

Book Review:
Judaism and Jesus
By Zev Garber and Kenneth Hanson

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Abstract: *The authors show the Jewishness of Jesus and his teachings. They delve into what unites and what distinguishes Judaism and Christianity, especially in the Jewish liturgical practices that the early Christians, who were mainly Jews, took from their ancient traditions and modified to establish the liturgies that Christians practice today. They call, rightly, for dialogue between all Christians and all Jews, having established how much we can learn about ourselves by learning from the other.*

Keywords: *Dialogue, Liturgy, Passover Seder, Eucharist, Messianic Judaism, Shoah*

This is a book that I can highly recommend to scholars with some background in the field of Jewish-Christian studies. Zev Garber is an Orthodox Jewish scholar, long involved in the field, who has written numerous excellent works on the subject. Kenneth Hanson, as he tells the readers in his preface to this short volume, started out as an evangelical Christian who was drawn to the Hebrew language and, through interactions with the communities of modern Messianic Judaism, became a convert to Judaism.

Review

Zev Garber, in his introduction, speaks of his own efforts over the years to combat the ancient Christian teaching of contempt against Jews and Judaism which, as he rightly states, formed the bedrock of modern racial antisemitism that led to the Shoah (Holocaust). He describes his efforts, and those of other scholars, Jewish and Christian, to help people, Jewish and Christian, to understand the Jewishness of Jesus and his teachings. He briefly presents “a Jewish view” of Paul and John the Baptist.

Lastly, he states why the followers of Messianic Judaism, who hold to traditional Christian theology on the Trinity and the Incarnation, live their

lives as Jews and consider their faith to be a Jewish faith as well as a Christian faith. Garber considers this attempt to blend Judaism and Christianity together to be “unacceptable and incompatible” with rabbinic Judaism since the Trinity obfuscates the Oneness of God and the Incarnation and, from a Jewish point of view, is worshipping a human as if he is a god. Yet, as a pioneer in and practitioner of dialogue, he has engaged in “respectful dialogue” with Messianic Jewish leaders, while realizing that most Jewish academics and denominations believe Messianic Judaism to be an attempt by Christians to convert Jews away from their faith and people.

In the first section of the book, Garber describes his experiences teaching Jewish Studies, Bible, and “the historical Jesus” (i.e. Jesus as a Jew) in a public two-year college. Regarding the Hebrew Scriptures, studying it from both a Jewish and a Christian point of view, Garber notes, deepens the understanding of both communities. He concludes with a note on a Passover Seder open to both Jews and Christians, which would need to take into account not only the Exodus but also the Shoah. Hanson then describes the challenges he faced teaching about Jesus the Jew in the context of his Judaic Studies courses, taking into account the centuries long Christian teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism which twisted the actual testimony of the New Testament and misrepresented the beliefs and practices of the Jewish People, thus ripping Jesus out of his actual historical context.

In Section II, Garber first looks at the Christian self-understanding of a community/church as “one in Christ” from the perspective of Jewish understandings and questions regarding the Hebrew Scriptures and the great tragedy of the Shoah. Regarding the first, Garber establishes, in my opinion, that Jesus was in fact a Pharisee, citing Matthew 23:2–3 (“The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it.”) and numerous other New Testament passages. He notes Jesus’ “caustic” words to Temple authorities, which mirror those of the Pharisees who were, as he notes the “proto-rabbis” of Jesus’ time. He could have described Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple to make this even more clear.

With regard to Paul, who opened the Jesus movement up to include Gentiles, who needed only observe the Noahide covenant commandments, which was also a Jewish view of God’s relationship with humanity at large that the rabbis ultimately adopted, Garber writes that “Christ not Torah is the centrifugal force” (p. 53). He then takes up the “theology” of the Shoah, noting the “deafening silence from Heaven” during it and how Jews since then have wrestled with their understanding of God. He notes, correctly, that the perpetrators of the Shoah were Christians, killing under the banner of the

“Crooked Cross,” the swastika. He concludes by noting that “the acts of concentration camp inmates, whose caring, kindness, nurturing, sacrifice and suffering,” especially by women inmates, placed God’s presence there (p. 56).

Garber then returns to the first century, explicating his understanding of Jesus as a revolutionary, anti-Roman figure, traces of which he finds in the earliest gospel, Mark. Increasingly though, as events drew nearer to and after the crushed Jewish rebellion and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE, Christians sought to placate the Romans, especially by exculpating the one person who had the power to order the crucifixion, Pontius Pilate. I would note our common Christian Creed that Jesus “suffered and died under Pontius Pilate” does not mention any Jewish involvement.

Garber, unfairly in my estimation, accuses Mark of being “anti-Jewish.” Personally, I do not believe that a close reading of Mark, or the other two Synoptic Gospels, justifies such a conclusion. It was, many scholars would assert, later generations of Christians who misread the gospels to make them appear to justify the essential calumny of the teaching of contempt, that Jews were and are collectively guilty of the death of Jesus. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Jews clearly involved in Jesus’ death were “the chief priests and the elders.” Jesus is arrested in the night for fear that the Jews of Jerusalem would rise to save him. The scene in which Jews are said to shout “Crucify him!” takes place in Pilate’s walled-off courtyard, which could have held at best a hundred people, again out of sight of the Jews of Jerusalem, not to mention the Jews in the rest of Judea and in the Diaspora.

Hanson convincingly argues for a more positive understanding of the Pharisees and Jesus’ interactions with them, a position with which I agree. He argues for critical biblical scholarship, citing a lack thereof in evangelical circles. This is likely true. I would note, however, that Catholic and mainline Protestant scholarship has been doing just this for many years.

Hanson delves into how Jews and Christians might understand, react to, and engage in dialogue with Messianic Jews, about whom I knew little before reading this book. He makes a serious error when he states that Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians believe that “faith in Jesus alone is the ground for ‘salvation’.” This is simply not true, as one can see in the official declarations of the Catholic Church, especially since the Second Vatican Council, and likewise in many of the official statements of Episcopalian, Orthodox and Protestant Churches. Hanson is correct to state that what divided Judaism and Christianity is the Incarnation, that idea that Jesus was/is fully human and fully divine. For Jews, as he notes, this is the dividing line. Messianic Jews, he also notes, cannot be accepted by Jews as practicing a

form of Judaism if they hold to this doctrine, even if, as many do, they observe the laws and practices of rabbinic Judaism. But if one does not believe in the Incarnation, one cannot be called a Christian.

A leading Messianic Jewish scholar, Mark Kinzer, has observed that “the incarnation of Jesus/Yeshua mirrors that of the Divine Presence in the Jewish People as a whole” (p. 89). However, Hanson notes that the Jewish people in the Bible are often shown as veering away from the Covenant Commandments and falling into sin and are thus hardly “divine” as Jesus is said by Christianity to be divine. Can a person be considered fully Jewish, adhering to the Shema (“Hear O Israel the Lord, your God, is One”), if s/he believes in the Trinity and the Incarnation. Jews can, arguably, believe that Jesus was/is the Messiah, was raised from the dead, and will return at the end of time, and still be considered Jewish, but not if they believe in the Trinity and Incarnation. Hanson concludes that there are “non-Trinitarian” Messianic Jews who might well be considered Jewish and as such be eligible for Israel’s Law of Return.

In Chapter Seven, Hanson delves into what we know of the ancient Hasidim (pious persons) and whether Jesus/Yeshua might have been part of that movement, wondering whether it (and Jesus) might have been militant or pacifist. He describes what can be learned about this amorphous group through study of the books of the Maccabees, rabbinic literature, and Josephus with comments on the Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls along the way.

In Section III, Garber and Hanson argue, convincingly in my opinion, for academic and direct dialogue with Messianic Jews. They are not, the authors believe, simply a modern version of age-old Christian attempts to convert Jews away from their faith and practices, but a group with which both believing Christians and Jews can engage and learn with in dialogue.

Interwoven Liturgies

The final chapter in this excellent book, “Sitting at a Common Table,” by Hanson begins with a reference to the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples as a Passover Seder. The book, while referencing the Last Supper, however, does not go into any details about it or about its significance for Jewish-Christian relations in the early church and over the course of history. This is a lapse since in order to understand the reality of Jesus as a Jew and as a Jew whose death and resurrection would bring about a new form of Judaism, which we today call Christianity, one must understand how Jesus and his followers celebrated their faith through the acts of worship, developed the

liturgies of their people, the Jewish people, and how they came to redefine their meaning in a way that placed Jesus at the side of the One God of Israel in these liturgical ceremonies, thus redefining Judaism itself and bringing about what would become a new religion, though one deeply interwoven with the branches of the religion out of which it grew. The two reflections to come are thus designed to fill in the hole that Garber and Hanson left in their treatment of Judaism and Jesus. In a sense, they form the final chapter of the book that the authors indicated was necessary but failed to write.

Passover is a central Jewish holy day where Jewish families, at home, eat a meal celebrating the Exodus from Egypt and looking forward to the End Times when the Jewish People and all humanity will “pass over” from our current reality into a new age: the Messianic Age of universal peace, health, justice, and harmony. Since the Last Supper was the origin of the Christian understanding and celebration of the Eucharist, I believe that drawing out the intimate relationships between Jewish and Christian liturgical traditions can bolster and deepen the central theme of the book: that Jesus and his teachings are best understood within the context of his people, the Jews, and his religious tradition, Judaism. So this section of my paper and the one that follows, on the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Day of the Lord, Sunday, in a real sense, “complete” what is missing in the Garber/Hanson book as well as exploring a set of relationships between Judaism and Christianity.

While much of what I summarize here may well be known to readers of this journal, my aim is also to open up areas in which Jews and Christians today can come together in dialogue to deepen and go to the depths of what our religions have in common: coming from a single root, and where the intertwining branches of God’s covenant with the Jews and God’s covenant with all humanity differ and yet on a deeper level still have in common.

I hope that this section will be used to motivate Jews and Christians to attend each other’s worship services. Christians should go to synagogues on Shabbat and be invited by Jews to sit with them to eat the Passover Seder, using the occasion to discuss its meaning for both religions. Likewise, Jews should go with Christians on Sunday to Mass or other Eucharistic services. While Jews cannot/will not partake of the Eucharist of bread and wine, the opportunity can be taken for the Jews and Christians to understand why both communities have unleavened bread and wine as central to their liturgical lives. So the reader might consider this section to be a call to action for both Christians and Jews to come together and share with each other their deepest beliefs and to come to an understanding that these beliefs and liturgical practices are mirror images of each other. In so doing, Christians will come to

understand their own faith more honestly and deeply. And Jews will come to understand more clearly just what it was that the Jewish People gave to the world through the lives and teachings of Jesus and his followers.

First, we need to understand that God's ongoing covenant with the Jewish people—celebrated in the Passover Seder as the first culmination of the Exodus and the giving of the Law/Torah/Covenant to the Jewish People on Mt. Sinai—intimately intersects, from the Christian perspective, with God's covenant with us Christians through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. For centuries, all too many Christians felt that the Christian covenant had replaced or superseded the Jewish covenant, but this is not so.

St. Paul, in Romans 9–11, declares God's covenant with the Jewish People to be "irrevocable" and likens Judaism and the Jesus movement, which was to become Christianity, as intertwined branches of the same tree, having a common root. The validity of this metaphor can be seen to this day in Christian liturgy, which has its roots in Jewish liturgy, which is why I titled a book of essays by Jewish and Christian scholars *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy* (Paulist Press, 1990).

In a talk to leaders of Catholic Bishops' conference in 1982, Pope Saint John Paul II emphasized, very much in a way similar to that of the Garber/Hanson book, the "common spiritual heritage" of Jews and Christians since we share a bible and Jesus lived as a pious Jew of his time, drawing the lessons he taught from the only bible he knew, the Hebrew Scriptures. He noted that a "better understanding" of Catholic faith, life, and "above all" our liturgy can come from appreciating their roots in Judaism, both that of Jesus' time and "as professed and lived now as well." Just as the New Testament cannot be fully understood apart from understanding the Hebrew Scriptures as a source of so much of Jesus' teaching, so Christian liturgy cannot fully be comprehended without understanding the Jewish liturgical life faithfully observed by Jesus and his followers. This section of my essay will delve into a few aspects of the pope's challenge.

One can see the relationship between Jewish and Christian liturgies, which is to say between Judaism and Jesus, to use the title of the book under review, every Sunday when we Catholics go to Mass. Its first part is called the Liturgy of the Word, consisting of readings from the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. So too in Jewish synagogues, the central part of the Sabbath ceremony is the reading of Sacred Scripture, especially the first five books, which we Christians call the Pentateuch and Jews the Torah—a term extended to include the whole of the Jewish Bible. The Pentateuch/Torah is entirely read through every year in the synagogue. In Jesus' time, a reading

from the prophets was added. In Christianity, there is a reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, often one which Jesus is understood to have fulfilled and one from the New Testament. Rabbi and Priest then comment on the biblical readings and their relevance for the lives of their congregations.

Each religion reserves a special day of the week for its core liturgical ceremony. Judaism on *Shabbat*—from the Hebrew word for “seven,” i.e. the last day of the week—celebrates the culmination of God’s creation as described in Genesis. On the sixth day, God created humanity “in the image and likeness of God, male and female” (Gen. 1:27), emphasizing humanity’s responsibility, as in a real sense the presence of God in creation, to care for all of the world and all of its living creatures. On the seventh day, God rested from the work of creation, so for Jews the Sabbath is a day of rest and no work is to be done. Rabbinic discussions debate what constitutes “work” and what situations might cause one to do what might be considered work, but which is a response to the basic commandment of God to care for creation and all living creatures. If an animal is hurt, might its wounds be cared for? If a human is in dire need, whether seriously ill or injured, surely that person should receive life-giving care. One can certainly see a very Jewish, even rabbinic understanding of the Torah and the Law of Jesus when he cures and performs miracles on the Sabbath.

While Christianity and Christian liturgy began as a Jewish movement celebrating a Jew (the Jesus movement) without denying the ongoing validity of God’s covenant with the Jewish people and their faith, Judaism, Christianity sought to reinterpret its understanding of the Jewish liturgy that it practiced, as did Jesus. Again, this fact, properly understood, underscores the major themes of the Garber/Hanson book and, in a sense, brings them into the everyday lives of Jews and Christians so that we can better and more deeply engage in the dialogue that Garber and Hanson rightly call for.

Christianity shifted its Sabbath from the seventh or last day of the week to the first day of the week, symbolizing a “new creation” or a new life for humanity in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Yet its liturgical celebration was not really new but rather an adaptation of the Jewish synagogue service quite common in Jesus’ time. The origins of this common form of Jewish and Christian service, reading the sacred word of God (the Bible) and commenting on it, can be found in the Babylonian Exile. The Jews, defeated, suffered the destruction of the Temple and therefore had to live without the sacred space of the Temple, where God was especially present, and without the possibility of sacrificing animals in the Temple, which a number of biblical laws required the Jews to do. But recalling that God was

with them even in their time of captivity in Egypt and had been with them throughout their journey to the Promised Land, Jews realized that God was still speaking to them even in exile through the Torah/Law, the word of God revealed to them in Sacred Scripture. So, they would come together to recite and jointly meditate upon God's living word to them.

Even when the Jews were able to return to the promised land, rebuild the Temple, and once again offer sacrifices, they built synagogues throughout the land, making their faith part of their local lives on a day-to-day basis. Also, it involved the whole community, laity not just the priesthood, in discussions discerning the meaning and application of the Torah/Law to their lives. At the conclusion of the readings, a prayer, the *Kaddish*, is said by all. It parallels the Our Father, which Jesus taught his followers to pray:

Great and Holy is God's Name in the world
which God has created according to God's will.
May God establish the Kingdom during your life
and days, and during the life of all the house of Israel,
speedily and soon.
Amen.

The *Avinu/Our Father*:

Our Father Who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come,
Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
Amen

Jesus, as Garber and Hanson rightly state, is practicing Judaism by teaching his followers to pray as the Jews do, in a sense summarizing Judaism in this very Jewish prayer that was to become a central Christian prayer, the *Avinu*—Our Father. In the gospels, Jesus is often shown praying and teaching in synagogues (e.g. Matthew 6:23, 12:9, and 13:54). He proclaimed that the hope represented by the *Kaddish* would soon come to pass. The New Testament authors argued that this fulfillment had come to pass, or at least had begun to be fulfilled, by Jesus himself, for example in the multiplication of the loaves of bread and Jesus being portrayed as “the Bread of Life” (John 6),

which occurred shortly before the holy day of Pesach/Passover, which commemorated the Exodus and the Jewish people eating unleavened bread—unleavened so that they could carry it with them—and drinking wine, symbolizing the blood which they put on the entrances to their homes so that the Angel of Death would “pass over” them. For Christians in the Eucharist, the bread symbolizes the flesh of Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, and the wine symbolizes his blood shed during the crucifixion through which Christians can “pass over” from their lives of sin, be forgiven for them by God, and pass over into the new life of persons at one with both God and with their fellow Christians.

The Last Supper and the Eucharist

Jesus’ Passover/Pesach meal with his disciples just before his death is known by Christians as the Last Supper. It could be called the last Seder. The unleavened bread “is my Body” and the wine “is my Blood.” The bread and wine symbolizing the exodus of the Jews from exile in Egypt and exile in Babylonia are now fulfilled. The messianic age of universal peace, justice, health, and harmony among all humans is thus, symbolically, begun. Hymns praising God were sung. The Last Supper was a Jewish Passover meal, the aspirations of which were now beginning to be fulfilled and made into reality.

Interestingly, Jesus is depicted as washing the feet of his followers. This seems to be a version of the Jewish Passover meal in which the leader of the *Seder* washes his (or her) hands before the meal and recites the blessing: *Baruch attah Adonai Eloheinu Melek haOlam ha-motzi lehem min haAretz*. Blessed are You, Oh Lord, King of the Universe, who gives us bread from the Earth. Jesus is thus observing Jewish tradition for the ceremonial, communal meal, but infusing it with new meaning. In rabbinic Jewish mystical tradition, the bread and wine would be seen as the re-birth of Israel and the birth of the Messiah. In the Jewish meal, a large piece of unleavened bread, the *matzah*, is broken by the head of the household and all present receive and consume a piece, along with the meat of a lamb, in Jesus’ time a lamb sacrificed to God in the Temple. Christian tradition thus sees Jesus as the Lamb of God, broken by the Crucifixion, yet raised from the dead. The Psalms of Praise, especially Psalm 116, recited at the meal by Jews look to the future restoration of the Jewish People and all humanity.

Christians see in the Last Supper on Holy Thursday and Jesus’ subsequent death on Good Friday and resurrection on the first day of the week the fulfillment of the promises to Israel and humanity that are central to the

Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. (I avoid here the term Sunday for the first day of the week since in Catholic tradition it is better known as Domingo, the Day of the Lord.) It is important to understand not only the Jewishness of Jesus, but that St. Paul and the authors of the Gospels, certainly the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke), were Jews. For these authors, the End Time/Messianic Age was begun by Jesus during what we call Holy Week. We Christians await its “perfect fulfillment” in the end time. This understanding of how Jews and Christians understand the Messianic promises exemplifies what Garber and Hanson are working to convince their readers to understand: the intimate relationship between Jesus, his people the Jews, and the Judaism of Jesus’ time and for all times to come until the End of Time.

Jews, understandably, are still awaiting its “fulfillment” in the End Time. Jews and Christians share the same vision for the Messianic Age of universal peace, health, justice, and harmony. Jews will note, as many have to me in friendly dialogue over the years, that one has only to look out one’s window or turn on the TV on any given day to realize that the promises have not yet come to fulfillment. As a Vatican document has rightly stated, we Catholics await their “perfect fulfillment” while Jews await the fulfillment. But the Church in this document also calls on Catholics and all Christians to work together with Jews to prepare the way for this Messianic Age by helping the poor, those in need, the sick, and all who need our help, preparing the way and working for what Jews call *tikkun olam*, “Healing the World.”

Shabbat and the Lord’s Day

Again, following Garber and Hanson, we today need to understand the intimate, interwoven relationship between the great weekly holy days of Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity. It is clear that the early Christians, being Jews, celebrated both the Sabbath, which ends at sundown on what we call Saturday in continuity with their ancestors and their traditions, and the Lord’s Day, which we call Sunday, celebrating the Resurrection and the dawning of the new age of the Messiah, Jesus/Yeshua. Gentile converts, following the reasoning of St. Paul, were welcomed into the Jesus movement. They were required to follow only the traditional seven commandments of God’s covenant with all humanity in the person of Noah, who represented the rising from the death of humanity represented by the Flood (Genesis). Sunday, for Christians, represented the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and therefore the new freedom of Christians from the “death” of their sins.

The Sabbath for Jews, as we have seen, represents the seventh day, the day on which God rested after the six days of creation (Genesis). Therefore Jews, in covenant with God, observe the model of God and rest on the Sabbath. This has over the centuries led to innumerable rabbinic discussions on what constitutes “work.” The Sabbath is reserved for communal prayer in their synagogues and for a weekly family meal, which in a sense is a weekly seder. Likewise, Christians gather in Church on Sunday to pray and celebrate the Eucharist, which is modeled on the synagogue service of readings from Scripture and on the *seder*, the Last Supper, the consumption of the unleavened bread and the wine of life. For both Judaism and Christianity, then, there is a weekly commemoration and celebration and a central annual worship event, which brings to life in the present the great biblical events of the past and looks forward with anticipation to their fulfillment/perfect fulfillment in the Messianic Age at the End of Time.

This dual Christian celebration of both the Sabbath and the Resurrection was practiced by Christians well into the fifth century. Again, it reflects the relationship, as Garber and Hanson show so well, between Jesus, his early followers, and the developing religion about Jesus, Christianity. One can see this reflected in the anti-Jewish writings of St. John Chrysostom. Chrysostom believed, wrongly (as the Second Vatican Council made clear in *Nostra Aetate no. 4*), that Jesus (and therefore the weekly Sunday Eucharist) not only “fulfilled” the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures and of Judaism, but must be understood to have fully replaced them. Chrysostom’s writings, based on sermons he gave in his church, were to become a major source of the development of the nefarious Christian teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism, which reverberated over the centuries and was, in a real sense, the foundation of what became Nazi anti-Semitism.

Chrysostom—and the many Christians who had similar views—was angry that his Jewish and gentile Christian congregants continued to practice Judaism, albeit in a modified form which, as we have seen, was based on the writings of St. Paul. Ignoring Paul and actual reality, Chrysostom charged that Jews in their synagogue services committed heresy, worshiped the devil, maligned the Eucharist, and plotted against Christians. All of this came from his idea that Christians should turn their backs on anything Jewish and worship only in his church in the way he wanted. His writings were spread wide and far and infected much of the Christian thinking of his time and for the centuries that followed.

Today, we Christians are called, I believe by God, to turn toward one another in dialogue. We can do this by sitting and standing together in our

respective houses of worship, and in the case of the *Seder* in our homes, and then sitting together in a circle or around the table and sharing our experiences and deepest emotions. I have invited Jews to come with me to my church to experience Mass on Sunday. More profoundly, Catholics can invite Jews to come and experience Holy Week services, especially on Holy Thursday, which celebrates the Last Supper and is, along with Good Friday and Easter, central to the Christian faith.

It would be helpful to let your parish priest know if you are inviting Jews to attend the Good Friday liturgy, given its history. For it was especially on Good Friday that Christians, hearing sermons about how “the Jews” killed Jesus (despite the fact that it was Pilate and Pilate alone who made that decision and the fact that the few Jews involved, the chief priests, were appointed by Pilate and did Pilate’s bidding in all things, as our Creed, “suffered and died under Pontius Pilate,” clearly and rightly states with no mention of Jews) stormed out of their churches and gathered into mobs that invaded the Jewish ghettos, stealing from them, raping their women, and killing men, women and children. If the priest knows that Jews are in attendance he is likely to preach a sermon that will make it clear that the Church officially has condemned the idea that “the Jews” were or are collectively guilty of the death of Jesus, as so many sermons over the centuries erroneously preached.

Finally, Easter represents the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In discussing it after mass, Christians can note that based upon ancient Jewish teachings found in the Hebrew Scriptures, both Jews and Christians look forward to an end time in which all humans will be raised from the dead and live in a time of universal peace, justice, health, and harmony. Jews and Christians are both equally called to prepare the way for this Messianic Age by working together *now* to help those in need, whether of food, health care, housing, or other needs. Our task, as Jews would say, is jointly *tikkun olam*, healing the world in preparation for the coming or return of the Messiah in whom both Jews and Christians believe.

Dialogue is not just talk. Central to both of our religious and liturgical traditions is the call to action. Joint Action. For the betterment of all humanity and, indeed, of creation itself, our world and home.

Conclusion

This slim book by Garber and Hanson will open up for readers volumes of ever deepening understanding into the true nature of the teaching

of Jesus, the Judaism of his time and our time, and the development of Christianity as we know it today in its varying forms of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Orthodox Christianities. It illustrates how serious research into the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth will foster and deepen interreligious dialogue between Jews and Christians in a way that will help all involved understand their own religious traditions better and more deeply.

I used Chrysostom as an example of what went wrong in our relationships, a wrong that the book of Garber and Hanson seeks to make us aware so that we can acknowledge and move beyond the crimes of Christians against Jews over the centuries. I did not mean to cast sole blame on Chrysostom, of course. He was one of a number of the “fathers” of the Church who gave such sermons and wrote such tracts against Jews and Judaism. But he encapsulated this wider movement and significantly influenced it. Nor is this essay the time to go into detail on the ancient Christian contempt for Jews and Judaism. The major point to take from it, within the context of this paper, is that the anti-Jewish teaching of contempt obscured and for all practical purposes denied the fact that Jesus of Nazareth lived and died a faithful Jew of his time. It ignored that Jesus’ teachings, derived from the only Bible he knew (the Jewish bible), paralleled the teachings of Judaism, and—with regard to the social and ethical proclamations which he taught—are very similar to those of rabbinic Judaism. As we know, Jesus was close to and in constant dialogue with the Pharisees of his time who became the rabbis and, based upon the insights that Jews took from their exiles in Egypt and Babylon, found a way to preserve Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

Christianity, as Garber and Hanson illustrate, likewise began to emerge as a separate Jewish, then Gentile/Jewish, and finally mainly Gentile movement, that is the Church as we know it around and after the destruction of the Temple, the period when the Synoptic Gospels were written. The Gospel of John appears to represent a later period, around the turn of the first century, when the Jesus movement, the Church, was becoming increasingly Gentile. Where the Synoptic gospels speak of a variety of Jewish groups, John’s Gospel tends to speak in general terms of “the Jews.” What the Synoptics attribute negatively to the Pharisees—or at least those of the School of Shammai—the Gospel of John attributes negatively to “the Jews.”

It is this de-Judaization of Jesus and of early Christianity which became generally accepted by Christians over the centuries. And it is for this reason that the excellent book by Garber and Hanson that has been reviewed here had to be written. The point of the book has been to reclaim the essence of Christianity in the Judaism which gave it birth and to help modern Jews and

Christians come together in dialogue and—it is to be hoped—in working together, as the Hebrew prophets and Jesus strongly argued for, to bring about a better world, to help those in need, and prepare the way for the coming/return of the Messiah who will announce the Messianic Age, the age of universal peace, justice, and harmony for all Jews and for all Christians and for all humanity. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Zev Garber and Kenneth Hanson for helping to launch us on this journey.

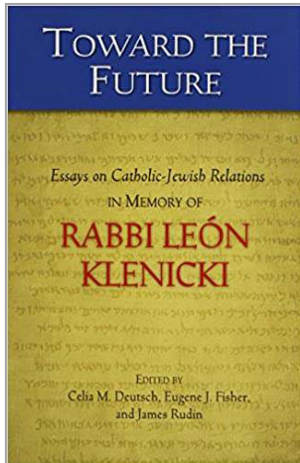
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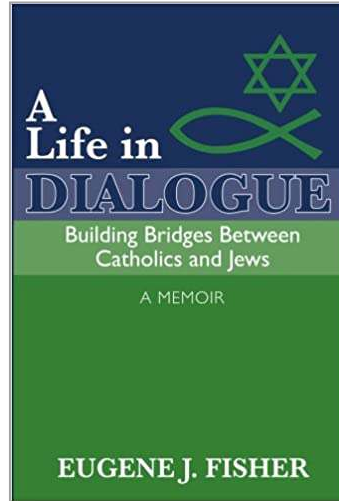
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[Dr. Eugene J. Fisher](#) is Distinguished Professor of Theology at Saint Leo University. He has worked tirelessly for the reconciliation between Catholics and Jews. Ahead of his time, he effected change, directing Catholic-Jewish relations for the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops beginning in 1977 and as author of numerous works in the field. He has been a Consultor to the Holy See and a member of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee. Dr. Fisher is an active member of learned and professional societies, such as the Catholic Biblical Association, the National Association of Professors of Hebrew, and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). He has lectured widely throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Latin America and Australia. He has published over twenty-five books and monographs, and some 300 articles in major religious journals, many of which have been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Polish and German for publication in Latin America and Europe. See: “*Nostra Aetate*: A Personal Reflection,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Fall 2015, Vol 50, no 4) pages 529–38, and *A Life in Dialogue, Building Bridges between Catholics and Jews: A Memoir*, St. Petersburg, FL: Mr. Media Books, 2017.

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