

Dominic Rubin: Jewish continuity in the Body of the Messiah.

In this paper, I would like to examine what the Russian experience can tell us about the question of Jewish continuity in the body of the Messiah. I want to consider the self-perception and perception of each other of Jews, Russian Orthodox and Jewish Christians in the period starting roughly from 1795 and continuing to our own day. I will examine philosophical and theological writings of various parties, and will draw on other periods to provide an interpretation of this material. I should state right away that the further my investigations go, the more I am convinced that an institutional, corporate Jewish Christianity is impossible. I have stated this to Messianic Jewish acquaintances before, and it didn't hinder a thoroughly amicable relationship, but I do feel a bit of a party-pooper stating it so publicly and so instantaneously, here! However, in stating this thesis I always await contradiction and re-education: my conclusions are based on empirical factors, and are not *a priori*, so I can still be reformed.

I read Mark's paper, and was excited to see references to Michael Wyschogrod and Franz Rosenzweig, two thinkers I have also grappled with. I set down some of my thoughts in my book *Holy Russia, Sacred Israel*, which is an earlier examination of the topic I am now presenting. Specifically, I look there at a review written in 1927 by one of Russia's greatest philosophers, Semyon Frank, of Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*. Frank was a Jew who converted to Russian Orthodoxy in 1913 – the year of the Beilis trial, Europe's last blood libel, which was a national scandal in Russia at the time. His own view of the identity of a converted Jew was a tragic one: he saw it as a stark choice between the Messiah of Israel and the people of Israel with its Judaic faith. One could not have one's cake and eat it. I pretty much agree with him, though being somewhat less disciplined I believe one can nibble away at the cake when no one is looking. Perhaps that's why I'm here. However, he's right: if you bite off too much, not only will you have no cake, but you may feel rather unwell afterwards too. That explains why his review of Rosenzweig is pretty unsympathetic. However, when I re-read Rosenzweig, what struck me is how similar the goals of the German-Jewish Renaissance were to those of the contemporary Russian Silver Age philosophical and theological renaissance: both were searching for concrete identity, community, a way to make tradition speak to modernity, a way to approach Judaism (for the Germans) and Christianity (for the Russians) not – as Mark writes in his paper “in the manner of Maimonides...as a philosophy or religion, [but] rather...as a sanctified ethnicity.” A buzz word in Russian thought at this time was the notion of ‘sacred materialism’, which included what Mark called ‘sanctified ethnicity’.

This leads me straight to the heart of our topic, as I am approaching it: Fr. Sergei Bulgakov and his writings on Jewry and Jewish Christianity. It is maybe providential that I should be sharing these thoughts with you in Paris, because Bulgakov's main essays on Jews were written in 1941 in this city when it was under occupation by the Nazis. Indeed, his obituary for Lev Shestov can be considered part of his Jewish writings: the latter was a Russian-Jewish philosopher whose work for many, rightly or wrongly, embodied a sort of Jewish-Christian worldview. He died here in 1938, and Bulgakov wrote sorrowfully and admiringly of his former friend and colleague, regretting that though he had drawn so close to Christ, his Ahasueric soul had nonetheless not made the final step to faith. Nonetheless, shortly before his death Shestov had written to Bulgakov asking to discuss the question of the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments. Bulgakov scrupulously avoided trying to press the Christian interpretation on him – as he wrote in 1941, “it is forbidden to missionize to Jews” due to Christianity's long history of anti-Semitism.

Again, reading Mark's paper, as well as other contemporary Messianic writings, I realized that already 60 years ago, Bulgakov was an advocate of 'post-missionary Messianic Judaism' - at least in the sense that he yearned for a Hebrew Christianity which would be the free and spontaneous creation of Jewish Christians, and utterly without outside pressure. It all had to come from within, driven by the voice of Christ speaking in the sacred blood of the descendants of the prophets and the blood-relatives of the Mother of God.

This convergence between contemporary Messianic Judaism and Fr Sergei sounds too good to be true – and indeed it is, for several reasons. Firstly, he had had his own anti-Semitic temptations in his last years in Russia. His own writings are scattered with rather sharp denunciations of 'Yids', whom in several places he accuses of trying to destroy Holy Russia. Such anti-Semitism is an endemic problem of Russian-Christian thought, even those who are mostly sympathetic to Jews. Secondly, Bulgakov's mysticism rather got the better of him here, and I'll take a bit of time to explain what I mean.

He believed that God was both transcendent and immanent, and that the divine immanence was manifested in the physical world. He was firmly against the Augustinian dichotomy between carnal Jews and spiritual Christians, adherents of the fleshly letter and adherents of the spiritual, allegorical meaning of the Bible. Like Soloviev, he emphasized time and again that Christ is God incarnate, so that Christianity is the *carnal* religion per excellence. This carnality can be seen in the sanctification of matter in all the Church's rites and sacraments: the transformation of water when it is blessed, the transformation of wood and pigment into a conduit for sanctity in the icon-board, not to mention the folk-customs of Orthodoxy such as the different fruits, pies and so on which are consumed at different festivals. Christ himself is the meeting-place of the divine immanence and transcendence, and this immanence can be seen in the Old Testament genealogies, which recount how the whole physical earthly existence of Israel, God's beloved nation, flowed into the veins of the God-man. Christ the Jew is thus the source and receptacle of sacred Jewish blood, and Bulgakov was quite clear that those Jews who came after Christ, even those who rejected him as Messiah, were still linked to him by blood.

Bulgakov used his theory of sacred blood to argue against Nazi racism in 1941: their concept of blood, he argued, was a distortion of the Biblical conception of blood, and in a sense was a reaction against the neglect of the meaning of matter in Western Christianity. This was all part of the wider Russian polemic, or more kindly, engagement with Western Christianity, and in this case it held that abstract and hyper-spiritualized Protestants and Catholics had neglected the importance of matter, physicality and sacred nationhood in Christian life - Protestants, because they prioritized the individual and the small brotherhood which claimed no relationship to history or nation, and Catholics, because they subsumed national individuality under the uniform template of Latin quasi-universalism. Now's not the time to go into the rights and wrongs of this sweeping claim, but what Bulgakov was saying as regards Nazism and Jewry was that Nazism had gone in the other direction: the real Biblical meaning of blood was that it is the meeting place of immanence and transcendence, of spirit and matter, a physico-spiritual unity which is at the root of human personhood. Western Christians chose one element of this equation, spirit; the Nazis were now choosing blood. But for them blood, the blood of the nation or tribe, determined personality – whereas it should in fact be seen as embodying and giving important substance to the spirit.

So far, so good. But now we come to the flaw. Bulgakov was clear that Orthodoxy was a fusion of the blood of the Russian nation with the spirit of Christianity to produce an embodied local Russian Christianity moving in all its concreteness and particularity through space and time. Its Christian spirit owed much to the cosmopolitan, rootless, scattered Jews who were the disciples of Jesus – and who had spread Christianity throughout the world.

In many ways, wrote Bulgakov, in a deliberate reversal of Nazi libel against the Jews, the Church continues to be scattered, transnational, rootless and cosmopolitan like its Jewish founders. However, when Bulgakov expresses himself on what a *contemporary* Jewish Christianity could be like, he founders.

Bulgakov considers Christianity to be incomplete without its Jewish heart. He manifestly yearns for there to be a Jewish Christianity – for Christianity was preached first to the Jews. And he embraces a logic which is utterly impeccable, and which drives Messianic Judaism today, namely: he believes all individuals and nations are called to Christ; he believes that the Jewish people is still chosen and called to Christ first among nations *as* a nation, and must thus not assimilate out of existence; he believes that individual Jewish conversions lead to assimilation and loss of Jewish identity; *ergo*: the only solution to the Jewish question is for some form of collective Jewish Christianity.

Each of the premises in this chain of deduction were disputed by many Russian Christians at the time, and Bulgakov is pretty radical in this regard. Most people held, for example, that the Jews were not chosen any longer, must assimilate, or alternately convert and become Russian Orthodox with no Jewish accent, and some extreme anti-Semites held that the Jews were not called to Christ, that Christ was not a Jew and so forth. Bulgakov backs up his position with Biblical references, and they are convincing. However, despite all this goodwill, Biblical support and coherent logic, Bulgakov still has a big problem on his hands. Aside from being convinced that Jews have sacred blood, and wishing that there be a Jewish Christianity, he has absolutely no specific proposals for what rites, rituals, and observances might distinguish Jewish from gentile Christianity.

It can't be the Law, because in this respect he is traditional: the Law has been fulfilled by Christ's coming, it can have no real application for New Testament believers.

Of course, he is aware that ‘fulfilled’ does not mean replaced, but more ‘filled out’, in the sense of pleroma – but this too is not that helpful. Why? Because the pleroma of Old and New Testament traditions are already contained in the Orthodox Church: priesthood, blood sacrifice (albeit in a ‘bloodless’ way), choral singing, vestments, other elements of Temple worship and so on – are all sacred material elements of the Old Testament, all sacramentally Judaic. They have not been abolished as in austere Calvinism. Orthodoxy is already the fulfillment of ancient Judaism in the sense that more than rabbinic or Reform Judaism, she includes all those things that Protestants can only read about in their copies of Old Testament. In this sense, Jews are rather like Protestants: they may have sacred blood but they have lost the ancient sacred material ritualism.

It is in *this* sense that Bulgakov finds himself in a bind – or rather, to be honest, that I find myself in a bind when reading of Bulgakov’s proposed Jewish Christianity. For there can be no specifically Judaic rituals that Jewish Christians could adhere to that Russian Christians also do not adhere to. But still Bulgakov wants a Jewish Christianity. We thus are forced, in reading Bulgakov, into an unpleasant paradox: the only thing that could make Jewish Christians identifiable and separate is their sacred Christic blood. If we go further down this line, we come to bans on intermarriage. If we go still further, perhaps to bans on intercommunion between Jewish and gentile Christians, for who knows, shared love and fellowship may lead to intermarriage and a dissolution of sacred Judaic blood. And yet in other places, it is quite clear that Bulgakov could not countenance such a picture of Christianity, Jewish or otherwise. Bulgakov, I have concluded, is thus well-intentioned – but, as far as his writings on Jewish Christianity are concerned, utterly contradictory and inconsistent.

Everything I have said about institutional Jewish or Hebrew Christianity being contradictory relates so far to Bulgakov. Perhaps there are other ways, other theological approaches, which could make it work. What interested me about Mark’s paper is that through Wyschogrod and Rosenzweig he inherits many of the assumptions and hopes which also fed Bulgakov: all three thinkers are operating in the post-Kantian, post-Hegelian space where the search for concrete identity is being conducted. And when I read of the proposal for a strictly separate 2-church ecclesiology with bans on intermarriage between Jewish and gentile Christians, I understood that I had read Bulgakov correctly: this is indeed where ‘sanctified ethnicity’ or ‘sacred blood’ leads. Bulgakov, however, had to leave his proposals in the air, at the stage of wishful thinking, for luckily I would say, the deep and ancient tradition of the Orthodox church allowed him to understand that if he followed that logic any further, he would get into very serious problems. He went as far as he did, I would argue, because of the pain that his logic put before him, because of his deep sensitivity to the ‘mystery of Israel’ or the ‘Jewish question’ or the ‘Christian question’ as it was variously called by the Russian thinkers. The lost sheep of Israel were Christ’s original mandate; the people of Israel was and is God’s chosen people; and yet now, if a Jew converts to Christ, he is lost to his people. Ergo, ergo: there *must* a Jewish Christianity. Otherwise Christianity is not whole; worse: it does not make sense. Worse: it may even imply that the Jewish people, the un-superseded Israel is in fact the one and only true Israel – and the Church only a secondary, subordinate Israel for the gentiles. Which, by the way, is really Rosenzweig’s position – if one reads all his writings carefully.

I should say that the path Bulgakov trod, from yearning to high optimism to contradiction, spiced along the way with not altogether contradictory anti-Semitism that came from an impatience with Jews to act as

Russian Christians, and indeed Christians in general, wanted them to – is in fact a recapitulation of the path of the Russian Church and Jewish people on the large-scale. And this convinces me even further that Bulgakov's approach, while logically valid is empirically flawed. For in 1795, 1 ½ million Yiddish-speaking Jews suddenly entered the Russian empire, due to the partition of Poland. Jews had been banned from Russia before then and treated with great suspicion since the Judaizing heresy of the 15th century. Their sudden incorporation produced quite a surge of enthusiasm in some quarters. St Philaret, the great Moscow bishop, was among those who helped found institutes for the reception of Israelite Christians, and the emperor Alexander himself put his weight behind the endeavor to convert the new population, who it was envisaged would become a Jewish Christian collective. However, these mass conversion attempts failed and Alexander's son Nicholas I focused on other ways of assimilating Russian Jewry to Russian norms, some of them like the Cantonist conscription system violent and amounting to enforced enculturation and Christianization. By the end of the nineteenth century, once again, the idea that Jews as a non-Christian collective would forever remain outside Christendom was seen for the most part as the realistic position to take. This position was itself stated in different ways, some benign and some malicious, as I will discuss later.

Bulgakov's example shows, however, that the Hebrew Christian option had not died completely even by then, and his own position was influenced and anticipated by that of the famous philosopher Vladimir Soloviev. Soloviev defended the Messianic Jewish community of Joseph Rabinowitz in Odessa. This was a tiny community, which was a drop in the ocean of the five million Russian Jews (as the number had now become) who did not choose Hebrew Christianity. Furthermore, if we look at what Soloviev really wrote about Rabinowitz, we see that the position of the great Russian defender of Jews and the Talmud, was really rather conventional when it came to Jewish Christianity in practice: he wrote that Rabinowitz's congregation should be tolerated by the Russian church so that it would have the chance to outgrow its errors, many of them of a Protestant nature, and move in the direction of the one true Orthodox Church. In fact, Rabinowitz and his community became more Protestant in orientation and eventually disappeared. I am no expert on Rabinowitz's theology, but one thing that struck me in the little I managed to read of his writings was the way he referred to Talmudic Judaism as the work of the devil, and the Talmud as an evil book. Thus, I would be curious to know on what he based his Jewish Christianity. My surmise is that Jews at that time really were a nation, the Yiddish nation, as Paul Kriwaczek has called it, so that being a Jew and preserving one's Jewishness were far easier, aided by linguistic nationalism. And yet, even in those circumstances at the peak of Yiddish civilization, a viable transmissible Jewish Christianity, which was offered the support of the Russian Church, disintegrated in two or three generations. The results do not bode well for our own linguistically and culturally fragmented Jewish world. Israel goes a small part of the way to overcoming this, but even there unbridgeable divergence is, sadly, becoming the norm. And I speak only of the reality of Jewish Israel. The situation with Christian Israel is maybe worse.

In short, the Russian Orthodox Messianic Jewish option of Soloviev, Bulgakov, St Philaret, and Joseph Rabinowitz failed on paper and in reality. Perhaps, one might think that this is because they did not have a proper Torah Christianity, a proper Messianic Jewish halakhah? As I said, none of these men contemplated this option. I have thought about what a halakhic Jewish Christianity might look like and also have grave misgivings about this too. Last year, I entered into what for me was a very fruitful correspondence on this theme with

David Rudolph. I will try to briefly summarize my arguments and his responses to them, and then I will say where my mind stands on this issue now.

The position I outlined to David boiled down to two points about Torah Christianity:

1. The incorrectness of the idea that a Christianity which doesn't allow for Jewish continuity is unfaithful to the Gospel.
2. My belief that a Christianity which does try to include Jewish continuity is as destructive or non-destructive of Jewish continuity as traditional Orthodox-Catholic denial of Torah identity to baptized Jews.

Concerning the first point, it was Michael Wyschogrod who argued that the Hebrew Bible envisages Jews existing *mi-dor le-dor* and *'ad olam*. Thus any New Testament that breaks the Jewish chain of generations contradicts the Old Testament. Jews can only survive if they are preserved by the Torah. Ergo, Christianity needs Jewish Torah separatism. My argument is that Torah, so conceived is a means for preserving Jews, and this puts Jews before Torah, and idolizes Jewish continuity. Thus a different conception of Torah is needed. For instance, we might see Torah as a good in itself which Jews observe not for their own preservation, but simply because it's God's word. The rabbis implied this view when they pictured God studying Torah in heaven, and called it the blueprint for the world and so on. The Jews would derive their eternality from the Torah, and not the Torah from Jews. The problem with this eternal view of Torah is that there are many time-bound Torah commandments: the command to destroy Amalek or expel the nations from Canaan, for instance, once fulfilled are no longer literally binding. In order to observe such commandments, one has to give them an allegorical meaning, as Philo did – but if you do that, it seems hard to accuse Christians of spiritualizing the Torah and claiming that Israel is eternal because she is the Church.

There's another logical alternative: one could see the Torah as higher than Jews, so avoiding nationalist idolatry, but not in itself as eternal but leading Jews to some higher good: this would avoid the contradiction of Torah being time-bound but eternal. Both Maimonides and Nachmanides agree that in *olam ha-ba* there will be no eating, drinking or sleeping, and that Torah observance is what gets Jews into *olam ha-ba*.

Obviously, if there is no eating or drinking there can be no kashrut, Shabbat and so on, except in the sense that one could study these no longer relevant laws. But then what do we have? The Torah has been superseded and allegorized again. Furthermore, Maimonides and Nachmanides are saying, contra Wyschogrod, what traditional Christianity is saying: Jews must be preserved by Torah dor le-dor, until the last generation when there is no need for dor le-dor. I think the next step is predictable: the last generation is the arrival of the Messiah. Hence, for Christians once the Messiah has arrived, Jewish preservation – by strict Torah logic – is not necessary.

As for point two. The question of ‘Who is a Jew’ depends on halakhic definition. If one has different halakha, one has different conceptions of Jewry. Orthodox Judaism considers belief in the divinity of Jesus by Jews to be idolatry. A body of fully halakhic Jews who came to practice Torah Christianity and had their own halakhic authority would be banned from intermarrying with Orthodox Jews; they could not pray with them, as the blessing against heretics (*birkhat ha-minim*) was designed to keep Jewish Christians out of the synagogue; given their different theological orientation, their own halakhot would soon diverge at nearly every turn of the way. Result: two communities calling themselves Israel, one of which simply considers the other’s use of that term to be perfidious usurpation, namely the view that Orthodox Judaism has and would have of Messianic Judaism. You will notice that this is exactly the view it has of Christianity, and so Torah Christianity’s huge efforts will be worth nothing in terms of preserving Jewish unity and continuity and the Jewishness of Christianity as conceived by anyone but itself.

I come now to David’s response. I’ll discuss the first point in more detail later. But he pointed out some interesting objections to my second point – which to a certain extent I had foreseen myself. My approach, he said, might be true if there was just one monolithic Orthodox Judaism, but in reality there are other Judaisms – Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative, which are in dialogue with each other, and which also face the creative task of constructing a new *halakhah* to meet their new worldviews. To quote David himself: “there are ordained UMJC rabbis [who] engage New Covenant realities of Torah life while holding this in tension with the need to honor our fathers and remain within the communal discourse that constructs communal boundaries. The creativity involved in working out Messianic Jewish halakhah without becoming disconnected from kol Yisrael is not unlike some of the progressive halakhah we see developing in modern Judaism.”

In antiquity Jewish Christianity disappeared because it was pressured out of existence by Jews and Christians. The Jews objected to Jesus-belief, the Christians to observance of the Law and to the non-acceptance by Jewish Christians of the Trinitarian dogmas the Orthodox Church was slowly formulating. The same happened with Rabinowitz. However, what would happen if a pluralistic Judaism found a place for Messianic Judaism, and the Christian churches were satisfied that Messianic Judaism was doctrinally orthodox? That in effect, even as I was writing to David, was the scenario forming in my mind, and David only sharpened it, especially with his account of the realia of American life.

This is a fascinating possibility, and one other thing I learnt from David is that Messianic Judaism is rediscovering an interest in Orthodox Trinitarian dogma, so that the doctrinal gap I imagined to be huge, is in fact less so than I thought. So, forgive the presumption, one is tempted to apply the words of Gamaliel here: let us see if it is of God. However, I am still unconvinced. I have to confess to a certain old-world skepticism here.

Messianic Judaism seems to display an American can-do attitude, which I have to say I admire in general. However, here the energy of this can-do approach in building from scratch a whole new form of Christian living seems to me to be a diversion of valuable energy away from the arduous task of following Christ, which is difficult enough as it is. If I was convinced of David's and Michael Wyschogrod's arguments that an identifiable Jewry must exist in the Church *mi-dor le-dor*, I would pour my own energy into Messianic Judaism. But I am not. Furthermore, Christ founded the Church at Pentecost. Since then, the Church has existed for two thousand years. One needs to make a distinction, as Orthodox ecclesiology does, between Christ who is the perfect body of the Church and the empirical, earthly manifestation of the Church, which is not perfect, but striving towards full unity with Jesus Christ. However, while the earthly church may not be the absolute truth incarnate, as Jesus Christ was and is, we believe that it is the best bridge to the absolute, and that for example, in the sacrament of the Eucharist given us by the head of the Church, the imperfect and becoming church does indeed unite here on earth with the perfect church, which includes but transcends the earthly church. All this means that the Orthodox Church, with its sacraments, is the nearest we can get to Christ, and its 2000 year history is where one must look to see the history of the sanctification of our world by Christ and His Spirit. Now that raises a question: has the Church of Christ, admittedly flawed in some of its empirical dealings, and still developing but nonetheless guided by the Spirit in its formulation and understanding of the dogmas and sacraments, been crucially incomplete and imperfect in a major sacramental and doctrinal issue? Did the Church make a mistake in not sanctifying Torah observance for a separate community of Israel within herself? Here I must answer with Bulgakov and other Orthodox thinkers and simple believers: the Church already contains the Torah. Those parts of the Torah which are time-bound like the destruction of the Canaanites and so on, she – like rabbinic Judaism – interprets allegorically, and thus preserves the entirety of sacred history for those who join this sacred story later.

As I wrote to David, I believe the Church never categorically ruled out Torah Christianity. Justin Martyr famously says that Jews are welcome to keep their Torah observances as long as they do not encourage gentiles to do so. He is a bit grudging about it, but still. What I believe then, is that the Church – as in all its dogmatic formulations, which are more of an apophatic than cataphatic nature – outlined a space of freedom in which its members, Jew or gentile, could follow Christ in the freedom of their own conscience and in love of their fellow Christians. Within that space, the Torah Christian option did not flourish: either Jewish Christians did try to persuade gentiles joining them to accept the full Torah, or – as with Mark's proposal – they went down the path of isolationism. I proposed to David that Jewish identity in the Church can thus only be discontinuous, each individual or sometimes groups in different epochs, feeling loyalty and love for their Jewish past, but without this expressing itself in systematic Torah separateness. David's reply was a partial agreement, with disagreement: "Though this is an accurate description of history when we look back, I am not sure this was how God wanted it to be. Perhaps he desired, and continues to desire, for a more linear expression among the discontinuous explosions. Can we rule this out?" And later he wrote: "I see the community of Jewish followers of Yeshua as fully authorized by the Messiah (the Torah giver) to establish halakhahic standards for Jews within our communities."

My response to this would be that God in synergy with the Church did indeed want there to be no systematically separate Jewish Christianity. I say this in deliberately brutal language, but the reality I describe, while painful, is softer. After Christ, the Torah came to be viewed through the lens of Christ and as a pointer to

Christ. The incarnation of God dwarfed the contents of Israelite revelation until then. How could the Bible not be seen in its light? As a result, continued observance of Passover, festivals, Shabbat, Temple sacrifices and so on became secondary matters for Jewish believers. Jesus was a Jew who observed the Torah, of course. So was James and his community. Torah observance was a given and continued to be practiced by Jewish Christians, though of course, rites like the slaughter of the Passover lamb were soaked in a significance Jewish non-believers would not understand. At the earliest stage, there was duplication: for Jewish-Christians also consumed the bloodless sacrifice of the Passover lamb, Jesus Christ, in the house-churches with fellow-believers, all of them in Jerusalem, Jews. If one had taken away the Eucharist from James and his community, their life would have lost its meaning. If you had taken away the Temple Passover offering, you would have merely lessened the richness of their ritual lives. The real Passover lamb was of lesser significance, lesser reality than the Eucharistic lamb.

Now fast-forward to a time when there is no Passover lamb because the Temple has been destroyed. Did Jewish Christians mourn the Temple with the same grief as Jewish Jews? Or the loss of the Land of Israel? No. Since the book of Hebrews, and before of course, they had understood that their Eucharistic lamb was far more real than the 'real' Temple lamb. If these things had been reinstated, they may once again have enjoyed their practice, imbuing them with their own symbolism. But because they were secondary matters, in some essential sense Jewish Christians were indifferent to them, if by indifferent we are comparing their emotions and orientation with that of those Jews who became rabbinites. By indifferent, I mean, non-essential – perhaps an even stronger term.

But now consider modern Jews who come to Christ: there are those among them who, even though they never really knew Torah observance from the inside, wish to make Torah observance a matter of importance, even though the real Torah by Jewish-Christian logic is merely a symbol of a far deeper reality.

But the situation seems even stranger than that. Even Jews whose only link with God is Talmudic rabbinic Judaism understand that the Talmud is a symbol of a deeper reality: most of the Talmud and rabbinic liturgy centres around the restoration of the Temple and the hope of a return to the land, and the restoration of prophecy. The Talmud is a *book* about the Temple, not the Temple; a *book* about the Land, not the Land; a dialectical work with different rabbinic opinions, and not the *direct* voice of God. Rosenzweig's teacher, Herman Cohen, considered this move from direct revelation to dialectical human discourse an increase in knowledge – and in some ways he is right: but our historical sense must tell us that, as regards the relationship between Talmud and New Testament, this does not apply – and Cohen's words lead ultimately, anyway, to a supersession of the Talmud and the formation of Reform Judaism. However, this aside, the Talmud – as I have been saying – anticipates and licenses Cohen, for the Talmud could not be happier if it itself was to become a secondary book due to the realities it merely discusses having been instituted again. Then Cohanim would snatch time for a daf-Toyre between shifting lamb carcasses to the altar, but they would not spend all day learning about the Temple when the Temple was in front of their noses.

And thus my surprise: a group of modern Jewish-Christians wishes to make a central component in their own life a symbol of a symbol of a symbol, namely the *book* about the stone Temple which points to the fleshly Temple which is Christ's body, when they already have at the centre of their lives the reality behind this chain of reflections! What is more, they wish to pour serious energy into this. Again, this seems to me evidence

of an anachronistic theology: if one has no awareness of history, no love for its details, no passion for how the incarnated Word of God adapts in divine-human synergy with its body of recipients, then one can slice through the centuries – as Luther did – with a debonnaire disregard for the details of how the Church has unfolded in time. As with Luther, the rather unnerving implication is once again that for 1500 years the Church had simply got it wrong until he arrived to correct things. It also seems to me that Christians who try to reinstate the Old Testament and Talmud have come from a tradition that is lacking in ritual and history itself, which has not already absorbed Torah, which does not commemorate the Maccabees as saints, or have saint's days for Moses and Elijah, which does not see the Bethlehem infants as Jewish martyrs, which does not praise in hymns the Jewish children who welcome Christ as he entered Jerusalem. There is a hunger for history, and what I would see as a mistaken desire to satisfy that hunger by constructing a new history of one's own. But of course one cannot create tradition: the very attempt is a contradiction in terms.

Christians are indifferent to the realia of Judaism. If they exist, fine. To throw oneself into their reconstruction and reinstitution shows that they are not a matter of indifference, but extremely important. I see this *non*-indifference as detracting from the difference that is Christ. As I said, for Orthodox finite man joins Christ and enters on the path to deification through baptism and communion in the body and blood of the god-man, the Eucharistic sacrament which is the heart of the Orthodox Church. Around that grew up the hierarchy of bishop, priest and deacon. They are the shepherds of the believers who constitute the empirical communities of those who are becoming Christ's body in the world. Messianic Jewish *non*-indifference to Judaism cannot then be a matter of indifference for the Orthodox Church: after all, it takes Jews further away from joining to the Eucharistic community of Christ. It leads, inevitably it seems, to a desire to split those who approach the cup of Christ's blood into two, by seeking to implement laws – *halakhot* – that will have those of Jewish blood drink from one cup, and those of gentile blood drink from another. Is the blood of Christ not one?

Is it not an all-human, all-Adamic blood that vivifies and brings all of humanity back to itself? Can any Orthodox priest, Jewish or otherwise, organize his flock so that Jews and gentiles commune separately?

I'll make one final negative point before proposing something positive. As I said to David, one last thing that keeps me from drawing close to Messianic Judaism is that for me Judaism and Jewish identity is already powerful enough: I feel if I were to be in constant contact with the ritual and symbols of Judaism, I might be swallowed up by the reality which they point to, a reality in which the Messiah has not come and is devoutly awaited. In this sense, I really do understand St John Chrysostom's albeit excessive condemnation of Jews or perhaps Judaizers in 4th century Antioch who went between synagogue and Church. David wrote to me that "the Messianic synagogue is a kind of middle ground between the church and synagogue so it mitigates the scariness to some degree". But in fact, I feel the absolute contrary: the Messianic synagogue, for me, highlights the danger and uncertainty. It revives questions settled many centuries ago, and challenges the Church to defend its decisions all over again, to prove that she after all does have some wisdom, some cumulative experience. I understand that such a perception is a result of my own personal weakness, and I would be interested to find out if others share these fears.

Having spent so long being negative, I will finish by making some constructive comments. I'll try to explain how I see Jewish continuity in the body of the Messiah. A lot of what I have said above could easily slip into anti-Judaism and even anti-Semitism. However, I have the greatest admiration and love for Judaism, and I

am not about to turn my back on Jewish friends and family. I also am driven by the same conundrum that confronted Bulgakov: I too believe all individuals and nations are called to Christ; that the Jewish people was called to Christ first among nations *as* a nation, and must thus not assimilate out of existence; that individual Jewish conversions lead to assimilation and loss of Jewish identity. However, due to all I have said, I resist the conclusion that the only solution to the Jewish question is for some form of collective Jewish Christianity.

Instead, I believe that Jewish people – as a people – will remain outside the Orthodox Church, which is the one true church on earth. Does that mean I believe the Jewish people will not be saved, or that the Jewish people are thus outside humanity, as some anti-Semites – Russian Orthodox and others – have claimed? No. Here I rely on a patristic 2-church ecclesiology, restated in contemporary times by Fr Vasili Sventsitski and Lev Karsavin, among others. This 2-church ecclesiology shares a name with Mark's proposal, but it is extremely different. It distinguishes the imperfect, becoming Church on earth from the perfect, Church. The latter is the body of Jesus Christ, the god-man: in Christ, our humanity is complete and it is complete because it is fully united to God. The former consists of those sections and elements of the human race and human nature which are on the path to joining fully to Jesus Christ. The becoming Church and the perfect Church are two, but they are not separate, they constitute a unity, which is admittedly difficult to conceive.

When I became a Christian, Christ did not gain something. When I was not a Christian, Christ was not lacking something. Obviously: Christ is perfect in His humanity and in His divinity, and in their union. In this sense, he already includes the fullness of what was, is and will be. This raises questions of freedom of will and so on, but let's sidestep this for now. Instead, this individual example can be applied to nations. Paul tells us that 'all Israel will be saved'. The same applies: when the Jewish people, as now, are outside the body of Christ, Christ does not lack something. When they join him, he is not made fuller. All that is good is of Christ. Some of the good in me has already appeared, some of it is yet to appear. Ditto for the Jewish people. But from the perspective of Christ this 'yet' and 'already' are divisions in space-time which are not appropriate to Christ's fullness and perfection. Thus, as regards the historical, becoming Church the Jewish people has been and will probably be for the foreseeable future outside the Church, and the Orthodox Church – as Bulgakov mourned – is incomplete. From the perspective of the become, completed Church all that is good in the Jewish people is part of it, and it is a nonsense to say that what is good is outside of Christ in his perfect divine-humanity.

We can thus point categorically to who is a member of the imperfect, becoming or visible Church on earth: a baptismal certificate will do the trick. But as to who is a member of the perfect Church that is Christ's universal divine-human body, as the Blessed Augustine said: We do not know where the Church is not. The Spirit, which blows where – and we might add how – it wills, far beyond our ken and comprehension, gathers into God's Son all that is good in humanity. There is a teaching put forward recently by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) about the saint, in whose saintliness sinful humanity is drawn in and redeemed. Bulgakov himself pointed to the unity of the Jewish people. Thus when the Jewish people enters the Church, after the gentiles have come in – as St Paul seems to predict – all her ancestors who remained outside her will be drawn into the Church too: or rather, as the scales fall off their and our eyes – it will be seen that the body of the Messiah was much vaster than the tip of the iceberg that we called the Orthodox Church.

The statements I am making here are not, of course empirical. They go beyond space and time. They are statements of hope. We don't know the contours of the perfect Church. We might like to state that certain people and nations will enter the perfect Church, or be shown to have been part of the perfect Church, wholly or partially or not all. But such judgments are reflections of our own degrees of hope and generosity. To state, for example, as anti-Semites have done, that the Jewish people will remain outside the Church, aside from seeming implausible, is really only a malicious hope, or rather a death-wish. I am inclined to an opposite point of view, but then I have a vested interest – relatives and so on – and I am not boasting of my extreme prayerfulness or hopefulness.

If we simplify all this grossly, it boils down to the fact that for me the Jewish people is – I hope – in the bosom of the Christ and His Spirit. The Jewish people follows its own logic of continuity, awaiting its Messiah. Thus I have answered the question as to what is Jewish continuity in the body of the Messiah. Jewry is being continuous *outside* the Church; but it is also *inside* the Church. Jewry is dead. Long live Jewry. Am Yisrael Chai! That is Christian dialectics for you!

Furthermore, we know that the divine Trinity of love is a love of otherness: the persons of the Trinity are one, but they are also different to each other. Only because each one lets the other be itself entirely can three be one. Rublev's icon of the Trinity shows how the cup of sacrificial love emerges between the outlines of the three angels. God is Love, because God is three persons who contain the crucifying love of the Father, the crucified love of the Son and the restorative love of the Spirit – as St Philaret said. The imperfect Church replays this dynamic out in space and time, i.e. history. If the Church was one, and had no partner other to itself, how could she imitate God? Non-Christian humanity is this other, with whom the Church draws into a symphonic dance. Each nation dances its own dance, but at the end of history, all nations will dance together. Those dances that pirhouette around the growing Church reflect its rhythm, they have their own beauty, when they first join hands with the Church a complete new type of dance is seen, and the new dancers even change the shape of the great dance. By forcing those duetting couples on the outside to enter too early would be to destroy a rare and precious beauty and destroy the harmony of the great Dance itself. Jewry, par excellence, is the symbol of the nation who pirhouettes outside the great circle: she is not the only one, but she personifies the one who draws close and moves away. Seen from above, the beautiful performer of pirouettes on the outside is – of course – a part of the grand symphony itself. Seen from above, all those careful and idiosyncratic moves of those on the outside are wonderful and inspiring. Seen from above, Jewry is already part of the body of the Messiah even when she is seemingly outside the Messiah; and when she joins hands finally with the Messiah, well – she will carry on dancing her dance within the circle and the circle will absorb her rhythms.

Do I despair then for Jewry? No. Do I despair for a Church which has no Jews *mi-dor le-dor*? But we *do* have Jews *mi-dor le-dor*. Can't you see them dancing? Now, as for me – what am I going to do as one who sprung from the Jewish people. I will carry on, as best as I can leading a Jewish life. I am religiously entirely outside the Jewish people, because I am a Christian. But perhaps that has left what is most characteristic of Jewishness in me: I love Yiddish literature, I love Israel, I love Hebrew, and I love Talmudic discussions, halakhot and midrashim, and so on and so forth. It could only be tedious to enunciate all my personal likes and dislikes. But I love these things partly as an outsider, and partly as an insider. I belong to a Church, too, which feels the existence of the Jewish people as an existential threat in many ways – which is where I see the root of anti-Semitism. As Aaron Steinberg said of Dostoevsky: he had a sneaking suspicion that perhaps the Jews had not

lost God's favor. Because he could only envisage one Messiah nation, he felt the Jews were a direct threat to Russian Messiahship. He was, for example, concerned that Russia conquer Constantinople and then Palestine, because if as prophesied Christ was to return to Palestine, Palestine should be Russian, so that Christ would return to the Messiah nation.

However, the perfect Church is always full. There should be no existential anxiety – although, as my above comments show, I can't say I always live up to this myself. For me, the Christ has come: my own Jewish *dor* is ended, but another Jewish *dor* is still pirhouetting towards Christ, hopefully within Christ, alongside me.

Although I cannot agree with Messianic Judaism, I have to say that my exchange with David did help me to see an alternative point of view, and it also strengthened my own Jewish-Christian identity, even though I conceive of this very differently from him. To quote David again: "The worldwide growth of the Messianic Jewish community has also helped to marshal the chutzpah necessary to take this stand within the Jewish world. It is my hope that the budding relationship between the Messianic Jewish community and Jews in churches worldwide will further strengthen this resolve to identify as Jews within the Jewish world." I am not sure whether I would identify as a Jew in the Jewish world, but sharing thoughts of the meaning of Jewishness for Christians of Jewish birth has helped me to hang onto my Jewishness in the Christian world. I am here to learn more about this.

Thank you.