the national breakthrough, so his confession would be that of a Christian “S. A. Man” (a member of the Nazis’ *Sturmabteilung*) “or another conscientious follower of Adolf Hitler, at the same time a conscientious Christian.” He “raised his hand to Hitler and the nation in the victory salute, while lifting praying hands to God, the giver of his life and responsibility.” Tens of millions of Germans could say and do the same. His words and actions blended earnest faith with national allegiance, repudiation of the world with sacrificial love to the church and his nation, and affirmed the Way of the Cross against all opposing spirits. For him religion must be dynamic, beautiful, and admirable, though dangerous for its sacrificial commitment.³²

Another confession upheld Christ as the champion for “the nobility of the human spirit” and praised Germany as the model of a new reality, a “new humanity” that would flourish under a secure socio-political order and centralized obedience. Membership in the *Reichskirche* (the Imperial Church) should equate to national citizenship; the church’s legal and official coordination with the state would complete the national glory. Other religious societies and unions should have no official standing, but the state would handle essential operations and resources for them. Roman Catholic Canon Law should be annulled. This example of “Christian nationalism” is unsurprising considering the sentiments alive in German hearts and minds during the period. That a pastor should use such powerful language reveals the great hunger for stability and glory for Germany once again.³³

A better-known standard bearer for the “German Faith” suited to the new order, Julius Reissinger, declared that the German Christians could “achieve our powers in the highest and joyfully enfold them in the ultimate depths of the eternal Godhood.” Whether it originated Protestant Pietism or mystical Eastern Christianity, his language came from the Nazi lectionary. “*Rassen und Völker* are “down to earth,” living demarcations of order, self-contained spheres of life in the creative will of God.” His own German *Volk*³⁴ (ethnic people) and true home was also the home of “true, brotherly disposition and joyful cooperation” to hold everyone together in a common humanity; “the high purpose of God” called the entire nation to “holy duty”. The Germans were to enjoy the natural blessings of God as they kept “clear hearts and childlike openness” in order to expel any “unholy, evil, God-opposing spirit” from their community. Reissinger wrote that the Spirit of God is to “fill us and make us free, driving us to all good and noble works, in service and sacrifice, in battle and sorrow, as in Jesus and other redeeming heroes of God of our own “*Volkes*” (ethnic

³² P. Johannes Lorentzen, originally published in the weekly *Gerohr der Zeit*, republished in *Diesseits und jenseits der Grenze* (Neumünster, May 1933); in Kurt Dietrich Schmidt, ed., *Die Bekenntnisse und grundsätzlichen Ausserungen zur Kirchenfrage des Jahres 1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1934), 38-40.

³³ Ernst Bergmann, “Confessio Germanica oder Deutschapostolikum,” *Die deutsche Nationalkirche* (Breslau 1933), 269; in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 131.

³⁴ The terms *Volk* and others relating to National Socialist and German Christian ideology or teachings are given as such, though with hints initially, less confusing than using nearly untranslatable English terms that cannot convey the meaning adequately.

nation) we ourselves stand great and masterful before the Spirit.” The spirit of the heroic Jesus and other Germans was given voice.³⁵

Reissinger’s affirmations set an early boundary for the church struggle, though he did not mention theological themes that were to cause the most trouble in the future. There were, however, strong indications of new dogmas. The specific teachings about the identity of Christ Jesus as a redeeming hero, the matter of the mysterious and eternal “streaming” Spirit, its driving, moral, “most fruitful unfolding of life,” and Jesus as one among “other redeeming heroes of God” indicates a “Germanization” of Jesus and the activity of the Spirit as uniquely active in the German *Volk*. Reissinger offered praise that the soil of the country held special status from God.

Appearing later in 1933, Willo Mahr’s article in a Nordic world view magazine lauded the “divine becoming” of the Nordic people in the “unity of ‘Blut und Glauben’ (Blood and Belief).” The Nordic German understands the divine “eternal oneness” by understanding Nature, and human unity with the cosmic “All”. Its realization in national unity, its nature bound *Volkheit* (“ethnic characteristics of the German/Nordic people”) manifests the supra-personal creation of divine Becoming on the earth. The one who participates belongs to “the eternal Becoming,” and holy living serves “the form and unity of life of the *Volkheit*, as a matter of duty and conscience toward God.³⁶ Much had been given, and much was required.

Confessions and statements from both sides of the church struggle flowed from Germany’s presses to the nation. Beyond the few other examples of German Christian Confessions were statements and pledges offered at mass meetings, such as “The Resolution of the Greater-Berlin District of the Faith Movement of ‘German Christians,’” (November 13, 1933);³⁷ and, among others, the manuscript “Guidelines of the Faith Movement of ‘German Christians,’” by Joachim Hossenfelder, of May 26, 1932, the previous year.³⁸ That statement had provoked a response from Pastor Dr. von Rabenau of Berlin-Schöneberg, who directed his comments against those of Hossenfelder. Von Rabenau defended orthodox theological views kept in the Lutheran confessions and in the common practices of lay participation and church government.³⁹

The German Christian documents varied in their use of the Bible. Generally, they gave priority to the New Testament while recognizing the Old Testament as valuable

³⁵ Julius Reissinger, “Deutscher Glaube,” *Nürnberg Land* (May 1933); in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 132-3.

³⁶ Willo Mahr, “Religiöse Richtsätze für völkische Deutsche” *Die Sonne: Monatschrift für Nordische Weltanschauung und Lebengestaltung*, Issue 9 (Jahrgang 10, September 1933): 435; in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 133.

³⁷ “Entschliessung des Gaus Gross-Berlin der Glaubensbewegung ‘Deutsche Christen,’” *Junge Kirche* (Jahrgang 1, 1933): 312; in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 133-134.

³⁸ “Richtlinien der Glaubensbewegung ‘Deutsche Christen,” (Manuscript, May 26, 1932), in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 135-136.

³⁹ “Zwölf Leitsätze für die Arbeit der evangelischen Kirche in der Gegenwart,” (original, Herbst 1932); in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 137-140.

for understanding the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Savior. Some minimized or rejected the Old Testament. Many praised the specific action of divine law in the basis of the separation of races and in the form of the Führer, Adolf Hitler, and the National Socialist state formed under him. That divine law also operated in the awakened history of Blood and Soil of the *Volkes*, in the role of the German Christians in forming the German National Church and the Nazi state. They affirmed the power of faith in God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ (in that order) as the source of grace, forgiveness, and power to form the German community and the state. In the believing German congregation “the fire of holy sacrificial preparation” was burning.⁴⁰ Such symbolic fires brought to mind Nazi bonfires and rituals that went with them.

Ehrenberg and other pastors responded soberly to confessions and guidelines such as these. Their sense of alarm and urgency deepened when the church election of May 1933 gave the German Christians a strong majority over other church groups. The German Christians had campaigned against the German Protestant Church as a spiritual relic, unresponsive and irrelevant in the new era, myopically opposed to the new state, a pastor-dominated church lacking people, dying and dangerous to marriage and family, and its members failing to fight godlessness. The German Protestant Church was accused of resistance to a unified church for the people and the Fatherland, of misunderstanding the Lutheran confessions, misinterpreting the God-willed foundations of *das Volk* and *Rasse*, and being guilty of sabotage and intentional frustration of the new order in church matters. The pastors were unreliable, said the German Christians; pretending to fight for the gospel and conscience, they cared only about their own power.⁴¹

These presumptuous charges were scatter-shots at the pastors of the German Protestant Church, who already were experiencing pressure and harassment from their congregations and Nazi officials. It remains remarkable that a vocal and hostile minority could sway the majority and muffle concerted and appropriate responses from pastors and church administrators. Though they represented perhaps ten per cent of Protestants, they were dominant in certain regions of Germany; otherwise, they influenced both silent and outspoken sympathizers. One region of strength was the Ruhr Valley, including Bochum, where Hans Ehrenberg served.⁴²

⁴⁰ “Richtlinien der Kirchenbewegung Deutsche Christen (National Church Movement) in Thuringia vom 11. Dezember 1933,” *Die Junge Kirche* (Jahrgang 2, 1934): 79-80; in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 102.

⁴¹ Brakelmann, *EKB:Zustimmung*, 72-3.

⁴² Doris Bergen describes the ubiquity of the German Christians who, though numbering about 600,000 members, wielded influence beyond their numbers. Prompting confusion, the very name “Deutsche Christen” was a line in the sand one must cross, or risk being considered un-Christian or un-patriotic—Hitler is said to have suggested the name. Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 3-13. On tacit acceptance, neutrality, or approval of the new Nazi order, see: Brakelmann, *EKB:Zustimmung*, 45.

The Bochum Pentecost Confession 1933 and Confessional Front

Among the numerous orthodox responses to the *Deutsche Christen* were two that Ehrenberg and other pastors produced in 1933 and 1938. These were the “Word and Confession of Westphalian Pastors in the Hour of the Church and the Nation,” and the “Confessional Front: An Objection from Hans Ehrenberg with Other Pastors in the Westphalian District of the Ruhr.”⁴³

While the church struggle grew, Pastor Ehrenberg met with other Lutheran and Reformed pastors to discuss and compose what became known as the Bochum Pentecost Confession. They would expose the heretical doctrines and principles of the German Christians and express the voice of the true church. They drew from the Protestant Confessions and Christian creeds and symbols, that is, from a complete biblical and doctrinal theology. Ehrenberg, with a subgroup of younger pastors, drafted the Bochum Confession that was presented at Pentecost 1933. Later, just after the war’s end, writing a “letter” to the Heidelberg theology professor and Confessing Church member Edmund Schlink, Ehrenberg described the group’s process:

In the last weeks before Pentecost 1933, Brother Ludwig Steil, who suffered a martyr’s death in 1945, and I in my parsonage in Bochum with a few younger ministerial brothers had worked to prepare a published confession as the ‘Confession of Westphalian Pastors’—preparation of the sections [I-III] on Church, People, and State was by the Reform pastor Steil; and I, the Lutheran, prepared the section [IV] on rejected doctrines. We acted in unity at the time. According to the often misused but here rightly used expression, it was really the Hour of the Protestants, that is, just as well unified as Lutherans and Reformed can be. It was the Hour of Barmen that came exactly a year later—the Hour of the German Protestant Church that confessed itself as the ‘Confessing Church’, as ‘Church of Churches’.⁴⁴

Ehrenberg and other Bochum pastors, plus others in the surrounding industrial districts of Gelsenkirchen, Dortmund, and Herne, shared decisively in the “Bochum Pentecost Confession.” One hundred pastors signed at first, others later.⁴⁵

What was immediately behind the confessors’ action? It was the response required to deliver an appropriate word to the Lutheran world of his day, one never outdated;

⁴³ “Wort und Bekenntnis westfälischer Pastoren zur Stunde der Kirche und des Volkes,” (original, Pfingsten 1933); and “Bekenntnisfront. Ein Einwurf von Hans Ehrenberg in Verbindung mit etlichen Pfarrern des westfälischen Ruhrbezirks” (original, August 1933); in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 33-35, 73-77.

⁴⁴ Hans Ehrenberg, *Ökumenische Erfahrungen, Heft 1: Luthertum Ökumenisch und Deutsch*, (Gütersloh, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1947), 34; also quoted in Brakelmann, *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 2:118

⁴⁵ Brakelmann, *Judenchristliches Schicksal*, 2:118-21.

it would be “ecumenical and German,” offered with “brennender Sorge,” (burning concern), evoking Moses’ experience as the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a fiery flame from the thorn bush (Exodus 2). Like the angel of the Lord, the confessing group had a message for the church.⁴⁶ Lutheranism must have something meaningful to offer for the present, at least to counteract the accusation that Martin Luther was responsible for Hitler. Someone must stand up against the great swindle in order to counter the “breathtaking way we had been called to obedience. Lutheranism must speak up.”⁴⁷

The Bochum Confession’s foreword cited the political force of the authoritarian state, which “the church, her agencies, preachers, and laity” must acknowledge in order to respond appropriately, especially when the National Socialist state through the German Christians was seizing and redefining theological doctrines and writing confessions for their own purposes. Affirming the faith of the fathers, the Bochum Pentecost Confession affirmed belief in the Triune God and in the completion of the Reformation. Having boldly preached the gospel to a united flock, they had contented themselves with a confessionally lax and disunited national church. But now, “the glory of the office calls us with many brothers, and we recognize that it has presented to us the Hour of the People and the Hour of the Church.” The Lord of the church himself was calling, being confessed as the Son of the living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the incarnate Word; who came in humility in the world, promised by the prophets, born of a virgin, God and Man together, who is called our brother; who by his Word, deeds, death and resurrection has sealed us as the possession of the Father, so that we would be saved; who, upon whose Second Coming we hope, “in the power of the Holy Spirit His communion and church;” who calls us today to follow him.⁴⁸

Composed in four articles, the Confession first addressed the continuing record of transgressions against the role of God in human life. The confessional statements were well grounded in the historical Reformation confessions and ordinances. The statements directly indicated perversions or breaches already present and obvious in the Nazi order.

⁴⁶ The phrase also evoked the recent encyclical of Pope Pius XI, 1937, *Mit Brennender Sorge: On the Church and the German Reich*, encouraging the Catholic faithful of Germany, and in Paragraph 34, objecting to “the voluntary and systematic antagonism raised between national education and religious duty.” German Catholics were suffering persecution. “Human laws in flagrant contradiction with the natural law, . . . morally indefensible, can never contribute to the good of the people.” *Mit Brennender Sorge: Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on the Church and the German Reich to the Venerable Brethren the Archbishops and Bishops of Germany and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, February 5, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge.html

⁴⁷ Hans Ehrenberg, *Luthertum Ökumenisch und Deutsch*, 33-34.

⁴⁸ “Wort und Bekenntnis”, in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 33. The elements of the Bochum Confession accord with the Lutheran Confessions and Catechisms, a summary example being the Formula of Concord, online “Book of Concord”, January 20, 2023, <https://thebookofconcord.org/formula-of-concord-solid-declaration/>.

First, the persistence of original sin. Human beings might well be caretakers in the creation, but “where man exerts his mastery of the Earth, making himself to be lord of lords, he acts in the place of the Creation Lordship of God,” thus discarding God-given powers and lapsing into demonic deeds. Such godless tendencies have filled the world with attractive and tempting global organizations, intellectual systems, and evolutionary utopias. God’s limits on humanity are to be soberly considered.⁴⁹

The second article affirmed the necessary provision of God by grace in the ordinances and commands that protect sinners from their own sin. The whole life of humanity being subject to God’s will as Creator, living sinfully outside of the ordinances brings families, the nations, and the states to ruin; consequently, God has empowered men to keep and protect the ordinances through his commandments. Every sphere of Creation—Blood, ethnicity, life force, and health—also reveals God’s sovereignty over Creation in the fallen world.⁵⁰

Third, the confession asserted the role of the Protestant Church in speaking the Word of God through the ordinances. As a body called by God and in which Christ is present, the Protestant church is not supposed to exercise its own power in the world and should not have to compete with secular power. Found in an “inevitable boundary struggle between the church and the ordinances of power, family, nation, and the state, the church must decide yet never encroach on the accordance of nationality with Creation and the will of God for the state.”⁵¹

In the fourth article, the confession rejected seven categories of error or false teaching of the German Christians: (1) the fanatical teachings about *Volk* and *Rasse*, (2) the reduction of Holy Scripture to moralistic teachings, (3) the much false teachings about the redemptive work of Christ, the shame of the Cross, and other heresies that diminished the effect of grace, (4) their suppression of the church’s presentation of the work of Christ in its teachings, to the detriment of the present and future for state and church, (5) the liberal blending of church actions with those of the state, (6) the liberal equation of the Jewish mission with the gentile Mission, and, (7) the church schism in which the Jewish Christians would be excluded from the church of the gentile Christians. Finally, the confession rejected the liberal-idealist claims of the state rooted in the false teachings of Fichte, Hegel, and Marx. The Bochum Confession ended with a statement that, according to their teaching and shepherding offices, the signers were making the commitment to strengthen and broaden the independent Confessional Front.⁵²

The “Word and Confession of the Westphalian Pastors,” appeared early in the church struggle and was at least eighth in a line of confessions or confessional statements, published or not, starting in October 1932. In one case, because of the violent events that prompted it, perhaps the most poignant was “The Word and

⁴⁹ “Wort und Bekenntnis,” in Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse*, 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 34-5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 35.

Confession of Altona Pastors in the Need and Confusion of Public Life,” in January 1933.⁵³

Ehrenberg and a few others also presented a new alliance, “The Confessional Front” that professed to be a “faith and teaching community who by the Word of God are bound to the Old Church and Reformation confessions’ authoritative value to speak for the present church.” With a broad membership trusting in the confessions and open to dialogue, the group’s statement positioned them centrally in the Reformation tradition and declared their opposition to “the church-political tactics in the conduct of the church.” In a time of shame for Germany and turning away from God, they asserted that the German church must recommit to the “Theology of the Cross,” seeking a reforming experience constructive for the nation. The Confessional Front urged more reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, prophetic obedience, and the consistent witness of the Word of God to Christ Jesus in both Testaments.⁵⁴

The church of the Word should avoid all fanaticism and seek to redeem the fanatics, they declared. They objected to those church groups who showed “bare inner belief” such as Anabaptists and Darbyists, or those groups focusing on “human beings and of humanity, of the human spirit and human nature, in Humanism, Idealism, Liberalism, Socialism.” They rejected “the present-day enthusiasts of the creation (created things), such as soil, blood, body, ethnicity, vigor, . . . that emancipate the natural endowments from the Creator God and his death-and-life-giving Word. The attitude of the church should be to say yes to a Christian Socialism that would liberate working people from economic people, from debt-bondage; yes, to a national society not a “totalist” society; yes, to a national people, caretakers with civil courage, a sense of self-sacrifice, and an essential patriotism, to overcome the barriers and hostility between the working and middle classes; yes, to develop and improve the level of humaneness or positive personality in the nation; and yes, to distinguishing between the evil spirits such as are evident even by the proclamation of the Word by nationalist men and to accomplish discipline against such a thing in the church.⁵⁵

The Confessing Front says “No” to “the nationalist man” who wants law only rather than law and redemption, rootedness in the soil rather than redeemed Nature, breeding rather than breeding and reverence, submission rather than membership and service out of experienced compassion, and heroism and camaraderie rather than mission and brotherhood.⁵⁶

⁵³ “Das Wort und Bekenntnis Altonaer Pastoren in der Not und Verwirrung des öffentlichen Lebens,” in *Ibid.*, 10, 19-25. On July 17, 1932, during Sunday worship services, political violence in Altona-Hamburg involving members of the Nazi SA (Sturmabteilung or Stormtroopers), the Communist Party, and the police resulted in 17 deaths and many injuries. This and other similar political tensions and violence prompted responses from the churches from the start.

⁵⁴ “Bekenntnisfront,” in “Wort und Bekenntnis,” Schmidt 73-5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-7.

The Confessional front also rejected the circumstance in which the individual pastor speaks alone, only on the accountability of his office. It was false modesty not to surrender humbly to the confession and spirit held in common in the wider church. Having “everything in common” applied also to theology. “It is clericalism, and indeed community clericalism, if the pastor believes that he can solve the questions the German Christians throw up and the conflicts they provoke through faithful work in the congregation;” that is, if he thinks he can dispense with the reality of the church question beyond his own congregation. In that case, he himself does not submit himself to the church but to the community of the *Volkskirche* (the *Völkisch* or ethnic national church). That is no way to accomplish the task of “church and nation.”⁵⁷

Ehrenberg, Pascal, the Jews, the Church, and Ecumenicity

Hans Ehrenberg valued historical reflection on topics that most interested him, often because they were consistent with his life experiences. Of course as a follower of Jesus Christ, he championed the communion of the church in its local and ecumenical missions. His most innovative written contribution on ecumenicity was his study on Blaise Pascal (1623-1662).

In what may not actually be a stretch, Ehrenberg proposed that Pascal be recognized as a “Doctor” of the whole church, as the founder of philosophical anthropology, and “Father of Ecumenicity.” He staked the worth of his book about Pascal on the claim that Pascal was “a man of the twentieth century.” Ehrenberg devoted ten or more years of study to write *In der Schule Pascals (In the School of Pascal)*, and it was his answer to the “German enmity” toward Pascal. The Germans had neglected or dismissed Pascal, though Nietzsche had commented on him, and, when Ehrenberg wrote, only a few writers had given Pascal recent attention. When a new wave of works on Pascal arrived after the Second World War, Ehrenberg interacted with some of them and joined that wave. For him, as for some others, the seventeenth-century thinker Pascal actually had important things to say to people in the twentieth century. Pascal in fact unified the four centuries of the modern era, for he was at once the most modern yet traditional spirit in Europe, a necessary man for modern Europe, and the point-man for the contemporary convulsions of a unifying Europe. He was the “pioneer and prophet of the emerging ripening-out of the twentieth century.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Hans Ehrenberg, *In der Schule Pascals* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1954), 12; Traugott Jähnichen, “Blaise Pascal als theologischer Lehrer der Gegenwart – Hans Ehrenbergs Interpretation der ‘Pensées,’” in Traugott Jähnichen and Andreas Losch, eds. *Hans Ehrenberg als Grenzgänger zwischen Theologie und Philosophie*, Hans Ehrenberg-Studien 1 (Kamen, Germany: Hartmut Spenner, 2017), 161-2. Jähnichen judged Ehrenberg to be remarkable for detecting and addressing new and important philosophical and theological topics, and for offering original interpretations of important events and persons such as Pascal.

With his book on Pascal, Ehrenberg took up the subject he had chosen not to examine in his own autobiography, that is, the topic of the Jews, except to mention it only in passing. In the postscript to his autobiography, he wrote,

I am convinced that there are some things which must be mentioned and others about which it is better to keep silent. It is significant that even the ablest books on the Jewish question are extremely inadequate and unhelpful, . . . I should therefore have set myself the task of converting the three groups—Jews, anti-Semites, and even pro-Semites. But it was never my intention to *convert* anybody when I decided to give some account of my life and struggle.⁵⁹

That letter remained unwritten. Instead, a decade later, Ehrenberg provided an “able” book, *In the School of Pascal*. It is keenly historical and judicious, deeply empathic and spiritually mature. There he exposes the Jews’ dangerous position with historical Christianity, the German Protestant Church during the Third Reich, and the Confessing Church. From these elements he construes a vibrant model of ecumenicity worth considering today. Apart from introducing Pascal as “Confessor”, the book offers five aspects or chapters: Pascal’s contribution to the Confessing Church, the rediscovery of the Jews, the philosopher as enemy of philosophy, Pascal as the Father of the Ecumene, and the character of the outsider in the Pascal Controversy of the 1600s. And so we attend here to Chapters 1, 2, and 4.

From the start of the Christian movement, ecumenicity took a back-row seat to conflict in ancient controversies over heresy and orthodoxy. It struck Ehrenberg that to be aware of such historical controversies allowed other comparisons while one was experiencing and trying to survive the troubled climate of National Socialist Germany. The Jansenist Controversy for example, occurred while French Catholics and Protestants made bloody war against each other in the 1500s. That controversy touched Pascal as a result of his relationship with the Jansenists of Port Royal, France. Having an ambiguous middle position did not save one from the threatening spiritual atmosphere. According to Pascal and Ehrenberg, atheism and deism empowered and emboldened the Jesuits, making the Jansenist Controversy a model of religious and political conflict.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Hans Ehrenberg, *Autobiography*, 156; *Autobiographie*, 150.

⁶⁰ The prolonged dispute between the followers of Cornelius Jansen and the Roman curia is summarized here: Forget, Jacques. "Jansenius and Jansenism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. vol. 8. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910). Accessed January 22, 2023 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08285a.htm> . For the present its relevant bias applies to Pascal being identified with the Jansenists through his relationship with the Arnauld family. Chapter Five presents the controversy, the events preceding it, the parties involved, Pascal’s evangelical confession of Rome, the five points of the papacy rejecting the Jansenists’ accusations against the Molinists, Pascal’s existential leap in the order of love, his double devotion to Port Royal and the Roman Catholic Church as an institution, and his middle way between liberalism and orthodoxy. He ends up the outsider to any school of thought, to any dogmatic tradition, and to any exclusivity in faith. Ehrenberg, *In The School of Pascal*, 130-148.

Contradicting others' assessments of Pascal, Ehrenberg presented him as a faithful, if critical, Roman Catholic whose exemplary confessional life commended him to the Protestant Confessing Church 300 years later. He was evidence for the one true Christian faith against atheism and deism, which belonged to modernity, specifically to the German Revolution after the Great War, the formation and fall of the Weimar Republic, and the great historical turn in the National Socialists' seizure of power.

In his introduction to *In the School of Pascal*, Ehrenberg marvels at the man whose death at 39 belied the range and nature of his accomplishments. The introduction's epigraph from Pascal sets the existential focus: "Between us, and Hell on the one hand and Heaven on the other, only in-between is life, the most fragile thing in the world." In that world, Pascal was a bright light, a "gift of Heaven to us."⁶¹

Ehrenberg admired his subject, though Pascal's impressive, accomplishments in science and mathematics do not figure here. He found gold in the *Pensées*: "Pascal's thoughts occupy the complete space that an aphorism can fill," he wrote. They ascend to a 'firmament of Aphorisms', from which they send forth revelations in an unprecedented way, and again they descend upon an Earth thirsting for Truth and Love. Without long breathing spaces, one cannot read Pascal, and one may not read him without freshly repeated, further reading. His aphorisms are like *Logien*, oracles that come from immediate presence with the Lord. Only Goethe's example of instructions for thought had the same effect for Ehrenberg, who was, if his words were true, increasingly awestruck.⁶²

In the School of Pascal was primarily a "school essay" offering clarity, enlightenment, and instruction, and implying meaning beyond a first look. It was "an essay towards the quintessence of his mindset and spiritual efficacy." What Pascal contributed to a "reformation of thought" in his own time also should apply to twentieth-century Germany.⁶³

The chapter "First Aspect, Pascal's Contribution to the Confessing Church" details his role in the reformation of thought in the seventeenth century, his reception in the *Communio Sanctorum* (*Communion of the Saints*). Ehrenberg examines Pascal's thoughts on deism as practical atheism, the mystery of Jesus, his witness against all deism, his argument that Christless deism led to Christless politics, and his view of the God of the Christians. There was Pascal's primer on confession in fragment 556 of the *Pensées*; the Jesuits exposed as deists, and their practices likened as akin to the denatured Christianity of the Moral Rearmament Movement. Pascal was a partner in ecumenism, a fully realized Catholic, and his struggles against deism amounted to an "ecumenical theology."⁶⁴

⁶¹ *In der Schule Pascals*, (*Pensées* 213) 9. Ehrenberg appears to follow the Brunshwig edition numbering of the *Pensées*, followed here as he uses them.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 20-1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-7, 44-5.

Pascal was a gift to everyone as an ecumenical model; after all, he could not be counted simply as a Roman Catholic or Protestant saint. Yet as an ecumenical saint he fostered the “spring of ecumenism” that promised unity and renewal for the old church. Opposite his outlook, two major confessional scenarios dominated in the twentieth century: “first, one generally known, addressed against the proponents of godlessness or Christlessness; and the second, wherein one not an atheist may yet be without God. One can call both Christless.” Atheistic Marxism and deism were twin problems in modernity: what was the good of not being godless while being Christless? Pascal considered such people enemies. For Ehrenberg, the contemporary enemy was rooted neither in absolute materialism nor total Marxism, but in a monotheism that “confesses the God of the philosophers, the so-called deist who denies the divinity of Christ and the Trinity of God. He is by no means a declared atheist, but only nearly so, well-nigh an atheist.” Ehrenberg found enemies in those who claimed to believe in God, “yet their unbelief has to do with the Bible, the biblical God: they deny the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ—they are Christless.” Ehrenberg, with Pascal, negatively estimated those modern persons whose deism amounted to atheism.⁶⁵

When faced with assaults on belief, Ehrenberg typically led with a confessional response before responding intellectually. “That is the only assault on unbelief that strikes true. Every other feud with godlessness [is] fought with untempered weapons.” He found resources directly in the church creeds. In their struggles with religious or state authorities, both he and Pascal found themselves active in a “confessional situation,” as in the conflict of the Confessing Church with the Nazis. In matters involving deism or atheism, Ehrenberg insisted that the confessional situation took priority over battle itself, for the situation developed out of metaphysical or world view stances operating with the existence of God. “It prevails where the god of Aristotle has been received, and intrudes by way of Descartes in the same philosophy.” No issue bothered Pascal and Ehrenberg more than the ways deism supplanted Christian orthodoxy in the general culture of the leading nations. The German Confessing Church had opposed that kind of religion. The entire “Ecumene” or church worldwide, Ehrenberg insisted, must decide to join that fight.⁶⁶

Pascal, the Jesuits, and the Deists

The Society of Jesus energized the Jansenist Controversy. Blaise Pascal sided with the Jansenists without being one, and he objected to the Jesuits, specifically to the Molinism he found in them. He knew and admired the writings of Cornelius Jansen,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 29-30. An of example of the proper response to evil was the wisdom of identifying the real source of evil in Nazism with the devil, or the demonic, and proceeding in the strength of the confessions. See Ehrenberg, *Autobiography*, 22, 26, 36-7.

especially the *Augustinus*, and the works of Antoine Arnauld⁶⁷ and Saint-Cyran,⁶⁸ being attracted to the topic of grace in them.⁶⁹

On the issue of “sufficient grace,” Ehrenberg opined that the Jesuits of Pascal’s time failed to explain the need to love God wholeheartedly. “Then as now,” he claimed, “would the popular ‘a little Christianity’ be recognized. Let Christ be neutral according to Jesuitical and moral rearmament⁷⁰ teaching.” He thought both Jesuits and Jansenists deserved criticism for their religious practices; one was “broad-minded and lax, the other rigorous and puritanical.” Pascal considered the Jesuits dangerously neutral in their spiritual stance, while the Jansenists, far from neutral, were guilty of betraying love. He uncovered the Jesuits’ skepticism and neutrality in their practices of “moral casuistry and application of canon law.” He targeted the writings of Luis de Molina (1535-1600), a theologian and professor of the Society of Jesus at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, who was a specialist in the *Summa Theologia* of Thomas Aquinas. His book *Concordia* interacted extensively with the *Summa*, but drew negative attention from the papacy by his teaching on reconciling the relationship between sufficient grace, efficacious grace, and human free will.⁷¹ De Molina’s views on the topic were the core of his system of the *divine scientia media* and went counter to Thomistic teachings on the interaction of grace and free will.⁷²

⁶⁷ Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694). The youngest of twenty children, a priest, theologian and philosopher, co-author of *La Logique ou l’Art de penser (Port Royal Grammar and Logic)*, a long-used textbook, Arnauld taught on efficacious grace in relation to free will. From 1655 he was associated with Pascal among the *recluses* at Port Royal. Elmar Kremer, “Antoine Arnauld”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., February 8, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arnauld/>

⁶⁸ Saint-Cyran (Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (1581-1643). Abbot of Saint-Cyran and a founder of Jansenism.

⁶⁹ Carmen Monasterio, “Pascal ante el misterio de al gracia,” *Scripta Theologica* 42 (2010): 13, n.6, on Arnauld against Molinism; 13, n.8, on the Port Royal community and Pascal’s relationship with them, and 27, on Pascal, his theology of man, original sin, and neo-Pelagianism; “Sobre la influencia de San Agustín en Pascal,” in Sellier, P., *Pascal et Saint Augustin* (Paris: Arman Colin, 1995); and the “Writings on Grace” at Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, January 23, 2023, <https://iep.utm.edu/pascal-b/#SSH2cj>

⁷⁰ Ehrenberg despised the “little Christianity” evident in modern religion, and took issue with the contemporary international Moral Rearmament movement that the Pennsylvania German Lutheran F. N. D. Buchman founded in China. Donald M. C. Englert, “The Bible and Modern Religions: Buchmanism or Moral Rearmament,” in *Interpretation* 12:3 (July 1958): 310-16.

⁷¹ Pohle, Joseph. “Luis de Molina.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. vol. 10. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. Accessed 11 January 2023. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10436a.htm>

⁷² But one portion of an extensively reasoned summary must suffice for this essay: “Even Molinism must and does admit that the very *idea* of efficacious grace includes the free consent of the will, and also that the *decree* of *God* to bestow an efficacious grace upon a man involves with metaphysical *certainty* the free co-operation of the will. From this it follows that *God* must possess some infallible source of *knowledge* by means of which he knows from all *eternity*, with metaphysical *certainty*, whether in the future the will is going to co-operate with a given grace or to resist it. When the question has assumed this form, it is easy to see that the whole controversy resolves itself into a discussion on the foreknowledge which *God* has of the free future acts; and thus the two opposing systems on grace are ultimately founded upon the general *doctrine* on *God* and His attributes.” The *scientia media* is the special knowledge of God that discerns a person’s disposition to

Because the Jesuits carried on with Molina's system, the more Augustinian and Thomistic Jansenists, Pascal himself, and the evidently Augustinian Ehrenberg engaged a medieval maelstrom pertinent to twentieth-century theology and ecclesiology. Ehrenberg's engagement with Pascal's own part in the conflicts between the Society of Jesus, the Dominicans (Order of Preachers), and the Jansenists calls to mind the great stone Luis de Molina had tossed in the sea of Christian doctrine; still it was making waves.

Pascal, and later Ehrenberg, were aghast at the apparent decline of faith from the medieval to the modern periods, during which deism was overtaking Christian faith. Paradoxically as modern complex societies developed, non-atheistic stances grew alongside practical atheism. For example, Ehrenberg declared, the deists in France and England practiced "a nearly non-dogmatic, naturalistic Christianity, religious and yet practically atheistic, making up the unified religion of all people and nations." The "God of deism" had consummated the first instance of modern state building in the political seizure of power in the French Revolution.⁷³ The German Confessing Church was fighting against that religion in the twentieth century, as Pascal did in the seventeenth century; against it the entire ecumene, the worldwide church, soon entered the fight.⁷⁴

Ehrenberg writes that when Pascal unmasked the deism of the Jesuits, he showed "that in the last instance he never had anything to fear relating to the true catholicity of the church and the universality of divine grace." His struggle was a Reformation-type conflict versus Roman Catholicism—an inner-church battle. Pascal was both a friendly neighbor to the Protestant Reformation and a Catholic faithful to the papacy. His powerful Jesuit opponents had access to the king and used that privilege against Pascal, and against the Jansenists in a controversy that long outlived the original participants. In response to a fight he never wanted, Pascal responded, "Attend carefully to this, all of you, you have the law, you have the fraud, [but] I have the truth as my entire strength; were I to lose it, I would be lost" (fragment 921).⁷⁵

Pascal and Rediscovering of the Jews

The chapter "Second Aspect, The Rediscovery of the Jews," examines themes, including: the humanity of the Jew, opposition and harmony in the dialectical moment between Judaism and Christianity; God's covenant fidelity to the First Son, Israel; the re-Christianization of Christianity; Pascal as the apostle of *Una Sancta*; the Jews as a testimony of Christ through faith and lack of faith; carnal and spiritual

make use of or to accept grace, thus "sufficient grace" is of no effect, dependent on the human response made in freedom of the will. Pohle, Joseph. "Molinism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. vol. 10. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911; January 8, 2023, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10437a.htm> .

⁷³ In der Schule Pascals, 35.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 48-50.

Jews and Christians; Judaism as a typology for the church; the hiddenness of God; and the appreciation of the poet George Cherbury (Herbert) and others for the Jews.

Ehrenberg writes, "The Christian church took an unusually long time to rediscover the Jews, and in a sense, it was a new, initial discovery." It is a problem about what the generations fail to know in succession. In 1944 Ehrenberg declared that solving the "Jewish problem" has always been "deferred until the time for it was accomplished." The first deferment occurred in the "Apostolic Council of Acts xv, whose decisions have never been carried out or observed." Acts 15:8-9 refers to the distribution of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and their speaking to one another using the language of brotherhood. There was an expanding community of faith, a worldwide church with no distinctions among persons, and hearts united in the common faith. The second deferment was found in the "prophecy of St. Paul in Romans 9-11 concerning the future of Israel, which, though proclaimed, has hardly ever been finally appreciated." Hints of Paul's meaning come in the assertions "all Israel will be saved" (11:26), the irrevocability of "the gifts and the call of God," and God's having "consigned all people to disobedience so that he may show mercy on them all" (11:28-32). A third matter deferred was the result of waiting for an appropriate and workable use of the typology of the Old Testament for interpreting the New Testament; it had to be a rehabilitated method truer to the biblical sense and looking beyond allegory.⁷⁶

As an example of applying a revised typology, Ehrenberg examined the accusation of the Jews' bloodguilt for murdering Jesus Christ. He found the accusing Christians hypocritical, and the Jews' persecutions inconsistent as consciences wavered between hatred and toleration. The accusation of bloodguilt produced distorted interpretations of the New Testament and diverted believers from the proper historical traditions of the church. Hardened attitudes had interfered with accurate knowledge and correct opinion. Another example was Voltaire's humanist-moralist-deist condemnation of Judaism as the mother-religion to Christianity, which he also condemned. Ehrenberg compared Voltaire's "Satanic" approach to that of Adolf Hitler who insulted and persecuted Christianity and Judaism, and even schemed to exterminate all Jews. Voltaire and Hitler did these things as modern men. Deism could not be separated from modernity and its inadequacies. Thus, as an early modern writer, Pascal stood distinctly for another perspective toward Judaism: "There is from the outset a purely exterior distinction in Pascal from all *Christiani contra Judaeos* theories, for a large section of his *Pensées* is devoted to the question of the Jews." Pascal may as well have been the one who noticed the Jews for the first time and took them seriously. They could help him, especially with their Talmudic and Midrashic traditions to assist his understanding of and testimony about original sin. Ehrenberg exclaims, "The Jew of the Talmud as a fellow witness to the Augustinian and Reformed conception of sin over against the modernism of the Pelagian Jesuits!"⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Hans P. Ehrenberg, "The Rediscovery of the Jew in Christianity," *International Review of Missions* 33:4 (1944): 400.

⁷⁷ *In der Schule Pascals*, 64; "Rediscovery of the Jew," 401-2.

Pascal analyzed the relationship between Christians and non-Christians, and the differences as well between Christians as “carnal” or “true”, and Jews as carnal or true. As with all religions, “ideas differ from practice.” To clarify, he made several distinctions, “Jews and gentiles love the same *good*. Jews and Christians love the same *God*.” There were two kinds of Jews: “the first had only pagan affections, the other had Christian affections. . . . true (spiritual, not carnal) Jews and true Christians have but the same religion.” True Jews (“the Christians of the old law”) and true Christians, both of them living according to the new law of Christ, have no barriers between them, though a vast chasm remains between Christianity and Judaism. “Pascal emphasizes constantly that the Father of Jesus Christ is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that He and not the God of the philosophers and scholars is the true God; He alone has in Jesus Christ His Son.”⁷⁸

The long section of Pascal’s *Pensées* (fragments 571-774) focuses on the Jews. People often ignored the section from fear of the Jewish Question, or because it was unfamiliar or forbidden to unauthorized persons. For Pascal the matter of the Jews in a predominantly Christian society caught and kept his attention. Ehrenberg, with Pascal, abhorred “chaining Judaism, that is wholly divine in its authority, its duration, its perpetuity, its morality, its doctrine, and its effects, with the darkening of the Jews.” For Ehrenberg, the family resemblances between Judaism and Christianity offered a “dialectical moment” for disagreement and harmony; Pascal “deviated not a millimeter away” from that dialectic truth, and through personal experience could speak 300 years later directly to Ehrenberg’s convictions on existence and suffering: “Contradictory as it is that one is miserable and nevertheless endures, the Jews persist always despite their misery” (fragment 640). It was for Ehrenberg the same give and take in the Confessional Struggle against Nazism. There was a solution in merging the Jew’s positive and negative worth. Pascal (fragment 641) mused on the one hand about the biblical and historical witness available to the Jews and on the other the hiddenness of God to them; yet God’s hiddenness was displayed in them. They served to signify the Messiah, yet in a great paradox, the wisdom of the gospel in continuity with the witness of the prophets “made them powerful enemies of their fulfillment.”⁷⁹

Concerning the rediscovery of the Jews, Ehrenberg, with Pascal, was eager to explain about the purpose of the Jews their election by God, with and without Christ. He explained that the Jew can never escape God, for unlike the gentiles the Jew has no escape route. God holds everyone in suspense; anyone who hears God draws nearer to Christ on the way of salvation history. The Jews, then, make known the Christ, the Messiah, whether through refusal or acceptance, the Jews fulfill the prophets’ words, witnessing about the Messiah. “Christ always separates where he appears and his gospel is earnestly declared.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *In der Schule Pascals*, 64-5; “Rediscovery of the Jew,” 402.

⁷⁹ *In der Schule Pascals*, 55-7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

Pascal probed the repercussions on Christianity that resulted from the attitude of the Jews to Jesus Christ, offered two points: first, that unbelieving Jews prompted unbelief in non-Jews, including unbelieving Christians. Conversely, and second, that even in unbelief the Jews serve Christian belief in a noticeable way. Pascal and Ehrenberg follow the Apostle Paul in explaining how the non-elect could have faith. Plainly, “in worldly terms, had the Jews received the Messiah, then all non-Jews who confessed Christ would be judged Jews.” Jewish unbelievers also rescued the gentiles and so broke the monopoly of Jewish election. Spiritually speaking, if the Jews had kept the genuine promises concerning the Messiah so that they would have been of his party, then their witness would not have been so convincing. “By virtue of Judaism, Christianity cancels every Christian party, school, and clique,” Ehrenberg declares. “This implication advances the rediscovery of the Jews on the part of the church.”⁸¹

In 1944 Ehrenberg praised Pascal’s great contribution to the theology and missiology of the church: he “rediscovered the Jews and re-established their relationship to the Christian Faith.”⁸² Ensuing emphases in *In the School of Pascal* track themes similar to those in his 1944 article. There is more on “the dialectic between Judaism and Christianity,” which required repair even so long ago as when the church ceased to follow the pattern of the Acts of the Apostles, whether because of the rise to dominance of the Roman Catholic communion in the West, or newer developments in an “extreme Protestant” point of view. Ehrenberg blamed the rational allegorical method as part of the reason the Old Testament no longer conveyed the direct meaning of the Word of God. It was a great concern, for “the church no longer experiences its own history in living connection with Judaism.” Judaism rightly still belongs in the House of God, even as the synagogue whose eyes are blindfolded. The lack of dialogue between Christianity and Judaism changed nothing for the better.⁸³

Previously, Augustine in his sermons warned the gentile Christian that if he recognized himself in the elder son in the parable of the lost son, as the twig grafted onto the olive tree, he should not boast in front of the one cut off and who could be grafted in again at any time.

Augustine distinguished the God-fearing Jews who start to contemplate the riddle of the Church, that openly put its Christian

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸² “Rediscovery of the Jew”, 405.

⁸³ *In der Schule Pascals*, 60. Wolfram Liebster writes about “Ehrenberg and the Theology of Israel” and the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. He described Ehrenberg’s theology and conception for twenty-first century Christianity as a “Ketzerkirche” (church of heretics) who practice “Johannine Christianity” with help from the Apostle Paul. I will address this focus in separate work. See: Wolfram Liebster, “Der Beitrag Hans Ehrenbergs zur gegenwärtigen Israeltheologie,” in Manfred Keller & Jens Murken, *Das Erbe des Theologen Hans Ehrenberg: Eine Zwischenbilanz* (Berlin & Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009), 167-76.

members before their eyes, talking of them about how the Jew again found in the church his prophets and the psalms, and became troubled then at God's comforting words, "My son, are you not always still with me?"

Ehrenberg exclaimed, "O, this little word 'still', that Augustine as a forerunner who entering over more than a thousand years later shows the rediscovery of the Jews!" Augustine still supplied evidence that the Jews belong. Ehrenberg questioned the ambivalence of Luther and the Reformation toward the Jews: what should have been a revolutionary turn in the balance of attitudes and conduct between Jews and Christians ended up a historical disappointment, with Luther having "burnt the fingers" of the Jews. Reformation Christianity became ghettoized, preventing a right relationship with the Jews.⁸⁴

Following Pascal, Ehrenberg proposed three routes to rediscovering the structure of salvation of post Christian Israel: first, to review one's understanding of the Old Testament (not only the prophets) as the Word of God; second, to review the standing relationship between the Jewish People and the Messiah Jesus; and third, to find respect for the parallel and common theological existence of Jews and Christians. Pascal posed these as opportunities for renovation. Ehrenberg believed them to be vital because of the biological and theological threats of his century—the unpunished denials and sham claims—about the relationship between contemporary Jews and Old Testament Jews. The God of the philosophers was part of the problem.⁸⁵

Pascal believed the rediscovery of the Jews and the re-Christianization of Christianity could happen together. If Jews and Christians were to be brought together, it would be because they acknowledged their true common state of being, their fallenness, and their redemption in a God they commonly love.⁸⁶

Pascal, the Father of Ecumenicity

Ehrenberg's chapter on the Fourth Aspect of Pascal and ecumenism begins with the exclamation, "The confessional struggle against the self-deceptions about unity—against making up with the Jewish forerunners of the Christians, against the supposed elimination of arbitrary thinking!" Ehrenberg was done with cheap resolutions, paper declarations, and new ideologies. In high hopes, he asserted that the recognition of Pascal as the father of ecumenism could be bracketed between old and new eras spanning the 300 years since his "Memorial" on November 23, 1654. His comments on the church and the Jews prompted fresh thinking on the relationship between the two. As to the church itself, Pascal's reminder to pay attention to events and processes both within and without its walls speaks of the ecumene. To the end of his life Pascal affirmed an ecumenical theology, the

⁸⁴ *In der Schule Pascals*, 60-2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 62-3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 64-5.

rejection of Rome notwithstanding and their letters to him be damned. Yet Ehrenberg called him a catholic ecumenist and an ecumenical Catholic. He knew that his study had only just begun the work of resolving and understanding what Pascal had handed down. What was unresolved in Pascal was “the visible sign that all priests bear on their foreheads,” intimated in a final statement (fragment 848): “Because the mercy of God is so powerful that he conceals himself even as he enlightens us toward our salvation, which light then may we hope in, when he unveils himself?”⁸⁷

In the School of Pascal pondered the scope of Pascal’s contributions outside of mathematics and science and resolved the difficulty of describing him clearly and credibly. Blaise Pascal showed broad-ranging interests, took part in a great church controversy, and offered an unusual, aphoristic and piercing defense of faith. In his time others misunderstood and condemned him, if they did not dismiss him outright. Did he offer too little evidence for accurate assessment? By taking the *Pensées* seriously, Ehrenberg achieved a creative analysis and a positive assessment that got around earlier commentators who disregarded Pascal’s religious thinking while they found his contributions in recognizable scientific or mathematical fields more attractive.

Ehrenberg could write *In the School of Pascal* in part because of his experience in bringing other historic and biblical figures to life for the twentieth century. His publications reveal extraordinary focus on movers and thinkers of the West: philosophers, theologians, psychologists, the general society, industrial workers, humanist greats, and biblical personalities. Ehrenberg was an unusual thinker and writer.⁸⁸

Ehrenberg had “money in the game” certainly, with the historical and contemporary topic of Jews and Christians. His own experiences as a man of faith and intellect, as one born of Jewish heritage and baptized into Christianity, a Jewish Christian, a professor of philosophy and a Lutheran pastor—offered all the insight he needed into Pascal’s meditations on the dilemma of Jews and Christians loving and serving the same God but unable to love each other.

As a German of outstanding intellectual and cultural mien, Ehrenberg knew far more than enough how to evaluate the problems Pascal identified replicated in modern German society. His own sufferings at the hands of his fellow Christians and hate-filled opponents during the Nazi era tempered his empathy as well as his courageous determination to respond appropriately to the needs and tasks before him. His interactions with Pascal across a historical distance benefited the most from

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 128-9.

⁸⁸ A few examples: *Kant’s Categories and the Systematic Concept of Philosophy* (1910); *The Factions of Philosophy* (Kant and Hegel, 1911); *Tragedy and the Cross* (Greek and western European playwrights from antiquity to Shakespeare and Goethe, 1920); *Eastern Christianity* (Eastern Orthodox philosophers and theologians, 1923-1925); *The Man Without Work* (unemployed laborers, 1931); *Concerning Human Beings: Biblical and Contemporary* (1948); and *Job—The Existentialist: Five Dialogues in Two Parts* (1952).

his empathic and mature interactions with life, still fully in process, when he studied Pascal and a decade later published the book. Even now we benefit from his gifts and his commitment.

Clearly, in a period when all religion suffers confusion if not opposition, Pascal's concerns for the Jews and his insight into their shared heritage with Christians applies to religious competition and triumphalism, and the dangerous confusions between religious entities and the state. His, and Ehrenberg's, pronouncements could only be prophetic as they spoke truth to power. They also spoke to members of religious factions and challenged movements that threatened the stability of governments and societies in the West and worldwide.

Ehrenberg's ecumenical proposals for the churches remind us about the nature of the true church. He urged the virtues of openness and cooperation within and among denominations; he warned that believers actively watch for factions that intend and do evil inside and outside of the church. The political and governmental manipulation of churches can end in control, as happened in Nazi Germany, and as continues now in states such as Russia and Hungary. The threat from religious nationalists and other factions in the United States weighs heavily on the soul. Pascal's experiences with the power of the Society of Jesus in the court of the Bourbons of France drives home the danger of, and to, religion collaborating with governments.

In a situation like the one Ehrenberg and the Confessing Church experienced during the Third Reich, the church loses the ability to speak in its own defense to an overreaching government. What sounds like sheer advantage of a state church for the purposes of the Christian faith ends up endangering the mission of the church. The German churches learned that truth the hard way through institutional and state destruction. Postwar Germany needed reconstruction under a new constitution; the German church faced difficult decisions about accountability for the losses dealt it by nationalist fervor and other misjudgments.

The other great loss was that of the proper role of the state to protect and nurture its citizens. Yes, it is right that the citizen should be called upon to serve, even sacrificially, in the proper instance. However, the German state that acted against its own citizens, Jews, other minorities, and even dissident Christians, and otherwise, found itself able to act with impunity while a powerless church and a deceived, confused public could neither speak nor act against the powers of darkness. Too late, they found themselves instead in lockstep with them.

Hans Ehrenberg argued for the theological and ecclesial reinterpretation and restructuring of the relationship between the Jews and the Christian Church. It was a relationship lost in the process of Christianity's growth beyond its origins among a small band of Jews centered in Jerusalem, to its expansion among the gentiles. Here was a universal faith that soon developed restrictions or boundaries among its members from among the nations. Their cultural foundations and social traditions

tested the faith from the beginning and continues presently to do so. The continuing scenario always accompanies the perennial tradition that carries the core of Christian faith. Ehrenberg offered many reminders that the gospel core must be preserved as the vital treasure of the church. It is a treasure to be shared among one's neighbors and the nations, beyond familiar sociocultural frontiers.

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Stretch, Turn, and Twist, The Mental Topology of Religion: An Experiment in the Treatment of Religion as a Perspective

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“Oh, no! That’s no answer.” I insisted. “Even in the world of make-believe there have to be rules. The parts have to be consistent and belong together. This kind of picture is a lie. Things are forced to fit because the writer or the director or somebody wanted something in that didn’t belong. And it doesn’t feel right.” – Keynes (2004, p. 77)

Abstract

The concept and perspective along with the practice of analysis in regards to religion has been around time immemorial. However, the purpose of this paper is not to ask the tired question, what is religion (?), in terms of a definitional question but instead to ask what religion is (?) from a vantage point that privileges the individual’s mental perspective. The field of topology will form the basis for this paper interdisciplinary argument which will be used to explicate the ability of religion to be mentally changed or manipulated much like material objects which are topologically significant (e.g., donuts or rubberbands). The purpose and goal of this paper will be to shift the position of the concept of religion to more of a visual perspective in relation to individual vision.

In the book *Topology: A Very Short Introduction* the scholar Richard Earl demonstrates some basic principles of the mathematical discipline of topology through the use of alphabet. Topology is as Earl (2019) notes concerned with “shape, connection, and relative position” (p. 1). And, though topologists look at items which are of relevance to the materialist (e.g., mugs, donuts, rubber bands, lines on maps) and which consist of matter, the argument could be made that religion as a mental concept or perspective could thought of topologically similar to a rubber band or donut. In explaining religion as a mental concept I want to highlight two figures: How individuals see religion (?) and What do individuals see as religion (?).

The letter T is not found in the word religion; but the letter for the purposes of this article will be a subsequent stand in for the concept. For everyone the letter T can only in a topological sense be seen in one way, as the letter T, which is right side up; however, this manner of looking at religion is different than how scholars view, examine, and describe, religion in the world presently (and in the past). Instead scholars have seen religion as more like the letter I which is nether homomorphic (i.e., similar form) nor congruent to the letter T or the letter T way of thinking of religion.

Unlike the rigid and upright letter T, I is bidirectional and can be seen as such from both directions right side up or up-side down. The letter I represents a perspective of religion that is located between different perspectives and is considered especially fluid as a result. I recognizes the rigid notions which individuals hold of religion (e.g., church on Sundays, prayer, bibles) though the letter also showcases a different latter perspective of religion which is composed of items and activities present in more implicit areas of society.

Traditional and Implicit Religion

Beyond what could be described as traditional religion which much ink has been spilt on by scholars (e.g., Durkheim, 1912/1915; Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Geertz, 1973) is replete with notions of individuals occupying sacred structures (e.g., church, mosque, shrine) and conducting accompanying sacred rituals or practices (e.g., praying or baptism). There are newer forms of religion that unlike traditional forms are not organized in line with the organizational form found commonly in institutionalized traditional religions. The scholar Edward Bailey defined implicit religion by different means: As a word, “commitment(s)”; phrase, “integrating foci”; and longer definition, “as intensive concern(s) with extensive effect(s)” (1990, p. 210). Under the definition, “commitments,” activities such as sports and fandom are seen as quasi and open precepts for religious identification and are studied as such under relevant fields in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. Cosplay for example which is an activity set within many different fandoms typically focusing on themes, series, or characters found in anime or sci-fi. Committed individuals are dedicated to the craft as Lamerichs (2018, p. 204) points out:

It seems to me, however, that cosplay is less about developing or performing a character and more about constituting a visual resemblance with it. Although a cosplayer can perform the character in part, for instance, by walking around with that character’s attitude, the overall idea is a visual one. Cosplay is based on recognition more than reimagining.

Though as it was made clear through an interview, of a North American anime fan, done by scholar Antonia Levi (2013, p. 3) in which the fan noted: “The fact that it’s Japanese has nothing to do with it. I’m not that interested in Japan;” commitment is not always found together with a certain identity: Whether that identity is social, political, cultural, or even historical in nature. The individuals’ perspective shapes how they see the commitment and how it is practiced; the individuals’ perspective also shapes whether the commitment is seen as religious. Karol Chandler Ezell (2022) provided another example in her presentation at the Southwest Conference for Religious Studies titled “Following the Pied Pipers: Is K-Pop Idol Stunning Idolatry ... or Just Fake Love” groups such as the Christians and atheists were noted as disliking the group of BTS due to the activities of the dedicated interactive fan base bordering on religious and idol worship. However, religious individuals could only make their decision based upon the recognition that the activities of BTS and their fans form a type of worship of an religion that is implicit. And, again the notion

of commitment with BTS is separate from other characteristics of the social, political, cultural, or again even historical similar to the activity of cosplay.

T Perspective to I: Traditional Towards Implicit Religion

T although a unidirectional perspective of religion without respect for the recognition of religion – within religion – there is a possibility in certain cases for the perspective of T to transform into that of I although probably not in the positive sense. As was noted in the presentation by Karol Chandler Ezell (2022) individuals recognized the BTS as religious idols – in an implicit sense. This raises the question that although traditional or institutional religion is particularly simple to recognize especially with a T perspective; how is it that individuals, with that same perspective see religious activities which are normally open to individuals who hold more of an I perspective as implicit and not necessarily recognized as religious.

Implicitness which is present in the idea of implicit religion is perhaps a good place to start in sorting out the transformation of perspectives. The idea of implicit is similar in part to gestalt with the individual having to piece together the individual pieces under a theme or common notion with the overall theme becoming visible to those with the correct perspective on the matter. Take as an example the gestalt ground to figure picture commonly shown in elementary psychology courses, called Rubin's vase. In the picture there are two different things – or themes – which could be drawn out and perceived: The first, is a pair of faces facing towards each other while the second, is a vase. Neither theme is actually there they are both implicit in the features which govern the design of the picture.

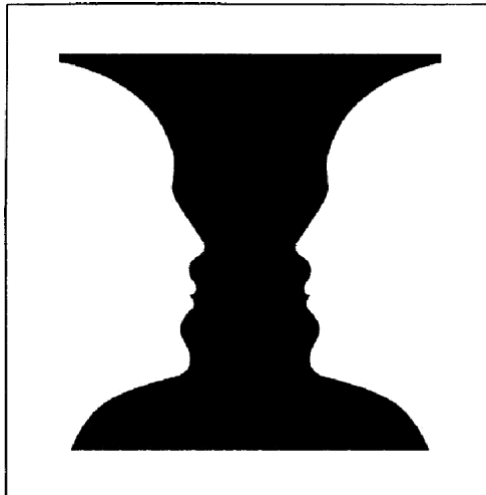


Figure 1. Rubin's vase

Proximal or distal sight relation to the individuals' experience could impact the recognition of other forms of the object. During music concerts or soccer games individuals are experiencing entertainment as an individual unit of recognition as a proximal music or sports experience but a distal religious experience. Experience with a concept is necessary to draw an implicit object, idea, or item out of another,

as an example take the Rubin's vase again which if one did not know about the idea or concept of a vase then they would either not be able to or have difficulty pulling the vase out of the picture. But, the opposite could also be true where the individual knows what the object is but it's defined apart from its normal state due in part with the individual's interaction with those types of vases as opposed to the one being asked about.

Researchers in the cognitive sciences (see Balota and Cohen, 2008) have noted that more proximal things are in semantic memory the more they are related and remembered together (e.g., firetruck). These proximal relations typically are cultural but engagement in a group or organization can form other further narrower relations between more specialized things. The more related the ideas the easier they are to retrieve although the models that these things are based on are always available to change due in part to new experiences.

For example, some individuals look at their belief and practice in the divine not as religion, which Goldenberg (2019) has argued was a concept not present in the Bible, but instead as spirituality. The words religion and spirituality although they are similar enough to come in contact with other during conversations to some individuals, religion and spirituality might be the equivalent of day and night, each discussing about a different experience. In their essay, scholars Blake E. Ashforth and Deepa Vaidyana begin their argument by describing the difference between religion and spirituality, this goes as follows:

Although many definitions of spirituality have been offered, most suggest that spirituality connotes a personal connection to something subjectively meaningful and larger than oneself, a transcendence of self Conversely, religion—as elaborated on below—tends to connote a more or less institutionalized system of beliefs and practices that address spiritual matters. Thus, religion represents a more collective and fixed—or organized—response to desires for transcendence, whereas spirituality represents a more idiosyncratic and emergent response. (Ashforth & Vaidyana, 2002, p. 360)

The two words bring about two different experiences and reactions but in order to understand and act upon either term one needs to have experienced and have brought about past understanding in order to interpret them. Moreover, religion and spirituality are implicit in each other as concepts and need some notion of personal definition to separate them. For example, an elderly man who set up an exhibit at the Mississippi Forrest County Fair discussing about the connection between the narrative of the coexistent humans and the dinosaurs unknowingly brought up a great example of this when I talked to him after I experienced the show. The older individual asked the question, did you enjoy the show (?); to which I replied yes, I did as I dabble in religion. The older individual proceeded to inform me that the narrative just experienced was not religion but instead was spirituality, he also proceeded to note to me that religion was man made instead of made by God.

The personal definition of the older man allowed this older man to perceive the implicitness of the spiritual nature from that of man-made religion. This is similar to how the definition of the situation from within the confines of symbolic interactionism

performs to detail to individuals and shows them how to behave in a certain situation. Definitions of the individual will always be plagued by what the philosopher Friedrich Waismann called "open texture" (e.g., Waismann, 1965); though the gaps which appear from the creation of a definition posture, a possible problem, if not for individuals ability to adapt and reinterpret or understand the world around them. Or, in the case of such theories including Charles Bergers' Uncertainty Reduction Theory or Dale Brashers' Uncertainty Management Theory which explain that individuals enact certain behaviors to reduce the amount of uncertainty one feels during an interaction (e.g., Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2021). Moreover, in the theory of symbolic interactionism, Mead and Blumer have noted that meaning is not fixed but instead is shaped by experience. And, in frame theory which originated out of the sociologist Erving Goffman's book titled *Frame Analysis*, the world as seen by the individual is never neutral and is shaped by the world around them based upon the individual's prior experiences (Goffman, 1986).

And, it is the constant management, transformation, and shaping of our understanding that aids us and the older man in understanding difference as it is this difference which assists individuals in identification through the separation of experience from the background opposed to the foreground. When the T perspective changes from itself to that of the bipolar I there is a recognition of this element which is illegal from within the definition present from within the holder of the T perspective. And, similar to the idea of Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance the individual will possess tension between the two different perspectives when the transformation occurs due to the understanding of the apparent illegality of the event occurring in relation to the individual's personal definition.

While some would claim that this ire driven by the tension between their T perspective driven by a private / personal definition of religion and the understanding of an implicit event which seems to violate that definition is purely illogical and superficial. Hastorf and Cantril's (1954) results from their conducted case study would suggest that the purpose for their experience motivates how the individual experiences the world. As well their results also suggest that the way individuals see the world as real in and itself, as the authors wrote:

From this point of view it is inaccurate and misleading to say that different people have different "attitudes" concerning the same "thing." For the "thing" simply is not the same for different people whether the "thing" is a football game, a presidential candidate, Communism, or spinach. We do not simply "react to" a happening or to some impingement from the environment in a determined way (except in behavior that has become reflexive or habitual). We behave according to what we bring to the occasion, and what each of us brings to the occasion is more or less unique. (p.133)

However, purpose changes over time reorienting the perception of the individual in addition to the cognitive ontology of the "thing" under observation. So because of the revelation of Hastorf and Cantril this question now becomes raised in the midst of the current overall topic; what can the material placed under the permissible label of the T and I perspectives. If it is the case that the implicit nature of religion should not

only be real but also different for each individual and is brought about by an independent and unique purpose then we would the line between religion from a T perspective and from an I perspective be drawn. Or, can a line be drawn between the two perspectives or is it even real or arbitrary? Or, the more important meta-level question needing to be asked is, is seeing actually believing or is it merely a prerequisite for believing and more importantly a proceeding factor idealist constructions.

I Perspective to T: Implicit Towards Traditional Religion

The reverse of the T perspective turning into an I where the I transforms into an T perspective is also a possibility with the most likely culprit being social pressure from an etic perspective external from the individual experiencing the phenomenon where its existence is deemed controversial or imaginary. Social pressure is also a part of socialization, a normal part, and can be located in every social institution in relation to the rules of the society which are learned through experience. The premise of social pressure is that of conformity to make sure everyone is on the same page in what could be an assumed shared social society, where everyone is assumed to share the same cognitive states or ideas. Though as previously mentioned in the research conducted by Hastorf and Cantril which suggests that the perception of reality is one that is different for every individual but since it is as the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein examined in his famous beetle in the box thought experiment located in the book, *Philosophical Investigations*, that language can only be utilized as a public phenomenon; the private ideas which language cannot touch and which cultivate the private worlds of individual minds can be hard to detect outside of their public display. The notion of language cultivates a false illusion of a shared reality which everyone is culpable in upholding and practicing and displaying. The notion of a false illusion which details the shared nature of society is found most notably in the sociological paradigms of symbolic interactionism (see Carter & Fuller, 2016 for review) and social constructionism (see Andrews, 2012 for review). And, while symbolic interactionism and social constructionism claims to have an answer to the function of society on the basis that meaning in some sense is shared among its members, the shared function that language presents is only rudimentary and surface level. Moreover even on a surface level language can be problematic when referenced in terms of individual psychology, as psychologist Daniel Katz (1947) argued that language is poor at substituting the reality it is looking to represent. On the other hand, Katz wrote "The real world is more complex, more colorful, more fluid, more multidimensional than the pale words or oversimplified signs used to convey meaning" (p. 17). This problematic aspect of language allow the present argument to take on a legitimate basis in the personal psychology of the individual. Katz statement also demonstrates the generalizing power of language which can iron over the different perspectival shades held by each individual. This psycholinguistic result can be seen with the I to T perspective metamorphosis that can be seen plenty of individuals today, with some individuals – such as the older man mentioned earlier – pushing the T perspective.

With the retroactive transformation from the I to the T perspective there is a regression from an implicit to an explicit perception that occurs not in the basis of

language but in personal experience. There is a lessening of ability to see the implicit in events or just turn away from them and classify them as non-religion mentally on a personal level which can not be easily shared. Unlike the I perspective which can be thought of as nuanced and piercing open to an expanded and unseen side of religion, the T perspective can be possibly seen to less nuanced preferring to stay with the institutional view of religion as the one true means of religiousness – although some individuals would say religion does not even reach deep enough, instead preferring to utilize spirituality as a measurement of religiousness. The transforming from the I to T perspective can be as a canceling of nascent understanding of the world, such a process can be seen as an elimination or neglect of alternative shades of their own perspective.

Conclusion

The main selling point of experience comes from the phrase seeing is believing where by seeing and understanding individuals are able to take capable action on the point of the thing seen and understood at that point in time or later on in the future. In the case of the present paper the topic, religion, has been seen to change over time as have been seen over the years within the parameters of ideas, texts, beliefs, and practices that constitute the basis for religion. However, is it really the case that the perspective is really split on a basis of arbitrary definitional knowledge or arbitrary reference to one's belief. To raise ancient philosophical question, how do we know?, if it is as Hastorf and Cantril (1954) note that a thing is different for each person based on their purpose upon perception. To date phenomenologists have attempted to get at a core understanding of consciousness in the face of experience however, scholars have also been hampered by the limitation of public language. If phenomenologists succeed in linguistically unhampered exploration of individual conscious experiences, what will they find? One religion? Or, two different ones? Or, seven billion independent religions all residing in the heads and experiences of individuals from all over the world? And, not just perspectives, but entirely different religions. Additionally, will all those religions be the same or different, indeed will they be so different that the word religion would not be able to fit the experience?

A major part of the socialization process is religion however, what does that look like especially from the sense of implicit religion – if say the individual is an atheist? Is this an religious analog to Cooley's statement concern communication where there is no line of demarcation between communication and the outside world, where the present case the activity communication can be changed for religion? Where is the demarcation line for religion, within the mind of the individual thinking or cognizing about religion right now using his own experience as an personal algorithm unfettered by words or in many ordinary cases the broad range of linguistic symbolism: Russell Hurlburt and his colleagues have termed this "unsymbolic thinking" (e.g., Hurlburt & Akhter, 2008; Harvey & Hurlburt, 2008). So in demarcating T from I perspectives can the prospect be said to be objective and found in the world or subjectively located in the individual cognition.

More important is consideration of whether religion is a thing. Similar to how an artist's perspective of the target thing can influence the finished painting, the

perspective can change how a thing is viewed and interacted with. And, while we know for a definite fact that religion changes, morphs, and transforms with time and space can we still not label it a thing even though it is not a thing nor does it possess a certain thingness that say an apple does or even a model. And, if religion is not a thing how can individuals have a perspective concerning religion as if it were a thing, where is the potential thingness in religion – where is the thing, religion, for which we can apply our perspective? Is the application of thingness by which we demarcate one thing by its contrast to a subsequent other based upon where we draw the line when we navigate religion as a gestalt constellation of other recognized things with an intrinsic thingness? Or, is there some natural order to the presence of things in and of themselves that determines their thingness, to which religion is no exception to the rule? As existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre wrote the following lines in his essay “Existentialism as a Humanism,”

If one considers an article of manufacture as, for example, a book or a paper-knife – one sees that it has been made by an artisan who had a conception of it; and he has paid attention, equally, to the conception of a paper-knife and to the pre-existent technique of production which is a part of that conception and is, at bottom, a formula. Thus the paper-knife is at the same time an article producible in a certain manner and one which, on the other hand, serves a definite purpose, for one cannot suppose that a man would produce a paper-knife without knowing what it was for. (1956, p. 289)

Religion presses somehow on the population of the living and the dead raising questions. However, religion is itself a question that itself never ceases to close itself and constantly remains open to the attention of apt scholars across many various traditions and areas of study. And, as new technologies old manners of thinking about the concept of religion; new variations of the concept come to mind and spring to mind the growth of new questions. These questions can appear at the most basic and fundamental level or can be seen at the high levels of complexity and meta-understanding and awareness. They have a habit of eating at our existing answers and certainty in things, and religion is no exception to this never ending process. However, out of the masticated and dissolved answers broken down by the recognition of new questions comes exciting new promise in the sight of religion in addition to action towards what religion is. But, these answers are not here yet and remain in the present to be undiscovered by scholars struggling to make sense of the world in the present as well as in the future.

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A Reign of Justice: Ancient Mesopotamia and the Modern Quest for a Just Social Order

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Introduction

Classicists may be tempted to think elevated discussions regarding justice originated with the Greeks. It is clear the Greeks were highly interested in this subject, as the *Geschichte* of their justice concept can be traced back to the myths regarding the Titans.¹ Themis was the personification of the essential traits (law, order, and justice), with her daughter Dike depicted as the goddess of justice.² Justice would also play a major role in Pythagoras' mathematical approach, as he believed the universe required balance and reparation. Later, the concept would feature prominently in the ideal societies depicted by Plato and Aristotle. Conversely, Old Testament scholars generally point to pre-C.E. Jewish scriptures as the starting point for a justice concept. Certainly, the Pentateuchal law codes contain a voluminous amount of ethical material, not to mention the Deuteronomist development of those codes and subsequent reflection by later prophets. Nevertheless, both the Pentateuch and Greek writings are predated by inscriptions recorded by earlier Near Eastern people-groups equally interested in social justice and societal ethics, with some Mesopotamian texts going back to the 3rd millennium BCE.

The goal of this article is twofold. Primarily, the issue of how justice was understood in the ancient Near Eastern world will be surveyed. While this article must be necessarily cursory, the hope is a true-to-source understanding of how justice was perceived and applied within the geopolitical framework of this corner of the ancient world. Secondly, there is the issue of potential application of these insights to our ongoing effort to build a society that is just and equitable. We live in an age where the Western world is finally beginning to listen to a variety of perspectives and approaches in our attempt to better understand oppression, disparity, and inequality—and of course in our attempt to remedy these ongoing issues. This article simply attempts to add a few more voices to the chorus, albeit ancient ones.

¹ Gregory Vlastos, "Equality and Justice in Early Greek Cosmologies," *Classical Philology* 42, 3 (1947): 173.

² For an overview of the Greek view of justice, see Eric A. Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

Justice in Lagash and Isin-Larsa

The promotion of justice is a prominent theme throughout surviving Mesopotamian documents.³ The oldest known example dates to 2430 B.C.E, when En-te-māyna, governor of Lagash, etched praise of himself in stone. He declared that he had “freed [the population] of [oppressive] interest rates.”⁴ This immediately follows the declaration, “He instituted the freedom of Lagash,” along with a claim of returning a child to its mother—which most likely is meant to be taken as representative for a whole series of restorative acts.⁵ It is notable that this most-ancient example of justice deals with two issues still pressing upon our modern society: economic justice and legal justice. Regarding economic justice, oppressive taxation and predatory interest rates plagued the ancient world. Despite our penchant for assuming societal advances, it is no coincidence that modern payday lenders and cash advance loan operators disproportionately operate within walking distance of low-income areas—often purporting to offer a “service” to the community. As to judicial justice, while the West has only begun seriously grappling with issues related to judicial reform within the last four or five decades, systemic legal injustice has long plagued human civilization. What makes this cuneiform text fascinating is En-te-mena’s recognition of the destructive impact economic and legal injustice has on society. Or, if we are to remain skeptical of this ancient politician, he at least recognized the political advantage of appearing to see their destructive impact.

A similar practice of granting freedom from oppressive debt was mentioned in the Edict of Ammi-saduqa. From the late Old Babylonian period, it begins by declaring “the arrears of the farmer, shepherd, provincial officials, and crown tributaries ... are remitted. The collector may not sue for payment.”⁶ It further notes that any funds “collected by constraint he must refund.... Whoever does not make a refund in compliance with the king’s ordinance shall die.”⁷ It is not immediately clear whether the death penalty was mandated because oppressive debt collection methods were considered a crime so egregious in and of itself that it warranted death. It is more

³ Raymond Westbrook, “Social Reform in the Ancient Near East,” in *Social Justice in the Ancient World*, ed. K. D. Irani and Morris Silver, Global Perspectives in History and Politics: Contributions in Political Science 354 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 170.

⁴ Words in brackets appear to be Nardoni’s attempt to clarify meaning. See Enrique Nardoni, *Rise Up, O Judge: A Study of Justice in the Biblical World*, trans. Charles Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 2. W.G. Lambert’s original French translation reads, “Il fit instituer la liberte des interest.” See W. G. Lambert, “Nebuchadnezzar King of Justice,” *British Institute for the Study of Iraq* 27, 1 (1965): 16.

⁵ Maurice Lambert’s original translation into French reads, “Il fit instituer la liberte de Lagash.” Translation is my own. See Maurice Lambert, “L’Expansion de Lagash Au Temps D’Entemena,” *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 47, 1 (1972): 2, cf. 1-22. The text further says he “instituted freedom for the inhabitants of Uruk, for the inhabitants of Larsa, for the inhabitants of Badtibira [etc.]”

⁶ J. J. Finkelstein, “The Edict of Ammisaduqa: A New Text,” *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’archéologie Orientale* 63, 1 (1969): 49. The document further forbids debt collected from “any Akkadian or Amorite.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

likely this penalty would have been imposed on any act of disobedience to a king's direct order—whatever that edict might have been concerning. The frequency of the death penalty in many of these early law codes suggests this may be the case.

The inscription known today as the *Reforms of Uru-ká-gina*, regarding the twenty-fourth-century BCE king of Lagash, records the king making a binding agreement with the god Nin-girsu that he would never subjugate the orphan or widow to the powerful.⁸ The text lists numerous examples of establishing justice, such as removing the “safe passage toll” charged to workers, putting a stop to powerful landowners plundering the orchards of the poor, and setting free those inhabitants of Lagash who had been wrongly imprisoned by the rich and powerful.⁹ These and other surviving inscriptions, throughout a variety of cultures, frequently paired kingly acts of justice with divine commands. In 1974, Wolfram von Soden translated a Mesopotamian prayer tablet to the goddess Ishtar, which praised the deity as one who “loves justice.”¹⁰ She is described elsewhere as one who judges “the people with righteousness and justice” and “regards the oppressed and beaten and leads them daily with equity.”¹¹ Justice, in the ancient world, was seen as divinely willed. As such, it was theoretically applicable to all, thus making protection of the disenfranchised a national priority—at least in theory. Ur-nammu, the king of Ur, Sumer, and Akkad (c. 2112-2094 B.C.), proclaimed that during his reign, “The orphan was not delivered up to the mighty man; the man of one shekel was not delivered up to the man of one mina.”¹² Gudea, who reigned Lagash in Southern Mesopotamia circa 2080-2060, claimed, “I paid attention to the justice ordained by Nanše and Ningirsu; I did not expose the orphan to the wealthy person, nor did I expose the widow to the influential one.”¹³

Multiple surviving inscriptions from the pre-Babylonian Isin-Larsa Dynasty show claimed attempts to normalize justice. Lipit-Eštar (c. 1870-1860 B.C.) is described as a “king who established justice in the land of Sumer and Akkad,”¹⁴ and would boast

⁸ Douglass Frayne, *Presargonic Period (2700-2350 BC), Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 265.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 264. Niels Peter Lemche calls our attention to the fact that Entemena also extended this debt relief to the surrounding regions. See Niels Peter Lemche, “Andurārum and Mīšarum: Comments on the Problem of Social Edicts and Their Application in the Ancient Near East,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 38, 1 (1979): 16.

¹⁰ Wolfram von Soden, “Zwei Königsgebete an Ištar Aus Assyrien,” *Archiv Für Orientforschung* 25 (1974): 38. Soden’s translation appears on page 48, “die Gerechtigkeit liebt.”

¹¹ Moshe Weinfeld, “‘Justice and Righteousness’ – משפט וצדקה: The Expression and Its Meaning,” in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 235.

¹² J. J. Finkelstein, “The Laws of Ur-Nammu,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 22 (1969): 68. Note that Ezekiel 45:12 places the value of a mina as being sixty shekels. There is some uncertainty how the Ugaritic system subdivided their units of measure, leading some to conclude the mina was worth fifty shekels. See Robert R. Stieglitz, “Commodity Prices at Ugarit,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99, 1 (1979): 15–23.

¹³ Dietz Otto Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty, The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Early Periods* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 36.

¹⁴ Douglas R. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595 BC), The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Early Periods* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 47.

about building a “house of justice.”¹⁵ His successor, Enlik-bāni, would proclaim, “I established justice in Nippur. I made righteousness appear.”¹⁶ A long succession of Isin kings would refer to their rule as a “reign of justice” (including Nūr-Adad, Sîn-iddinam, and Sîn-iqīšam). Warad-Sîn took the title “shepherd of justice,”¹⁷ and Samsu-iluna spoke of his “scepter of justice.”¹⁸ Ammī-ditāna brags that “the gods Samas and Marduk love my reign [because] I provided justice for the land of Sumer and Akkad.”¹⁹

The Justice of Hammurabi

One of the most famous kings of the First Babylonian Dynasty was Hammurabi, the originator of the *Code of Hammurabi*. Unlike many of the inscriptions considered thus far, this code goes beyond grandiose boasts by political leaders and actually provides a relatively comprehensive legal framework. One of the most remarkable features of this ancient law code is the goal stated in the prologue of the document: “to make justice visible in the land.” Hammurabi had a pressing desire to reform society under a new, uniform system of justice. This pursuit of justice was directly linked to divine will, as can be clearly seen when we give the above quote in its fuller context: “Then did Anu and Bêl call me by name, Hammurabi, the high prince, god-fearing, to make justice visible in the land, to banish the proud and the oppressor, that the great should not despoil the weak.”²⁰ The prologue concludes, “When Marduk brought me to direct all people and commissioned me to give judgment, I laid down justice and right in the provinces.”²¹ Society needed to be rebuilt upon a code of justice precisely because the gods demanded it, at least as Hammurabi states the matter.

As was typical in ancient codes and discussions on justice, the focus was almost completely on punitive justice. While it was just to protect the orphan and widow, this justice was enacted through either retributive or restitutive processes. *Retribution* was enacted when the offense called for some type of proportional response—the so-called “eye for an eye” approach. Additionally, *restitution* occurred when the offender was required to repay the victim when tangible goods or property were stolen, damaged, or lost.

Much has been written about this ancient code of ethics and it continues to delight Assyriologists and contemporary ethicists alike. Even so, Hammurabi’s *Code* contained serious flaws and oddities. While the attempt may have been to apply punitive justice consistently, it wasn’t applied equally. For example, the husband who abandoned his wife could be forced to offer her financial restitution in the amount of her original dowry,

¹⁵ Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595 BC)*, 54.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 378.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 413.

²⁰ C. H. W. Johns, *Babylonian and Assyrian Laws, Contracts, and Letters, Library of Ancient Inscriptions* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 390.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 392.

whereas the wife who abandoned her husband would be drowned. Another concern was the requirement for accusers to forcefully bring the accused into court by themselves—creating a de facto failed system as powerless groups would not normally have the means of forcing an oppressor into court. Even worse, in certain situations, an accused person would prove his innocence or guilt by jumping in the Euphrates River. If the accused drowned, he was deemed guilty, and the accuser could take possession of his house. However, if he returned safely to shore, the accuser would be put to death. One can only imagine the fear of those innocent persons wrongly accused who lacked the physical strength or skill to swim. Or consider the scenario where a truly-guilty abuser triumphantly returns to shore and gleefully watches as the accuser—who had been wronged—was put to death. These real-life scenarios take on an almost metaphor-like quality when one considers how the powerful today continue use the legal system to their own advantage against the weak.

Neo-Assyrian Justice

Turning to the Neo-Assyrians empire, the royal inscriptions of Sargon II declares, “I, Sargon, who protects justice.”²² In a fuller description, he states, “In accordance with the saying of my name . . . that the great gods had given to me—to protect truth and justice, to guide the powerless, (and) to prevent the wrongful harm of the weak.”²³ He later mentions defeating a nameless Hittite king “who did not protect justice.”²⁴ We know nothing of that individual or the circumstances of his reign, or even if the accusation was accurate. What is notable, however, is that at least from a public relations standpoint an ethically ‘good’ political leader was defined as one who prioritized justice whereas an ethically ‘bad’ leader did not.

Later, when Esarhaddon assumed the throne, he would be presented with a report lamenting that “justice has been in abeyance since Sargon.”²⁵ Political opportunism is likely at play here, as it would have been to Esarhaddon’s advantage to link himself to his nation’s most recognized and revered historical figure. He also links himself to the nation’s deities, claiming, “the gods named me for shepherding the land and people in order to give the land and the people verdicts of truth and justice.”²⁶ Significantly, he expresses a desire that the promotion of justice would become a priority of all future leaders. His inscription includes his longing that “the future prince” would respect this wish by ruling with “truth and justice.”²⁷ His successor Ashurbanipal would boast, “I shepherded them in prosperity and justice,”²⁸ and referred to himself as one whom the

²² Grant Frame, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721-705 BC)* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021), 287.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20, cf. 229.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 69, cf. 331.

²⁵ Johns, *Babylonian and Assyrian Laws, Contracts, and Letters*, 377.

²⁶ Erle Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680-669 BC)* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 121.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁸ Jamie Novotny and Joshua Jeffers, *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668-631 BC), Aššur-Etel-Ilāni (630-627 BC), and Sîn-Šarra-Iškun (626-612 BC), Kings of Assyria, Part 1* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018), 58.

great gods “had created in truth and justice.”²⁹ Nebuchadnezzar, a king of Babylon, would be described as “a lover of truth and righteousness.”³⁰ If the cuneiform texts translated by W. G. Lambert do indeed refer to Nebuchadnezzar, they describe the king as one who “was not negligent in the matter of true and righteous judgment.”³¹

Justice in an Ugaritic/Hurrian Epic

An Ugaritic text dating to the late Bronze Age tells a story of the likely legendary Hurrian king Keret, or Kirta. Known today as the Epic of Kirta, it comes to us from the scribe Ilimilku of Ugarit. As there are no other known copies in existence, it is debated whether he accurately preserved an earlier story, heavily edited that story, or composed it entirely himself. As these were hostile kingdoms, there remains the possibility of exaggerated and unflattering elements.³² Unfortunately, the story begins and ends abruptly, suggesting tablets are still lost to history. The remaining tablets are also damaged, leaving the surviving story fragmentary.

Old Testament scholars find this text significant as it mentions both the god El and his wife Asherah, who both play prominent roles in the story. From the surviving tablets, we read that Keret is cursed with a fatal illness by the goddess Asherah for failing to keep his promise to her. However, El steps in and heals Keret. Before news of his recovery can spread, the prince Yassib bursts into his room and demands the kingdom. The now-cured Keret curses Yassib, asking the deity Horon, the master of demons, to smash Yassib’s skull. This is where the fragmentary story ends. What is significant for our purposes is the rational Yassib offers for his demand that his father vacate the throne. He confronts his father, saying, “You do not judge the cause of the widow, you do not try the case of the importunate. You do not banish the extortioners of the poor, you do not feed the orphan nor the widow, because you have become a brother to a bed of sickness.”³³

Surprisingly, this line has received relatively little scholarly attention in relation to understand ANE justice. Academic discussions on the epic have centered around matters such as the compositional role of the scribe Ilimilku, linguistic issues, and potential connections to or implications for Old Testament studies (especially the portrayal of El, Asherah, and Horon). The ethical implications of this statement offer tremendous insight regarding the expectations placed upon ancient kings and perhaps even the panic that may have ensued when a ruler believed his ability to live up to those expectations was being questioned. Whether Yassib’s accusation

²⁹ Ibid., 241.

³⁰ Stephen Langdon, *Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1912), 100. See page 101 for Langdon’s German translation.

³¹ The king’s name is never mentioned in the surviving text, though it undoubtedly comes from the later Babylonian period. See Lambert, “Nebuchadnezzar King of Justice,” 8.

³² For more information on this debate, see Válek, “Foreigners and Religion at Ugarit,” p. 51; and especially A.H.W Curtis, “Ilimilku of Ugarit: Copyist or Creator?,” in P.R. Davies & T. Römer (eds), *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism, and Script* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

³³ J.C.L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Second (New York: T&T Clark International, 1978), 101.

was merely pretext or a legitimate concern is unknown, especially considering we do not have the ending to the story. What is clear is that Yassib, and perhaps his supporters, saw the charge as a strong argument in his favor. Even the accusation had the possibility of delegitimizing Keret. As the Assyriologist Morris Jastrow observed elsewhere, “the judge stands in place of the deity...if he fails in the proper discharge of his duties, he lowers the dignity of his office.” This created a de facto break between the ruler and the deity, at least in the eyes of the people. Morris adds, “by permitting him to go astray, [the deity] shows that he no longer desires the judge to speak in his name.”³⁴ This potentially explains the forceful response of Keret.

Implications and Conclusion

While we dare not flatten these diverse cultures into a single ideology or minimize their vast differences, there are some similarities that emerge. One of the most notable is the tradition of *noblesse oblige* where rulers were expected to look after the welfare of their poor subjects. Justice was intimately tied to the nation’s sovereign and ruling class. There was no concept of limiting the power of the sovereign in the ANE world, let alone sharing that power equitably. Yet, there was a clearly formulated understanding that those in power were ethically obligated to use that power to protect the weak from abuse.

This notion was directly tied to the universally held belief in a divine mandate for justice. Morality and religion were conjoined realities. The gods demanded that society be properly ordered, and such order could not occur if abuse operated unchecked. Political rulers often went to great lengths to educate their subjects about this divine expectation, with the sovereign either claiming semi-divine status or otherwise possessing a special mandate from the gods to promote justice. This was no doubt an effective method to retain power. Despite the self-serving nature of this association, it also reinforced the general understanding that justice was not optional, at least as a claimed governing principle.

Another similarity was that justice was primarily seen as involving the punishment of oppression (retributive justice). The frequency of the death penalty in Hammurabi’s code is indicative of this emphasis. This concept survives today as our modern judicial system is nearly synonymous with punishment. Nevertheless, a restorative aspect of justice can be found throughout ANE literature. This generally involved acts of mercy intended to relieve the suffering of the disenfranchised. It was not enough to merely punish the one who wrongly enslaved another since restorative justice required that the prisoner be set free. Likewise, a poor widow who has been defrauded of property could theoretically expect the courts to order her property returned to her, at least in ideal situations. This was extremely limited, as one is hard-pressed to find examples of the wrongly imprisoned man being compensated for lost freedom or the widow being awarded additional monetary benefit for the

³⁴ Morris Jastrow, *Aspects of Religious Belief and Practice in Babylonian and Assyria* Lecture VI, Section VII. 1911.

hardship incurred because of the theft. Nevertheless, these ancient law codes birthed the concept of restorative justice and provided future societies with an important foundation upon which to build.

Finally, inscriptions regarding justice in the ANE were chiefly related to those ancient societies' economic and financial systems. For those following contemporary discussions about justice, it should be no surprise that modern debates, arguments, and protests are often focused on economic issues. For example, those arguing for a secure border regularly claim undocumented workers will take American jobs, whereas those arguing for relaxed border policies point to economic hardship in the nations of origin. Another example is the debate over reparations, where proponents for this action are attempting to redress longstanding economic disenfranchisement while opponents insist this would place an oppressive economic burden upon contemporary citizens far removed from the original wrongdoing. These dilemmas are difficult to solve due to the ethical issues involved and the potential for causing or continuing harm. The very nature of economics lends itself to abuse of the underclass, as economic systems involve 'winners' and 'losers. As such, they are normatively predatory and favor the powerful. Like the modern world, even when the ancient world was at its best it struggled to keep these abuses under control.

The ANE's approach to justice was deeply flawed. Inherent sexism was rampant, which is seen clearly in Hammurabi's code where women were not granted the same rights or restitution as men. Nor is there any indication that attempts were made to transfer power to disenfranchised groups, thus leaving them permanently at the mercy of those in power over them. Even when justice was enacted it was typically sporadic and situational, often occurring only when a new king was attempting to solidify his reign. As with modern politicians, one gets the sense political leaders were more interested in carving their legacy into stone—with little concrete data that those legacies accurately reflected reality. It is one thing for an ancient king to claim he reigned in justice, but it is another thing entirely for the people of that time to have experienced such a reign. As with modern perspectives and approaches to justice, some of their methods deserve our praise even as we recoil at those practices of false justice that brought even more abuse.

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Threshing Floors of the Bible: Their Social, Political and Symbolic Purposes

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Introduction

The threshing floors of the Bible were outdoor stone floors, usually circular in fashion, used by farmers to process the grain of their crops. For the larger community, like watermills of recent past,¹ they could be gathering places bustling with commercial and communal activity.²

Threshing floors served several purposes:

- As agricultural processing facilities and places of commercial activity.
- As places that have symbolic meaning.
- As neutral places of gathering.
- As places of political treaty.
- As places of mourning.
- As places of sacrifice.
- As building sites.

As Processing Facilities

While threshing floors in ancient Israel had significant social and symbolic value, their function as agricultural facilities to process grain was primary. Something we all depend on for sustenance, the harvesting of grain, is a process of gathering and separation. For example, with corn, after the stalks are gathered, the cobs are separated from the stalk, then their outer leafy husks are detached. For animal feed, the cobs can be consumed whole. For human consumption, the kernels on the cob, with their soft hulls left intact, are removed. The kernels are consumed while fresh, or dried and ground into flour.³ With wheat, the outer harder hulls of the seed are broken or 'threshed' from the seed. In ancient times threshing was performed by hand on the threshing floor with wheels, sledges, or hinged wooden rods called flails. This flailing or threshing process was aided by the wind blowing the lighter broken hulls or chaff away from the grain after being released into the air from a fork,

¹ [Historic Alabama Watermills - ALABAMA HERITAGE](#) See also, Franklin F. Webb and Ricky L. Cox, *The Water-Powered Mills of Floyd County Virginia: Illustrated Histories 1770-2010* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2012) locations 887, 906, 924, 930, 1265, 2846, 3561.

² Susan Ackerman, "Threshing Floors" in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Meyers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000) 1305.

³ Michael Woods and Mary B. Woods, *Ancient Agriculture: From Foraging to Farming*, (Minneapolis: Runestone Press, 2000) 76-78.

shovel, or shallow basket. Called winnowing, this left the heavier delectable seed on the threshing floor to be gathered.⁴ In the book of Ruth, we get a good idea about harvesting in Biblical times. Boaz, a community leader and 'man of standing,' owned land on which he grew barley and wheat. With an overseer in charge of men and women, his laborers gleaned and gathered stalks from the fields that were bound in manageable bundles called sheaves to be taken to the threshing floor. After the threshing and winnowing process,⁵ while waiting for his harvest to be transported from the threshing floor for storage to protect it from theft, he (likely with others) slept near the pile of grain as it lay overnight on the threshing floor.⁶ The bounty of his crop is indicated when Ruth, who Boaz would later marry, went to Boaz that night; she found him on the threshing floor "at the far end of the grain pile." (Ruth 3:7)



Location and Structure

One of the things that made threshing floors unique was the specific meteorological and geographical conditions required for their location. The winnowing process's great advantage often determined the threshing floor's location. Hosea 13:3 vividly describes how chaff was separated from the grain by the wind: "Like chaff swirling from a threshing floor." or when Isaiah references the winnowing of chaff as "the wind will pick them up, and a gale will blow them away." (Isaiah 41:16) Thus, a place with strong, steady winds with access to district farmers, and a plot of ground flat enough to accommodate the threshing floor structure, was preferred and often determined a threshing floor's location. Jamie Waters points out, "as their flat floors are often situated in areas with wind accessibility . . . hill tops were traditional locations."⁷ The Biblical text also indicates the preference for elevated locations when King Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahab, king of Israel, met at the threshing floor of the city of Samaria, located near the entrance gate. This city, named after its original owner, Shemer, was built on a hill. (1 Kings 16:23-24) The idiom in the book of Isaiah, "driven before the wind like chaff on the hills," likewise confirms the winnowing process of locations on higher ground. (17:13) Additionally, as the temple in Jerusalem was built over a threshing floor, Victor Hurowitz observes, "This site

⁴ [Separating the Wheat from the Chaff | The Whole Grains Council, 2000](#)

⁵ Encyclopedia of Ancient History, (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing)

⁶ Ruth 2:1-7, 15; 3:2-7.

⁷ Jaimie L. Waters, *Threshing Floors in Ancient Israel: Their Ritual and Symbolic Significance* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015) 9, 11.

was chosen because it was outside the city and was elevated. In ancient Israel threshing floors were located at places where the wind would blow freely to facilitate winnowing.”⁸

The threshing and winnowing process also determined the threshing floor's structure. To facilitate the gathering and threshing of the grain, especially with sledges pulled by animals going in a circle, most threshing floors were round, with curbs added to the perimeter of the threshing floor structure. So the cereal could be sufficiently threshed from its hulls, a hard surface area was required, usually of closely spaced stones, hewn rock; even plaster was used. As Waters shows, "Excavations in Samaria have uncovered several agricultural installations, including multiple threshing floors, wine presses, and olive presses dating roughly from the Hellenistic period to the Roman period. These threshing floors were typically level areas cut into rock, some with stone fences around them, and almost always on the outskirts of a settlement."⁹ Additionally, in Israel, 6 km northeast of Caesarea, a residence dated between the first century BCE to the first century CE was excavated by Y. Hirschfeld and R. Birger-Calderon. They discovered a courtyard with a wine press, olive press, and a threshing floor. The rock-hewn semi-circular threshing floor area measured 7.6 meters (25 feet) by 1.8 (6 feet) meters. The size and shape of this threshing floor led the excavators to conclude the grain was threshed with flails.¹⁰ In Cyprus, the ethnoarchaeological study by John Whitaker reveals threshing floors were sometimes plastered. While in northern Greece, to utilize scarce arable soil, Georgia Tsartsidou discovered threshing floors were dismantled every year after harvest to cultivate the same plots of ground before the following year's threshing when new floors would be installed.¹¹



⁸ Victor Hurowitz, "Inside Solomon's Temple" in the *Bible Review*, 10:2, April 1994.

⁹ Waters, 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8,

Commercial Activity

That their use was essential, and their locations required specific conditions meant threshing floor areas were unique and valuable to their owners. That meant the proprietor would benefit economically with a charge-of-use, of a likely percentage take of the harvest. Threshing floors could have single ownership or be owned by a village, city, or perhaps even the king. Interestingly, the threshing floor at Samaria was prominently located at the city's gates. Controlling the flow of people, city gates were often places of social, political, and business exchange. Moreover, since the newly built Samaria and its threshing floor were contiguous suggests Samaria's threshing floor may have played a role in the city's choice for a building site. Either way, it is hard to imagine king Ahab would not have taken proprietorship of such an essential structure near the gates of the capital city his father Omri built.¹² In other instances, threshing floors were owned by ordinary individuals. While it is generally believed the "threshing floor of Atad" was named for its location as "a place of thorns," and was owned by the village that grew up around it,¹³ the "threshing floor of Nakon" was more likely named after a person. But the "threshing floor of Araunah" certainly was owned and named after Araunah, a Jebusite from Jerusalem. Araunah's threshing floor was purchased from Araunah by king David for fifty shekels of silver. (Gen. 50:10; 2 Sam. 6:6, 24:18- 24) Regarding business activity, since their locations were unique and harvest time was limited, threshing floors were likely crowded with area farmers at the height of harvest season. Additionally, interestingly enough, the Bible mentions the presence of prostitutes at threshing floors. Speaking about their unfaithfulness to their god, Hosea reproaches the Israelites saying, "you love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor." (9:1) Beyond the sentence as an idiom; that wages, prostitution, and threshing floors are associated suggests a basis in real life activity. If that is so, as prostitution historically links itself to commercial activity, for them to have plied their trade at threshing floors, suggests an ample degree of business activity, especially at the height of harvest season.¹⁴

Symbolism

As phrases from threshing floor processes, like "separating the chaff from the wheat" or "bringing in the sheaves" - a refrain of an old gospel song - have been used allegorically, in ancient Israel threshing floors themselves held a surprisingly significant cultural and symbolic place for the communities they served. As idioms within the Bible: synonymous with the giving of first fruits, offerings from the threshing floor represent a spirit of generosity and dedication by the faithful to God's

¹² 1 Kings 16:23-24.

¹³ Charles Ellicott, *A Bible Commentary for English Readers*, (Omaha, NE: Patristic Publishing, 2019) 674-75.

¹⁴ Thomas McGinn, "Zoning Shame in the Roman City" in *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World*, edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Laura K. McClure (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006) 161-65. See also, Kate Lister, *Harlots, Whores and Hackabouts: A History of Sex for Sale* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2021) 10, 46-77, 166.

cause in their lives. 'First fruits' and 'threshing floor offerings' were always the freshest and best of the gathered harvest. In Numbers 18:25-30, as the Lord, through Moses, commanded the Levites to give a tithe of the tithes to the priesthood, Moses said, "When you present the best part, it will be reckoned to you as the product of the threshing floor or winepress." In other places, the symbolism of the threshing floor represented promises of plenty. If Israel stayed true to their god, the prophet Joel promised their "threshing floors will be filled with grain." (Joel 2:24) However, John the Baptist used the winnowing process at the threshing floor in a more ominous way. "His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear the threshing floor." (Luke 3:17) But in their day, threshing floors, as essential agricultural tools, held a positive place for the people they served. Besides their use as processing facilities and that their locations were widely known, threshing floors were also places of ceremonial gathering. A threshing floor could be a politically neutral meeting place between leaders, or they could be ceremonial spaces of mourning and offering. One threshing floor would even have its place in history and become the designated location for Yahweh's temple.

Places of Gathering

As Victor Matthews mentions about the social nature of threshing floors, "One elaboration of the social character of the threshing floor is found in its use as a stage for events that either are turning points in a narrative or serve to showcase major public events."¹⁵ That threshing floors, as places on high, were unique yet essential meant their locations would have been widely known to the people of the districts they served. Moreover, the essential and shared character of the threshing floor meant that a degree of neutrality was understood by the communities they served. In Genesis 50:1-14, as the story of Joseph-in-Egypt goes, Joseph rose to great prominence under Pharaoh when a famine caused his twelve brothers in Canaan to seek refuge in Egypt. As their father stayed in Canaan, the brothers and their families prospered in Egypt in an area called Goshen. But when their father passed away in Canaan, with permission from Pharaoh, Joseph, and his brothers - accompanied by a significant entourage of Egyptian dignitaries - traveled back to Canaan "near the river Jordan" to the threshing floor of Atad. There they mourned Jacob's passing for seven days. That the place held a degree of neutrality is indicated when, though important foreigners with "a very large company, with chariots and horsemen," showed up at the local threshing floor, the locals sounded no alarm. They assumed the Egyptians were holding a "solemn mourning ceremony." (Gen. 50:1-11) Additionally, since Ahab and Jehoshaphat, kings of two related, often-at-odds nations (Judah and Israel) chose to have their meeting at Samaria's threshing floor, close to Samaria's gate, to discuss a joint attack on the city of Ramoth Gilead, again suggests an understanding of the symbolically neutral nature of threshing floors.¹⁶

¹⁵ Victor Matthews, "Physical Space, Imagined Space, and "Lived Space" in Ancient Israel" in *Biblical Theological Bulletin*, 2003, issue 1, volume 33:14.

¹⁶ 1 Kings 22:1-10.

Furthermore, as places of social gathering, threshing floors could also be used for places of sacrifice. In this respect Araunah's threshing floor would play a pivotal role in the history of Israel. The account starts with an unauthorized census by David that leads to remarkable events at Araunah's threshing floor. As the story goes, wanting to assess the strength of his forces, David orders a count of Israel's fighting men. God was incensed with David for doing this because it showed a lack of faith in the Lord, who had defeated Israel's enemies with little to no help. After all, He saved Israel from Pharaoh in Egypt when they were most vulnerable. He also instructed Gideon on how to defeat the Midianite army with just 300 men. Why would David need to assess the strength of his fighting force when he had God on his side? God thus instructed Gad, David's seer, to give David three choices: three years of famine for Israel, three months of defeat at the hands of his enemies, or three days of plague. Distressed, David asked only that he not fall into the hands of men. As the plague wreaked havoc on the people, David saw from his palace a vision of an angel at the threshing floor of Araunah. Standing between heaven and earth, with sword drawn, the angel was ready to strike Jerusalem next. Falling to their knees, the elders and David pleaded for the plague to stop. For things to be made right, the angel sent word to David to go up to Araunah's threshing floor on Mount Moriah and build an altar of sacrifice. Though Araunah wanted to gift the threshing floor, plus the oxen, grain, and sledges as wood for the sacrifice, David insisted on paying for it. There, David built an altar, offered sacrifices, and called on the Lord for mercy. As the account tells, God answered by sending fire from heaven onto the altar! The plague ceased. Interestingly, Araunah's threshing floor marks an important place in history, for it became the site on Mount Moriah where Solomon would build Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem. In the same place where David offered sacrifices at Araunah's threshing floor, his son Solomon stood before a new bronze altar, and as sacrifices were made, he dedicated the newly finished temple.¹⁷ As mentioned in 2 Chronicles 3:1,

Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

This temple would play a pivotal role in the social and economic life of the Jewish people from c. 957 BCE until its destruction at the hands of the Babylonians in 587, as would the Second Temple on the same site from c. 516 BCE until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. Furthermore, the same Temple Mount area - over Araunah's threshing floor - is still considered a holy site for Jewish, Christian, and Islamic people today.

¹⁷ Judges 7:1-25; 1 Kings 8:1-10; 2 Sam. 24:1-25; 1 Chron. 14:13-16, 21:1-27, 29:1-9; 2 Chron. 3:1-2, 5:7-14, 6:12-42, 7:1-3; 20:14-26.

Conclusion

Threshing floors were, of course, not limited in time and place to just that of ancient Palestine but were commonsense answers to agriculture needs, and so their remains are found throughout the Mediterranean. As they were necessary to the agricultural process, threshing beds or floors were laid out wherever cereal grain was grown. Until modern times with the invention of threshing and winnowing machines - then the combines that combined both processes - wooden barns with breezeways were also used throughout Europe and America as threshing floor sites. As the threshing floors mentioned in the Bible were essential processing facilities for the farmers using them, that their locations required specific geological and meteorological conditions made them commercially valuable to their owners. Then, as they served their greater farming districts, and their locations were widely known they served social and symbolic purposes as well. Moreover, as phraseologies from the threshing floor process gained idiomatic value within the Biblical text and in our present language, threshing floors, at the time of their use, also became neutral places of gathering for political meetings. They also became places of mourning and sacrifice. Finally, as the threshing floors at Atad and Samaria appear instrumental to their city's location, Araunah's threshing floor was certainly the designated building site for Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem.

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Consuming the Self: Inspiration Porn's Destruction of Human Wholeness

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Abstract

Popular and profitable internet and social media platforms have eased access to pornographic materials around the globe. Pornography is everywhere, all the time. One troubling outgrowth of internet pornography is a phenomenon known as inspiration porn. "Inspiration porn," a term coined by the late disability activist Stella Young, refers to any objectifying depiction of a disabled person that treats the person as a source and site of inspiration for able-bodied people. The operating force behind inspiration porn is a narrative of disabled people as overcomers of broken bodies or grateful recipients of charity. Inspiration porn thus reduces personhood from a complex web of essence and identities to a singular marker of selfhood: disability. By conflating human essence and identity—by equating what one is (or has) with who one is—inspiration porn effectively denies personhood to disabled people. In this paper, I expand upon Young's work by articulating the philosophical and theological assumptions underlying inspiration porn. I then analyze inspiration porn to show how religiosity contributes to inspiration porn and the reductive views of personhood that produce it. Finally, I point to alternative expressions of Christian thought and practice that offer hopeful counterpoints to inspiration porn's dehumanizing narrative of disability.

Introduction

Author's disclaimer: My paper focuses on the phenomenon of "inspiration porn," a term coined by the late disability activist Stella Young in an editorial published in July 2012 on the ABC website "Ramped Up." In Young's thought, the term "inspiration porn" refers to any objectifying depiction of a disabled person that treats the person as a source and site of inspiration for able-bodied people. I also wish to disclaim that throughout this article, I have opted to use person-first and disability-first language interchangeably when referring to people with disabilities. Disabled people have thoughtful and varied reasons for preferring one form of language over the other. Like many, I prefer disability-first language when referring to myself and others: however, it is always best practice to ask individuals what language they prefer when talking about disability.

You and I consume pornography every day of our lives. In this digital age, where information is shared in abbreviated format and at lightning speed, pornography is inescapable. Oftentimes, we are the pornographers, creating narrative fantasies that reduce complex human beings to objects for the sake of our own pleasure. We distribute these materials through the stories we tell ourselves and through the images we post and share. In this paper, I discuss a troubling outgrowth of a cultural

landscape prone to producing pornography: the phenomenon of inspiration porn, or the practice of treating disabled people as sources and sites of inspiration for able-bodied people while reducing their complex, storied identities to a single marker of selfhood: disability. In the following pages, I establish a framework for analyzing inspiration porn. I trace the philosophical assumptions that have given birth to reductive understandings of disabled people, and consider how Christian thought and practice have contributed to objectifying and exclusionary treatment of people with disabilities. Finally, I propose an alternative framework for considering disability, replacing the dehumanizing tendencies of inspiration porn with Nancy Eiesland's generative Christology of the disabled God in hope of affording a new understanding of disability, prompting life-giving thought and practice.

Pornography: Consuming the Self

The phrase "consumption of pornography" dominates the medical, psychiatric, and sociological research about behaviors relating to the subject. In this paper, I will modify this formal language slightly to advance my thesis: the essence of pornography is consumption for the sake of pleasure. By defining pornography in this way, I distinguish the identity (for instance, the subject, genre, or medium) of pornography or individual pornographies from its essence of consumption in the arguments I weave throughout the following pages.

Perhaps the most common usage of the word pornography denotes the image and video-based explicit material especially prevalent within online platforms. These erotic materials are distributed through websites, online chatrooms, and social media and accessed via a screen. Viewers (primarily males) seek out this material chiefly for the purpose of experiencing sexual pleasure (Petersen and Hyde 28). Notably, pornographic images and videos rely on objectification of female actors to create effective erotica for the assumed male audience. The women featured in pornography are not depicted as unique and storied human beings but are instead reduced to their sexual capacity. Stripped of their varied identities and human essence, the actors are reduced to sex objects. This objectification is instrumental in helping consumers of pornography to achieve sexual pleasure.

Inspiration porn, or depictions of disabled people that treat the person as a source and site of inspiration for able-bodied people, operates in a similar manner. Like erotic pornography, the phenomenon of inspiration porn is increasingly online and image-based. It is promulgated through images and videos and distributed through media reports and social media shares. Like explicit pornographic materials, inspiration porn does not present the disabled person captured in an image or video as a complex, multi-faceted human being, but instead reduces their identity to a single, visible marker of selfhood: disability. By objectifying the disabled actors within these images and videos, inspiration porn helps viewers achieve a climax that is not physical, but emotional, as they prompt a pleasurable sensation of moral satisfaction and superiority within able-bodied consumers.

The phenomenon of inspiration porn is prevalent within a multitude of mediums, surfacing in literary classics, news reports, and nonprofit mission statements. Even so, the primary arbiters of inspiration porn are online platforms, where users circulate objectifying narratives of disabled people through images, videos, and social media posts. One well-known example of inspiration porn is an image of a child with prosthetic legs below the knee, completing a race, with the caption “Your excuse is invalid.” Another image depicts an able-bodied man encouraging a child, who does not have hands, with the words “The only disability in life is a bad attitude.” Video examples of inspiration porn often feature similar content: one video (which has garnered well over one million views) captures the first pitch at a professional baseball game, thrown by a man without arms; another viral video shows a child using a walker joining his friends and playing soccer. On social media, inspiration porn often takes the form of a highly shared post, such as one popular post that praised a high school quarterback for taking his friend to prom. The catch? His prom date is a young woman with Down Syndrome, and their story is shared as “inspirational.”

Objectification is the name and game of inspiration porn, as these images, videos, and narratives reduce complex human persons to a single aspect of their identities. The objectifying nature of this content led the late Australian disability activist, journalist, and comedian Stella Young to coin the term “inspiration porn” in describing this phenomenon, purposefully choosing a term that would evoke connotations of objectification of an oppressed group of people by an oppressing group of people. In a Ted Talk on the topic delivered in Sydney in 2014, Young explains, “I use the term porn deliberately, because they objectify one group of people for the benefit of another group of people... in this case, we're objectifying disabled people for the benefit of nondisabled people” (Young). Continuing her analysis, Young notes that inspiration porn situates disabled people under the evaluative gaze of able-bodied consumers, positioning them as “objects of inspiration” for consumption (Young). The work of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, a pioneer in disability studies scholarship, illuminates the idea of the gaze that dictates interaction with inspiration porn. In *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, Garland-Thomson draws on feminist theory to make a parallel between the philosophical and cultural treatment of the female body and the disabled body. She writes,

This image of the disabled body as a visual assault, a shocking spectacle to the normate eye, captures a defining aspect of the disabled experience. Whereas feminists claim that women are objects of the evaluative male gaze... the disabled body is the object of the stare. If the male gaze makes the normative female a sexual spectacle, then the stare sculpts the disabled subject into a grotesque spectacle (Garland-Thompson 26).

Just as the male gaze defines female objectification, so the stare objectifies disabled people. Pornography of all sorts relies on this sort of looking—one of evaluation, Othering, and consumption. In inspiration porn, the stare becomes all-consuming,

reducing the personhood of people with disabilities—as Young puts it, “We’re not real people. We are there to inspire” (Young).

Identifying Inspiration Porn

My research and analysis have helped me to identify two distinct narrative genres of inspiration porn. The first genre features the narrative of overcoming disability, as is apparent in images and videos of disabled people completing everyday activities in ways that best suit their bodies, such as the child playing soccer while using a walker and the child completing a race with prosthetic legs. The second genre highlights the charitable acts of able-bodied people toward disabled people. Social media posts praising the quarterback who invited a girl with Down Syndrome to prom and viral videos of fast-food employees feeding disabled customers fall into this category. Regardless of the genre, examples of inspiration porn share common features and tropes. In analyzing instances of inspiration porn, I propose the following framework for qualifying content as inspiration porn: first, the content features a person with a visible or known disability; second, the purpose or framing of the content is inspiration; lastly, the content ceases to be “inspirational” when the category of disability is removed. This last qualifier originates from the work of Stella Young, who aptly identifies that inspiration porn infantilizes disabled people by praising their everyday acts. Throughout this paper, when I discuss inspiration porn broadly or note specific examples, I am referring to content that meets these criteria.

Philosophical Assumptions Contributing to Inspiration Porn

As Young identifies in her TED talk, two primary assumptions about disability underly inspiration porn: first, disability is a bad thing; second, disability is abnormal or exceptional. It is worth noting that a strong correlation exists between common understandings of women and disabled people in philosophical thought. By tracing these ideas to their philosophical origins, we may begin to unpack some of the baggage that saddles our cultural conceptions of disability.

Aristotelian philosophy establishes a foundation of dehumanizing thought and rhetoric toward both women and disabled people, whose identities of femaleness and disability are conflated in his work. In his *Generation of Animals*, Aristotle establishes the idea of an ideal human type (male and able-bodied) from which all others deviate. He writes, “Just as it sometimes happens that deformed offspring are produced by deformed parents, and sometimes not, so the offspring produced by a female are sometimes female, sometimes not, but male. The reason is that the female is as it were a deformed male...” (Aristotle 2.3). Contemporary understandings of disability and femaleness continue to be shaped by this thought, which categorizes both disability and femaleness as deviance from the able-bodied, male, normative body. Expanding on the ways in which Aristotelian philosophy about women and disability has contributed to modern understandings of these people groups, scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson writes,

More significant than Aristotle's simple conflation of disability and femaleness is his declaration that the source of all otherness is the concept of a norm, a 'generic type' against which all physical variation appears as different, derivative, inferior, and insufficient. Not only does this definition of the female as a 'mutilated male' inform later depictions of woman as diminished man, but it also arranges somatic diversity into a hierarchy of value that assigns completeness to some bodies and deficiency to others... Aristotle initiates the discursive practice of marking what is deemed aberrant while concealing what is privileged behind an assertion of normalcy... What this passage makes clearest, however, is that without the monstrous body to demarcate the borders of the generic, without the female body to distinguish the shape of the male, and without the pathological to give form to the normal, the taxonomies of bodily value that underlie political, social, and economic arrangements would collapse (Garland-Thompson 20).

To borrow from the terminology of Simone de Beauvoir, the philosophical understandings that inform modern views of femininity and disability have effectively established both groups as the "Other" to an "Absolute" type. In this framework, Garland-Thomson continues, "the disabled figure operates as a code for insufficiency, contingency, and abjection—for deviant particularity—thus establishing the contours of a canonical body that garners the prerogatives and privileges of a supposedly stable, universalized normalcy" (Garland-Thomson 136). By furthering the conception of the disabled body as monstrous or incomplete and upholding nondisabled bodies as normal, inspiration porn contributes to deeply entrenched philosophical thought about the nature of disability.

The moral model of disability forms another philosophical component underlying inspiration porn. Historically the most prevalent model used to conceptualize disability, the moral model frames disability as a sign of hidden sin and/or the result of divine punishment. This understanding is present in the earliest writings and behaviors surrounding disability and evident in many socio-religious contexts of the ancient world, such as the Ancient Near Eastern setting depicted in the Christian New Testament. In the gospel of John, the author recounts an encounter between Jesus and a blind man. The text states, "As he [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" (NRSV, John 9.1-2). The disciples' question confirms their understanding of disability as "a sign of moral imperfection or divine retribution for sin" (Eiesland 71) afforded by a moral model of disability. Texts such as these contribute to an "implicit theology" within the Christian tradition that "represents disability as being linked with sin, marring the divine image in humans, and preventing religious service" (Eiesland 71). While many Christian congregations will no longer explicitly state that disability is a result of personal or familial sin (though some continue to do so), Christian practices and rhetoric often promote the longstanding thought that "disability denotes an unusual relationship with God and that the person with disabilities is either divinely blessed or damned: the defiled evildoer or the spiritual superhero" (Eiesland 70). This understanding dually makes

suspect the disabled person and elevates them to inspirational status, setting the stage for understandings of disability as something to heal, fear, or overcome.

Theological Assumptions Contributing to Inspiration Porn

The Aristotelian notion of deviant bodies and the moral model of disability both heavily influence religious understandings of disability, where the body is not a neutral ground, but a text inscribed with varied meanings. Within the Christian tradition, the body often bears associations with sin and impurity and is held in a lower status than the immaterial soul. In mainstream thought, Aristotelian philosophy has cemented the normative status of the nondisabled body; by contrast, the disabled body is often described as “deformed” or “broken” in Christian rhetoric. The logic of sanctification prevalent in the Christian tradition contributes to this understanding of the normative body as the ideal or perfected state— “whole” and “complete,” instead of “deficient” and “sinful.” Moreover, this rationale implicates the disabled body as suspect while elevating the nondisabled body as nearer to Divine perfection.

A narrow concept of the *Imago Dei* may further increase stigmatization of disabled bodies within the Christian tradition. The late disabled theologian Nancy Eiesland speaks to this issue, writing, “related to the sin-disability conflation is the theme that physical disability is a travesty of the divine image and an inherent desecration of all things holy” (Eiesland 72). If one views the inscription of the Divine Image upon humans in materialistic, bodily terms, then people whose bodies deviate from the ideal, normative standard may be seen as less reflective of God’s image, or even as a distortion of the *Imago Dei*. This logic has been applied at various times within Christian history to women and disabled people alike, and served as the basis from which members of both groups are viewed as suspect and are consequently excluded from congregational activities and leadership. In turn, this exclusion only serves to reinforce the idea of “deviant” bodies as both exceptional and decidedly bad.

A final attitudinal barrier that has traditionally marginalized disabled people within Christian thought and practice is the institution of Christian charity. *Caritas*—a Latin word, meaning love or compassion—is the intended force driving Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Since the religion’s earliest days, Christians around the world have practiced acts of charity in order to relieve the suffering of socially disadvantaged groups or individuals. Historically and currently, disabled people are often positioned as recipients of Christian charity. Such an understanding is problematic in two ways. First, this positioning is reliant on a perception that disabled people are sufferers. While some disabilities may naturally involve suffering (for example, some disabled people live with chronic pain or illnesses that bring about discomfort), the diversity of disabilities is such that this generalization is not descriptive of the reality of all disabled people. Also worth noting is the argument of proponents of the social model of disability, who contend that the majority of suffering endured by disabled people has been at the hands of people and

institutions who consider their needs to be marginal and refuse to adapt. Secondly, charity toward disabled people typically positions the disabled person as a non-agential, grateful recipient, and an able-bodied charitable person as the helper motivated by pity. This framework elevates the able-bodied person into a favored position of privilege, from which they may provide aid, and portrays disabled people as needing salvific aid from able-bodied individuals.

Through the rhetoric of sanctification, exclusionary understandings of the Imago Dei, and the institution of Christian charity, many facets of the Christian tradition contribute to the ideological tendencies underlying the phenomenon of inspiration porn. Situating the effect of these tendencies, Eiesland writes, “the social-symbolic order that these Christian theologies help to establish perpetuates the belief that disability is inherently ‘un(w)holy’” (Eiesland 93). It is difficult to acknowledge the reality that core components of Christian thought and practice have simultaneously met and caused the suffering of disabled individuals. When analyzing the dissonance between intention and effect, a clear theme emerges, evident also in instances of inspiration porn: pity as a defining force does not lead to meaningful relationship or inclusive theology, but instead promotes consumption where understanding might have been reached instead.

Alternative Christology: Rebuking Inspiration Porn

The richness of Christian thought and practice has allowed for various interpretations and responses to disability since the birth of the religion. Conveyed through Eiesland’s words, “disability has never been religiously neutral,” but is instead imbued with “theological significance” in every context of its existence (Eiesland 69). In recent years, scholarship has prompted new theological understandings of disability which offer hopeful counterpoints to the dehumanizing religious undertones fueling inspiration porn, in turn contradicting disability as evidence of sin, disability as distortion of the Imago Dei, or disability as a fallen state to overcome.

In *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, Nancy Eiesland gestures to the generative possibilities of Christology in disability studies. She argues that Christian doctrine of the Incarnate God forever changes the way in which we must conceive of our bodies, writing, “Christology is fundamentally about human experience and human bodies as partially constitutive of God. God is with us: Emmanuel” (Eiesland 99). Within her book, Eiesland offers readers a re-envisioned Christology of the risen Jesus as the disabled God, who carries in His resurrected body the pain and limitations prompted by nail wounds in His hands and feet and a spear wound in His side. This Jesus, she writes,

... is not a romanticized notion of the ‘overcomer’ God... The disabled God embodies the ability to see clearly the complexity and ‘mixed blessing’ of life and bodies, without living in despair. This revelation is of a God for us who

celebrates joy and experiences pain not separately in time or space, but simultaneously (Eiesland 102-103).

Eiesland's proposed Christology rebukes the objectifying understandings of disability purported by inspiration porn. Her vision of the disabled God creates space for new theological conceptualizations of extraordinary or marginal bodies that neither condemn the body, overcome the body, nor elevate the body as the sole marker of a person's identity. By introducing audiences to the disabled God, Eiesland replaces the pornographic frameworks that promote marginalization and consumption of disabled people with a new understanding that begets exploration, redemption, and rejuvenation.

The possibilities afforded by a new Christology of the risen Jesus as the disabled God are decidedly optimistic. By affirming the theology of the disabled God, Eiesland is hopeful that churches may no longer fall into doctrine or practice that pits disabled people against their bodies, but instead may usher in "constitutive change whereby people with disabilities can affirm our bodies in dignity and reconceive the church as community of justice for people with disabilities" (Eiesland 94). To rightly recognize and respond to the centrality of disability, we first must reckon with the centrality of disability in the figure of Jesus, the disabled God, who serves as the ultimate contradiction to the ideology of inspiration porn. This Christ is not an overcomer of a "broken" body, nor are His bodily limitations the evidence of Divine disfavor. He may not be defined by the pity of others, nor may He be consumed as inspiration. Instead, He is Emmanuel—God with us—reaching out His disabled hands in invitation, beckoning us into a celebration of human wholeness in His disabilities and our own.

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Implicit Objectification: An Historical Inquiry in the Role of Evangelicalism in the Objectification of the Female Body

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Abstract

Foundational to Western culture are both the Judaeo-Christian tradition and Greek philosophy. From the outset, these ancient cultures have contained models of masculinity and femininity that have shaped ideas of maleness and femaleness that persist to this day. Ancient Greek scholars talked frequently of the female body's inferiority as well as its dangerous sexual propensity to not only men, but even to the state. In the modern era, furthermore, the taboos and strict regulation of the female body may be observed in methods of economic consumerism, medical principles, public policy, and of course, religious beliefs. Focusing on an apt and timely example of the often uneasy alliance between women and theological doctrine, my paper explores Evangelical Christianity in the American South. Here, I discuss the Evangelical rhetoric of purity and modesty, disclosing how Evangelicals have long advocated for the covering of the human body, specifically the female body as an object of carnal temptation and sensual danger. This strategy has served to create an identity for women that is both offensive and inappropriate, and persists in modern Christian practice as well as doctrine in the Western concept of the sexualized feminine form. After tracing the purity movement's historical origins in the United States, I evaluate as well as outline the movement's effects on the Evangelical community, the psychological implications, and the resulting neuroses on Evangelical women.

Introduction

The body of a woman is many things. It can create life or draw men to their death. It is art or it is temptation. It is beautiful or vile. It is covered and pure or unrobed and dangerous. It is suspect or unassuming. It has, for thousands of years, been the polarizing battleground upon which men have waged their wars of words as they attempt to make rules, laws, and religious superstitions to conceptualize this thing, this body, this place where neutrality does not exist. The female body has come to occupy a lineage of narratives. In the United States alone, the question of the nature of this body and the manner in which one should interact with her is as old as the nation herself. And yet, in the age of Title IX laws and postmodern feminism, where the body of a woman is no longer barred from entry or occupation, this conflict has been seemingly resolved. Within the Christian tradition, however, these conflicts have persisted surely and steadily.

In the beginning, Scripture reads, God created the heavens and the earth. Perhaps this story is readily familiar. This Creation narrative is quickly followed by the

narrative of the Fall in which the woman was tempted first. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”¹

From these short few sentences, an entire theological interpretation of the corruption and moral onus conferred to women exists today. In this paper, I will investigate the historical persistence and transmission of Evangelical regard for the female body, both physically and morally, arguing that the two have been inherently tied together. I will then evaluate the psychological implications of such beliefs as well as the resulting neurosis experienced in self-monitoring and self-objectification in the lives of the women subjected to such beliefs.

Part I: The History

We begin with a quick and absolutely non-comprehensive survey through American history. American Protestant beliefs regarding the female body as an object of carnal temptation and sensual danger began amongst Puritan interpretations regarding the Genesis chapter. Largely informed by beliefs in the total depravity of mankind, Puritans charged the first woman and her subsequent descendants responsible for the wretched state of the world. Because of the woman’s fall in Genesis, Puritans “viewed women’s bodies as ‘weaker vessels’ unable to withstand the temptations of sin,” charging them as instigators of immorality.² This was highlighted in the censure laws of a Puritan community in which the charge of fornication fell almost solely on women. As Monica Fitzgerald’s research concludes “fornication was primarily a female censure” with women being involved in “90 percent of all censure cases, and 77 percent” being “censured without a man being charged.”³ Because of the belief of women’s bodies as “prone to sin,” Puritans “viewed fornication” primarily “as a female sin.”⁴ Yet this notion of the susceptibility of female immorality would come into question as beliefs would shift with the “radical Protestant ideas of a feminized spirituality and all souls being equal” in the Great Awakening.⁵

The subsequent period of the Great Awakening transformed the principle of female religious inferiority by its new emphasis on the conversion experience which would later reinvent notions of the female body. Championed by evangelist George Whitfield, the idea that a person had to experience “the ‘new birth’ of conversion” came to occupy Evangelical sensibilities.⁶ Being “born again” necessitated a sort of emotional response in which a person, so convicted by their sins, would, by

¹ Gen. 3:6 (NRSV).

² Monica Fitzgerald, *Puritans Behaving Badly: Gender, Punishment, and Religion in Early America* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 59.

³ Fitzgerald, *Puritans Behaving Badly*, 60.

⁴ Fitzgerald, *Puritans Behaving Badly*, 59-61.

⁵ Fitzgerald, *Puritans Behaving Badly*, 10.

⁶ Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 1.

“shrieking, crying, weeping and wailing,” fall to their knees in repentance.⁷ Because conversion experiences were often predicated on deep emotional responses, the spirituality of women came to rival, if not equal that of men. Whereas the stereotype of the increased emotionality of women had long been considered a deficit, the Great Awakening reshaped all prior sentiments by legitimizing the spiritual experiences of women and allowing for what would become a sort of religious moral authority.

In turn, the nineteenth century saw the proliferation of new beliefs about women and the female body as a result of the Industrial Revolution. American Industrialism shifted the economy from primarily “agrarian and handicraft...to one dominated by industry and machine manufacturing.”⁸ American life, which had been a formerly integrated family affair in which all members worked to support the home, became divided into public and private spheres. Many historians have noted how “an increasingly industrial market economy in which masculine virtues of competition, courage, and risk were considered the most valuable” resulted in religion and moral piety becoming the ideal characteristics of women, particularly Protestant women.⁹ This Christian “feminization” held consequences for perceptions of ideal womanhood and the subsequent beliefs surrounding the female body. Rather than reflecting the perspective of women as more prone to bodily error, as the Puritans did, industrial-era Christians saw women as “moral guardians of the home and society.”¹⁰ Man’s domain of the public sector was characterized as a place of godless worldliness and women were to be the opposite, holy and chaste, championing the domestic sphere. Mirroring the economic and cultural changes of the Industrial Revolution, conceptions of the female disposition came to be dichotomized with the nature of man, yet with women occupying a superior moral status and men being consigned to the faults of their economy. Thus, whereas the female body had initially been thought of as more prone to bodily sin, a new belief system in which women were considered to be more predisposed to moral uprightness than men emerged.

Ebenezer Bailey’s 1833 selection titled *The Young Ladies’ Class Book* revealed this shifting narrative of female moral superiority in its supplication to women: “Hence it is, that the influence of the society of woman, is, almost always, to soften the violence of those [secular] impulses, which would otherwise act with so constant and fatal an influence on the soul of man.”¹¹ It was here the introduction of what would become a widespread belief in the inevitability of male sexuality, and the consequent simultaneity of woman as gatekeeper emerged. Women were charged to protect and

⁷ Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 135.

⁸ “The First Industrial Revolution,” Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed February 10, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution/The-first-Industrial-Revolution>.

⁹ Sara Moslener, *Virgin Nation: Sexual Purity and American Adolescence*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 56.

¹⁰ Elizabeth H. Flowers and Karen K. Seat, “Gender, Sexuality, and Marriage,” in *The Cambridge Companion to American Protestantism*, ed. Jason E. Vickers and Jennifer Woodruff Tait (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 205.

¹¹ Ebenezer Bailey, *The Young Ladies’ Class Book*, (Massachusetts: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1850), 166.

defend their virtue while men, “by nature more sensual than they, would try to assault it.”¹² As gatekeepers, Christian women were given the sole responsibility to proactively prevent men from taking their liberties. American writer Thomas Branagan wrote that in the case that a man had “ruined” a girl by the taking of her virtue, it would have only been resultant of the “imprudence and immodesty on the part of the woman” for he would have been only acting upon his “very natural” impulses.¹³

Following the World Wars in the 20th century, the United States entered a time of peace and prosperity that largely garnered a spirit of cultural revolution. Conversations of morality were at an all-time high as the Civil Rights, Second Wave Feminist, and Countercultural movements swept the nation. Evangelicals, hardly immune to the cultural shifts, attempted to both react as well as reflect the changing value systems of the nation. In opposition to what Evangelicals called “secular humanism,” Christians instead championed family values upon the sense that the secular forces threatened the family.¹⁴ One such Evangelical was James Dobson of Focus on the Family. By using the secular style of therapeutic self-help language, Dobson published and produced large quantities of media advocating for a “return to family life and gender roles that closely resembled the ideals of nineteenth-century white, middle-class America.”¹⁵ In doing so, he talked specifically about male-female relationships with one particular underlying assumption: that male sexuality is inevitable.

Informed largely by economist George Gilder’s book *Sexual Suicide*, Dobson cited how Gilder “makes it clear that single men (as a class) are often a threat to society. Until they accept the responsibility for families, their sexual aggression is largely unbridled and potentially destructive.”¹⁶ That quotation was featured in the introduction to Dobson’s book *Straight Talk* in a section titled *A Man and His Sexual Identity* which proceeds to frame male sexual virility as the motivation and framework of all of man’s actions. Indeed, Dobson cites economist George Gilder in his assertion that “men commit over 90 percent of major crimes of violence, 100 percent of the rapes, 95 percent of the burglaries” with the primary motivation of “unbridled and potentially destructive...sexual aggression.”¹⁷ The belief that “male sexuality [was] a physical drive and a psychological compulsion” came to

¹² Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 155.

¹³ Thomas Branagan, *The Excellency of the Female Character Vindicated Being an Investigation Relative to the Cause and Effects of the Encroachments of Men Upon the Rights of Women and the Too Frequent Degradation and Consequent Misfortunes of the Fair Sex*, (Philadelphia: Printed by J. Rakestraw, 1808), 290.

¹⁴ Seth Dowland, *Family Values and the Rise of the Christian Right*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 32.

¹⁵ Moslener, *Virgin Nation*, 96.

¹⁶ James C. Dobson, *Straight Talk*, (Dallas: Word Pub., 1991), 31.

¹⁷ Dobson, *Straight Talk*, 31.

characterize Evangelical assumptions in the 1970s.¹⁸ Where then did that leave women?

Evangelical women, taught to operate under the assumption that men were these dangerous sexual creatures, were thus tasked to temper and resist men. “He is driven; she must set the terms and conditions, goals and destinations of the journey. Her faculty of greater natural restraint and selectivity makes [her] the sexual judge and executive.”¹⁹ It was women who were charged with channeling male sexuality. For much of the 20th century, woman would be the gatekeeper, man the beast in need of taming.

Part II: The Present Consequences

While my survey of American history has largely focused on the messaging of inevitable male sexuality and the female moral onus, it is important to note the myriad of opposition that this set of beliefs has cultivated throughout the years amongst researched professionals. In 1891, a publication known as *The Philanthropist* featured an article by the U.S.’s first official female physician Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell commenting on the “radical physiological error...that men are less able to resist [sexual] instinct” and “that they require a license in action which forbids the laying down of the same moral law for men and women.”²⁰ Yet while understood by the scientific community to be a fallacy unsubstantiated by research, these beliefs persisted throughout the 20th century well into the present day. One must wonder what sort of effect beliefs such as these illicit in the believer.

I would like to preface with the acknowledgment that, consistent with the psychological literature, men, on average, do indeed have greater sex drives than women. A large meta-analysis done by Frankenbach et al. concluded that “men’s sex drive is stronger than women’s with a medium-to-large effect size ($g=0.69$)” with “men think[ing] and fantasiz[ing] about sex more often, experienc[ing] sexual affect such as desire more often, and more often engag[ing] in solitary sexual behavior (masturbation).”²¹ This means that male and female sex drives overlap approximately 73% to 78% with men possessing, on average a higher sex drive.²² Yet the experience of a greater sex drive does not mean that male sexuality is inevitable or that men should be given a sexual double standard. To do so assumes that men are less capable of exerting self-control, something that scientific research does not corroborate.²³

¹⁸ George F. Gilder, *Men and Marriage*, (Gretna: Pelican Pub. Co., 1986), 12.

¹⁹ Gilder, *Men and Marriage*, 12.

²⁰ Elizabeth Blackwell, “Cruelty and Lust—Appeal to Women,” *Vigilance VI*, no. 12 91891): 1.

²¹ Julius Frankenbach,, Marcel Weber, David D. Loschelder, Helena Kilger, and Malte Friese, “Sex Drive: Theoretical Conceptualization and Meta-Analytic Review of Gender Differences,” *Psychological Bulletin* 148 (9-10): 653, doi:10.1077/bul0000366.

²² Frankenbach et al., 648.

²³ Denise T. D. de Ridder, Gerty Lensvelt-Mulders, Catrin Finkenauer, F. Marijn Stok, and Roy F. Baumeister, “Taking Stock of Self-Control: A Meta-Analysis of How Trait Self-Control Relates

The error in such beliefs is that they not only absolve men from their sexual responsibility but they actually serve to objectify women in their assumption that men will always see females as sex objects for their use and act accordingly. When women are taught that they are solely responsible for their licit and illicit sexual encounters, this message becomes internalized and affects their sense of self as well as future behaviors. This principle, known as the grounded theory model, “consists of three general stages that describe the process: (a) the messages that women receive about sexuality, (b) the internalized experience of how these messages interact with the women’s sense of sexuality, and (c) the actions women take to explore and manage their sexuality.”²⁴ In a large qualitative study of Evangelical women, “participants indicated that they were... taught in their religious culture that women were predominantly responsible for the sexual temptation of men and that this was the basis for sexual purity.”²⁵ This messaging then informed their internalized sense of sexuality “particularly in terms of physical presentation” meaning that “women [were to] literally cover their sexuality in hopes to temper the temptation for men.”²⁶ This sexual internalization has provided an entire Evangelical subculture dedicated to modifying oneself under this sexualized presumption. This subculture’s favorite catchphrase? Modest is hottest.

Centered on the premise that men cannot help themselves, Evangelical beliefs about modesty center on “not becoming a stumbling block.” This phrase originates from Romans 14:13, which says: “Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother or sister.”²⁷ This verse, taken out of context, has been used by Evangelicals to persuade women that what they wear can potentially serve as the reason someone else sins. In a blog post titled “When Girls Unknowingly Tempt Guys Toward Lust” written by the Evangelical YouTube sister duo known as Girl Defined, the author encourages women to take “extreme measures to fight for purity” such as sorting through mail to throw out the immodest and sensual ads before her husband sees them, refusing to watch movies with any immodest women in them, and carefully curating the images she posts so as to not contain any immodesty.²⁸ Why should she do this? Because she sees “the value of fighting for the guys in [her] life by making the necessary sacrifices to help them succeed morally.”²⁹ Yes, morally. Actions such as those listed are dictated by one very important assumption: that men are incapable of withstanding the temptation to objectify women. And,

to a Wide Range of Behaviors,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 16, no. 1 (2022): 92, doi:10.1177/1088868311428749.

²⁴ Carly J. Claney, M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall, Tamara L. Anderson, and Andrea L, “Sexual without Sex: A Qualitative Study of Single Emerging Adult Evangelical Women,” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 12 no. 2 (2020): 193, doi:10.1037/rel0000191.

²⁵ Claney, Hall, and Anderson, “Sexual without Sex,” 194.

²⁶ Claney, Hall, and Anderson, “Sexual without Sex,” 194.

²⁷ Rom. 14:13 (NRSV).

²⁸ “When Girls Unknowingly Tempt Guys toward Lust,” GirlDefined, accessed February 4, 2023, <https://girldefined.com/girls-unknowingly-tempt-guys-lust>.

²⁹ GirlDefined, “When Girls Unknowingly Tempt Guys toward Lust.”

because men are hopelessly lascivious, it is therefore the job of women to guard and protect a man's purity.

By viewing the world in such a black-and-white manner of moral danger, Evangelicals engage in both the objectification of women as well as self-objectification. Objectification is defined by the American Psychological Association as the experience of a person being "made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than [being] seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or [when] sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person."³⁰ Evangelicals unknowingly participate in the objectification of women when they impose sexuality on the body of all women. A woman's body is incapable of neutrality when it is constantly viewed through a lens of sexual temptation. The consequence of this? Self-objectification. As studied by Barbara Frederickson, objectification theory holds "that the first psychological consequence of being steeped within sexually objectifying contexts is "self-objectification," defined as the tendency to introject an objectifying third-person perspective on one's own body, evaluating it in terms of its value and attractiveness to others, rather than its value and function for the self."³¹ In Evangelical contexts, the body is evaluated squarely on its observance to arbitrary standards of clothed or unclothed, modest or immodest, tempting or demure, pure or impure, all of which is predicated upon how sexually dangerous it is to male sensibilities.

It is, of course, common knowledge that the sexualization of women and girls is hardly a unique problem faced by Evangelicals. In 2005, the APA deemed it to be such a significant public health issue that they created the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls in response. Their 2007 report "examine[d] and summarize[d] psychological theory, research, and clinical experience" which led them to discover a link between "sexualization with three of the most common mental health problems of girls and women: eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression."³² Self-objectification was found to be "linked directly with diminished sexual health among adolescent girls."³³ Exposure to sexualized media affected "how girls conceptualize[d] femininity and sexuality."³⁴ And last but not least, the sexualization of girls was found to have "a negative impact on other groups" such as boys and men by inhibiting full enjoyment of "intimacy with a female partner."³⁵ This problem of objectification of the female body extends far beyond the confines of Evangelicalism.

Conclusion

³⁰ "Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls," American Psychological Association, accessed February 10, 2023, <https://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report>.

³¹ Barbara L. Frederickson, Lee Meyerhoff Hendler, Stephanie Nilsen, Jean Fox O'Barr, and Tomi-Ann Roberts, "Bringing Back the Body: A Retrospective on the Development of Objectification Theory," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 35 no. 4 (2012): 690, doi:10.1177/0361684311426690.

³² APA, "Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls," 1-3.

³³ APA, "Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls," 3.

³⁴ APA, "Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls," 3.

³⁵ APA, "Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls," 3.

Yet rather than seeking to be “above reproach” as Evangelicals would ascribe their ideology of modesty to be, they have in fact served to reinforce the very issues they claim to address. In an attempt to be “set apart” from the world, Evangelicals have fallen into the same traps, treating the woman and the body as an object of carnality rather than the handiwork of God. Hoping to evade sin and temptation, Evangelicals instead ate the bitter fruit of legalism. In an attempt to please God, they made their sacrifices on an altar of misplaced accusations and gave themselves a law, Mosaic in scope. As the belief in the inevitability of male sexuality has persisted throughout the history of Evangelicalism, so too have women been saddled with a cross too great to bear, one that places all moral culpability upon the backs of the innocent, and one that is inconsistent with the character of the Christian God, the God who sees and the God who loves.

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The Oberammergau Passion Play: An Historical Review and Comparative Study of the 2000, 2010, and 2020 [2022] Performances

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The world's oldest religious melodrama, the *Passionspiele Oberammergau*, has been performed since 1634 which makes it a very unique and special play in its own right, but what adds to its mystique is why it was decided the play needed to be performed in the first place. In 1633, the village elders gathered to discuss how best to combat a plague that was destroying villages around the region. The plague had entered their little village and people were dying; it was at this time they made a promise to God to perform a Passion Play every ten years for an eternity, if God would spare their village from any more deaths. No one else succumbed to the plague after the vow, and with few exceptions due to wars, and most recently Covid 19, this vow has been fulfilled. The year 2022 (postponed two years due to the worldwide pandemic) marks the forty-second season of this world-renowned play. As an historical researcher of religious history, I was able to attend the 2000, 2010, and 2020 (in 2022) plays in the *Passionspiele* Theater in Oberammergau. While the basic story, which is based on the Gospels found in the New Testament of the Holy Bible cannot be altered or changed to any great or significant degree, each performance offered noticeable changes and alterations to make it more modern and appealing to 21st century audiences. Most notably, perhaps was in the 2000 play and onward how it emphasized clearly the Jewishness of Jesus, which had been downplayed in earlier versions by staunch conservative traditionalists. This paper offers a brief introduction to the historical background of the play and attempts to define and compare the similarities and differences found in the three performances regarding how Jews were portrayed in each performance that I personally attended in 2000, 2010, and 2020 (2022). The appendices offer further information about the reform efforts of the play over the centuries through transcribed interviews and a detailed chronology of the play. As the play continues to evolve and change, future script writers and directors will undoubtedly put their interpretive stamp on how it is to be rewritten and ultimately performed, using historical and archived scripts to maintain the play's primary objective of telling the greatest story ever told—The Passion of Christ, from Good Friday through the crucifixion, and finally his resurrection—to fulfill that solemn vow made by the village elders in 1633.

Introduction

The *Passionspiele Oberammergau* is unique among the world's Passion Plays because of its long and colorful history. Passion Plays were very popular early on in the history of Christianity, especially within the Catholic tradition, largely being developed in the Tyrol region of what is now Austria, as well as in the Bavarian

region of Germany where Oberammergau is located.¹ Traditional Passion Plays depict “The Passion of Christ” which is the period from Good Friday through the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. The plays normally show the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem, his trial on trumped up charges made by the Jewish priests to the Romans, his suffering and humiliation through the streets on his way to the crucifixion, finally culminating with his resurrection.

Historically, Passion Plays often had a polarizing message that pitted the “wicked Jews” against the “suffering Christians.” After all, it was commonly believed that the Jews killed Jesus, and thus, forever they should be reviled for this. Of course, today, this archaic attitude seems illogical, if not silly, because an entire people cannot be blamed for the actions of a few zealots from over two millennia ago. Besides, Jesus of Nazareth was a practicing Jew at the time of his death; all of his Disciples and followers were Jewish, including his family—parents, Mary and Joseph, and his siblings.² (Leonard, 2011)

The ensuing movement that occurred following the crucifixion of Jesus eventually would become widely known as Christianity. Even though Jesus himself was Jewish, this fact tended to be set aside as persecution of Jews continued throughout history since the time Jesus lived. Today, certain negative stereotypes remain concerning the Jewish race that date back more than 2000 years. Sadly, Passion Plays have historically played a huge part in promoting the notion of the culpability of the Jews for the persecution and crucifixion of Jesus. “The history of the Oberammergau Passion Play as being one which manifests these antisemitic tropes—Jews as villainous, Jews as deceptive, Jews as bloodthirsty, Jews as manipulative, Jews as Christ killers—was always part of the story.” (Schrader, 2022)

Passion Plays, then, also traditionally served to emphasize the culpability of the Jews, albeit erroneously but surreptitiously, by fostering a belief that Jews are to blame for Jesus’ death. Further exasperating the situation, Passion Plays routinely depicted Jews as sinister and evil in the majority of Passion Plays performed throughout Christianity’s tumultuous history. The Oberammergau Passion Play

¹ Oberammergau is nestled in the Bavarian Alps of Germany, in relatively close proximity geographically from the opulent and majestic Neuschwanstein Castle and the Linderhof Royal Palace, both built by Mad King Ludwig II. On September 25, 1871, King Ludwig II attended a special performance of the play and he was so impressed and taken by the performance that he invited the principal actors to Linderhof Palace where he presented them with gifts. To further express his gratitude to the community of Oberammergau, he donated an exquisite marble monument depicting the crucifixion, which was dedicated on October 15, 1875. (Kienberger, p. 39) To commemorate the close relationship the village of Oberammergau had with King Ludwig II, and to recognize his generosity, every year on August 24th, in the King’s memory, the village people burn the “Ludwig Fire” on Mount Kofel coupled with grand fireworks displays.

² Jesus was accused by Jewish priests who were likely very threatened by his sudden notoriety among the masses who began to follow his teachings. The Jewish priests demanded that he be arrested and tried for heresy in a Roman court. Many of his followers believed him to be the “messiah” and this alarmed the Jewish priests, fearing they would lose power and stature in the community if Jesus were allowed to continue on with his ministry.

was no different. From its inception in the 17th century, until modern times, a number of aspects of the Oberammergau Passion Play followed the traditional belief that the evil Jews were responsible for Jesus' death and it was the religious responsibility of the virtuous Christians to reinforce this message through these melodramas.³

This blatant anti-Semitism continued within the Oberammergau Passion Play until well after World War II. This anti-Semitism with regards to certain aspects of the play persisted in less obvious forms until the 1990 season when a group of "reformists" within the Oberammergau Town Council (the entity in charge of monitoring and promoting the play) finally outnumbered the "traditionalists," hence being able to truly reform and affect sweeping changes to the script and costuming which traditionally cast Jews disparagingly.

Leading the reformists was a very unassuming, but passionate individual named Otto Huber. His tireless work and desire to make the Oberammergau Passion Play as historically correct as possible, while taking into account the scriptures from which it is based, is a feat that has given him adoration from supporters and scorn from critics and detractors. (Leonard, 2011) [See Appendix 1 for a partial transcript of an interview from 2010 with Mr. Otto Huber.]

Notable Changes in the Play from 2000-2022

The 2000 production of the Oberammergau Passion Play offered some very needed and important changes that specifically dealt with the anti-Semitic elements that had been allowed to go on in earlier productions. Most notably, perhaps, was the "blood curse" from the Gospel of Mathew, chapter 27, verses 24 and 25⁴ was completely removed from the script. The fact that Otto Huber, as the script writer, for the 2000 performance was able to write it out of the play is significant and noteworthy. The traditionalists were dead-set against such a huge change because it is a part of the Gospels of the Passion. Jewish groups were pleased that such an anti-Semitic element of the script was no longer going to be allowed.

For the 2000 performance, Stuckl [the Play director] and Huber [deputy director and script writer] revised the script and staging extensively. In this version of the play, Jesus's Jewishness was highlighted. For instance, he wore a *kippah* (Jewish head covering), was referred to as "Rabbi," and prayed in Hebrew. Additionally, in this script, Judas betrayed Jesus for political reasons, while in earlier scripts he had done

³ See Appendix 3 for a detailed chronology of the Oberammergau Passion Play's history.

⁴ This blood curse pertains to the moment Pilate realized he was not succeeding and people were beginning to riot, so he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves." And in unison, the crowd responded vociferously, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." (Holy Bible. Mathew 27:24-25.) This short passage from the scriptures has been used for millennia to persecute the Jewish people. This reply to Pilate by the people has been viewed as a sort of self-pronounced curse on the whole of the Jewish people for Jesus' death, which has been emphasized in Passion Plays ever since.

so for money. Pilate was presented more fully as the villain character, multiple supersessionist tableaux vivants were replaced by more positive biblical scenes, and the infamous line from Mathew that charged Jews in every generation with Jesus's death ("We take his blood upon us and upon our children") was completely removed from the play. (American Jewish Committee, 2022)

Another notable change in the 2000 play was a menorah that was placed upon the Last Supper table to signify further the Jewishness of Jesus and his disciples. The Last Supper was, in fact, the Passover Seder.⁵ Another change was how the script called for those in attendance to refer to Jesus as "Rabbi" numerous times which further emphasized the Jewishness of Jesus to the audience. The 2010 and 2022 performances continued to promote the 2000 reforms and a further change that occurred was the change in the order of the Play in an effort to demonstrate more effectively the message of "hope" that Jesus was bringing to the people by emphasizing more clearly the oppression of the people by the Romans. Jesus would no longer be viewed as suffering for his faith, but instead "show him as a strong defendant of his Jewish faith." (Passionsspiele 2022)

The 2010 performance (41st Play year) and the 2022 performance (42nd Play year) had the play starting in the afternoon, breaking for dinner, then being completed in the evening. Until the 2010 performance, the play was started in the morning, had an extended lunch break, then finished in the evening. The Play being done in the darkness of the night added to the dramatic effect and mystique of the latter portions of the Play. In addition, the formerly open-air stage that left the actors vulnerable to the elements was equipped with a movable roof that protected the actors from any inclement weather.

The 2010 Play featured, as a huge dramatic change, Jesus holding high an opened Torah scroll (a facsimile), while the other Jewish characters sang a newly composed rendition of Shema, Judaism's central prayer. (American Jewish Committee, 2022). Also, portrayed were vividly colored Tableaux Vivants depicting scenes from the Old Testament with silent, motionless people arranged to represent the scenes they were depicting. These included living images of "The Loss of Paradise," "Moses leading the Israelites through the Red Sea," "The Ten Commandments and the Dance Around the Golden Calf," "The Paschal Meal before the Exodus from Egypt," "The Betrayal at the Rock of Gibeon," "The Calling of Moses before the Burning Bush," "The Prophet Daniel in the Lion's Pit," "The Mocking of Job," "The Despair of

⁵ The Passover Seder is a meal that Jewish families share together on the first night of Passover. It is a sort of religious service held around the dinner table where the participants share food, eat together, pray, sing, and drink wine, in observance of the story of the Israelites being liberated from slavery in ancient Egypt. In the Book of Exodus in the Holy Bible (Exodus 13:8-10. ESV, 2016), Jews are commanded to retell the story of the Exodus and liberation. "You shall tell your son on that day, 'it is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth."

Cain,” “Moses is Expelled by the Pharaoh,” “Joseph is Celebrated as Egypt’s Savior,” and “The Sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah.”⁶

The “Jewishness” of Jesus and his followers was further emphasized in the 2010 production, and the struggle between Jesus’s camp and the other Jews was more vividly portrayed as an internal Jewish matter rather than a theological battle between Judaism and emerging Christianity.

Progress has happened at Oberammergau, but the process of constructive engagement and revision must continue. There are remaining concerns regarding the depiction of the power dynamic between the Jewish priests and Pilate; Pilate should be portrayed as more powerful than the priests as the historical record reflects. There remain concerns about points within the play that do not properly reflect the divided Jewish views of Jesus’s leadership, as well as some of the tableaux vivants that remain supersessionist. It is therefore important that attendees educate themselves on the history of Oberammergau, the progress achieved, and the remaining sensitive lingering issues. (American Jewish Committee, 2022)

When Adolph Hitler attended the Oberammergau Passion Play in 1934, he mused’ “It is vital that the Passion Play be continued at Oberammergau; for never has the menace of Jewry been so convincingly portrayed as in this presentation of what happened in the times of the Romans.” (Goldmann, 2022) This fact speaks volumes to how anti-semitic the Oberammergau Passion Play must have been for Hitler to have spoken so glowingly about its treatment of Jews in the performance he witnessed.

In the 2022 production of the Oberammergau Passion Play, what I personally found to be very telling was how the relationship of Jesus and Judas had evolved from the 2000 and 2010 performances. In the latest version, their relationship suggested a deeper emotional intimacy than in past performances. Judas’ frustration with Jesus was emphasized much more in 2022 as Jesus’ popularity grew among the people, Judas seemed to suggest that Jesus needed to take advantage of this political opportunity, and Jesus’ hesitation to do so seems to be at the core of Judas’ disappointment with Jesus. A.J. Goldmann, writing for *The Atlantic*, made some very astute observations regarding this complicated relationship between Judas and Jesus:

The dramatic core of the current production is, in many respects, the Jesus-Judas relationship, depicted as emotionally intimate and fraught.

⁶ “What has changed over the years, however, are the Living Images’ aesthetics and their content. While the images always show scenes from the Old Testament, neither their selection nor their order of sequence are cut in stone. ...The reason the Living Images are the most technically challenging part of the entire Play is because each one is set up differently and because changeover times are so short. While the Play is being performed out front, the next Image needs to be set up behind the stage. To give the audience an unobstructed view of the mountains behind the theatre, the Passion Play Theatre was never equipped with a fly tower.” (Fritsch, 2022)

As Jesus's grassroots support grows in Jerusalem, Judas is frustrated with what he considers Jesus's reluctance to take a stronger political role. This Judas doesn't so much betray his friend as try to force a meeting between Jesus and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish authorities. In the 2022 production, Judas receives the infamous 30 pieces of silver only after Jesus has been taken into custody. Judas barges in on the High Council and accuses them of deception

"Caiaphas," Judas wails, "you misled me. You betrayed and deceived me." Storming out of the High Council, Judas flings the coins back in the priests' face.

Every story needs a bad guy, though; if this Judas is not the villainous traitor that he has been represented as throughout history, Stuckl emphasizes the bloodthirstiness of Caiaphas, the high priest, instead. Although Pilate comes across as an unsavory thug in this production, rather than as the noble protector up against a rabble of unruly subjects, I did find it troubling that Caiaphas goes to great lengths in demanding Jesus's death. (Goldmann, 2022)

Conclusion

Historically, Passion Plays often had a polarizing message that pitted the "wicked Jews" against the "suffering Christians" (Mork, 153) Since 1990, a genuine effort by reformists in Oberammergau, led by Director Christian Stuckl and Script Writer Otto Huber (through the 2010 performance year, and primarily by Christian Stuckl in the 2022 performance) to rid the play of its anti-Semitic elements and to try to appeal to a newer, younger generation of pilgrims who may not clearly understand or are familiar with the theological intricacies that at one time were very much a part of the audience's common knowledge when it came to the Gospels as they are presented in Passion Plays.

The questions we have to ask have changed. Since the Passion Play seeks to convey the message of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to people as a reassuring and empowering event, it must take up the fears and hopes of people today. Thus, in the depiction of Christ's suffering and death, the questions regarding the meaning and future of human existence come into view in dramatic ways. The new production aims to clarify important elements of Jesus' message for today's spectators. As in the 2010 production, Jesus does not immediately begin to drive the merchants and money changers out of the temple after his entry into the city and the temple, but first introduces himself as the Messiah who aims to renew the religious faith of his people and make the message of God its centerpiece. (Stuckl, pp. 6-7)

Since my first viewing of the Oberammergau Passion play in the year 2000, then again in 2010, and most recently in 2022, I am struck by how different each performance was presented, even though each depicted the same story. Of course,

the script has been heavily revised for each performance, but more than that, the play continues to fascinate in how the portrayal of the scriptures come to life with elaborate stage sets, costuming and top-tiered acting and musical accompaniment. Especially, the 2022 costuming was much more subdued than in past performances, using muted colors that seemed to blend in with the background sets. In the 2000 play, the high priests wore vividly colored robes with large brimmed hats adorned with feathers. In 2010, the high priests elaborate robes and headwear again stood out as being very noticeable, identifying them as being of the noble class, as compared to the people who represented the common folk. The 2022 performance further toned down the palate of the costumes and set designs, offering spectators a more realistic interpretation of how people perhaps looked during Biblical times. Of course, this is merely a personal observation that has little relevance to the impactful changes of how Jesus is categorically portrayed as a Jewish Rabbi with his Jewishness emphasized throughout the play more so in 2022 than in past performances.

While no doubt more changes to the script will be made in future performance years, the work done to this point is nothing short of prodigious, offering spectators a more balanced and ethically correct version of the Gospels that do not vilify Jews as had demonstrably been done in the past. While the changes may still not be enough for the ardent critics of the play itself, it becomes more difficult to change what is described and portrayed in the source—the Holy Bible. The interpretation of the Gospels is the key and how future interpretations of the Gospels will be portrayed in the Oberammergau Passion Play will be interesting for future scholars and researchers to compare and contrast prior performances with those that will occur in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Otto Huber Interview

[Author's Note: The following is a partial transcript and summary (with detailed notes) of an interview conducted with Otto Huber on June 9, 2010 at his home in Oberammergau, Germany. The text is largely in its original form with minor corrections to grammar in order for it to read more fluidly. (Originally published by Leonard, T.J. in the *2011 Proceedings for the Association for the Scientific Study of Religion (ASSR)* in a paper entitled "The *Passionsspiele Oberammergau*: Efforts to Reform Anti-Semitic Elements in the World's most Famous Religious Melodrama.")

TJL: Having grown up in Oberammergau, how has the Passion Play been a part of your life—first as a child and now as an adult?

When I was 3-years-old... I have a picture which was in the book by Jim Shapiro.⁷ At that time, I went to the Passion Play Theater; my grandfather was a good actor and was a well-respected person. And so, when I was 13-years old, it was fun.⁸ My grandfather died in 1960. And that was a little bit of an experience [to realize] how much he was involved in the Passion Play.

Otto Huber has had a lifelong connection to the “Passion Play.” Having been born and raised in Oberammergau, it has been an integral part of his and his family’s lives for generations. In fact, one very important rule that is strictly adhered to is that the play be performed and done by only those who were born in Oberammergau or who have resided there for at least 20 years. Perhaps this, in part, is what makes the Oberammergau Passion Play so unique and special—it takes a village, literally, to create and produce a production of this magnitude.

Many villagers who have smaller roles in the play leave their “day” jobs at variously appointed times during the play’s performance to bustle through the medieval streets of Oberammergau in order to be on stage at the right moment for their particular parts; immediately upon finishing their roles, they rush back to their jobs to resume the work that is their livelihood.

Mr. Huber runs a small hotel to house pilgrims not only during the performance years, but as a part of his livelihood. Like his fellow villagers, the Passion Play is an entity in itself that has become so intertwined in the lives of the village that between performance years, much work and preparation occurs to ensure its success every ten years. Even though his association with the play began when he was but a small child, his real work started when he was approached by some who felt the play needed updating and modernizing when he was a young adult.

⁷ Mr. Huber is referring to the book *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World’s Most Famous Passion Play* by James Shapiro (Pantheon Books: NY, 2000). A photograph depicting a young Otto Huber alongside his grandfather, Hugo Rutz (as Peter), is found on page 53. [See Figure 1.]

⁸ “As a thirteen-year-old he had appeared in a few of the play’s celebrated tableaux vivants—scenes in which the curtain is raised to reveal the actors standing frozen, as if in a painting.” (Shapiro, 18)



Figure 1: “Hugo Rutz (as Peter) and his grandson, Otto Huber, 1950.” (Shapiro, 53).

Around 1960, this was of course around the time of Vatican II,⁹ and so everyone said “this is an old play of the 19th century, and it doesn’t correspond to the modern approach of the story, so you should get a completely new version of the story.” There were 100% traditionalists [on the town council] who said we should not change one iota.¹⁰

And then after a certain time, there was an important German composer, Mr. Carl Orff,¹¹ and he knew that in 1750 there was maybe the most outstanding literary version of the Oberammergau Passion Play; it was written by Rosner¹² and this thing had [nearly] 9,000 verses—and Rosner, by the way, brought in the “living

⁹ *The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican*, better known as “Vatican II,” convened between the years 1962 and 1965 to debate a number of issues facing the modern Catholic Church. Of particular interest to the Oberammergau Passion Play, the Vatican II categorically declared that the entire world’s Jewry—past, present, and future—are not responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion.

¹⁰ Throughout the interview, Mr. Huber repeatedly voiced his frustration with the process he had to go through in order to revise and change the play. Of course, he would not have an opportunity to do so until the 1990 performance season, when “reformers” finally outnumbered the “traditionalists.” A few minor reforms were made, but not until the 2000 season did the more substantial reforms occur.

¹¹ Even though the old text remained for the 1970 play season, nonetheless attempts to reform the play took on a new life (even though, in the end, the efforts made came to nothing). Among these early reformers was Mr. Carl Orff, along with A.J. Lippl, A.M. Miller, S. Schaller, and R. Raffalt. Between the years 1969-1989, a push to eliminate anti-Semitic elements within the play was actively pursued by a growing reformist camp from within the village. (“Chronology of the Passion Play 2000,” *Passionsspiele Oberammergau 2000*, Press Kit.)

¹² A Benedictine monk from the Ettal monastery, nearby to Oberammergau, Ferdinand Rosner set out in 1750 to make the most comprehensive rewriting of the play in nearly a century. (Shapiro, 61)

*tableaux's*¹³—he didn't call them living tableaux, he called them "meditations" because he wanted to have a balance of drama, meditation, drama, meditation, and so on.¹⁴

The tableaux vivants used in modern performances and renditions of the play date back to Father Rosner's concept of allowing a short, meditative break to occur during the performance. In the 2000 version of the Passion Play, as well as in the 2010 season, the tableaux vivants play an important role in offering biblical background to the Gospels on which the play is based. For example, in the 2010 Passion Play, the first tableaux vivant depicts "Paradise Lost" where Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden by God (*Passionsspiele Oberammergau* 2010, 9) and the second tableaux vivant, "Moses leads the Israelites through the Red Sea" (*Passionsspiele Oberammergau* 2010, 19), offers attendees an opportunity to comprehend visually these biblical episodes in order to gain an understanding of the alleged events that occurred throughout the Old Testament that have a historical connection to the final Passion of Christ.

I became in 1962, a scout, or a Catholic Youth, and after some time, I became a leader of the group, and then a leader in the Oberammergau parish troop. And then suddenly the young priest who was responsible for the youth had to go away to Munich, and he gave me something like a "heritage," he said, "Otto, you have a clear mind, clear brain, you know...you must renew the whole thing by going back to the meaning of the whole thing. Try to bring it forward."¹⁵ That's what I did, again and again, but it wasn't so easy back in 1970. I did a little bit of criticism, in a way which was quite clever what I said. The leader of Passionsspiele back in 1970 was an old Nazi [Anton Preisinger]. He didn't understand what I said and threw me out of the play and this was typical for the 1970s.¹⁶

¹³ "Rosner's greatest innovation was his masterly use of versification, including the introduction of alexandrines for the choruses. While he kept to the sequence and plot line of the old play, his use of music and his systemization of the tableaux vivants into regular prefiguration scenes—six sets of three tableaux in succession—utterly transformed the flow and rhythm of the play." (Shapiro, 61)

¹⁴ Otto Huber commented, "And the 9,000 verses—if you look at a Shakespeare play it mostly has around 5,000 verses, so they needed two days for the performance. And so, the problem was that Mr. Orff was a really good composer, and a man of theater, and he said to the people of Oberammergau 'maybe you should try instead of the 19th century version, the 18th century version is more powerful.'" (Personal interview, 2010)

¹⁵ The young parish priest whom Otto Huber refers to here was Father Hamburger.

¹⁶ As Shapiro points out in his book, there was "no love lost between Preisinger and Huber." (p. 19) To illustrate the conservatism surrounding the play by the traditionalists, Otto Huber related a story regarding Christian Stückl's grandfather who was denied the part of Jesus back in the 1960 version because he was married, at the time, to a Protestant—a non-Catholic. The part went to Preisinger, the ex-Nazi that Otto Huber refers to in the above text. [See Shapiro, 18-19]

This episode with the director, Anton Preisinger, only fortified Otto Huber's desire to change the script of the play. After locating an old Passion Play script from 1740—which included the music and meditations used at the time—Huber began to embark upon some self-training in how to rewrite and adapt text from the script. This endeavor was met with a certain level of success which encouraged him to dig deeper into not only the history of the Passion Play, but into the theological questions which surrounded the play.

Then in the 80s, there was a real earthquake in the city council, a complete change of generations and suddenly there was a young generation there, and some of them came out of the Catholic Youth from when I was a leader there. So they still had confidence in me, and they called me and they called me... "Otto, can you come back to Oberammergau to continue the whole thing."

In the meantime, there was a committee [to initiate] a dialogue [to deal] with the anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish issues.¹⁷ ...The playwright of 1980 and 1984¹⁸ was Mr. Hans Maier, and he was a wood carver but a very simple man. You have to understand in the Protestant tradition, to read the Bible was natural, but in the Catholic tradition, it took until 1942 when the Pope said, "OK, Catholics read the Bible," because [church leaders] knew how hard [it was to understand] the differences between the four Gospels that were written 2000 years ago. It was a different time and you can't read it the same way as a gothic novel of the 19th century. I think maybe the Pope had a right at that time to say to Catholics, "I will write the homily or something and don't read too much of the scriptures." The people of Oberammergau didn't have a good understanding of the scriptures. A funny example is when Christian Stückl once went to a neighbor and asked, "Could you please give me a Bible?" And she gave him the Passion Play of Daisenberger.¹⁹

So, in 1984, Mr. Maier was a really friendly man; and a good Catholic; and went to church—but his understanding was that the Passion Play must not be an outstanding art form but it must only

¹⁷ Frustrated with a lack of willingness by the villagers of Oberammergau to remove anti-Semitic elements from the play after the Vatican II ruling in 1965, American Jewish organizations called upon attendees to boycott the play in 1970 which helped to bring the issue of anti-Semitism embedded within the text of the play to the forefront, forcing the Oberammergau elders to address the issue.

¹⁸ The year 1984 marked the 350th anniversary year of the original play's production. On anniversary years—like 1934 when Hitler attended the play and remarked so positively about its treatment of the Jews—the village will include a special performance.

¹⁹ Joseph Alois Daisenberger (1799–1883, priest in Oberammergau since 1845), made some revisions to the script and directed the Passion Play in 1850. He wanted the play to be understood and enjoyed by the common folk, hence his desire to reform the script.

be done by pious people...by true believers. Which meant Jesus must not be a good actor but he must be a strong believer. It doesn't work like this.

At this point in the interview, Mr. Huber's frustration showed when he talked about the inflexibility of the "traditionalists": "They always had the idea that we have to keep 100% tradition...and I cannot stand them in many ways. From outside Oberammergau was a place where nothing would change; don't change your behavior because this is against Oberammergau." (Personal interview, 2010) The tide began to change, however, as more reformers were elected to the new city council in 1984 (which outnumbered the traditionalists who preferred to keep the play exactly as it was). The council's reformist faction, though, was somewhat divided between those who were supporters of Christian Stückl and those who were backing Otto Huber. It was amicably resolved when Otto Huber yielded the directing of the play to Christian Stückl:

So, the question was who should be the first Play Director? And maybe I am the softer person, and I thought, "Oh, he was here the whole time and I was away..." so, the most important thing to be a theater director is really to know the people and to know who is able to do what.

So, I was a little bit of the specialist for the whole message of the play, as well as, let's say, for the ideology and for the hermeneutic questions. And he was the one who knew the people and [who] could be this and that.

Our tasks included a few changes in 1990 and this was a real challenge; we were quite young—Christian was 27 or 28 and I was 43... so now I am 63, and in 2000 I was 53...so this was a real challenge for two youngsters for the first time and we had so many problems with the city council...

TJL: Does the City Council have to approve everything that is changed in the Play?

They have to approve everything. They have funny things, for example, since 1933 there has to be a special play done about the beginning of the Oberammergau Passion Play. The question is why is it they have made this vow? I think this vow was done as a background of a certain theology. They really thought that every plague was a punishment of God so you can find many tableaux with the idea of a punishing God. He has to punish humanity down there or punish sinners. And so how do we get rid of the punishment [aspect]?

There is either Mary showing her breast saying “I gave my milk to your son,” and so on. And there’s another one, Sebastian, “I take all the errors on my breast,” as well as other saints, and so on. And then the main contrast, Jesus is kneeling there and he is shown as the Jesus in the Passion. He is portrayed as a representative of humanity. He took on his shoulder all this punishment for humanity. This is a theology which is extremely interesting, but extremely hard to understand somehow for people today...it is not so easy. Sometimes it goes together with the Lutheran idea of justification by faith.

The War of Thirty Years started in 1618, so at the moment it was after 15 years of war... maybe they were a little bit exhausted after 15 years of war. At the same time, this was a very cruel war.

Before the Thirty Years War, there was a population of 17 million in what we now call Germany; after this war, there were 4 million—from 17 back to 4 million. You can find places around Oberammergau where there were formally villages and they died out completely. There is now forest where there was a village before.

So, I can understand them, they were really like, “God we are dying.” So, one approach was maybe that God has forgotten that his son has taken everything on his shoulder and we have to remind him. So, look here God, what this town has done for you.

And there was an idea that it was not to remind God but to somehow repeat it.²⁰

So Christian [Stückl] tried to find a way...using an expression [of art]...how can there be a God if humanity has to suffer? How can there be a God and look at this?²¹ The Oberammergau parish, the council—the parish has its own council—and there were still a

²⁰ Mr. Huber continued on discussing this idea of a collective feeling of “Catholic guilt.” He referred to it as a “blood and soil tradition” relating the attitude of Leo Weismantel, a man from outside the village who some town leaders wanted to write a new “blood and soil” play, but his play text was never used. Mr. Weismantel had received an important award for a drama he wrote previously, but according to Mr. Huber, he did not have a good theological background. Weismantel concentrated on the “sinful” aspect of humanity, emphasizing carnal sins of the flesh and reiterating how God was punishing the people for their earthly indiscretions. The message was simple: Stop sinning. (Personal interview, 2010)

²¹ For an eloquent essay written by Christian Stückl and his struggle to find common ground between the art form and the theology of the Gospels in his stage direction of the Passion Play, see *Press Kit Oberammergau 2010*, provided by *Gemeinde Oberammergau*.

few traditionalists, members of the city council, and they could not understand the whole suggestion.

And they said, "This Mr. Stückl is the end of Oberammergau!" It was interesting, we had worked for many things, and we had made changes to avoid anti-Jewish elements...and there was this really wonderful, talented young man [Christian Stückl] in Oberammergau who had done a stage design for several new performances of Dvorak and 19th century Wagner, and so on. And he is a strong man. He was then working in Berlin as an artist and he had done a stage design, and this new stage design had been accepted by the Oberammergau City Council.

Change is often difficult in the best of times, but when considering trying to change an institution with a history and tradition as old the Oberammergau Passion Play, the task to make even the slightest changes in not only the script, but in the set design and directing, was met with vociferous opposition.

Mr. Huber related a story to illustrate the type of nonsensical opposition he and Christian Stückl encountered in trying to reform parts of the Passion Play. A traditionalist, who was an ex-Nazi, was blinded during the war in an exercise to test a soldier's courage. As a young soldier, he was told to hold a live grenade after the pin was pulled for as long as he could before it exploded. Obviously, he held on to it a bit too long and was blinded by the explosion.

This ex-Nazi was a well-respected man around the village with a number of supporters, but he was against the new set design created by the young Christian Stückl. When pressed as to why he was against the new set design, he replied: "Because I don't like the color." The joke being the ex-Nazi was completely blind and could not see colors anyway. Mr. Huber's point was quite clear: The remaining traditionalists were against anything new because it meant change.

As a reformist, Otto Huber had a difficult task in choosing which changes should be done initially, and which ones could be dealt with in future revisions of the script. With much pressure from American Jewish organizations to omit anti-Semitic language, props, and staging from the 2000 version of the play which had been often times emphasized in traditional versions of the play, he needed to choose his battles carefully and strategically.²²

²² In previous versions of the play, costumes portraying the followers of Jesus and Jews on stage were starkly different—the followers of Jesus wore lighter, friendlier tones with Jewish characters assuming more sinister colors and designs. Also, the headgear of the Jewish priests was horned-miters which seemed to suggest that Jews had horns, making them appear devil-like. These costuming aspects (style of clothing and horned-hats) were used through the 1984 performance year, and beginning in 1990, were changed to more sensitive attire that was less melodramatic in pitting Jews against the Gentiles. Of course, logically, none of the traditional choices for costuming made

For example, in the 90s we wanted to get rid of Mathew: 25,²³ the blood curse. We said in the Gospel of Mathew, this blood is so much of a purifying blood; ...the blood of re-consecration...that is too sophisticated [to portray] on the stage that people never will understand it. Also, the reception of this blood sentence over the centuries was so awful that we should just get rid of it.

There were three meetings of the City Council to talk about this. So, you can see how hard it was to bring something forward. And at the end of it they had asked the bishop at the time, and he said, "Oh, this sentence must stay in the Passion Play, but I will write an article about it in the textbook." But nobody read it... about 6 pages.

So, Christian did the staging, and in the moment when they should have said this sentence, there was so much noise that nobody could hear it. This was the 1990 play. I only told you this story to make you understand how great a challenge it was to create something new against the wishes of the traditionalists and the City Council.²⁴

Then there came so many changes...after the year 1990. If the traditionalists had been a little bit more clever, more elegant somehow, they could have found another agreement for the question: Can the women of Oberammergau have the same right as the men? In the Catholic Church, only priests, men, are allowed to perform the important roles. They thought the Passion Play would be something similar when Passion Plays started in Europe around 1200. Oberammergau did not invent them.

I haven't looked at the history of those places, but the first time we know of a lady being in a Passion Play was 1530, in southern Tyrol. The men did all the female parts. And in Oberammergau, it was a little shadow of this. So, women were only allowed to be in the play until they were 35—and only if they were not married! So

any sense because at the time of Jesus, they were all Jewish; Christianity was not a movement until well after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. (Leonard, 3-4)

²³ The Gospel According to Mathew, Chapter 27; verse 25: "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be upon us, and on our children." (*Holy Bible*, King James Version Mathew 27:25)

²⁴ Finally in the 2000 version and onward, the "blood curse" sentence was completely deleted from the script's text. It was very clever, though, how the reformists buried the sentence in the clamor and cacophony of a huge crowd scene where it would largely go unnoticed. This is an example of how the reformists introduced changes gradually and in clever ways in order to proceed with their long-term agenda of making more noticeable changes.

often, Jesus was 45 years old and his mother was only 20 years old. This was an unnecessary miracle in my opinion.

The women in 1990 asked for the same rights [as men] and this actually was not so easy...because women have more time to be in the play than men...so we could fill Jerusalem three times with the women of Oberammergau. So, then there was the question of did there live men, too?

The traditionalists refused any agreements so they went to the court of Munich, a Bavarian court, and the decision was Oberammergau is public domain, and they have to follow the same rules as for any other public institution.²⁵

At this point, Mr. Huber gives some historical background to the religious leanings of the people who were traditionally from Oberammergau. Until World War II, basically everyone was Roman Catholic. Once the war ended, and many displaced people began to migrate to the village, the population not only doubled in size but was much more diverse in terms of religion and ethnicity.

From this moment, not only the believers—there was a time when there were only Catholics—then there was a change when Protestants could be in the play, too. Especially, Protestant critics about the Passion Play could have a better impression and since, I think, 1970 or so, all those Protestants were in the Play. I have to say that before that there was only one Protestant lady in Oberammergau in 1930. And the Protestants, they came only after the War [WWII].

In Oberammergau, in 1945 to 1946, we had 2000 inhabitants born in Oberammergau—all of them Catholic—and we had 2,500 refugees. So, 100% had to be integrated. There were many Protestants, and so in the 1950s we built a church for the Protestants. But, for example, in Bavaria they wanted to keep the Old Catholic traditions. So for example, when I was a pupil, at school, there were 8 Catholic classes and there was a special Protestant class in Bavaria.

From the 1970s on, Protestants were in the play. In 1990, for the first time, a Protestant [was cast in] a main role as the Prologue. Since this decision, now everybody who is born in Oberammergau

²⁵ The courts ruled favorably to allow women to participate equally in the play as men, which also included other minorities and people of different faiths (or no faith) to participate if they fulfilled the residency rule. Previously, only the most pious—true believers—were allowed to act in the play even if they had no ability. Today, potential actors have auditions and the best possible actor is given the part of a particular role.

or who has lived here for 20 years is allowed to be in the play. Even if you are atheist...there are some Muslims in the play...and so on.

But you can see, in 1990 to 2000 to 2010—the years where I had the responsibility—and in 1990, it was really a great effort to reform; in 2000 we were more clever, and again in 2010, we had more experience in thinking and in doing theater...both, but especially Christian who is a leader of a theater in Munich, had done a lot of Shakespeare and so on. So, from 1990 to 2010, changes, changes, changes.

TJL: In comparison to the previous performance in 2000, in what ways has the current 2010 play changed?

Many, many, many. I think that one of the things is when Jesus and the Jews entered Jerusalem;²⁶ a great hymn... “The one who comes in the name of the Lord” ...it was not clear why they were singing for him. What were their hopes? [In the previous 2000 version] he got off his donkey and threw the tables in the temple...it was not clear that this was the act of a prophet who says you have to focus on God—take away all the money, all the goats, etc—all that was not the center...God is the center and that was not clear.

You can find in the four gospels, four different versions of the moment when Jesus enters Jerusalem. In John, it is chapter 12; and in Mathew he goes to Jerusalem, and he throws the merchants out of the temple; in Mark he comes to Jerusalem, enters Jerusalem, and then goes away to Bethany or somewhere and comes back again. That’s when he throws the merchants from the temple.²⁷

²⁶ See Figure 2. Also, in Figure 3, a menorah is prominently placed on the Passover Seder table which serves to emphasize the Jewishness of Jesus and his Disciples.

²⁷ Jesus entered Jerusalem on what is now Palm Sunday (the Sunday before [Easter Sunday](#)) and is mentioned by all four [Gospels Mark 11:1-11](#); [Matthew 21:1-11](#); [Luke 19:28-44](#); and [John 12:12-19](#)). (Holy Bible, King James Version)



Figure 2: Jesus of Nazareth, coming from Jericho on a pilgrimage for the Passover feast, enters Jerusalem with his disciples. [Permission granted by *Gemeinde Oberammergau 2010* to reproduce this photo by Brigitte Maria Mayer.]

We thought, maybe we should bring the throwing out of the merchants in another act...so we brought it to the third act. And in the first act, we have to make it understandable why there was hope because of Jesus. Or maybe people know less and less about his messages and I think that is a general change in theology...this idea that Jesus took on his shoulder all the punishment of God for humanity. This brings, somehow, an automatic redemption. We are redeemed automatically.

When Jesus came to Israel, he did not say you are redeemed and continue to live...go on, go on, and do the same thing. You have to change your life; you have to change your ideas. You have to change your relationships with your brothers and with God. He was really demanding.



Figure 3: Jesus of Nazareth, preparing for the Passover feast (Last Supper) with his disciples. Please note the Jewish menorah prominently placed upon the table, an addition from the 2000 performance of the play. [Permission granted by *Gemeinde Oberammergau 2010* to reproduce this photo by Brigitte Maria Mayer.]

Do you know we look at a certain time, for example, Gandhi, when he comes to India and all the British soldiers are around? ...So, when you look now at the first scene, there are Roman soldiers around and this is a part of the situation why Israel waited for a Messiah because he should have helped them to get rid of the occupiers.

And there are moments where there are words from the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus inspires self-confidence: "You are the light of the world; you are the children of your father in heaven, so you behave like your Father." So, the moment where he shows mercy towards the sinner, for example, the adulteress...that is the first act.

The third act, when he has thrown out the merchants from the temple, the last time in 2000 we looked to show a moment of prayer, and we took a Psalm, there are a number of Psalms, which are about pilgrims entering Jerusalem. We used one of them, but in 2010 we didn't think it was clear enough. So, maybe we should use a prayer, and a prayer which the Jews and the Christians can pray together: "Shema Israel".²⁸

²⁸ "Shema Yisrael (or Sh'ma Yisrael or just Shema) ([Hebrew](#): שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל; "Hear, [O] Israel") are the first two words of a section of the [Torah](#) ([Hebrew Bible](#)) that is a centerpiece of the morning and evening [Jewish prayer services](#). The first verse encapsulates the [monotheistic](#) essence of [Judaism](#): 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is one,' found in [Deuteronomy 6:4](#)." (Wikipedia, retrieved December 31, 2010 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shema_Yisrael).

And another thing is, in the dialogue of the olden days, you can always find or see the conflicts of Jesus and the political conflict between Jesus and the Romans. And they don't want to look at the religious conflict.

And so, in the four Gospels there are only religious conflicts, until the end and then they said he should be punished by death and then they bring him to Pilot. So, Pilot—and the Romans—only appear at the end of the story.

At the beginning of the story, it is the Romans who are making the laws. So, Pilot arrives in the third act. He says to Caiaphas, "You are responsible for law and order in the city and if this young preacher brings chaos to the city, then you will lose your job and I will bring my soldiers and you will see what happens." So, in the following acts, it can be understood why Caiaphas says, "It is better that one man dies, than that the whole nation suffers."

These are a few of the changes...and some changes really tried to make the historical situation more understandable. And it has consequences for the question of the guilt of the Jews when you can see the Romans and Pilot at the beginning; and it makes it clearer that Jesus is not an enemy of the law, like it is shown in the Letter of Paul, where he is against the law.

It is clear during our conversation that Mr. Huber is quite concerned about the future of the play and how it will be carried on with future generations of Oberammergau villagers. He mentioned that he is heartened by young people in the village who say they can identify with the current version of the play. He very much wants the youth of Oberammergau to be actively involved so they will maintain interest in the story and a desire to continue the tradition into the next millennium. "The young generation must take over the questions and they have to find their solutions; they have to take on the task." (Personal interview, 2010)

Certainly, Otto Huber and Christian Stückl are leaving a huge legacy that will endure for generations to come. Both have fought to reform all aspects of the play, and have made many enemies in the process. Although they have very different personalities, they both believe in what they are doing and that it is for the good of the local and world community. The accurate portrayal of the last days of Jesus' life, based on the Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John, cannot be altered completely or interpreted correctly without risking losing the theological and spiritual aspects of the play and alienating those who feel offended by some of its depictions. To scores of believing Christians and faithful pilgrims, the Bible is the inerrant word

of God and is the only truth. The interpretation of this literary work, however, shall always be debated and revised as humankind evolves.

I am quite proud as I have written many verses for the lyrics for the choir...and all of these words which I have written have inspired the composer to write wonderful music. And I think that Oberammergau is not only a historical drama, it is a mystery play. And I think that many touching moments are in the music. I think some of the most inspiring messages are found in the music. There is a lot of new music and we took away a lot of stupid things regarding Judaism and Judas [to make it more acceptable and less divisive]. And this is kosher...not only kosher but persuasive, somehow.

Christian [Stückl] is much more interested in politics than I am. For me, the high priest talks too much. I would like to get rid of some of these sentences. So that is the difficulty. You know, we have so many people in Oberammergau who would like to be in the play. So, it is so nice to bring them to the high council and everybody has one sentence to say. Everyone is proud to be in the play. So, it is very difficult to bring everyone in and make it shorter.

Maybe we will gain a more adequate understanding of what happened—not only in a historical way, but in a spiritual way. Sometimes, I said to my Jewish dialogue's partner, "I will be more interested in a spiritual dialogue than to be in one where the American organizations like ADL²⁹ feel they must act as policemen and we the criminals...and I don't like [the Play] to be controlled by policemen.

The stupid thing is when there is someone coming only to argue about historical arguments and not accepting anything that is in the Gospels. If somebody comes and says the four Gospels are completely a collection of errors, and you should get rid of them—and some of them really ask us to change completely—so as I have said several times, we went very far [with our revisions], so maybe you should go and see the Pope and ask him to change a few parts...

I think it is so wonderful when I go to Mass in Oberammergau, and the church is completely filled with people coming from all over the world. When you go to Rome, they, too, are coming from all over the world, but only the Catholics. In Oberammergau, maybe there

²⁹ ADL= Anti-Defamation League.

are less people than in Rome, but they come from really different religions and backgrounds. So somehow you feel the universal brotherhood of Christians here in Oberammergau. I think this is wonderful.

Appendix 2: Personal Internet-Interview with Oberammergau Passion Play Scholar and Researcher, Dr. Gordon Mork, July 5, 2010 (via E-Mail).

(Originally published by Leonard, T.J. in the 2011 Proceedings for the Association for the Scientific Study of Religion (ASSR) in a paper entitled “The Passionsspiele Oberammergau: Efforts to Reform Anti-Semitic Elements in the World’s most Famous Religious Melodrama.”)

1. When did you first become interested in the Oberammergau Passion Play?

³⁰

In 1983 Dianne [Dr. Mork’s wife] and I decided to try to organize a travel group to the play. As I began to learn more about it, at that time, I realized that there were some very controversial aspects of the play, particularly the anti-Semitic prejudices embedded within its traditions.

2. Could you give an historical outline of the Passion Play?

In 1633, during the 30 years’ war, a deadly plague infested Oberammergau and the surrounding areas. The village elders made a pledge that if God would spare the village from the plague, the village would perform the Passion Play once each decade, forever. According to local tradition, thereafter no one else died of the plague, and therefore the Passion Play (based on texts locally available) was performed in 1634. Performances have continued in a more-or-less unbroken tradition since that time.

3. How far back do actual copies of the script date?

According to the Chronology in the book we each purchased from Otto in 2010, the earliest text we have is from 1662, though we know it was based on an earlier version. [Dr. Mork is referring to the book Passion Play Oberammergau 2010, published by Prestel in conjunction with the Community of Oberammergau, 2010.]

4. How common were Passion Plays at the time Oberammergau started its tradition?

Very common, used as part of Easter rituals.

³⁰ Since this interview was conducted, Dr. Mork has since passed away. His knowledge and expertise on the Oberammergau Passion Play were without question expansive, having contributed greatly to the research available on the Play and in the area of the anti-Semitic elements that were a part of the Oberammergau Passion Play for so long. I include this interview here as a sign of respect to honor his work on this subject.

5. How has the Oberammergau Passion Play evolved over the years? Specifically, with regards to the script, how has it changed?

That is a long story. Suffice it to say that nearly every play year has seen some changes. The standard traditional text was written by Fathers Weis and Daisenberger in the 19th century, and hardly changed until 1990. Since that time, major changes in text and tone have sought to eliminate anti-Semitic stereotypes and prejudices.

6. Historically, anti-Semitic overtones had always been a central theme to the Oberammergau Passion Play—perhaps some of it unintentional, other parts very intentional. Can you give a brief description of some of these and how it has changed for the current play?

During the 19th century, the play was basically a melodrama pitting "wicked Jews" against Jesus and his "good Christians." After the reforms begun for the 1990 play, the interpretation now shows clearly the "Jewishness" of Jesus and shows the conflict as being within the Jewish population of Jerusalem, and between the Jews and the Romans. "Christians," as a distinct religious group, only appear after Jesus' death and resurrection.

7. In addition, as a comparison, referring to the Passion Play performed when Hitler was in power up to the most recent versions of the play—specifically 1984 (the 350th anniversary of the Oberammergau Passion Play), 1990, 2000, and 2010—what are some of the more significant changes in the script and in the play itself?

Let me give two examples: 1) In the traditional play (i.e. 19th century to 1984), the verse from Matthew in which the Jewish crowd chants "His blood be upon us and our children" was given a very prominent role, as if to blame all the Jews for Jesus' death; in 1990 the line was virtually drowned out in a purposely chaotic crowd scene. 2) The staging of the traditional play costumed the Jewish high priests with headgear which looked to some as devilish horns; after 1990 the "horns" were gone, replaced with other forms of headgear.

8. Specifically, what major differences in the Play did you observe between the 2000 performance and the 2010 performance?

Aside from the change in timing, from afternoon to late evening, rather than from morning till later afternoon, the major change was the addition of Jesus' teachings which were introduced into the text. For example, elements of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer (which are not technically part of the Passion texts) were given a prominent part in the on-stage dialogue.

9. If you could briefly reiterate for me, what were the most distinguishing differences, historically, that are in contrast to how it is currently being performed?

The current version the play is far more sensitive to broader questions of theological and historical appropriateness than was the version which I saw in 1984. The villagers leading the play now, Christian Stückl and Otto Huber, are well informed about the Roman Catholic theology of the Vatican II Council, [See Appendix 2 for an excerpt from the official declaration by Vatican II] they are informed about the dangers of anti-Semitism which were inherent in the traditional version of the play, and they are well positioned to shape the play for the 21st century.

10. As an expert having studied and researched the Oberammergau Passion Play for over twenty-five years, what changes do you foresee in the future renditions—moving to 2020 and beyond—of the Oberammergau Passion Play from the perspective of someone who has researched it in detail, and are quite familiar with it?

It is difficult to say. The controversies surrounding the reforms of the play have receded, so there is unlikely to be a strong reaction against those reforms. Moreover, the reforms have largely accomplished their goals. There will still be changes in the future, no doubt, attempting to make the drama ever more meaningful to the faithful Christians who perform and who visit the drama, hopefully without unnecessarily offending non-Christians.

11. What makes the Oberammergau Passion Play so special and why has it endured for 376 years?

Among the many 17th century versions of the European passion plays, most have ceased to exist. Therefore, Oberammergau has remained in a very prominent role. That role has led to it becoming a model of Passion Play revivals in the late 20th and 21st centuries.

12. What is amazing to me, is how the local townspeople keep interest in the Play alive, passing the torch to subsequent younger generations at a time when modern technology with its bells and whistles could cause younger generations to lose interest? How do they do it? Any ideas?

As Otto Huber and others will attest, it is not easily accomplished. Surely there are economic and social forces at work, as well as purely religious ones. Nevertheless, I would say that the message continues to resonate in the village of Oberammergau, as it does in religious congregations throughout Christendom.

13. Of the several versions of the Play you have personally witnessed, which is the “best,” in your opinion?

That is very difficult to say, because each one had its own unique impact—because of itself and because of my personal situation when I saw it. Most exciting, I suppose, was the 1990 version, when the first breakthrough was made, moving decisively away from the anti-Semitic traditions of the past.

14. Do you have any parting comments?

I owe so much, to so many, so that I have had the opportunity to study this phenomenon over the years. Otto Huber and others in Oberammergau have been so gracious and helpful. Fellow scholars, like you, Todd, have kept my interest alive and my critical faculties sharp. And the institutional support of scholars and travelers has combined to make it all possible.

Appendix 3: A Chronicle of the Oberammergau Passion Play from 1633-2010

(From *Press Kit Passionsspiele Oberammergau 2010*, Gemeinde Oberammergau, 2010 [Received as E-mail attachment on May 26, 2010]).

A Chronicle 1633–2010

1633 It all started with a vow during the Plague. In the Thirty Years' War, the Black Death, the Plague, came to Oberammergau in 1632. Eighty deaths from the Plague were recorded in the register by 1633. The chronicle reports that in this time of suffering, the six aldermen and twelve parish representatives met and vowed to hold the Passion Play every ten years. At the time, passion plays were widespread in Europe. More than 250 plays are documented between 1500 and 1800 in Bavaria and Austria.

1634 (1st year of performance) The Passion is acted out at Pentecost at the graveyard by the church, by 60 to 70 performers.

1662 Date of the oldest preserved copy of the Oberammergau Passion Play script. Most of the 4,902 verses come from two older plays which were already combined before 1634: 1. a mediaeval passion play (second half of the fifteenth century), a written copy of which was found in the Benedictine monastery of St Ulrich and Afra in Augsburg. 2. the Reformation Passion "Tragedi" by the Augsburg meistersinger Sebastian Wild of 1566, circulated as a printed copy.

1674 (5th year of performance) Scenes extended by the Weilheim Passion by the priest Johann Älbi (1600, 1615)

1680 (6th year of performance) Switch to performances every ten years

1690 (7th year of performance) Oldest preserved municipal bill lists 'spendings for the Passion Play': 45 gulden (florins) and 45 kreutzer

1700 (8th year of performance) Directed by and rhymes improved by the prebendary Thomas Ainhaus.

1720 (10th year of performance) Preserved parts of the script revised by P. Karl Bader (1662–1731) reveal a stage with a Baroque backdrop.

1730 (11th year of performance) Revision by the Augustinian monk Anselm Manhart of Rottenbuch (1680–1752) who introduces the allegorical figures of Envy, Greed, Death and Sin as Jesus' opponents. Two performances. Deficit: 84 gulden. 1740

(12th year of performance) Script revision by the Augustinian monk Clemens Prasser of Rottenbuch (1703–1770).

1750 (13th year of performance) ‘Passio Nova’ by the Benedictine monk Ferdinand Rosner of Ettal (1709–1778), with complete new religious and design arrangement using the stylistic vocabulary of Baroque theatre. The allegories are integrated into the story: Jesus is at the centre of a dramatic struggle between God and the powers of hell. Rosner’s text is widely circulated in Bavaria and makes Oberammergau an example for other plays.

1760 (14th year of performance) Two performances with 14,000 spectators.

1770 All passion plays banned in Bavaria. Oberammergau is also refused permission despite intense efforts.

1780 (15th year of performance) Sole privilege for Oberammergau after Rosner’s Passion is revised by the Benedictine monk Magnus Knipfelberger of Ettal (1747–1825). He restricts the appearances of hell to musical interludes and calls the play ‘The Old and New Testament’ to avoid mentioning the topic of the Passion.

1790 (17th year of performance) Privilege renewed. The drop to 3,000 spectators connected to the Napoleonic Wars leaves a deficit of 205 gulden.

1800 (18th year of performance) To reduce municipal debts, the 1800 Passion. Play is continued with four performances.

1790 Minister Maximilian, Count of Montgelas, declares the Oberammergau Privilege is revoked. No performance.

1800 (19th year of performance) The ban on the Passion Play was lifted in 1811 after a new script was submitted written by the Ettal priest Dr Ottmar Weis (1769–1843) concentrating on the Gospels, the central idea of reconciliation, with the allegorical, mythological and legendary elements removed, and with contemporary theology, prose, realism and wordy, moralistic interpretations of the examples set. Music composed by the Oberammergau teacher Rochus Dedler (1779–1822). This music for the tableaux still plays a major role in determining the character of the play today

1815 (20th year of performance) Special performances in thanks for the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The script continues to be revised by Weis and the music by Dedler. A new Empire-style stage is acquired by prebendary J.N. Unhoch (1762–1832) flanked by Houses of Annas and Pilate and side streets. New decorations.

1830 (22nd year of performance) King Ludwig I approves the play on condition that the stage is no longer erected in the graveyard. Stage is moved to the northern edge of the village. In the new theatre there is room for an audience of 5,000, although only about 13,000 spectators come to the ten performances. Goethe publishes the

enthusiastic letter sent to him by S. Boisserée about the Passion Play in the magazine 'Chaos'.

1840 (23rd year of performance) 35,000 visitors. This rise is due to newspaper reports from 1830. Reviewers such as G. Görres, I. F. Lentner, L. Steub, E. Devrient, M. Deutinger and J. Sepp discovered the Passion Play and made it widely known.

1850 (24th year of performance) Direction and individual changes to the script by Joseph Alois Daisenberger (1799–1883, priest in Oberammergau since 1845), who, in the spirit of his teacher J. M. Sailer develops a richly effective way of teaching the common folk, using historical and dramatic works, among other things. An elected 'Passion committee' organises the plays. The first French and English reports on the play appear.

1860 (25th year of performance) In 1858, Daisenberger revises the script at the request of the directors and taking into account reviews from 1850. He gives priority to the Gospel of John and tries to bring out the drama of the Passion. Instead of Weis's updating, he opts for universality; instead of realism, idealisation; instead of politics, psychology (e.g. in the case of Judas). Based on antique and classic tragedy (structure, motifs), on the other hand he tries to add common appeal by introducing legends (Saint Veronica, Ahasuerus) and stories related to the Way of the Cross (e.g. Jesus meeting Mary).

1870 (26th year of performance) Daisenberger writes prologues to the tableaux in the rhythm of ancient odes. However, the municipality does not accept his proposal to write the Passion in verse. The play, interrupted by the war, is continued in 1871. 40,000 visitors, including Crown Prince Edward of England.

1880 (27th year of performance) Number of visitors rises to 100,000. The extension of the railway line to Murnau makes arrival easier. Thomas Cook discovers Oberammergau for the flourishing tourist trade. Guests include the composer Anton Bruckner and Georg II, Duke of Meiningen, who influenced the historicised theatre style of the time. Costumes made at the Munich court theatre.

1890 (28th year of performance) Stage reconstructed by the internationally renowned Munich theatre technician Carl Lautenschläger (separation of side houses, Neo-Renaissance façade, technical modernisation), seating partly covered, new production in the style of court theatre with naturalistic, historicised stage sets and costumes. 124,000 spectators at 40 performances.

1900 (29th year of performance) Roof built over entire auditorium with an iron framework. 4,200 seats. Audience of 174,000. The Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper writes: 'Oberammergau sees guests from all over the world; three gentlemen even arrived from China. In the church offertory box, there are coins from Egypt, India, Hong Kong, the USA, Mexico, Brazil and Peru'.

1922 (31st year of performance) The consequences of the war mean the play is shifted from 1920 to 1922. Johan Georg Lang is elected as director.

1930 (32nd year of performance) Stage rebuilt and new production created by Georg J. Lang (1889– 1968), who directed the play from 1922–1960. The clear, ascetic, monumental style of the stage fits with the artistic concentration of the stage sets, and are accompanied by impressive direction of large casts. The auditorium is extended to seat 5,200.

1934 (33rd year of performance) Special play to commemorate 300-year anniversary. Hitler visits the Passion Play. The new rulers claim the play for themselves, saying it emanates from the blessed power of the homeland. Hitler declares it 'of importance to the Reich' and Cardinal Faulhaber grants an official ecclesiastical commissioning, the 'missio canonica'.

1940 The Passion Play is dropped due to the war

1950 (34th year of performance) Music revised by Prof. Eugen Papst. 480,000 visitors including Federal President Theodor Heuss, Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the highest representative of the Allies, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

1960 (35th year of performance) Oberammergau is accused of a negative portrayal of Judaism by Christian and Jewish critics. The Abbot of Ettal, Dr Johannes M. Höck, makes slight corrections to the script but basically, the 1930 production is repeated almost unchanged.

1970 (36th year of performance) There is growing call for the Daisenberger script to be rewritten in Oberammergau. Cardinal Döpfner calls upon people to change their views. In his words, it is not about 'the guilt, or even the collective guilt, of the Jews, but about the failure even of the new Israel, of the church'. Anton Preisinger directs the play. The old script remains. All attempts at reform fail. In America, Jewish organisations boycott the play.

1975 The municipality gives Hans Schwaighofer the task of putting on a performance based on the Rosner script.

1977 After seven months of rehearsal with about 700 committed participants, there are eight performances which enjoy a very positive reception by the public and critics. At a citizens' referendum following this, however, the majority chooses against using the Rosner production for the 1980 performances.

1980 (37th year of performance) After major disputes within the village about the correct form for the Passion Plays, the sculptor Hans Maier directs the play based on the Daisenberger script. Some small changes are made to the script.

1984 (38th year of performance) Special play to commemorate the 350-year anniversary. New generation enters the municipal council, yet the Daisenberger version of the script is chosen for the 1990 play. Then, however, in 1986, comes the

surprise selection of the youngest director of the play ever: the 25-year-old sculptor Christian Stückl.

1990 (39th year of performance) Stückl brings in a young generation of actors in the main roles. Disputes over his direction soon assume dramatic proportions; he only just escapes being voted out. After a collection of signatures by conservative forces, the committee does withdraw its consent for the set by A. Kraut, which had already been approved. In the run-up to the Passion Play, a script commission, led by Prof. Rudolf Pesch, looks for solutions to answer ongoing queries from the Anti-Defamation League to stop the defamation of the Jewish people. The question of whether married and older women can perform receives a positive response from the provincial High Court. 480,000 visitors.

2000 (40th year of performance) Directed by Christian Stückl, the greatest script reform comes about since 1860. Along with the deputy director Otto Huber, Stückl attempts to eliminate the anti-Judaism in the play. The main point, however, is to give the figures more individualism. Not to restrict Jesus to his suffering, but instead to portray him as a strong fighter for his faith. In an amazing community achievement, almost 2,000 new costumes and 28 new sets are created, designed by the Oberammergau set designer Stefan Hageneier. Markus Zwink, who was already the musical director in 1990, rearranges the Dedler music. 520,000 visitors.

The 2010 Passion Play at a glance

- Dates and facts Words and music

- Text by Joseph Alois Daisenberger (1799-1883), written in 1860/70, in an adaptation by Otto Huber and Christian Stückl.
- Music by Rochus Dedler (1777-1822), originally composed in 1820 and newly arranged by Markus Zwink. The Production Team Christian Stückl, principal director of the Passion Play, born in 1961 in Oberammergau Otto Huber, deputy director/dramatic adviser, born 1947 in Oberammergau Stefan Hageneier, set and costume designer, born 1972 in Oberammergau Markus Zwink, conductor, born in 1956 in Oberammergau Michael Bocklet, conductor, born 1945 in Schongau.

The Play

- First performance on 15 May 2010
- Start of each performance: 14:30, end: 22:30 (with a three-hour interval). For the first time in the 375-year history of the Oberammergau Passion Play, a part of the play will be performed in the evening.
- 102 performances from 15 May to 3 October 2010, five times a week.
- There will be no performances on Mondays and Wednesdays.
- More than half a million visitors from all over the world are expected.

- Promoter of the 2010 Passion Play is the community of Oberammergau.

The Actors

- Every one of the approx. 2400 actors is either born in Oberammergau or has lived in the village for at least 20 years.
- 21 principal parts (Jesus, Mary, John, Judas, Peter, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas and others), 120 smaller and bigger speaking parts, solo singers, 100 male and female choristers, orchestra, apostles, priests and scribes, Roman soldiers and temple guards, people.

The Passion Play Theatre

- The stage was built in 1928, the auditorium in 1898. For the 2000 Passion Play, the entire Passion Play Theatre underwent a complete restoration.
- The Passion Play Theatre has got about 4,700 covered seats.

Timetable to 2010

- In September 2005, Oberammergau Council once again appointed Christian Stückl as director, as it had in 1990 and 2000. Together with him, the other appointments to the production team of the 2010 Passion Play were Otto Huber (deputy director), Stefan Hageneier (set and costumes), Markus Zwink (conductor) and Michael Bocklet (conductor).
- In June 2007, the citizens of Oberammergau decided in a referendum to move the performance of the Passion Play 2010 into the evening for the first time ever.
- Packages for the Passion Play 2010 have been on sale since January 2008.
- Individual tickets have been on sale from 20 April 2009. Tickets are available from: Oberammergau und DER Reisebüro oHG Geschäftsstelle der Passionsspiele 2010 Eugen-Pabst-Straße 9a 82478 Oberammergau Tel: 0049 08822 923 10, Fax: 0049 08822 923 152 E-Mail:info@passionsspiele2010.de
- Since Ash Wednesday 2009, all participants in the play let their hair grow - and men also their beards - in accordance with a long tradition, the "Beard and Hair Edict".
- On 17 April 2009, Director Christian Stückl presented the cast list for the 2010 Passion Play to Oberammergau Council in a closed session for a joint resolution.
- On 18 April 2009, the names of the actors were announced. In addition to the major characters of Jesus, Mary, Peter, Judas, Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas, there are 120 larger and smaller speaking parts. Altogether, more than 2400 Oberammergau villagers participate in the 2010 Passion Play, including more than 650 children.

- On 3 July 2009, first performance of "Die Pest" ("The Plague"). The play tells the story of the day labourer Kaspar Schisler, who in 1633 in the turmoil of the Thirty Year War brought the plague to Oberammergau, of the months of suffering and dying and of the vow to perform the passion play every 10 years.
- Rehearsals for the 41st Passion Play started in the autumn of 2009.
- The first performance of the 2010 Passion Play was on 15 May 2010.
- The final performance of the 2010 Passion Play was on 3 October 2010.

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Resolving the Low versus High Chronology Debate: New Radiocarbon Tests Create Additional Space for the Kingdom of Saul and Call for Re-imagining the Stories of David and Saul

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the implications of recent radiocarbon test results and archaeological investigations relevant to the ongoing scholarly controversy over the so-called “United Monarchy” of Kings David and Solomon, especially as influenced by the revolutionary “Low Chronology” advocated by distinguished Professor Dr. Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University. The origin and justification for the “Low Chronology” is discussed in Appendix A. Recent radiocarbon test results are discussed in Appendix B. I use findings radiocarbon test results and current scholarship relating to the great Philistine city of Gath.¹ I wish to show how evidence of the size and power of Gath lend support to arguments advanced by Jacob L. Wright² and Daniel E. Fleming.³ I also intend to demonstrate an urgent need to re-evaluate the imperial power relationships influencing ancient Judah along lines suggested by Richard A. Horsley⁴ and David Chidester.⁵

1

Maeir, Aren M. “Insights on the Philistine Culture and Related Issues: An Overview of 15 Years of Work at Tell eṣ-Ṣafi/Gath” Pages 345-404 in *The Ancient Near East in the 12th to 10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History, Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Haifa 2-5 May, 2010*, Edited by Gershon Galil, Ayelet Gilboa, Aren M. Maeir, and Dan’el Kahn. In *The Ancient Orient and Old Testament: Publications on the history and Culture of the ancient Near East and the Old Testament*. Volume 392, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag (2012). On line at http://humanities.tau.ac.il/bible/images/stories/Garfinkel_Ganor_Hasel_2012_AOAT_392.pdf (accessed 3/3/2015); Maeir, Aren M. “Maeir, M.M., and Hitchcock, L.A. (2017b)., “Rethinking the Philistines: A 2017 Perspective.” In Lipschits, O. Gadot, Y. & Adams, M.J., editors *Rethinking Israel: studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns (2017), p. 253.

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Wright, Jacob L. *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2014.

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Fleming, Daniel E. *The Legacy of Israel in JUDAH'S BIBLE: History, Politics, and the Reiniscing of Tradition*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

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Horsley, Richard A. “Religion and Other Products of Empire.” Pages 13-44 in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 71 no. 1 (Mr 2003)

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David Chidester. *Empire of Religion:Imperialism and Comparative Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2014)

Recent analysis of archaeological discoveries at Tell Es-Safi/Gath show that the Philistine City of Gath was the most powerful city in the Southern Levant throughout the time period during which the United Monarchy (UM) allegedly existed. As Professor Aren M. Maeir of Bar-Ilan University has testified at a presentation he made before the Oriental Institute In Chicago, it is impossible to imagine that the Davidic Kingdom could have been more than "small" at the same time that Gath, eight times larger, flourished such a short distance from Jerusalem.⁶

How are we to understand the relationship between Gath and nearby hill country polities? To answer this question, I argue that recent archaeological record, along with "admissions against interest" contained in the Biblical text, support the possibility that the historical figure, King David, as a client of the King of Gath, brought to the hill country an imperial paradigm and established an imperial form of religion. I argue that the most likely place for David to learn the ropes regarding a sophisticated monarchical government would have necessarily been at Gath, in view of his long term association with personalities associated with Gath during the period in which Gath flourished, the 10th Century BCE?

"The City of Gath apparently remained large and prosperous, possibly even expanding and reaching its settlement peak in the Iron Age IIA (perhaps as early as the tenth century, but certainly in the ninth century)."⁷

This paper proceeds in the following steps. First I situate archaeological findings in the ongoing debate between Maximalists and Minimalists with regard to the relationship between the Southern and Northern hill country along the Jordan River.⁸

6

Maeir, Aren M. "The Tell es_Safi/Gath Archaeological Project 1996-2010: Introduction, Overview and Synopsis of Results" Page 26 in *Egypt and Old Testament: Studies on the History, Culture and Religion of Egypt and the Old Testament* Edited by Manfred Görg, Volume 69. Wiesbaden. Germany. Harrassowitz Verlag (2012); See also, Video of speech by Professor Aren M. Maeir, Professor, The Martin Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology, Bar-Ilan University, Tel Aviv, Israel, and Director of The Tell es-Safi/Gath Archeological Project: Aren M. Maeir. "New Light on the Biblical Philistines: Recent Study on the Frenemies of Ancient Israel." online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAZPJRtdjmk> produced by The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. Accessed February 16, 2015. "Gath was the largest and most important city of the times." Minute 48 et seq. "Through out this entire period the major city, the major polity, the major kingdom in this region was Gath; and that means that try as you might you can't say that the Judaite Kingdom captured Philistia if Gath is still standing." Minute 54:05 to 54:25. "In the tenth and most of the 9th century, the Judaite Kingdom was small." Minute 54:50 . Ibid.; Maeir, Aren M. "Maeir, M.M., and Hitchcock, L.A (2017b)., "Rethinking the Philistines: A 2017 Perspective." In Lipschits, O. Gadot, Y. & Adams, M.J., editors *Rethinking Israel: studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein*. Winona Lake: Eisenbraums (2017), p. 253.

7

Faust, Avraham. "From Regional Power to Peaceful Neighbor: Philistia in the Iron I-II Transition." Page 180 *Israel Exploration Journal*. Vol 63, Nmbr 2 (2013)

8

See e.g. The vitriolic *ad hominem* attack on Israel Finkelstein employing sneering, ridiculing,

Second, I review how this debate has been aggravated by methodological differences and concomitant evidentiary disputes. The remainder of the paper presents a series of new questions that have emerged from the archaeological record which point to narratives about the United Kingdom which can be best understood in light of “subaltern” analysis. In particular, I suggest that David had the status of a Philistine Lord who brought an imperial paradigm to an innovative kingship which was transformative for the entire hill country. Further, I suggest that kingship of Saul would have exhibited many of the reactive characteristics that Horsley has called “products of empire,” including characteristics of a fanatic Sicario who cannot compromise with empire. I conclude by discussing the implications of imperial influences on the development of the original temple cult.

Was King David a Creature of an Imperial Paradigm?

If David was originally a mercenary in the employ of the King of Gath, is it possible that he led regular patrols of the Via Maris, Egypt's important trade route to Damascus and Mesopotamia? And, if so, is it possible that David led punitive expeditions against Hill Country bandits preying on caravans traveling up and down the Via Maris, including some led by Saul of Israel? If so, what kind of opportunities for corruption might be presented in the course of these duties? Could David keep part of the plunder recovered from bandit gangs thereby gaining the ability to reward comrades in arms and earn personal loyalty?

Can we assume that the path of advancement for a mercenary, soldier of fortune would lead the smartest and most fierce to eventually establish his own syndicate and exercise exclusive control over defined territory? Jacob Wright argues that David is a figure similar to Jephthah who was head of a band of desperadoes.⁹ If so, might we not expect that experience in dealing with hill country tribes would have served David well once he allied himself with a prominent family in the Hebron area by marrying someone like Abigail?

If David was granted a fiefdom by the King of Gath at Ziklag, doesn't this indicate that his status was that of a feudal lord - a Philistine feudal lord? If David occasionally fought Philistines, is it not likely that he merely prevailed in the inevitable rivalry of other similarly situated warlords from one of the other four

and belittling personal insults written by University of Arizona professor emeritus William G. Dever. “Learning More About Israel? Or Israel?” *Bible Archaeology Review*. Volume 40, no 4 (July/Aug 2014), pages 38-39

9

Drawing analogies between the careers of David and Jephthah, Dr. Jacob L. Wright, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, sets out a predicate for his analysis of the life of King David as follows: “This opening to the oldest David account, in its length and literary style, bears striking resemblances not only to the Jephthah legend but also to the biography of Idrimi, a figure who ruled the city-state of Alalakh (on Turkey's southern coast) in the 15th century BCE.” Page 38 in Jacob L. Wright *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2014.

Philistine kingdoms, each of whom no doubt wished to grow his own competing syndicate?

Did David acquire valuable administrative expertise as a result of his first hand observations of the government of Gath - expertise that was sadly lacking in the Sicarioi court of King Saul? Given the level of sophistication demonstrated by David in the course of establishing his kingdom, isn't it more likely that his administrative expertise was derived from Gath, rather than Gibeah, or whatever rocky outcrop that Saul called his capital? What advantage could there ever have been for David to hang around Saul's hill country hideout compared to opportunities at Gath, the largest city in the Southern Levant? Was David still a vassal to the King of Gath while presiding over Judah from Hebron?

Is there any reason why David's kingship at Hebron should be tightly coupled to events in the Northern Kingdom? Given the fact that the Deuteronomic author failed on several occasions to present a proper chronology synchronizing more recent northern and southern kings,¹⁰ how likely is it that the Deuteronomist has perfectly synchronized far earlier kingdoms? Could the Deuteronomist be certain that David became king at Hebron only after Saul was killed at the battle of Gilboa? Why would David not have effectively been the king at Hebron from the moment he married Abigail, who was presumably derived from local Calebite nobility?

As a Philistine vassal, was David likely to be an actual participant in the forces that destroyed the King, Crown Prince, and army of Israel on Mount Gilboa? As a competitive Philistine warlord, how likely is it that David would slink away with his tail between his legs just because rival lords didn't want him to join in the march on Saul's sicarioi militia at Mount Gilboa?¹¹

After Saul's defeat, is it not very likely that his Philistine patron would tap David to administer the conquered territory? Presumably, the Philistines would follow-up on their victory by plundering Shiloh and Gibeah and by collecting all available booty, including personal effects of Saul and, more significantly, religious relics thought to have value – including the Ark of the Covenant. Wouldn't these subsequently be turned over to the new Philistine vassal king? Isn't highly probable that David took King Saul's badges of authority (including his “crown”, if any) by right of conquest – or at least that he was granted these things by the Philistines in recognition of his appointment as new vassal king?

How likely is it that the Ark of the Covenant was gathering dust in some nobody's

10

Childs, Brevard S., *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House (1994). Page 157.

11

1 Samuel 29:7

barn throughout the 42 year rule of King Saul?¹² Is not this suggestion simply absurd? But, assuming the ark was used in worship during Saul's long reign, how could it have escaped capture after the Philistine victory? How else would David acquire the ark but by the grant of the Philistine authorities - most likely his patron at Gath, King Achish? If so, how might this provenance for the ark affect David's chances of securing early the loyalty of the northern hill country tribes?

What is the evidence that the situation in the Levant favored the establishment of a United Monarchy in the hill country? Was there a power vacuum?¹³ Was strategic territory up for grabs? Did any of the existing powers continue efforts to keep open the International Highway between Egypt and Damascus?

And, did David even know Saul personally? Was the memory of an independent David who was not even acquainted with King Saul reworked in order to incorporate, post hoc, connections with King Saul for propaganda purposes?¹⁴ If so, when did this occur and why? What can we learn about the development of the Bible as a result of these inquiries?

Richard Horsley has observed that ancient Judah was inclined to insist on a traditional way of life against attempts to impose an imperial paradigm. While he is specifically referring to the late antiquity, there is no reason to assume that the inclination was less strong in earlier times.

“Far from attesting a unitary religion (Judaism), our limited sources for late Second Temple Judea indicate a range of unstable social forces and movements resisting the attempts . . . to maintain order and consolidate power.”¹⁵

12

1 Samuel 7:1. Compare 1 Samuel 14:3

13

According to Maeir, such a vacuum would not exist until the fall of Gath. Maeir, “Insights,” page 402. In accord see Finkelstein, Israel. “The Sociopolitical Organization of the Central Hill Country in the Second Millennium BCE” page 126 in *Biblical Archaeology Today*, 1990; Finkelstein, Israel, “The Campaign of Shoshenq I to Palestine: A Guide to the 10th Century Polity” page 111 in *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* (ZDPV – Journal of the German Society for Exploration of Palestine) , Volume 118, (2002). “Judah could expand to the Shephelah only after the decline of Gath – probably as a result of the campaign of Hazael, King of Aram Damascus.” Finkelstein, “Sociopolitical,” page 111. For the view that, in contrast, a separate Northern Kingdom could have benefited from a power vacuum, see Finkelstein, Israel and Nadav Na’aman. “Shechem of the Amarna Period and the Rise of the Northern Kingdom of Israel,” Page 186-87 The earlier view based on the perception of a power vacuum is well represented in Killebrew, Ann E. *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel 1300–1100 B.C.E.* Boston: Brill 2005

14

Wright, p. 36.

15

Horsley, p. 26

I suggest that King Saul would have embodied those resisting forces more than any other character of 10th century BCE Judah. If there were Sicarioi¹⁶ resisting empire in later times, King Saul could have been considered an earlier leader of Sicarioi, as well. Saul spent his entire career fighting the Philistines and died on Mount Gilboa in hand-to-hand combat at the age of 72 in an early demonstration of extreme resistance similar to the last stand at Masada centuries later. These are an important part of the “admissions against interest” which provide a solid foundation for the analysis of the relationship between Saul and the Philistines. Considering archaeological evidence from Gath, it is apparent that David was not nearly so dedicated in his resistance to imperialism.

Richard Horsley also finds a “mimesis of imperial politics” during the brief interregnum of the Hasmonean regime, which would surely be typical of any earlier independent monarchy as well.

During its brief independence the Hasmonean regime aggressively extended its own rule over Idumea to the south and Samaria and Galilee to the north, in a mimesis of imperial politics.¹⁷

By like token, one must assume that the Davidic kingdom was also such a “mimesis of imperial politics.” There is an urgent need to re-evaluate all aspects of the Davidic kingdom in order to determine to what extent David was instrumental in “turning raw religious materials into intellectual manufactured goods”¹⁸ by means of the centralized temple cult.

These are issues raised both by the received text and by “the book of the rock” - that is, the archaeological record.

An Integrated Story of David and Solomon

In order to come to grips with these issues, it is helpful to review the current status of the never-ending debate between the Maximalists and the Minimalists with regard to the relationship between the Southern and Northern hill country along the Jordan River.¹⁹ This debate is aggravated by the fact that no clear evidence of Davidic

16

Horsley. p 28.

17

Ibid.

18

Chidester, p. 64.

19

Perhaps anticipating vitriolic attacks on him by the likes of Dr. Dever (see note 8, above), Dr. Finkelstein observed: “This eruption of the traditional biblical archaeology, characterized by a highly literal interpretation of the biblical text, should not come as a surprise. It is an unavoidable phase in the now two-centuries-long battle between the advocates of a critical history of ancient

building activity has been found in Jerusalem.²⁰

The material relating to David and Solomon must be dealt with as a unit.²¹ The stories are intertwined. So, it should be possible evaluate the David story using data points that set bookends around both kingdoms

One “right hand” bookend is certainly the inscription on the late 9th century Mesha Stele (830 BCE) which confirms at least that a Chieftain named David was credited as being a founder of a Judean royal house, which was still in existence some nine generations after its founding.²² This stele is primarily devoted to a record of the battles with Kings Omri and Ahab of the Northern Kingdom known as the House of Omri. Only tangential reference is made to the House of David.

At the other bookend, there is abundant and highly reliable evidence pertaining to Egyptian activities in the Levant down to the 10th century.²³ For many years, it has been known that the Egyptian Empire maintained provincial governor's residences at Aphek²⁴, Megiddo²⁵, and Bet She'an²⁶ (north, on the Jordan River) well into the later

Israel and the supporters of a conservative approach that tells a basically biblically narrated history of ancient Israel in modern words. Following every high-tide of critical studies comes a ‘counter-revolution’ of the conservative school.” Finkelstein, Israel. “A Great United Monarchy? Archaeological and Historical Perspectives” Pages 3-28 in *One God - One cult - One Nation*. Berlin : Göttingen de Gruyter, 2010, at page 19.

20

“Most annoying, over a century of archaeological explorations in Jerusalem – the capital of the glamorous biblical United Monarchy – failed to reveal evidence for any meaningful 10th-century building activity.” Finkelstein, *Monarchy* page 8.

21

Finkelstein, Israel. “State Formation in Israel and Judah: A Contrast in Context, a Contrast in Trajectory” page 46 in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Mar., 1999); Lemche, Niels Peter. Page 172 in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*. Edelman, Diana V. and Ehud Ben Zvi. (eds.) Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013

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Lemaire, Andre. “West Semitic Epigraphy and the History of the Levant During the 12th to the 10th Centuries, BCE.” Page 305 in *The Ancient Near East in the 12th to the 10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History, Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Haifa, May 2-5, 2010*. Edited by Gershon Galil, Ayelet Gilboa, Aren M. Maeir, and Dan’el Kahn. In *The Ancient Orient and Old Testament: Publications on the history and Culture of the ancient Near East and the Old Testament*. Volume 392, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag (2012) on line at http://humanities.tau.ac.il/bible/images/stories/Garfinkel_Ganor_Hasel_2012_AOAT_392.pdf (accessed 3/3/2014) See also “The Moabite Stone,” Bible History On-Line, La Center, Washington online at: http://www.bible-history.com/resource/ff_mesha.htm. (accessed 21 February 2015)

23

“There can be no doubt that the biblical Shishak refers to [Pharaoh] Shoshenq I and that he reigned in the second half of the 10th century BCE.” Finkelstein, Israel. “The Campaign of Shoshenq I to Palestine: A Guide to the 10th Century Polity” page 110 in ZDPV, Vol 118 (2002)

24

Gadot, Yuval. "The Late Bronze Egyptian Estate at Aphek." *Tel Aviv* 37, 2010, 48–66 at page 53.

parts of the 12th Century.²⁷ Garrisons of Egyptian troops were evidently maintained at these locations in order to patrol the "Via Maris", the vitally important Egyptian highway to Damascus. And there is support for the idea that the Egyptians maintained strong ties to the Philistines well into the Babylonian period in the 6th Century, and probably relied on Philistine mercenaries (vassals) to represent their interests around the Shephelah and in the Jezreel Valley.²⁸

Therefore, prior to the 11th Century, the evidence indicates that no hill country polity controlled the Jezreel Valley, let alone the coastal plains of the Levant south of Tell Qasile (present day Tel Aviv)²⁹. What happened after the late 12th century? Did Egypt abandon her empire and give up on keeping the Via Maris reasonably free of bandits and predatory local warlords?

The Bible concedes that the Tribe of Manasseh which was supposedly assigned the Jezreel Valley was not able to take possession of it prior to the 10th century BCE.³⁰ During the time of Saul, there was a garrison of Philistines nearby.³¹ And, there was even a Philistine garrison at Bethlehem in the time of David.³² Also, in the early 10th century, the Bible concedes that Philistines wiped out the entire host of the Army of Israel at Mount Gilboa³³, which is on the southern edge of the Jezreel Valley just

25 Dever, William G. "The Late Bronze – Early Iron I Horizon in Syria Palestine: Egyptians, Canaanites, 'Sea Peoples,' and Proto-Israelites." page 101 in *The Crisis Years: The 12th Century B.C.* Edited by William A. Ward and Martha Sharp Joukowsky. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing. 1989

26 See photo below taken by author at Bet She'an, Israel, July 12, 2014

27

Panitz-Cohen, Nava. 2014, *The History of Excavations at Tel Bet She'an and the Regional Surveys of the Bet She'an Valley*, in *Archaeology in the Land of "Tells and Ruins"*, ed. Bart Wagemakers, Oxbow Books, page 236

28

"Egypt became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from which the Philistines come." Genesis 10:13-14 ; "In the seventh century BCE the phenomenon of Greek mercenaries in the service of the Egyptian army was well-known in the region, especially in Philistia and the Negev." Finkelstein, Israel, "The Philistines in the Bible: A Late-Monarchic Perspective." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Volume 27, page 149 (2002)

29

"For about three centuries (c. 1460 to c. 1170) Palestine was under the direct control of Egypt, though some degree of political (and cultural) influence existed before and afterwards." Liverani, Mario. *Israel's History and the History of Israel*. London: Equinox (2003) page 10

30

The tribe of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us; yet all the Canaanites who live in the plain have chariots of iron, both those in Bet-she'an and its villages and those in the Valley of Jezreel." Joshua 17:16

31

1 Samuel 10:5 "Gibeath-elohim, at the place where the Philistine garrison is" Ibid.

32

1 Chronicles 11:16 "the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem." Ibid.

33

west of the Jordan River. Not only was the host of Israel defeated there, but the King and at least one Crown Prince were killed there, and the King's dead body was nailed to the wall at Bet She'an,³⁴ which had a robust Egyptian imperial history, having been under the control of the Egyptians for centuries until the late 12th Century.³⁵

What does this say about continued Egyptian influence in the area? Is it possible that Egypt, like England in India over two millennia later, learned how to control its sphere of influence using local vassals? Does this history indicate a power vacuum into which David could simply step in and set up shop? Or, is it possible that David was actually the vassal king in charge of the area on behalf of the Egyptians and/or the Egyptian proxies, the Philistines?

But, why would the Philistines be proxies for the Egyptians? To answer that question, perhaps it is best to start with hard evidence and work backwards in time. Hard evidence of a deep and lasting pact between Egypt and the Philistines exists at the beginning of the Neo Babylonian era, when Nebuchadnezzar found it necessary to completely obliterate Ashkelon to punish it for its loyalty to Egypt.³⁶

Nebuchadnezzar returned a couple of decades later to destroy Jerusalem for the same crime. And, in the previous occasion when a Mesopotamian Empire found it necessary to discipline Jerusalem by destroying its key fortresses at Lachish and Azekah and stripping it of its temple treasure to cover overdue payment of vassal province tribute, it was also because of the crime of making a rebellious alliance with Egypt.³⁷ It seems Egypt was very actively involved in efforts to control the area, even when it didn't want to commit its own troops.

Regardless of self-serving representations to the contrary in the Bible, the record in the rock shows that the Philistine pentapolis co-existed comfortably in the same immediate neighborhood with Judah and Jerusalem for at least four centuries until

“ And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those who were on the other side of the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.” 1 Samuel 31:7 (NKJV)

34 1 Samuel 31:10

35 Notes 25 and 26, above.

36

Fantalkin, A.. Why Did Nebuchadnezzar II Destroy Ashkelon in Kislev 604 B.C.E.?” Pages 87-111 in: Finkelstein, I. and Na'aman, N. (eds.). *The Fire Signals of Lachish: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Israel in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Persian Period in Honor of David Ussishkin*. Winona Lake:.(2011). Page 88

37

“Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? See, you are relying now on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.” 2 Kings 18:19-21 (NRS)

the Babylonian campaign of 604 BCE, when the Philistines were wiped out.³⁸ And, the Philistines were wiped out because they were loyal to Egypt.

When did this Philistine loyalty to Egypt begin? There are hints that Ramses III may have settled pacified “Sea Peoples” along the coast in the Southern Levant.³⁹ Whether that is true or not, there is no denying that Ramses III, in 1175 BCE, did completely defeat a major invasion of Sea Peoples, and that the defeated Sea Peoples settled on the coast of the Southern Levant.⁴⁰ How likely is it that Ramses III would have been content to allow a hostile, unpacified people to block the international highway from Egypt to Damascus after defeating them? Considering the importance of the North-South Highway (Via Maris) it is inconceivable that Egypt would have been content to leave the Philistines in control of the Lower Levant coastal area for over five centuries, unless the Philistines could be trusted to keep the road open and to provide sufficient police protection along the road so that caravans could get through without everything of value being stolen by hill country bandits.

I have shown that Egypt had strong influence over the Philistines both at the end of the 12th century BCE, and at the end of the 9th century BCE. Between these two “book end” data points, there is at least one significant Egyptian military campaign into the Southern Levant. It is the campaign of Pharaoh Sheshonq I,⁴¹ which was successful in securing Egyptian trade relations with Philistia.⁴² There is a second major campaign by Pharaoh Necho in the late 7th century, as Egypt tried to prop up the collapsing Assyrian Empire. But, before considering those pieces of the puzzle, it

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See Faust, Avraham. From Regional Power to Peaceful Neighbor: Philistia in the Iron I to II transition.” *Israel Exploration Journal* 63:174-204 (2013)

39

Ehlich, Carl S. *The Philistines in Transition: A History from ca. 1000 to 730 B.C.* New York: E.J. Brill (1996) page 8-9. “The paratactic nature of the [Medinet Habu inscription] allows an interpretation as evidence that Ramses III settled captive Sea Peoples (mainly the Philistines) as mercenaries in Canaan. “ Ibid. Note 47. See also, Liverani, Mario. *Israel's History and the History of Israel*, London, Equinox, Page 38;

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Ehrlich, Carl S. *The Philistines in Transition: A History from ca 1000 – 730 BCE.* New York: E.J. Brill (1996). pp. 7-8

41

“The Sheshonq I campaign could have taken place almost any time in the mid- to late tenth century BCE. . . . the Sheshonq campaign . . . could have coincided with the end days of the house of Saul.” Finkelstein, Israel. *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013, Pages 41, 51. This is consistent with a theory that Philistine mercenaries joined regular Egyptian troops in the campaign resulting in Saul's defeat at Mt. Gilboa, and that the Philistine cities could not have projected power so far into the Jezreel Valley without the support of Egyptian troops.

42

. Ehrlich, Carl S. *The Philistines in Transition: A History from ca. 1000-730 BCE.* New York, E.J.Brill (1996) page 65

is necessary to deal with a methodology of analysis – a means of resolving evidentiary disputes.

Two Types of Evidence: Self-Serving versus Admission against Interest

A ticklish issue in dealing reconciling biblical text with the "text in the rock" of archaeology is the apparent hypocrisy of accepting certain portions of the biblical text as factual when those portions seem to confirm archaeological theories, but rejecting biblical texts where such texts contradict archaeology. It seems like "cherry picking."

Perhaps it is useful to refer to a time honored principle of evidence in English and American jurisprudence. I refer to the concept of "admission against interest." Under the Federal Rules of Evidence, a declaration against interest is defined as a statement made by a declarant that is against the declarant's pecuniary, proprietary, or penal interest when it was made. A statement against interest is admissible as an exception to the hearsay rule.⁴³ In a legal dispute, facts can be separated into two categories: those that help establish the position of the plaintiff, and those that tend to discredit the position of the plaintiff.

If the plaintiff agrees that a fact in the second category is true, then this is an "admission against interest." As such, it is entitled to special weight and credibility. Because, the assumption is that the Plaintiff would never agree to the truth of evidence that hurt his case unless he had no choice - unless his only alternative is a "bare faced lie." The opposing party need not introduce evidence in support of the "admission against interest", because the issue has been conceded by the Plaintiff.

However, evidence in the first category, evidence which supports the plaintiff's case, can be called "self-serving" evidence. As such, self-serving evidence is treated with suspicion, since it is obviously in the interests of the plaintiff to generate such evidence. Such evidence can become accepted as fact only if the plaintiff carries his burden of proof with respect to those allegations.

With respect to various archaeological issues, some parts of the Biblical testimony will constitute "self-serving assertions" which require supporting evidence, and some parts will constitute "admissions against interest" which do not.

Obviously, in the course of discovery in a legal case, various evidence will be offered by the Plaintiff, and not all of it will be entirely consistent. But, in the presence of a clear admission against interest, the fact that some of the plaintiff's witnesses may have contradicted the admission against interest will not render the admission

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Rule 804(b)(3)(A) *Federal Rules of Evidence*, Pub. L. 93-595, §1, Jan. 2, 1975, 88 Stat. 1926, as amended December 1, 2014. See also *On Lee v. United States*, 343 U.S. 747 (U.S. Supreme Court), 1952.

against interest less significant, especially when the admission has been made by the Plaintiff himself after due deliberation. In like manner, the Bible often contains parallel stories treating the same subject, where these stories are contradictory, or even mutually exclusive. However, the existence of self-serving explanations next to admissions against interest does not defeat the latter.

Between archaeology and Biblical admissions against interest, there is solid evidence for the proposition that the Egyptians through their proxies, the Philistines, at all relevant times were able to maintain effective control of the Via Maris up until the campaigns of Sargon II, and probably continuing until Sennacherib's campaign in 703 BCE. The only realistic conclusion based on these facts is that the United Monarchy was confined to the Hill Country well south of Lake Gennesaret.

Working with a Bible in one hand and a trowel in the other, there have been biblical apologists (Maximalists) who have attempted to support self-serving Biblical passages asserting that King Solomon fortified the cities of Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo, and that he maintained Chariot armies in those cities. For example, Yigael Yadin asserted in the 1960s that there were "Solomonic gates" at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.⁴⁴ This was based on the fact that earlier Canaanite gates at those places had only four chambers, whereas Solomon might have innovated two additional chambers. While some might assume the difference between four and six chambers to be a rather arbitrary choice for a builder, perhaps only the wise King would have thought of beefing up the gates by adding two more chambers to the Canaanite design (one additional chamber on each side).

Scholars in charge of excavations at Megiddo have since challenged Yadin's attempts to corroborate the self-serving statements in the Bible. There is evidence that the alleged "Solomonic" gates were actually built by the Omride dynasty of the Northern Kingdom a full century after Solomon.⁴⁵ When first discovered, the so called "Solomonic Gate" at Megiddo was compared to a similar gate at Shechem, indicating an architectural debt to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, rather than to Solomon.⁴⁶

The same thing applied to the "Solomonic chariot stables." But, even Yadin conceded that the water systems at Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo would have been

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Yadin, Y. 1960, "New Light on Solomon's Megiddo." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 23.2:62-8.

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"The so-called 'Solomonic' monuments were in fact built by the Omrides." Finkelstein, Israel. "A Great United Monarchy? Archaeological and Historical Perspectives" Page 12 in *One God - One cult - One Nation* Berlin : Göttingen de Gruyter, 2010, ISBN 3110223570

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Franklin, Norma. 2014. "A Visit to Tel Megiddo in the Spring of 1954" in *Archaeology in the Land of "Tells and Ruins"*, ed. Bart Wagemakers, Oxbow Books, page 205.

installed by Northern King Ahab in the 9th Century, BCE.⁴⁷ Since abundant water would have been required in order to maintain the large number of chariot horses that were allegedly maintained by Solomon at Megiddo, it is reasonable to conclude that any such stables would not have served any significant number of horses prior to the reign of King Ahab of Israel. Bible based arguments that Solomon had chariot armies quartered at Megiddo, Hazor and Gezer seem to lack credibility.⁴⁸ Indeed, even Yadin conceded that the stables at Megiddo should be attributed to Ahab, and not Solomon.⁴⁹

As for interests in claiming early control of Gezer, the Bible admits that the Egyptians (the same Pharaoh) destroyed the city twice in the space of no more than two decades during and immediately after the alleged reign of King Solomon.⁵⁰ It seems unlikely that Solomon would have been able to fortify this city in the face of Egyptian determination that it remain in ruins. The Biblical assertion that a Pharaoh who could only have been Sheshonq I gave Gezer to Solomon as a wedding present after the first conquest is not only of dubious credibility considering that the same Pharaoh apparently took Gezer back a few decades later, but it is plainly a self-serving statement requiring the proponent to carry the full burden of proof.⁵¹

However, the presence of an Egyptian princess in Jerusalem,⁵² along with her retinue of Egyptian priests, body guards, and, spies reporting back to Egypt would be an admission against interests on the issue of Judean independence from Egypt. It would also be an admission against interests with respect to any argument that Egypt had resigned its determination to create vassal states along the Via Maris. If we assume that Gezer was some sort of dowry for the Egyptian princess, and if we assume that a dowry always belonged to the woman in the marriage, then Gezer technically would still belong to the Egyptians, even if the self-serving statement in the Bible regarding the gift of Gezer were true.

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Yadin, Y. 1970. "Megiddo and the Kings of Israel." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 33:66-96.

48

"Today all the stables are attributed to the eighth century BCE and possibly represent the building exploits of Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom. Franklin, Norma. 2014. "A Visit to Tel Megiddo in the Spring of 1954" in *Archaeology in the Land of "Tells and Ruins"*, ed. Bart Wagemakers, Oxbow Books, page 211.

49

Yadin, Y. 1970. "Megiddo and the Kings of Israel." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 33:66-96.

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1 Kings 9:16 and 1 Kings 14:25; "In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand cavalry. A countless army came with him from Egypt—Libyans, Sukkiim, and Ethiopians. He took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem." 2 Chronicles 12:2-4

51

1 Kings 9:16

52

2 Chronicles 8:11

As for interests in claiming early control of Hazor, which is located far north of the Lake of Gennesaret, and which is a vital link in the Via Maris, not only would logistics between Jerusalem and Hazor be a nightmare for King Solomon, it is inconceivable that the Egyptians, Philistines, Arameans, or Assyrians would have tolerated an alien fortification there. Perhaps Judeans were employed as mercenaries there, or perhaps some Judeans were employed by the Philistines to labor on public works. But, the idea that Solomon would have independent control of Hazor, astride the Via Maris, without accountability to the Egyptians seems highly unlikely, and a matter requiring the Maximalists to carry a heavy burden of proof.

In summary, facts pertaining to the specific events of the 10th century are hotly disputed. However, evidence from the periods before and after the tenth century are unequivocal. The great imperial powers controlled the Via Maris. And, there is no reason to believe that the 10th century was an exception.

What Then Can Be Said About the Davidic Kingdom?

In usual course of events, considering the situation, it must be considered likely that Egypt used Philistines as mercenaries and/or proxies for protecting Egyptian interests in the Southern Levant. And, in view of the size of the City of Gath, along with its hinterlands, the Kingdom of David was small. But, this small kingdom was secure enough in its rough terrain and able to maintain independence. Where did the ruler of this "small" kingdom originate? How did he become the legendary founder of this tough little kingdom?

There are two recent studies bear on this question, and each innovative. The first was by Dr. Daniel E. Fleming.⁵³ The second is by Dr. David L. Wright.⁵⁴ The two studies are not entirely consistent with one another. Yet, there is enough in common between them to forecast an emerging consensus regarding the origins of both the Judeans and King David. The developing consensus may hold that Judea was originally separate from Israel, and that David probably never actually met King Saul. Needless to say, there are far reaching implications.

I will summarize the argument and authorities presented by the two authors beginning with Dr. Fleming who, in his ground breaking study, argues, in effect, that 7th Century BCE Judean scribes had co-opted the historical antecedents of the northern Kingdom, Israel, which was always an entirely separate polity and which had become wealthy and powerful by the time the Assyrian invasion of the late 8th

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Fleming, Daniel E. *The Legacy of Israel in JUDAH'S BIBLE: History, Politics, and the Reinventing of Tradition*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

54

Wright, Jacob L. *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2014.

century BCE.⁵⁵ The destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria left a rich historic legacy in a state of abandonment.

To use an example from the current era, it was as if a well-known trademark were abandoned by a bankrupt company. For example a bankrupt company could sell its trademark to a former competitor. In this case, by analogy, Judea adopted the trademark, trade dress, and all the advertising copy that had previously belonged to the now defunct entity, Israel.

In order to harmoniously incorporate the newly acquired image into the existing trade dress, it was necessary to create some connective material to function as some kind of paste or staples integrating the new "mar-com" (marketing communications) into the pre-existing copy. In order to tack Judean history onto Israelite history, it was necessary to creatively elaborate on the story of David.

The problem faced by Judean scribes in accomplishing this task was complicated by the fact that Israel and Judea had been fierce enemies and had fought each other for centuries prior to the Israelite destruction. In fact, Judea had been allied with Assyria at the time the Assyrians destroyed Israel.⁵⁶ This is an embarrassing fact that must be overcome in order for Judah to make credible use of the Israelite "mar-com."

The audience to impress with the elaborated story of David was none other than large numbers of Israelite refugees who fled the Assyrian apocalypse and were pouring into Jerusalem during the 7th century BCE. These refugees created a dilemma for the Judean authorities. On the one hand, Judea was prospering as a loyal vassal of the Assyrians⁵⁷ and was in need of new workers in order to take full advantage of the new prosperity. On the other hand, these immigrants were no doubt full of resentment towards the Judean authorities for their role in the defeat of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians, with which Judea had been allied.

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"Because the Bible ultimately served the people of Judah as they grappled with the dissolution of their kingdom and the possibility of maintaining an identity on other terms, all of its contents have been filtered through Judahite assumptions. Yet this Jewish Bible gives pride of place to a long account of the past that revolves around the origins and early life of Israel, an anomaly that immediately raises the possibility that Judah took over a heritage that came from an entity called Israel. If so, everything in the narrative from Genesis through Kings is liable to include two types of material: content that derives from settings in Israel that relate directly to Israel as the object of interest, and content that reflects the adaptation of Israelite lore so as to account for Judah's connection with this past." Fleming at 32.

56

2 Kings 16:7.

57

Liverani, Mario. *Israel's History and the History of Israel*. London, Equinox Publishing Ltd., translated from Italian by Chiari Peri and Philip R. Davies 2005. Page 152.

An additional audiences were the neighboring kingdoms, but more especially Egypt and Assyria, the two competing imperial powers. It is always an advantage for a country to be able to claim antecedents in antiquity. An ancient lineage makes for valuable prestige, compared to Bedouin and Amorites (or, for that matter, Philistines) who had no ancient antecedents.

For a lot of reasons, it was worth considerable effort to do a credible job of integrating the Israelite antecedents into the Judean, for audiences both local and abroad.⁵⁸ By expanding on the story of David, the scribes picked a time period far enough in the past that no substantial contradictory evidence would interfere with historical revisionism. However, the refugees from the North no doubt held rather strong beliefs that Judea had never been a friend to Israel. It would be necessary to construct a complex story, and new additions would need to be made from time to time.

This is where the analysis of Dr. Wright becomes important. According to Dr. Wright, the oldest stories of Saul and David appear to be independent of one another.⁵⁹ In addition, it appears that there is an old story of David as the chieftain of a group of outlaw bandits ("apiru⁶⁰") who conduct a "protection racket" in an area extending from En Gedi in the East, Ziklag in the West, and Maon/Carmel in the South.⁶¹ It is argued that upon this framework of original history, the tapestry was extended to create a story of David interacting with the Northern Kingdom through King Saul, but

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Not only was there a need to modify the David story, there was also a need to demolish the reputation of King Saul. An anti-Saul polemic was needed during the Persian period. "It is reasonable to assume that this polemic with its hidden significance was launched during the transition from Babylonian to Persian rule by supporters of the Davidic dynasty, because of their opposition to new currents that referred to the Benjaminite option, the House of Saul." Amit, Yairah. "The Saul Polemic in the Persian Period." page 657 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*. Lipschits, Oded and Manfred Oeming (eds), Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2006. See also Blenkinsopp, J. "Benjamin Traditions Read in the Early Persian Period." Pages 629 -45 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*. Edited by Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2006.

59

"[T]he Book of Samuel contains a deep disparity. . . . Taking the disparity seriously and following it throughout the Book of Samuel, we can discern two very different narrative strands. One strand presents David serving valiantly in Saul's forces, . . . The other narrative strand knows nothing about David's relationship with Saul. Instead, it portrays David as a mercenary warlord." Wright, at 33.

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Finkelstein, Israel. "The Philistines in the Bible: A Late-Monarchic Perspective." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (2002) Volume 27, Page 137. For the view that all governments begin as protection rackets, see Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, Inc. (1974) page 25: "the dominant protective agency in a territory" ends up being the state.

61

"David is a wily outlaw, living by the sword and running a protection racket. He is man on the make, doing what he does best." page 6, Wright.

in such a way as to avoid David's being present at the ill-fated battle of Gilboa.

While the Goliath and harp playing stories merely serve to establish the earliest possible connection to the court of King Saul, the real trick was to show that David was intimately connected to the Northern Kingdom without his being blamed for the defeat of that polity by the Philistines at the famous battle of Gilboa. The ideal time for story to assert that David claimed kingship over the north would, obviously, be right after the death of Saul.

Here we come again to an "admission against interests." It seems that there is undeniable evidence that David acquired weapons, training, and followers during a sojourn with the Philistines at Gath. In fact, we see that a Gittite (Gathite) was one of David's most important "mighty men" right up through the rebellion of his son Absalom.⁶² So, it seems that David had obtained significant and long lasting assets from the huge city of Gath, which was only a short distance from Jerusalem.

At this point, it is helpful to summarize the archaeological evidence from the past years at Gath, evidence which is continuing to come to light right up to the present. This evidence proves that Gath was eight times the size of Jerusalem and that it was the dominant city in the Southern Levant during the 10th century.⁶³ It was certainly never defeated by David at any point during his reign.

Since Gath was very big and very powerful, it is reasonable to assume that David's relationship with its king was extremely important to him. In fact, it would be logical to assume that David probably obtained all of his concepts of royal administration from his observations at Gath. It is highly unlikely that experience in the court of Saul at Gibeah would have been of much value in comparison to the far grander experience at Gath. Such experience could account for the sophistication of David's later reign over Israel. Even if David's kingdom were small, he obviously laid the foundation for a very respectable hill country polity which was able to flourish over the succeeding centuries.

Another aspect of David's relationship with the King of Gath would logically be service as a mercenary with the Philistines in the defense of the Via Maris on behalf of the Egyptians. It is reasonable to assume that such duty would have involved expeditions all up and down the Via Maris, even as far as Damascus itself. Hence, David's service with the Philistines patrolling the Via Maris could easily give rise to legends of his having conquered Damascus. Presumably, David's involvement in military actions at Damascus and points further north would have been sponsored by the Egyptians who would have used mercenaries recruited from throughout the southern Levant.

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2 Samuel 15:19. See also, 2 Samuel 6:10

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. Maeir, notes 1 and 6 above.

It is also logical to assume that as an experienced veteran of mercenary campaigns along the Via Maris, David might well have participated in campaigns to suppress banditry originating from the northern hill country. The Via Maris skirts the northern Hill Country for a considerable distance. It would be likely that Saul and his sicarioi would have been able to harass caravans from Apehek near the coast all the way to Bet She'an on the Jordan River. Consequently, it would be highly probable that David would have fought engagements with Saul's sicarioi during his years of service to the king of Gath.

In the career of any successful young man, there comes a point where he has acquired the contacts and experience necessary to branch out on his own. It would be entirely typical that a very talented young warrior like David would have earned the necessary reputation to lead his own enterprise. We can treat the gift of Ziklag as admission against interests, since it is not in the interests of the Judeans to admit that their founder was a highly valued Philistine Lord entitled to receive such a behest. Operating out of Ziklag, David would have a franchise that could be extended into the Elah Valley and as far south as Hebron and Maon.

Where there is opportunity and lack of supervision, corruption is inevitable. Thus, one of the most obvious ventures for David's new enterprise would have been to run protection rackets in the southern hill country inhabited by the Calebite tribes. There, he would have encountered a well-connected woman known as Abigail. This Abigail, assuming, as is probable, that she was of a relatively high ancestral name, being a descendant of the founder of the Calebite clan, would have been in a position to lend a great deal of local credibility to David, upon his winning her support.

Clearly, David had success in the Hebron area. It is reasonable to assume that he had some help in establishing his legitimacy there. Since Abigail is a Calebite, and not an actual Judean (whatever the term Judean may mean at this time) evidence from the Bible pertaining to David's "power couple" relationship with Abigail is probably reliable as another admission against interests. It is an admission against interest because it associates David with non-Judean heritage. If Abigail were a self-serving invention, then surely she'd have been Judean.

With the help of Abigail, it would seem that David's stature in the Hebron vicinity grew to such an extent that he was able to acquire the status of a King there. No doubt, his rise created envy among other Philistine Lords, and there would have been times when he would find himself at odds with various ones of the Philistine Lords. It would not be surprising that there were battles with rivals as David competed for territory with other Philistine Lords. Nothing in this process would be unusual for a young feudal lord expanding his fiefdom. This would account for the need for David to occasionally repel rival bands of Philistines even as far East as the Rephaim Valley.

But, since Hebron was relatively exposed to attack from the West, it would be natural that David would seek a stronghold further to the East. And, Jerusalem would have been an ideal location. As a well-traveled Philistine Lord, David had probably been inside the Jebusite city on several occasions. Thus, it would not be hard for him to conceive a strategy for seizing it, once he had become king of Hebron.

The blending of the Saul and David narratives would be easiest during David's adolescence and very young adulthood. There would be no records in the northern kingdom likely to contradict assertions that David was a page in the court of King Saul. And, it might even be possible to rework a legendary encounter between a childhood David and one of the legendary giants believed to reside in the Calebite regions, a survivor of the giants killed by the eponymous hero, Caleb, many generations before.

The attempt to extend the story from David's childhood introduced various absurdities into the text. In a fictionalized treatment of the scribal process, Stefan Heym has his protagonist notice a discrepancy between the Goliath story and the story of David being invited to sing for Saul. In both of these stories, David encounters Saul for the very first time.⁶⁴

Legends about a legendary founder are known. For example, one need look no further than the biblical book of Judges to compare Jephthah of Gilead. Ashoka, the ruler of ancient India (304 to 232 BCE) was credited with killing a lion with his bare hands as a child. Hercules is another example; as a child he killed a lion and was taught to play a lyre. The heroic epic of Idrimi of Aleppo from the 15th century BCE has been compared to the Davidic legend.⁶⁵ This sort of thing is to be expected when encountering histories of founders of dynasties.

The point is, David's legend could easily be reworked so that David killed a Giant on behalf of King Saul. Then, to show why King Saul would not then have been a lifelong enthusiastic sponsor of David's career, the tapestry would be woven to explain that Saul went mad. Of course, Saul would have to be mad to conceive a

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"Why should a search have to be made throughout Israel for a musician with the necessary qualifications, why should messengers be dispatched to old Jesse in Bethlehem telling him to send David his son who is with the sheep, when that celebrity, having killed Goliath, was sitting at the royal super table? . . . If David is at court, singing to King Saul and exorcising the evil spirit of the Lord, how do we get him back to Bethlehem to pick up that bread and those tidbits for his Big Brothers, who serve with the army, and the ten cheeses for their captain? And, should not then King Saul have noticed that the valiant challenger to Goliath and the young fellow with the lute and the pretty voice were one and the same?" Heym, Stefan. *The King David Report*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons 1973. Page 48-49

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See, Sasson, Jack M. "Jephthah: Chutzpah and Overreach in a Hebrew Judge." Page 407, note 6, in *Literature as Politics, Politics and Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*. Edited by David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2013

hatred for a boy who killed a giant with a slingshot. Elaborations were made along this line. But, as the story spins out, it is impossible to ignore the most fundamental admissions against interests.

Two basic admissions appear in sharp relief:

- (1) Saul spent his entire career fighting Philistines (1 Samuel 14:52) and died in hand-to-hand combat with Philistines at the age of 72 (1 Samuel 13:1); and
- (2) David, some forty years junior to Saul (2 Samuel 5:4), was granted a fiefdom by the Philistine King of Gath (1 Samuel 27:6).

Saul was more likely a type of Chieftain or Labayu⁶⁶. If he was a mad man, perhaps he was mad in the sense that sicoroi are mad.

According to the self serving story line, David is the one who could have saved the Northern Kingdom from total defeat by Gath, but could not due to the insane hostility of King Saul. Thus, the embarrassing evidence that David was actually in the service of the Philistines can be explained away with blame laid at the door of King Saul, the madman.

The story in the Bible is cast so that David becomes King of Hebron only after Saul is destroyed by the Philistines. But, there is no logic to that time sequence.⁶⁷ From the day that David acquired his alliance with the Calebite clan through his marriage to Abigail, he was effectively the king of Hebron. The assertion that David only became king after Saul's death is self-serving. David had the skill and experience to begin his rule without waiting for Saul to get out of the way.

Products of Empire

Richard Horsley has listed "persistent resistance" as a reaction to imperial impositions.⁶⁸ Among several historical vignettes both ancient and modern, he briefly outlined the consequences of imperialism in the Levant during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. He also asserted that in the 6th century BCE the political-economic structure and religion of the Neo Babylonian empire were closely interrelated. Horsley did not extend his analysis to the 10th century in the Levant, but his

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See Finkelstein, Israel. "The Last Labayu: King Saul and the Expansion of the First North Israelite Territorial Entity." pages 171-187 in *Essays On Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

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Wright, pages 34-35; "In reality, the House of Saul and the founder of the Jerusalem dynasty could have been contemporaries." Finkelstein, *A Great United Monarchy?* Page 29

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Horsley, Richard A. "Religion and other Products of Empire." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 71, No. 1, pp 13-44 (March 2003)

observations are relevant here.

According to the “supplemental method” advocated by Jacob L. Wright, it would be expected that each generation would add to the corpus its own gloss. Because so much of the “supplemental approach” concerns material developed in an effort to understand the destruction of the first temple, I look to Jeremiah's advice to Zedekiah reflected in Jer 27:12,17 and Ezekiel's diatribe against imperialism reflected in Ezekiel 23:11-21, in order to show the reaction against imperial epistemology evident in Judean identity as mediated by the Pentateuch.

The Jeremiah passage reflects a lack of concern for whether Jerusalem was independent or a vassal, so long as it was a safe place to live and raise a family. Ezekiel, on the other hand, expresses extreme hostility toward any cooperation with empire. Between these two figures, who undoubtedly were leaders of rival schools of scholars, contrasting products of empire are revealed.

The Jeremiah school might well have been a source of the “imperial production of knowledge.” The Ezekiel school might well have been a source of research supporting “persistent resistance.”

Conclusion

In view of archaeological evidence coming from the site of ancient Gath showing that David could not have conquered the Philistines, the suggestion of Dr. Fleming that Judean scribes of the 7th century BCE reworked the story of Israel in order to connect it to a separate Judean entity, and the analysis of Dr. Wright which indicates that David began as an independent Judean warlord in no way associated with the court of “King” Saul, I therefore conclude that the primary influences on the development of King David were Philistine. In particular, I would like to suggest that a fruitful area of future study would assess the contributions made to Jewish civilization by virtue of its close association with the highly urbanized civilization of Philistia, in addition to the rich urban environment of Babylon. It may well be that the explanation of the unique vitality and sophistication of the Judean culture grounded in the Bible owes much to resisting the influence of both the Babylonians and the Philistines.⁶⁹

As Richard Chidester teaches:

“[W]e can engage the challenge of combining critical reflection on our past, which sometimes seems to make knowing anything almost impossible, with creative possibilities for working through enduring categories in the study of

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The list of “bad” influences in Ezekiel does not include the Philistines (Ezekiel 23:1-34), but perhaps they could be included as elements of the Egyptian influence.

religion to produce new knowledge.”⁷⁰

But, to fully realize the potential of this new knowledge, it is necessary to make analogies to the world that we know today, since it is the only experiential reality. A fruitful analogy is to compare the situation of ancient Judah to that of post colonial Latin American.

“Postcolonial Latin Americanism conceives of itself as a form of antiglobal epistemic practice geared toward the articulation or the production of difference through the expression of an always irreducible if shifting distance from the global. . . . Latin Americanist reflection becomes an instance of antiglobal theory, insofar as it opposes the imperial formation of knowledge (and its neoimperial variations) that has accompanied the move of capital toward universal subsumption in globalization.”⁷¹

The irresistible drive to maintain uniqueness is universal. One can scarcely imagine the emotional trauma experienced by residents of Judah in the 10th century BCE as their traditional life world as self directed agriculturalists was commandeered and devoted to the requirements of a bureaucratic royal state. While Jurgen Habermas devoted his career to the study of the reification (thingness) effects of modern capitalism, his observations have resonance in the ancient world. Then, as now, it is painful to experience the destruction of a life-world as a result of the conversion of traditional ways of life to accommodate bureaucracy, a cash economy, taxation, and all sorts of royal prerogatives, not to mention the disturbing presence of a palace guard composed of alien Philistines, along with hegemonic knowledge production in the service of an ideology dedicated to the creation and maintenance of empire all of which conduce to create pathological side effects of alienation, anomie and the unsettling of collective identities, which are the results of the reification process.⁷²

I contend that it was the constant irritation of the struggle to maintain uniqueness in the face of a universalizing imperial epistemology begun by David that account for the unique richness of the heritage of Judah.

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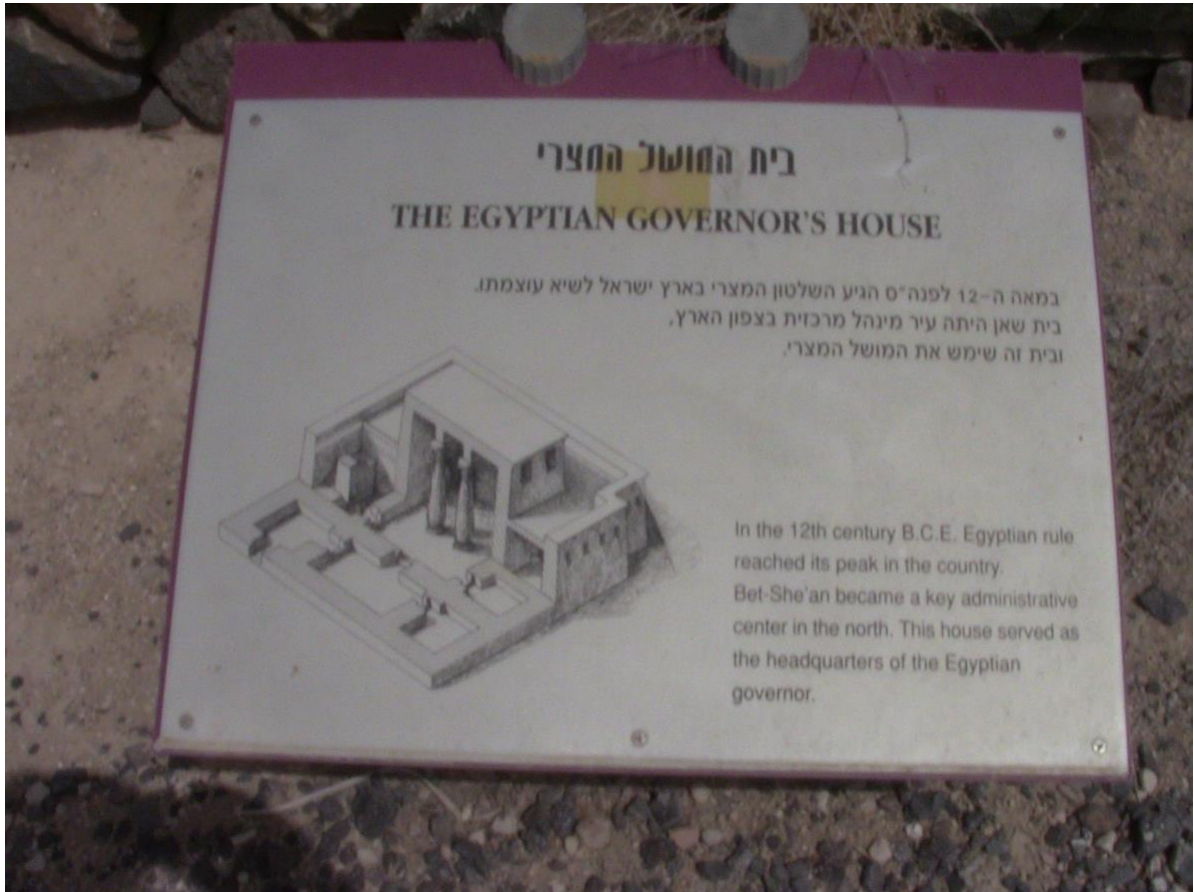
Chidester, *Empire* at 311 et seq.

71

Moreiras, Alberto. *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies*. Duke University Press (2001)

72 Habermas, Juergen, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2: A. trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1987. p. 321

Illustrations



Parks Department Plaque at Bet She'an National Park, Israel, showing an Egyptian Governor's Mansion and Egyptian Hegemony in the Jezreel Valley into the 12th century BCE..



The author at Bet She'an National Park, Israel

The author with Israel Finkelstein at the Tell Megiddo Archaeological Site



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Appendix 1

Debates over the Low versus High Chronology

Dr. Finkelstein explains the reasoning behind the "low chronology" as follows:

"The destruction layer of the Omride compound at Jezreel - which dates to the mid-ninth century yielded a pottery assemblage identical to the one dated at nearby Megiddo to the tenth century. ... Unique mason marks found on ashlar blocks in the palace of the Kings of Israel at Samaria (the capital of the Northern Kingdom), which was built in the first half of the ninth century BC, are identical to mason's marks found on ashlar blocks of one of the palaces at Megiddo, which was [previously] dated to the tenth century. ... To resolve these difficulties, one of us proposed lowering the date of strata that had been dated to the eleventh century to the tenth century, accordingly down-dating the strata affiliated with the time of Solomon in the mid tenth century BC to the first half of the ninth century BC (Finkelstein 1996). This "Low Chronology" proposal has become the main bone of contention in the research of Iron Age archaeology and history, with scholars either supporting (e.g. Kauf 2000; Niemann 200; Fantalkin 2001) or rejecting it (Mazar 1997; Ben-Tor 2000). But without new data, the debate has reached a stalemate. Beyond circumstantial consideration (or a stunning find in the future) the method left for resolving this matter is radiocarbon dating." (Finkelstein 2003)

(Finkelstein 2003, p 773)

But, in addition to the the logic of related archaeological finds in the Jezreel Valley and northern Israelite hill country, Dr. Finkelstein is a tireless advocate for a late date of arrival for Philistine culture. (Finkelstein 1995). The importance of the date of the arrival of the Philistine culture, according to Dr. Finkelstein is as follows:

The date of the settlement of the Philistines in the southern coastal plain of Canaan is the key to the chronology of the entire eastern Mediterranean Region at the end of the second millennium B.C.E. It is related to the most important historical text for the Late Bronze/Iron Age transition - the Medinet Habu inscription and reliefs, which describe the wars of Ramses III against the Sea Peoples in his 8th year. It thus connects the chronology of Egypt with the archaeology of the Levant, Cyprus and Anatolia. In fact, it is one of the only events in the entire chronological sequence of the Bronze and Iron Ages, that provide a direct link between text and archaeology. At the same time, it manifests the uneasy relationship between the two; the debate over the date of the settlement of the Philistines is a revealing case study for the tyranny of

an historical paradigm over archaeological finds.

(Finkelstein 1995, p. 213)

To be specific, Dr. Finkelstein advocated a 10th century date for the final Phase of Philistine conquest, as follows:

The Philistine Bichrome Stage, which lasted a century or slightly longer, ended with yet another significant change, when a number of sites were destroyed by fire - Tel Miqne Stratum IV, Tel Ashdod Stratum XI, Tel Mor Stratum 3 and possibly also Tell Jemmeh and Tell e1-Farrah in the south, and Tell el-Jarish in the north. These destructions, which apparently date to the 10th century B.C.E., reflect either the struggle between the Philistines and the rising power of the highlands people, or the renewed Egyptian interest in southern Palestine (e.g. Kitchen 1986:432-447).

(Finkelstein 1995, p. 232)

It can, therefore, be seen that from the beginning the low chronology was built upon an interpretation of evidence relating to the migration of an alien people into the southern Levant. Noll's three elements might be satisfied by evidence of population and urbanization attributable to Philistine culture, monument building after the arrival of the Philistines, and international trade in pottery (bi-chrome?), weapons, etc.

In contrast, Dr. Yosef Garfinkel of Hebrew University of Jerusalem pursued archaeological evidence supporting the "High Chronology" at Khirbet Qeiyafa from 2008 through 2013 (Garfinkel, 2013, p.44; 2018, pp. 56, 100) and at Tell Lachish from 2014 through 2017 (Garfinkel, 2019, p. 709; 2021, p. 442-444)

Garfinkel explains his objection to the low chronology as follows:

The new radiometric results obtained from Khirbet Qeiyafa clearly indicate that the transition from Iron Age I to II, in at least one case, took place at the very end of the eleventh or early tenth century BCE, thereby providing clear evidence against the low chronology. In Section 8.1 we described some methodological problems of dating projects that involve many sites. The new data from Khirbet Qeiyafa emphasize two of these aspects in relation to the current controversy over the Iron Age, and specifically to the low chronology.

1. Geography. The samples of the Iron Age IIA were taken mainly from sites in the Kingdom of Israel: Megiddo, Rehov, Dor, Tell el-Hammah and Hazor, while

almost no samples were taken from early Iron Age IIA sites in Judah and the south. This is probably due to the fact that most current large-scale archaeological excavations are in northern regions of Israel. No radiometric dating has been carried out for the various strata at Arad or Beersheba or the earlier phases of Stratum 3 at Beth-Shemesh. One sample from Lachish V gave an uncalibrated date of 2775±55 BP or 976–838 BCE after calibration; this is too broad a range to be meaningful, since it fits either chronology (Finkelstein and Piasezky 2010b; Carmi and Ussishkin 2004). Another case is that of Atar Haroa (Boaretto, Finkelstein and Shahack-Gross 2010), a site located in the extreme south whose pottery assemblage may be strongly affected by its geographical location. The samples from Apeh X–8 yielded very low dates, which in most models were considered outliers or misfits (Sharon et al. 2007; Finkelstein and Piasezky 2010b). Other samples from southern sites are either from the early Iron Age I (apart from Tell Qasile X) or from the late Iron Age IIA (Beth-Shemesh 3, Tel Zayit, Tell el-Safi).

2. Stratigraphy. The samples for radiometric dating came from later Iron Age IIA strata rather than the very first stage of the period. At Megiddo most of the samples come from Stratum VA–IVB and, although Finkelstein and Fantalkin (2012:41, n. 2) suggest that some unpublished data from Stratum VB fit the low chronology, the only published date from this stratum is actually in line with the dates from Khirbet Qeiyafa (Gilboa, Sharon and Boaretto 2013). It is a clear methodological error to assume the date of the beginning of a period by dating its later stages (for additional problems, see Kletter 2004).

(Garfinkel 2015, Debating Khibet Qeiyafa, p. 155-56)

In response, Dr. Finkelstein asserts a methodological error in Dr. Garfinkel's model. It is not appropriate to adhere to the “Qeiyafa alone” concept (Garfinkel et al. 2012:362). A “Qeiyafa in context” approach should be followed instead. Dr. Finkelstein responds as follows:

Our model for the Shephelah puts the transition from the Qeiyafa phase to the early Iron IIA in 997–904 BCE (68%), taking a broader view at this transition, beyond this region, we note that:

- 1. Our general model for the southern Levant puts this transition in 960–900 BCE (68%, Finkelstein and Piasezky 2010).*
- 2. Our work on 14C dates from late Iron I destruction layers in the north (Finkelstein and Piasezky 2009), as well as the stratigraphic evidence from Megiddo (yet unpublished) and other sites (Yoqneam XVI, Kinneret IV, Rehov D-3 – Arie 2011:367, 372, 374, 389) show that the end of the late Iron I was a protracted process that continued into the middle to second half of the 10th century (Finkelstein and Piasezky 2009:266–7). In other words, the end of Megiddo VIA (e.g. Boaretto 2006; Gilboa et al. 2013; Toffolo et al. 2014) cannot be considered as the close of the late Iron I pottery repertoire.*
- 3. Our recent detailed model for 10 well-separated and well-dated Late*

Bronze II to late Iron IIA layers at Megiddo (Toffolo et al. 2014) puts the Iron I/IIA transition at 985–935 BCE (68%)

(Finkelstein (2015) Radiocarbon Dating Khirbet Qeiyafa, p. 901-02)

After issuance of a new test result relating to olive pits in a jar, Dr. Finkelstein appended an additional comment based on the incorporation of the new data and reached the same results as before: Khirbet Qeiyafa dates to the first half of the tenth century. (Id. at 905)

Appendix 2

Debate Regarding Radiocarbon Reports

Recent radiocarbon reports appear to contradict the “Low Chronology” at least so far as the Shephelah south of Megiddo is concerned.

The lead scientist at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, Israel, seems to be Elisabetta Boaretto. At least, her name often comes first in articles reporting on the Iron Age test results. (See e.g. Boaretto 2019). Here are some of the interpretations advanced by under the authority of the Weizmann Institute:

"If so, the transition date of Megiddo is about 50–100 yr after Qubur el-Walaydah and Tell es-Safi/Gath." . . . "Meanwhile, we stand by our conclusions that the Philistine material culture at Tell es-Safi/Gath and Qubur el-Walaydah appeared prior to the appearance of analogous materials at Megiddo. We strongly believe that the processes involved in the appearance, development and spread of the Philistine culture were of a complex and drawn out nature (e.g. Maeir and Hitchcock 2017), and cannot be assumed to be related solely to specific and short term historical events (such as a confrontation between Rameses III and the Sea Peoples as supposedly reflected in the Medinet Habu Temple reliefs)."

(Boaretto, 2018, p. 9)

The Weizmann Institute scientists seem fascinated by the arrival time of the Philistine culture in the southern Levant. But, these results seem to refute the “low chronology” concept pioneered by Professor Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University. Dr. Finkelstein rejects the findings that the Iron Age I transition date in the south is significantly earlier than the transition date in the north, specifically at Megiddo, where Dr. Finkelstein has been the director of archaeological activities for over a two decades.

The above quotation was in reaction to the following criticism posed by Dr. Finkelstein:

To sum up my attitude to the Tell es-Safi samples (and model), the contexts described by the authors do not fit any of the requirements listed in the Methodology section above. The stratigraphy is problematic at best, with phases missing; many (most?) of the samples do not come from clean, in situ original contexts; exposure is insufficient and the pottery (collection of sherds)

does not allow for the establishing of a reliable sequence of ceramic phases. And above all this looms another tantalizing question: the pivotal period in the article - when according to the authors Philistine material culture appeared (their Early Iron I, LB III here) - is thus far missing at Tell es-Safi all together (in other words, for the time being its existence comes from a theoretical construct);⁸ is it a good idea, then, to try date such an elusive period only statistically?

(Finkelstein 2016, p. 280)

Perhaps the real problem is “Megiddo Envy”. There is no site in Israel at which the conditions are better for precise archaeology than Megiddo. With the possible exception of Khirbet Qeiyafa, no other site can offer “double ended sealing” of finds in well defined destruction layer stratigraphy and floors. This concern is at the core of the complaint of Avraham Faust:

In our original article we pointed out that there is an inherent bias in the way the archaeological record is created. We demonstrated that at Tel ‘Eton we were able to move forward and to date construction of the building, and therefore called for more attention to be given to earlier, more difficult to identify phases in a structure’s (and stratum’s) life. Instead of moving forward and developing such methods, Finkelstein appears to be discouraging such attempts.

Avoiding dating almost all contexts that reflect the ‘birth’ and ‘life’ of a building, and focusing only on its ‘death’, just reinforces the existing bias toward later events. Such a procedure will therefore be in favour of the low chronology, which was conceived based on a similarly biased sample, while keeping long periods in the dark.

Finkelstein’s claim that we should focus only on ‘groups’ of samples from above the floors (mostly destruction contexts) is akin to someone who lost a coin in a dark alley, but not only does this person looking for it in the main street under the bright streetlamp, but he reproaches others from going into the dark alley in an attempt to help him find his lost coin, in case they will spoil their eyes.

Studying long periods of occupation is tricky and difficult and will put considerable strains on our eyes. But we have no option but going into these alleys—even if there is a ‘danger’ that the light shed will cast more shadows on the low chronology.

(Faust 2021, p. 327-28)

This is kind of tantamount to saying, “Hey, Finkelstein, give us a break. We're trying to make a living too.” Since Finkelstein won't, then Boaretto steps in to help out with career planning.

Appendix 3

Excursus

Dr. Finkelstein had good reason to believe that monumental architecture at Tel Megiddo was contemporaneous with several 9th century (BCE) sites north of the 32nd parallel (32 degrees North latitude, or north from present day Nablus). The far reaching conclusions that Dr. Finkelstein reached after decades of excavation and analysis of ancient sites effectively replaced pre-existing consensus assigning a major role to King Solomon as builder of enormous fortress cities north of the 32nd parallel. The "low chronology" time frame means that Solomon was replaced by Kings Omri and Ahab of the Israelite north.

As one might expect, this change was not welcomed by many bible students. Dr. Finkelstein was branded a "minimalist" as to the presence of a Davidic dynasty active in the 10th century BCE, a charge which he denied - yet it stuck.

Dr. Finkelstein is a man who holds arguably the highest credentials in the archaeological community of the Ancient Near East (ANE). His honors and accomplishments are legion. There is probably no academic in his field that can equal his prestige and credibility. However, the recent tidal wave of radiocarbon reports contradicting his position has caught him somewhat off guard. He has responded with numerous appeals to the scientific community in hopes of proving that there were mistakes in methodology, data collection, sampling, or in assigning support to conclusions based on the data analyzed.

I have worked under both of the primary contestants and know them well. Working during the opening days/weeks of the "Fourth Expedition to Lachish" under the supervision of Dr. Garfinkel, my first training in Near Eastern archaeology was obtained. (My previous experience was with Mayan ruins in Orange Walk, Belize, and with the U.S. Parks Department at the Pea Ridge Civil War battle site.)

My understanding of the purpose of Dr. Garfinkel's attention to Lachish was the reasonable hope of finding evidence that King David or King Solomon were responsible for 10th century BCE fortifications there, and that such fortifications were dedicated to the control of the fertile fields of the Shephelah, where enough surplus grain could be grown to feed an army. As I will show, that hope has since been abandoned.

Working under the supervision of Dr. Finkelstein at Megiddo, I was able to develop an understanding of the differences between the archaeology of Lachish and Megiddo. I worked beside a young franco-phile woman from the Weizmann Institute named Forget who was gathering samples to be used in radiocarbon testing in 2014. Some of those samples were involved in the recent radiocarbon results.

It may be clear after my discussion of the various recent radiocarbon reports that Philistine culture spread widely during the 11th century in the latitudes below the 32th parallel. While the recent radiocarbon results appear to contradict the "low chronology," at the same time they might be said to create a "super high chronology" which no one knows quite what to do with. The time seems ripe for imagining a very different story of the Southern Levant.

Imagining a different story, superseding the old story, and documenting the elements of such a story present a tall order fraught with risk of rebuke, ridicule, or scorn. However, perhaps one can be forgiven for trying anyway, in the spirit of a Yeshiva debate.

First of all, there is now much more time available in the chronology at the front end of the story of the royal houses of Judah. At least three highly credible sources state that King Saul presided over the region around Bethel for no less than forty years - the same length of time assigned to each of David and Solomon, but fifteen years shorter than the 55 years assigned to King Manasseh in the late 7th century. Contrary to popular belief, King Saul clearly served for a long and full kingship, which was only ended as he and his three loyal military age sons fought hand to hand combat with an enemy. Josephus considers Saul a great hero who never stopped fighting the Philistines for over twenty (40?) years (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 14, Paragraph 9). The Apostle Paul, a Pharisee of the 1st Century CE, cites Saul's 40 years as king, no doubt in reliance upon a tradition known to Pharisees of the day. (Acts 13:21) And many versions of the Hebrew Scriptures certify his 40 year kingship. (1 Samuel 13:1, CEB, NASB, NET, NIV). And, with four adult sons, it is likely Saul died at an advanced age, possibly the age of 72. The super-high chronology makes room for a 40 year reign by Saul. Clearly, if anyone was deprived of a chance to rule, it was the crown prince, Jonathan, not Saul. Since Jonathan was of the same generation as David, this should not be hard to accept.

It is well known that many scholars assert that much of the material in the books of Samuel is devoted to providing exculpatory arguments to the effect that David wouldn't even think of undermining King Saul, much less David's beloved friend Jonathan. To an extent, the repetition of such exculpatory material brings to mind a certain well known Shakespearean phrase.

How then is one to propose a new vision of the interaction between the low country Philistines and the people of the hills while making good use of scripture? Is there a rubric for reification of certain portions of scripture over others?

I propose that, for the purposes of my argument, a distinction be made between "self serving" material (that material which puts David in the best possible light) and "admissions against interest" (places in the scripture where derogatory or embarrassing information leaks through the happy talk). I propose that, for the sake of this inquiry, priority be given to those portions of scripture that appear to admit things that the authors might have preferred to omit. Because, no one wants to admit negative facts about their hero unless the information is so well known that it is useless to ignore it - in other words: admissions against interest.

I will, therefor, highlight scripture that aligns King David with the Philistines. This includes not only the possibility that David grew up near a Philistine barracks (2 Samuel 23), the fact that scripture admits that David was made a member of the Philistine nobility (like an English Duke?) by virtue of a land grant, but also the fact that David, throughout his reign, surrounded himself with a body guard composed almost entirely of Philistine warriors. (2 Samuel 8:18; 15:18). While the traditional story elides these facts by assuming that the Philistine city of Gath had been subdued by David, the facts are quite to the contrary. Gath was ten times bigger than Jerusalem throughout the 10th and 9th centuries until it was destroyed by Arameans under the command of Hazael of Damascus. In fact, there is no reason to believe that David was ever independent of the ruler of Philistine Gath. I suggest, in accordance with Professor Marvin A Sweeney, that at the time David took control of Calebite Hebron and Jebusite Jerusalem he was a still a "Philistine vassal" in good standing. (Sweeney 2012, pp. 220-24). Surely being a Philistine Duke had its privileges.

An entirely different picture will emerge regarding the significance of Dr. Garfinkel's findings at Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet el Rai. The Elah Valley (which takes a turn toward the Southeast after Socoh), was a virtual invasion highway to Hebron, beginning on the coast at Philistine Ashdod, continuing past Philistine Gath, past Khirbet Qeiyafa, with geology continuing past Tell ej-Judeideh (Tel Goded), and ending, perhaps, at the home of Calebite headman, Nabal, and his wife, Abigail.

According to scripture, David bribed the other headmen of Calebite Hebron, but if Nabal is any example, threats and a protection racket might well have been the ultimate resort. And, just maybe, King Saul actually died defending the heights at Tell ej-Judeideh (Tel Goded) near the town of Keilah (loyal to Saul, 1 Sam 23) and the gates of Hebron. Abandoned by the commander-in-chief of his army, the

subsequently healthy and vigorous Abner, perhaps there is a parallel to the way Uriah died a few years later.

The archaeology of Tell ej-Judeideh includes a record of a destruction that may have occurred in the 10th century. (Gibson 1994, p. 230-31) The idea of King Saul defending this place against a Philistine warlord is sheer speculation, of course. But, assuming that David was still considered a Philistine warlord at the time he occupied Hebron (Sweeney 2012, p. 221), speculation concerning a battle at ej-Judeideh is speculation consistent with the Biblical account of David's conflict with the nearby inhabitants of Kei'lah. (1 Sa 23:5, 8-13). Perhaps the citizens of Keilah had accepted the protection racket proposed by David to their kinsman, Nabal, but sought to escape that racket as soon as Saul could free them from it. Kei'lah, was a fortified city seven miles Northwest of Hebron at the end of the Eshcol Valley, which is connect to the Elah Valley, which passes Gath and ends up at the coast at Ashdod. Kei'lah had a history going back to the Amarna period of being associated with Jebusite Jerusalem. (Wright 2014, p. 55) Thus, Kei'lah, had a proud and ancient heritage and could also be considered a gateway to Hebron and the possible alternative site of a last stand by King Saul against a Philistine force led by David.

In the civil war with Saul's son Ish-Bosheth, David is still a "Philistine vassal." (Sweeney 2012, p. 224) From Hebron, David could set his sights on Jebusite Jerusalem with the initial acquiescence of the King of Gath, acquiescence which would be regretted as soon as it became known that David was aiming to be promoted from vassal governor to king. (2 Samuel 5:17) One may well expect that David's entry into Jerusalem without seeming to fire a shot (or sling stone) was an inside job, or at least acquiesced in by the Jebusite elite (similar to the peaceful entry of Persian Cyrus into Babylon by way of a water gate). It is reasonable to assume that no Philistine force starting from Gath had ever succeeded in surmounting the many geological obstacles between Gath and Jerusalem.

A force coming from Hebron to lay siege to Jerusalem would constitute a serious and unprecedented threat. Such an attacking force would not have been exhausted by a long and strenuous march through rough terrain while being harrassed and ambushed by defenders hiding in inaccessible places. An army marching from Hebron would be fresh and unimpaired. The Jebusite elders must have been terrified. A surrender would have been well advised. Reflecting a peaceful resolution, the scriptures tell us that David insisted that Jebusites had the same citizenship rights as Judeans. It may even be that Bathsheba, the eventual Queen mother, was a Jebusite. (Feinman 2017, p. 222)

Perhaps it is true that the King of Gath later felt that David's wings could use a trimming. Perhaps it is true that a force from Gath drove up the Rephaim Valley

towards Jerusalem after David had been allowed a great deal of latitude in seizing Jerusalem. (2 Samuel 5:17) Philistine Nobility with struggles over its pecking order might experience internal conflicts, jealousy, and outright civil war. (Maeir 2017b, p. 250) doesn't make David any less of a Philistine nobleman. Why should David give up his status as a Philistine Duke? Compare disputes among the Crusaders in 1,000 CE. The *longue durée* is a potent concept.

Having traveled the road up the Rephaim Valley (more like a canyon or ravine), I can personally testify that it would be a very difficult invasion route - much more difficult than the Elah Valley route to Hebron. In 66 CE, an entire westbound Roman legion was ambushed and massacred in a similar defile. Yet, like the ultimate situation in 70 CE, winning an ambush or skirmish in a defile does not constitute winning a war. As I will document, only Aramean King Hazael was able to overcome the power of Gath long after David and Solomon had passed from the scene. While bringing siege equipment up a defile is difficult, it is equally difficult to bring siege equipment down a defile. Hazael did not attack out of a defile. He brought his forces across flat land to Gath, as David would later bring forces across a plateau from Hebron to lay siege to Jerusalem.

This brings me back to King Saul, who ruled 40 years and died at the age of 72 in hand to hand combat beside his loyal sons, including Crown Prince Jonathan. At his death, Saul was still the king of Benjamin and beyond. Rather than winning territory by kissing the hand of the king of Gath, Saul would have attempted to expand his territory by probing Philistine defenses. Thus, the short lived fortresses at Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet el-Rai might well have reflected efforts by King Saul to push back the territory of Philistine Gath. Similar small forts were known to have been built by Canaanites in efforts to stop the Philistines. Wouldn't it be ironic if David was the Philistine Nobleman responsible for bring a Philistine force against the two forts established by Saul and destroying them before continuing on to invest Calebite Hebron?

Or, perhaps Saul died defending Khirbet Qeiyafa.

Or, perhaps, in light of the extended time period over which conflicts between Philistia and the still existing 15th century Egyptian government center at Jebusite Jerusalem might have played out, perhaps Khirbet Qeiyafa was built by Jebusites attempting to defend against Philistines. Perhaps the reason Khirbet Qeiyafa was abandoned soon after being built had something to do with a Philistine Warlord, perhaps David, Duke of Ziklag, outflanking the Jebusite defenses and capturing Jerusalem. In that event, there would certainly be no further need of a fortress protecting the Elah Valley from Gath, since the hegemony of Gath now extended all the way to Jerusalem by virtue of the Jebusite surrender to the Duke of Ziklag. Such

a scenario might explain the otherwise puzzling failure of later scribes to preserve any memory of Khirbet Qeiyafa. (Pioske 2015, p. 94)

In any case, the fall of Jerusalem was the inevitable result of the fall of Hebron. Only from Hebron could an army avoid the perils of the narrow valleys between the Shephelah and Jerusalem. The route from Hebron has no such natural defensive points. Once Hebron was incorporated into the Philistine system, only a few years were needed to prepare an expedition against Jerusalem.

But, what was going on above the 32nd parallel? Pharaoh Shoshonq seemed to believe that there was trouble brewing in the Jezreel Valley. According to his records, he passed through the Southern Levant without encountering any opposition and without finding it necessary to be rude to anyone. It is reasonable to assume that he was on his way north after collecting tribute and auxiliary forces along the way, all according to pre-existing treaties and alliances. It will be seen that Gath was still a major power at the time of Sheshonq's tour, yet Gath did not impede Shoshonq's collection tour - nor did Jerusalem. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Egypt had some sort of alliance with the Philistines of Gath. It will be remembered that Babylon found it advisable to completely destroy Ashdod at the end of the 6th century BCE due to the persistent loyalty of Ashdod to Egypt. And, it is interesting to reflect on the fact that Ashdod was the seaport terminus of the Elah Valley leading to Gath and, ultimately, Hebron.

If Egypt and Philistia were aligned as against local and Mesopotamian rivals, one might assume that Philistia cooperated with Egypt in the maintenance and security of the Via Maris. As a good Philistine Warlord, David might well have been called upon from time to time to suppress bandits (*habiru*) along the Via Maris. It is not too much to expect that patrols north up the Via Maris might begin in Aphek, continue past Megiddo, and end up in the Jezreel Valley near Beit She'an, the site of an Egyptian Governor's Mansion as late as 1130 BCE. Perhaps this is where David met his Jezreel wife, who later joined him in his fiefdom at Ziklag.

An objection to these speculations might arise out of the record of King Saul's defense of the Golan Heights, near the site of the earlier battle won by Gideon. Current scholarship suggests that the writ of King Saul did not extend that far north, and that some other polity centered at Shechem (Aramean?) had control of the hill country to the north.

In fact, it makes no sense that a Philistine force, initially joined by David, who was thereby giving aid and comfort to the enemy, would muster at Aphek. Assuming such a force could reach the heights of Mount Gilboa, it must have accessed the Jezreel

Valley by way of Megiddo, which would be a more logical point of muster.

Perhaps a dim memory of a Labayu type king at Shechem is preserved in the account of Samuel. But, recent scholarship seems to confine King Saul's activities to the vicinity of Benjamin. (Sergi 2017) In any event, one must wonder why King Saul would venture so far to the north while leaving his backdoor open knowing David and/or the Philistines threaten to take Hebron. This mystery might best be resolved by accepting the fact that the defender of Hebron never went near Mt. Gilboa in the far north. If the Mt. Gilboa story was invented, perhaps it is primary meant to explain why King Saul's body was never found, or that his burial site was unknown. Perhaps the whole point of the story is that King Saul's body was supposed to have been burned. If an unidentified Jebusite was the actual protagonist of this drama (in place of a fictional King Saul) then the story teller would be a pains to divert attention from any such suspicion. It seems odd that Jebusite Jerusalem had been there since the time of the Amarna Letters - struggling to resist the habiru and Philistines all that time - yet, according to the Biblical story teller, Jebusites are invisible. I guess they kept to themselves a lot.

If a Labayu king at Shechem was the ancestor of later Kings Omri and Ahab, how then was it that there was ever an assumption that the people of Shechem were related to Judahites? A possible answer might be found in the work of Yale Professor James C. Scott in light of the scholarship of Dr. Sharon Zuckerman, co-director at the archaeological excavation of Hazor, far to the north of Shechem. (Scott 2009; Zuckerman 2010)

Yale Professor J.C.Scott carried out extensive research in an analogous *longue durée* culture inhabiting the highland massif of South East Asia. His study convinced him that no one of an entrepreneurial frame of mind would stay subject to "Valley Empires" when escape to nearby highlands was an option. The highlands offer a healthy, diverse diet not dependent upon a mono-cultured cash crop conforming to the convenient taxation by the empire. And, in the highlands, one is not only free of taxation, but also free of forced labor and conscription. Also, the heights have the advantage of being very difficult to invade due to the terrain.

Sharon Zuckerman (of blessed memory), for her part, believed that the late bronze age collapse resulted in popular rebellion at sites such as Hazor (a heavily populated bronze age site) followed by dispersion of the former inhabitants into the hill country. According to her theory, hill country people became amalgamated into a distinct ethnicity over against those who remained under the control of the valley kingdoms.

Dr. Scott has documented that such processes do result in ethnic differentiation of hill country versus valley. While those who abide in the hills may be maligned and regarded as less civilized, it is the valley people who lack the courage, strength, and wit to escape oppression. Such were the ethnicity now known as the Judeans.