

# The Reformation and Judaism: Between Philo-Semitism and Anti-Semitism<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The topic of this paper is the complex and ambivalent relationship between the Reformed Churches and Judaism, moving from a kind of Philo-Semitism to Christian Zionism and support for the State of Israel on the one hand, to missionary movements among Jews to anti-Judaism, and the contribution to the horrors of the Holocaust on the other hand. In between the two extremes stands the respect for the Old Testament and the neglect of the Apocrypha and other early Jewish writings. The initial focus of this article will be on what Martin Luther and Jean Calvin wrote about Judaism at the beginning of the Reformation over 500 years ago. Secondly, the article will deal with the influence of mission activity toward Jews and the emergence of Liberal Judaism as both scholarship and theology in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Lastly, the article will address the question of how the Holocaust and subsequent Jewish-Christian dialogue have changed the course of this relationship.

**Keywords:** Jewish-Christian dialogue, Reformation, missionary activity, Liberal Judaism.

In the theology of Reformer Jean Calvin, who lived one generation after Martin Luther, Pauline theology plays a less central role than in the theology of Luther. In Luther's thought, Paul is key to understanding everything. One important reason for this is that Calvin does not differentiate between New Testament and "Old Testament" theology but sees Christian Scripture as a unity. This Scripture is understood as the written version of the revelation of God, in which Christ is the centre. In the background of this, we need to remember Calvin's covenantal theology, that is there is only one eternal covenant, of which the two corresponding signs are: circumcision and baptism. For this reason, the reformation's twin terms of justification and sanctification, of law and gospel as well as of ecclesiology and eschatology can only be understood from a Christological perspective. Seen from the point of view of the unity of Scripture, the first and foremost question to be asked is about justification by faith, from which the sanctification follows, which both are the key and a turning point for the church, and therefore, at the centre of Pauline theology. Luther's thought is better understood in terms of opposition, Law *or* Gospel, works *or* faith, obviously more in dialogue with and in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church of his time than with Judaism, whereas Calvin's thought seems to work more harmoniously alongside the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and Judaism.

For Calvin, in the same way as justification and sanctification belong together, also the Law (Torah) in its condemning function, of which Christ is the "end," needs to be seen in unity with the Law (Torah) as rule of life. On the basis of his interpretation of the Pauline epistles, especially of his letters to the Galatians and to the Romans, this sanctification stands on higher ground than the justification, whereas in the case of Luther the sanctification remained more in the shadow of the justification.

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As far as the Christological interpretation of Scripture is concerned, on the one hand Calvin clearly says: “One should always avoid giving an opportunity to the Jews to contradict, as if we would want to refer everything intentionally and in the most clever way to Christ, even that what is not immediately related to him.”<sup>2</sup> He emphasized this most likely in response to those interpreting Scripture allegorically and typologically, a dominant hermeneutic since the early Church. However, the call is also clear in the other direction, that is “We should read Scripture with the intention to find Christ in it. Whoever deviates from this scope, will labor and study his whole life, but never find the acknowledgment of truth.”<sup>3</sup> Calvin obviously tried to find a balance between the Old and the New Testaments, working to correct Luther’s preference for the latter.

Where Luther emphatically contrasts “Law and Gospel,” Calvin underlines the unity of both, in the same way as he points to a unity between the Old and New Testaments and for the unity of both covenants, for Jews and non-Jews. For Calvin there is no other difference between Law and Gospel than the cultic commandments. As for the rest, they both teach the same truths, only in different ways. The Gospel confirms what the Law had promised, that is that “Christ is the foundation and the contents of the covenant with Abraham in the form of a promise, foremost meant for the Jews.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Calvin stresses elsewhere that he “Who would dare to exclude the Jews from taking part in Christ, with whom, as we have heard, the covenant of the Gospel has been made, which actual foundation is Christ?”<sup>5</sup>

Based on this completely different balancing of the paradigms of Pauline theology, we can see that in Calvin’s theology Israel and the relationship between Church and Synagogue is approached in a different manner than that found in Luther’s thinking. For Calvin, Israel has a continuing importance in the salvation-historical action of God. Jews and Christians share the same covenant and the same promises, whereas the difference between the two only lies in the cultic commandments of Torah observance. This becomes also evident in the fact that Calvin was much more knowledgeable about the Judaism of his own day than was Luther, and saw Judaism – as the people of the covenant of Sinai – as Christianity’s closest kin or sibling and partner in God’s covenant, and during his life seems to have approached Jewish people accordingly.

### **On the Relation Between Israel and the Church in Calvin**

German theologian Bertold Klappert differentiates between two groups of various (protestant) models to systematically define Protestant views of the relationship between Israel and the Church.<sup>6</sup> The first group denies the unique position of Israel, whereas the second in some form accepts a remaining *chosenness* of Israel. When we apply this classification to Lutheran and Calvinistic theologians, we can see that Klappert’s classification with regards to Martin Luther (and with him most of Lutheran theology) can be classified under the substitution model (the Church has substituted Israel in its salvatory role), whereas Calvin can be classified as seeing a unity between the Old and the New Testament (they share the same covenant). Thus for Calvin, the Old Testament mirrors what becomes evident in the New Testament, the

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1. Calvin in *Corpus Reformatorum* 59, 664. Cf. H.J. Kraus, “Calvins exegetische Prinzipien,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 79 (1968): 337–8, 340; U.F.W. Bauer, *All diese Worte. Impulse zur Schriftauslegung aus Amsterdam. Expliziert an der Schilfmeererzählung in Exodus 13, 17–14, 31* (EurHS 442) (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 30.

2. Calvin in *Corpus Reformatorum* 47, 125.

3. For further discussion see Willem Nijenhuis, “Calvin,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G. Krause and G. Müller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981), 583.

4. Nijenhuis, “Calvin,” 583. Cf. *Corpus Reformatorum* 30, 315.

5. For further discussion see Bertold Klappert, *Israel und die Kirche: Erwägungen zur Israellehre Karl Barth*, *Theologische Existenz heute* (München: Kaiser, 1980), 14–37.

Old Testament is the letter and the New Testament the spirit of the Gospel, and the Old Testament speaks of one nation, whereas the New Testament speaks of all.<sup>7</sup>

### The Educational Function of the Jewish Scriptures

Let us move on to the question, what did the Reformation actually mean when it spoke of “Judaism”? We can say that, from the perspective of the Reformation, the theological relevance of Judaism and the Jewish literature lies: (1) in the recognition of the importance of Judaism and its history as a question addressed to the Church; and (2) in the importance relegated to the Apocryphal literature in addition to that of the established and accepted books of the Biblical canon.

(1) As far as the relevance of Judaism and its history are concerned, Israel’s Biblical history has always played a role in Reformed theology, on the one hand, namely in the theological word pair of “Promise and Fulfillment” and on the other hand as proof of the truth of the Christian faith. What is then left is to acknowledge the history of post-Biblical Judaism until present-day Israel. For instance, the Dutch theologian Kornelis Heiko Miskotte has acknowledge this history by pointing to the context of Christian education as a certain “analogy“ between the history of Israel and the history or life of Christ (namely in their respective suffering) and to accept present-day Judaism, theologically, as a full dialogue partner. Contrary to this view, the substitution model works under the assumption that the existence of Biblical Israel and Judaism had ceased to be relevant at the beginning of the Christian Church.

(2) According to Calvin – in addition to the books of the canon – the Apocrypha can also have an edifying function.<sup>8</sup> Since we now have more Jewish writings from the Hellenistic-Roman period than at the time of the Reformation, we may expand this theological relevance and edifying function to the whole corpus of Jewish literature which can be dated to the intertestamental period. In addition, we can now include the major discoveries from the middle of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth centuries, such as Pseudepigraphal literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Out of the latter a new research field has emerged between the classical disciplines of Old Testament and New Testament Studies, namely that of Early Judaism.

Furthermore, it is equally important to also include Jewish Biblical interpretations from early Jewish and Medieval authors, as well as modern interpreters, whose works – whether they come from the hand of Philo or Kimchi – were read by all reformers, both directly and indirectly through translations and anthologies. The relevance of interpretation of Holy Scriptures, in its total breadth, from the single Hebrew characters to the history of its interpretation – as it had been acknowledged from the beginning – lies in the end in the encounter with the Word of God, which is a literary expression in all its complexity and historicity.

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6. For further discussion see Klappert, *Israel und die Kirche*, 16–17, and Gerbern S. Oegema, “Das Judentum aus reformatorischer Sicht II: Johannes Calvin,” *Nes Ammin-Heft* 3 (1997): 4–9.

7. See W. Neuser, “Calvins Stellung zu den Apokryphen des Alten Testaments,” in *Text, Wort, Glaube: Studien zur Überlieferung, Interpretation und Autorisierung biblischer Texte: Kurt Aland gewidmet*, ed. Martin Brecht (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 298–323; W. Neuser, “Die Reformierten und die Apokryphen des Alten Testaments,” in *Die Apokryphenfrage im ökumenischen Horizont*, ed. Siegfried Meurer (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1989) and H. Schützeichel, “Die deuterokanonischen Bücher des AT in den Schriften Calvins,” *Catholica* 47 (1993): 277–293.

### Concluding Theses on the Christological Interpretation of Scripture

The question about the Old Testament as a witness of Jesus Christ was answered by Martin Luther in following manner: “Christ is the centre and goal of the whole Scripture,” while Jean Calvin noted that “We have to read Scripture with the purpose of finding Christ in it.”<sup>9</sup> If a Christological interpretation of Scripture is understood in this way, one can leave behind any allegorical or typological interpretation because Christ is already alive and present in the Old Testament and defined by it.

If we summarize our finding on the basis of the reformed approach to Scripture as emphasizing the principle of *sola scriptura* and the unity of Scripture as the central starting point of Biblical exegesis and theology, while taking seriously the criticism that Judaism is often represented as being *too* Christian, one may phrase the “Christological” interpretation of Scripture as follows:

- It is not our task to interpret the Old Testament Christologically, as the Old Testament already itself points to Christ, but only for Christians, whereas for Jewish people it is the Book of the Covenant and remains so.
- Neither the Old Testament nor Jewish history can be referred to in the New Testament or the Church in a typological or Christological way. Instead, in the *Tanakh* everything has already been said about Christ, and we should not interpret it, as if Christians own the Old Testament, but be guided by it.
- When interpreting the Old Testament, one also needs to look at the Jewish interpretations of both Early and Medieval Judaism, as well as Modern Judaism, to avoid decontextualized interpretations.<sup>10</sup>

### The Holocaust and Judaism

Having said this, it cannot be denied that *after* the Holocaust the relationship between the Reformation and Judaism was a completely different one, moving from accepting that a Christian guild murdered over six million Jews to the establishment of a Jewish-Christian dialogue. While being in the relatively fortunate situation of speaking for and belonging to the Calvinist tradition, the situation in the Lutheran dominated world was far worse, especially in Germany. There was a satanic mix of social xenophobia and anti-Judaism along with nationalism and certain anti-Jewish theologies that led to the rise and flourishing of anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century and Nazism and the Holocaust in the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

Having lived in both the Netherlands and Germany, the following is partly based on personal impressions and encounters alongside my own reflections. This personal reflection also marks a change in the direction of this article, that is away from the intellectual and theological plane towards what this author perceives as the real world behind or under the intellectual and theological surface. For the purpose of this article I will refer to this “level” as the life setting of theology and will reflect upon the effects it has had on people, my particular focus will be on the effects that led to the murder of six million Jews.

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8. K.H. Miskotte, *Wenn die Götter schweigen: Vom Sinn des Alten Testaments* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1966), 457ff. Cf. K.H. Miskotte, “Het Jodendom als vraag aan de kerk,” *Eltheto* (March 1936).

9. For further discussion see Oegema, “Das Judentum,” 4–9.

10. See Brooks Schramm, *Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People: A Reader* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1989), and Schramm, “Luther, the Bible and the Jews” (conference presentation, The Reformation and the City, Concordia University, Montreal, QC, May 9, 2017).

I remember too well that as a student of theology and of the New Testament in the late seventies and early eighties, we still worked with the notion that there was a Jewish “background” to the New Testament. Our understanding of the Old and New Testaments stemmed from works that were from a previous generation of German and Lutheran New Testament scholars, such as those who had contributed to the widely consulted *Theological Dictionary to the New Testament*.<sup>12</sup> These scholars considered Judaism as something from the past and used it as a negative foil for the positive Christian Gospel.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, all of my older German professors had served as soldiers in Adolf Hitler’s army, either through forced conscription or as voluntary members of the NSDAP. Therefore, it came as a shock to me and my fellow students, when my New Testament professor, the late Tjitze Baarda, introduced us to the two-volume work of Hans Jansen, *Christian Theology after Auschwitz, 1980–1985*,<sup>14</sup> unveiling some of the theological and ecclesiastical roots of anti-Semitism.

Jansen’s focus was on presenting this “darks side” which was evident in the relationship between Judaism and Christianity and allowed students of theology to better understand the inner tensions that existed within the tradition, a tradition in the West that we fondly labelled the Judeo-Christian tradition. Jansen’s work opened a whole new perspective on this relationship, a perspective that in the past had been neglected or denied, but now for many, became a sort of revelation. Similarly, this new perspective had profound impacts on other fields of study which had taken flight during the seventies and eighties. For instance, Feminism and Liberation theology equally sought to offer alternative interpretations of the Bible and attempted to change the world from a white, male, Western, Christian dominated place to a more diverse, colourful and pluralistic world; a fight which still persists today in the world. As for the Jewish-Christian relationship, I see five important developments:

- (1) The establishment of institutes for the study of Judaism
- (2) The emergence of Liberal Judaism and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*
- (3) The founding of the State of Israel
- (4) The acceptance of a Christian guild for the Holocaust
- (5) The work of the Jewish-Christian dialogue

As a result of these trends, scholarship was able to move forward and offered many conferences and publications about Judaism. Jewish-Christian relations now stand on a vastly different footing than after the Second World War. Allow me to say a few things about some of these changes.

### **The Establishment of Institutes for the Study of Judaism**

The first institute for the study of Judaism was the *Institutum Judaicum et Mohammedicum* at the University of Halle in 1728. Of course, this was an institution which belonged to the Protestant Theological Faculty and was founded by the Pietistic Johann Heinrich Callenberg along with other pietists from Halle. The institution was intended for future missionaries who wanted to learn more about Judaism and Islam.

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11. G. W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

12. See Maurice Casey, “Some Anti-Semitic Assumptions in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,” *Novum Testamentum* 41, no. 3 (July 1999): 280–291. For a more general discussion see Robert Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985).

13. Hans Jansen, *Christian Theology after Auschwitz* (Christelijke theologie na Auschwitz), (Den Haag: Boekencentrum 1980–1985).

Moreover, the institution wanted the study of both religions to be done as academically as possible and thus, this led to very richly equipped libraries still in use today. However, the real goal was to equip missionaries with knowledge to convert Jews and Muslims to Christianity. In the nineteenth century this mission had become quite “successful” and had led many Jewish individuals to the conviction that it could be beneficial for them to convert to the dominant Western Christian culture and society, and that the best way to do this was to be baptized in a Church. A famous example of the successful missionary work was the conversion of nineteenth century German-Jewish poet Heinrich Heine, who considered baptism the “the ticket of admission into European culture.”<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that this period coincided with European Colonialism which encouraged missionary expeditions to many nations in the world.

In addition, other missions were quite successful among the so-called Messianic Jews, such as the one led by Jacob Frank, who had been inspired by Sabbatai Zwi – another Jewish Messiah from the seventeenth century – and who settled in Poland during the eighteenth century. In Germany, for the most part, other *Instituta Judaica* were being established throughout most of the nineteenth to twentieth century, good examples of cities which housed such institutes were Leipzig, Tübingen and Berlin. However, it was not until the late twentieth century that the Churches and Universities supporting these institutions officially gave up the idea of the Christian mission among Jews. This withdrawal of missionary work did not happen without a fight by many members, which were opposed to the idea and still believed that Jews had to become Christian in order to be saved. For instance, at the *Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* which at the time was housed in the University of Münster, where I happen to have worked from 1992 to 1994, and which had been moved after the Second World War from Leipzig to Münster, was still debating the withdrawal of missionary work. It was not until the mid 1990s that a radical change finally took place, and the mission among Jews was removed from the bylaws.

### **The Emergence of Liberal Judaism and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums***

Another development during the nineteenth century came from within Judaism itself, again mostly in the German-Continental realm, and involved the emancipation of the Jews after the French revolution, the emergence of Liberal Judaism and the establishment of the “*Wissenschaft des Judentums*” also known as the field of Jewish Studies (see also Judaic Studies and *Judaistik*).<sup>16</sup> This would all contribute to Judaism becoming a true dialogue partner, though originally a junior one, with the equally fast evolving Christian historical-critical scholarship and the liberal Christian theology of the nineteenth century.

Despite the many later developments in the twentieth century – such as neo-orthodoxy, the theology of Karl Barth, existentialism, the death of god theory, and secularism – both Jewish and Christian liberal and academic movements would lay the basis for a lasting heritage. The collaboration between Jewish and Christian liberals and intellectuals would continue to thrive and lead to significant partnerships in the field of biblical hermeneutics. A field that continues to flourish at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century and has allowed biblical scholarship, to a great extent, no longer be dependent on or

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14. Hilary L Rubinstein, *The Jews in the Modern World: A History Since 1750*, Mazal Holocaust Collection (London: Arnold, 2002), 259.

15. See Nahum N. Glatzer, “The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Studies,” in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1964), 27–45; Michael Brenner and Stefan Rohrbacher, eds., *Wissenschaft vom Judentum. Annäherungen nach dem Holocaust* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000); Andreas Lehnardt, ed., *Judaistik im Wandel. Ein halbes Jahrhundert Forschung und Lehre über das Judentum in Deutschland* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

controlled by religious or church affiliations. Now scholars from diverse religious backgrounds – whether Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, or Atheist – can participate in the academic study of the Bible. Furthermore, while the classical Christian-defined disciplines of Old Testament and New Testament Studies loosened in scope, new disciplines emerged. Specifically, that of Early Judaism, Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity, or sometimes all gathered under the larger umbrella discipline of Religions in Mediterranean Antiquity.

### **The Acceptance of a Christian Guild for the Holocaust**

As for the acceptance of a Christian guild for the Holocaust and the emergence of the Jewish-Christian dialogue, I will discuss this further in the context of the following section, on the Jewish-Christian Dialogue with special attention to Judaism and the Dutch Reformed Church. A special place for Judaism is found in the Netherlands and the Dutch Reformed Church, both socially and politically as well as theologically. As is well known, the newly founded Republic of the Seven Provinces established a policy of tolerance in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, towards Huguenots, Anabaptists and Jews expelled from Portugal and Spain. A policy that was not without its benefits for the Dutch who received numerous economic and intellectual benefits from the exchange. The Jewish people would come to occupy a lasting place in the Low Countries, and as I see it, not the least because Jean Calvin and Calvinism had given them a lasting place in his theology, by firmly rooting the Gospel in the Old Testament rather than rendering the Old Testament obsolete because of the New Testament, as many other Christian theologians had done before and would continue to do afterwards. Although the Dutch people harboured their own anti-Jewish sentiments like many other European nations, their leaders would often stand firm in times of crises, such as during the Second World War and the Oil Crisis of 1973.

Arguably the greatest Dutch theologian of the twentieth century was Kornelis Heiko Miskotte (1894–1976), a contemporary and pen-friend of Karl Barth, who had started as a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in a small village in Zeeland. He then became minister in Amsterdam and was given a special charge to conduct ministry among intellectuals and people in the periphery of the Church. Later in his life he would become a professor of systematic theology at the University of Leiden. Like many Dutch theology students, I too was influenced by Miskotte’s academic and pastoral work, even having become friends with his son, Herman Miskotte, a professor of practical theology, through whom I received much first-hand information. A prominent time that Herman recounted was during the Second World War when his father, Heiko Miskotte, had stood up for the Jewish people, not only in sermons in his Church in Amsterdam but also privately by helping Jews after the Nazis had started deporting them to Auschwitz and other deplorable death camps.

This preoccupation and personal engagement with Judaism had already started for Kornelis Miskotte before the Second World War with a dissertation which he submitted in 1933 on the “Essence of the Jewish Religion,” and later published in 1939 under the title “Edda and Torah” which was a phenomenological comparison of Judaism and Nazism<sup>17</sup> and was immediately banned by the Nazis, as soon as they had occupied the Netherlands in the year 1940. In addition, it was in 1939 that Miskotte initiated the so called “*Doornse Statements*,” which contrary to the famous “*Barmer Theologische Erklärung*” of 1934, also addressed Israel and anti-Semitism.<sup>18</sup>

16. Martin Kessler, *Kornelis Miskotte: A Biblical Theology* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1997), 22.

17. For further discussion see Gerbern S. Oegema, “Das Judentum aus reformatorischer Sicht I: Kornelis Heiko Miskotte,” *Nes Ammim-Heft 2* (1997): 17–22.

If one were to compare Karl Barth and Kornelis Miskotte, one can argue that for Barth, Paul and the Gospel come directly from above and are central to his theology, and therefore the Pauline letters are the canon within and to the canon. Against this Barthian perception Israel plays only a minor role, as its history has basically come to an end. While for Miskotte, Israel plays a more prominent personal, academic, and theological role in his understanding of Scripture. It is important to note that my intent is not to present him as an “Israel loving theologian,” or for that matter a Christian who in reality wanted to become Jewish instead of remaining Christian, a tendency which had become quite fashionable in the Netherlands after the Second World War. Like Barth, Miskotte understands Scripture through the lens of Christ; that said, in the dialogue between Judaism and Christianity it remains important that both keep their own identity. In that sense, Judaism is for Miskotte a question *to* the Church without questioning the legitimacy *of* the Church.

In 1934 he had already formulated Israel’s question to the Church, which is founded in Israel’s question about existence and why it is that the world existed, a question in which paganism<sup>19</sup> at the time was not interested in because it is a question about human existence itself. In that sense, according to Miskotte Israel *asks* Christians whether they really believe in the same God as in the Old Testament? If yes, the question then becomes on what grounds do Christians feel they need to constantly try to convert Jews? Because Jews, for the most part, had already accepted Christianity as an alternative road to salvation, for non-Jews. Israel *asks* the Church what it means when it speaks about salvation? Israel also *asks* why by simply existing it has generated so much hatred against Jews in the world? In the end, Israel should not be viewed as a question mark but rather, it needs to be understood as an exclamation mark because it shares a similar hope for a messianic reign of justice and peace as the Church.

In that sense Israel is a witness of the Gospel and the Old Testament is the real Scripture for we cannot understand the New Testament without the Old Testament. Whereas the Hebrew Bible is independent and as such is Scripture enough for Judaism to be a religion on its own. Remaining true to Calvin’s heritage, Miskotte sees everything as having already been said in the Old Testament, and it is only from the Old Testament that we can learn what it means when we talk about Christ. A clear distinction from how Luther and Lutherans’ viewed the Old Testament and its relationship with Israel.

With this theology clearly established already in the 1930s, Miskotte stood at the forefront of the establishment of the *Lehrhaus*, a house of learning or *Beth Midrash*, in which Christians learned about Judaism in dialogue with Jewish people, ordinary people, scholars, and rabbis. This *Lehrhaus*, or as we now know it today under the umbrella term of Jewish-Christian dialogue, became quite popular in the Netherlands and developed at some point hundreds of branches in cities across the country both small and large. A phenomenon well known in Germany and other European countries as well as in North America and has equally influenced me and my theology more than I can say.

### Conclusion

With the examples discussed here it should become clear that theology cannot be disconnected from the life one lives because how one thinks, argues and reflects theologically has an impact on how one acts in life, in society and towards one’s neighbors. If one takes a wrong turn in theology, one may also end up erring in life, which in times of crises may have dire consequences for other people. The Reformation’s five hundred years of interaction and aftermath with Judaism have shown that there are two sides of the coin; it has been a history ranging between Philo-Semitism and anti-Semitism, which forced Jews into

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18. The term “paganism” was coined by Miskotte instead of the present-day term secularism, as paganism in the days of Nazi ideology was understood as a movement that was actively working against the Judeo-Christian tradition.



isolation and near annihilation, but also allowed for their resurgence and resurrection, both theologically and politically. A history that also saw many theologians admiring the people of God. In the end, it is a history in which we are all implicated. The Jewish people have been very much a part of the 2000-year history of Christianity, just as the texts of the Hebrew Bible forms part of the DNA of Christianity, so to does the influence of early Judaism.

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