



ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE

Jesus the Jew: Survey on the Cliché in Its Context

Yahudi İsa: Bağlamı İçerisinde Bir Klişe Üzerine İnceleme

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Öz: Bu makale, Aydınlanma döneminde başlayan tarihsel İsa arayışına ilişkin çalışmaları takip etmekte ve bu arayışın günümüzde yapılan akademik çalışmalarda karşımıza çıkan “Yahudi İsa” söylemine odaklanmaktadır.

Aydınlanma Döneminin yeni dünya görüşünün önündeki en büyük engel kadim dünyayı temsil eden Kilise ve onun teorik zeminini oluşturan Kitab-ı Mukaddes'tir. Kitab-ı Mukaddes tenkidi Avrupa'da bilhassa Reformasyon'un etkin olduğu Batı Avrupa ülkelerinde ortaya çıkmış ve orada zirveye ulaşmıştır. Başlangıçta Katolik Kilisesinin epistemik ve litürjik baskısından kurtulma gayreti olarak görülebilecek bu tenkid faaliyeti, Aydınlanma düşüncesinin gerekli politik şartlar neticesinde hâkim konuma gelmesiyle, Protestan ülkelerde radikal sonuçlara varmıştır. Başlangıç noktası olarak İsa gerçekten kimdi sorusundan hareket eden bu arayış, en nihayetinde radikal bir biçimde onun tarihsel varlığının reddedilmesi ile neticelenmiştir. Zira modernitenin hükümranlığında katı olan her şey buharlaşmaktadır.

İşbu sebeple Reformasyon'un bayraktarlığını yapan Alman Hristiyanlığı, bu faciadan paylarına düşen sorumluluğu üzerlerine alarak, Tarihsel İsa ile İmanın Mesihî arasında ayırma gitmek suretiyle arayış bulmaya çalışmıştır. Bultmann'ın bütün gayretlerine rağmen, Kitab-ı Mukaddes'e yöneltilen tenkitler, dinin bir bütün olarak reddedilmesi şeklinde sonuçlanmıştır.

Sovyetlerin güdümü dışında bir Sosyalist dünya fikriyle harekete geçerek Çekoslovakya'da başlayan bahar, bir hafta içerisinde yerini hazana bırakmıştır. Burada karşılaştığımız manzara, Sosyalizm ve Komünizmin artık bir ideoloji olarak iflasıdır. Zira Sovyetler, kendisi dışında bir tavır alınmasına izin vermeyen despotik bir tahakküm iddiasındadır. Bu iddianın Prag sokaklarında Sovyet tankları ile görünür kılınması, bütün dünyaya Sovyetlerin artık dünyayı dönüştürmeyi hedefleyen bir ideoloji olarak Sosyalizmi ezdiğini göstermiştir. Bu noktadan itibaren Soğuk Savaş Döneminin ABD ve SSCB şeklinde kendini ifade ettiren düalizmi ortadan kaybolmuştur. Daha doğru bir ifadeyle, bu düalist mücadele Amerika Birleşik Devletleri lehine sonuçlanmıştır. Bu noktadan itibaren, o ana dek dünya tarihinde sessiz bir diaspora hayatı yasayan Yahudilik, İsrail'in bağımsız bir devlet olarak henüz yirmi yaşını doldurmadan, bölgede kendisine rakip olan bütün düşmanlarını mağlup etmesiyle, ilk defa kendisi olarak gün yüzüne çıkmıştır. Burada cereyan eden hadise, Ortadoğu halkları açısından Hegel'in dünya-tarihsel dediği etkiye sahiptir. Zira İsrail ve halkı, son sürgünlerinden on dokuz asır sonra, bölgede tekrar hâkim konuma geçmiştir. Bu politik hakimiyet, Yahudilik araştırmalarının modern akademideki zaferiyle devam etmiştir. Avrupa'da on dokuzuncu yüzyılda ortaya

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çıktığını iddia edebileceğimiz bir bilim dalı olarak Yahudilik araştırmaları, 1970'li yıllara değin, antisemit bir tavır ile gölgelenmiştir. Bu tavır, İnciller özelinde kendi döneminin Yahudiliği içerisinde doğmuş, büyümüş ve en nihayetinden tarihsel varlığı sona ermiş İsa'nın, daha evvel tanrı-katili olarak yaftalanan "Yahudi" figürü ile zıt bir zeminde görülmesine ve ele alınmasına yol açmıştır: İsa, Yahudiler tarafından katledilmiş Tanrı'nın oğludur ve bütün gayesi Tevrat'ın lağvına ve Yahudilerin lanetlemesine matuftur. Ancak bahsedilen jeopolitik değişimle birlikte bu neredeyse iki bin yıl süren anlatı da radikal bir kaymaya uğramıştır.

İsa'nın Yahudiliğinin geç de olsa kabul edilmesi artık akademik bir klişedir. İnciller bağlamında, "İsa bir Yahudi'ydi" demek gerçekten şaşırtıcı ya da umulmadık bir fikir değildir. İsa'nın Yahudiliğiyle ilgili sorun, bu fikrin gelişmesinin neden 1970'lere kadar sarkmış olduğudur. İkinci sorun ise İsa'nın Yahudiliği iddiasının modern akademide, bu kadar kısa bir süre içerisinde nasıl böylesine muazzam bir gelişme gösterebildiğidir. Bu, salt teolojinin sınırları içinde cevaplanması zor bir sorudur. Bu nedenle, bu makalede siyaset ve antropolojinin yardımına başvuracak ve nihayetinde Yeni Ahit çalışmalarında Yahudi İsa'ya ilişkin ana söylemin değişmesinin çeşitli nedenlerle gerçekleştiğini, ancak 1967 ve 1973 Arap-İsrail Savaşları ile 1968 Prag Baharı'nın çokkültürlülük, İkinci Vatikan Konsili (1962-1965) ve neoliberalizm gibi diğerlerinden daha önemli roller oynadığını iddia edeceğiz. Bu iki olay, bize, bu ani ama büyük ölçüde kabul gören değişimin motivasyonunu gösterebilir.

Tarihsel İsa Araştırmalarında Yahudi İsa vurgusunun yükselişiyle birlikte Holokost çalışmalarının yoğunluğu da artmıştır. 1970'lere kadar Holokost üzerine kayda değer bir çalışma yoğunluğu yokken, 1970'lerden bu yana bu eğilim tersine dönmüş ve modern akademide başat bir yer edinmiştir. Holokost anlatısı, Tarihsel İsa Araştırmalarını da etkileyen dünyanın değişen jeopolitiği tarafından da değerlendirilmiştir. Arap-İsrail savaşları sonucunda bölgede yükselen İsrail'in dünya sistemine hizmet edebilecek ülkelerden biri haline gelmesiyle birlikte Holokost ve Yahudi İsa vurgusu akademide bir tür propagandaya dönüşmüştür. Ancak bu rüzgar değişiminin başarıya ulaşmasını sağlayan bu hareketler değildir. Soğuk Savaş'ın çözülmesine yol açan olay 1968 Prag Baharı'dır. Çekoslovakya'da yaratılmaya çalışılan Sovyetler Birliği örneği dışında bir Sosyalizm ideali Sovyet tankları tarafından ezilmiştir. Sovyetler Birliği kendi içindeki yozlaşmayı iyileştirmeye yönelik bu girişimi bizzat kendisi yok ettiğinden, Sovyetlerin bu tepkisi Sosyalizmin intiharı olarak görülmelidir. Bu nedenle Soğuk Savaş döneminin ikinci gücü ideolojik olarak sahnedeki çekilmiştir. Prag Baharı'nın ezilmesi, modern akademinin farklı alanlarında bir bahara yol açmıştır: Tarihsel İsa Arayışı ve Holokost Çalışmaları.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarihsel İsa Arayışı, Naziler, Ari, Holokost, Prag Baharı, Komünizm, ABD, İsrail.

Abstract: This article investigates the studies on the historical search for Jesus, which started in the Enlightenment, and focuses on the "Jewish Jesus" discourse that we encounter in today's academic studies.

The biggest obstacle to the new worldview of the Enlightenment Period was the Church, which represented the ancient world, and the Bible, which formed its theoretical ground. Biblical criticism emerged in Europe, especially in Western European countries where the Reformation was active and reached its peak there. This criticism activity, which could be seen as an effort to get rid of the epistemic and liturgical pressure of the Catholic Church at the beginning, had radical consequences in Protestant countries as the Enlightenment thought became dominant as a result of the necessary political conditions. Starting with the question of who Jesus really was as a starting point, this search

eventually led to a radical rejection of his historical existence. For in the reign of modernity, everything solid melts into air.

For this reason, German Christianity, which was the flag-bearer of the Reformation, took its share of responsibility for this catastrophe and tried to find a way out by making a distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. Despite Bultmann's best efforts, the criticism of the Bible has resulted in the rejection of religion as a whole.

The Prague Spring of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, which had begun with the idea of the Socialist world outside the Soviet power, failed within a week. What we see here is an obvious failure of Socialism and Communism as an ideology because the Soviets claim a despotic domination that does not allow any attitude other than its own. The visualization of this claim by Soviet tanks in the streets of Prague showed the world that the Soviets had crushed Socialism as an ideology that aimed to transform the world. From this point on, the dualism of the Cold War era, expressed in the USA and the USSR, ended in favor of the former. From this point on, Judaism, which had been living a silent diaspora life in the history of the world, came to light for the first time when Israel, as an independent state, defeated all its enemies in the region, even before its 20th anniversary. For the peoples of the Middle East, this event has what Hegel called a world-historical impact. Israel, nineteen centuries after its last exile, has regained a dominant position in the region. This political dominance was followed by the triumph of Jewish studies in modern academia. The study of Judaism as a discipline, which can be claimed to have emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century, was marred by anti-Semitic attitudes until the 1970s. This attitude led to the view of Jesus, who was born, grew up, and finally ceased to exist historically within the Judaism of his own time in the Gospels, in opposition to the figure of the "Jew" who had been labelled as a god-murderer: Jesus is the son of God, slain by the Jews, and his whole purpose is the abrogation of the Torah and the condemnation of the Jews. However, with the mentioned geopolitical change, this narrative of almost two millennia has undergone a radical shift.

The late-coming acceptance of the Jewishness of Jesus is now a scholarly cliché. In the context of the Gospels, to say "Jesus was a Jew" is not a shocking or unexpected idea. The problem with the Jewishness of Jesus is why it took until the 1970s for this idea to develop. The second problem is how the assertion of the Jewishness of Jesus could develop so tremendously in the contemporary academy. That is a difficult question to answer within the limits of theology alone. Therefore, in this essay, I will have recourse to help of politics and anthropology and ultimately will claim that the changing of the main discourse in the New Testament scholarship on Jesus the Jew has happened for several reasons, but the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars and the Prague Spring of 1968 have played more important roles than others like multiculturalism, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and the rise of neoliberalism. These two events might show us the motivation for the sudden but widely accepted shift. With the rising emphasis on the Jesus the Jew in Historical Jesus Studies, the intensity of Holocaust studies has also increased. Whereas there was no significant concentration of work on the Holocaust until the 1970s, this trend has been reversed and has taken a dominant place in modern academia since the 1970s. The Holocaust narrative has also been valorized by the changing geopolitics of the world, which has also influenced Historical Jesus Studies. With the rise of Israel in the region as a result of the Arab-Israeli wars, which made Israel one of the countries that could serve the world system, the emphasis on the Holocaust and Jesus the Jew became a kind of propaganda in the academy. However, it is not these movements that have ensured the success of this wind change. The event that led to the thawing of the Cold War was the Prague Spring of 1968. The idea of Socialism

outside the Soviet Union, which was trying to be created in Czechoslovakia, was defeated by Soviet tanks. Since the Soviet Union itself destroyed this attempt to heal the corruption within itself, the Soviet reaction must be seen as the suicide of Socialism. It is for this reason that the second power of the Cold War period ideologically withdrew from the scene. The crushing of the Prague Spring led to a spring in a different field of modern academia: the Quest for the Historical Jesus and Holocaust Studies.

Key Words: The Quest, the Nazis, Arian, Holocaust, Prague Spring, Communism, USA, Israel.

Introduction

The change in the perception of history in the modern period was made possible by the elimination of the Biblical narrative of history. In the pre-modern world, the narrative of history was parallel to the story of the creation of Adam and Eve, the subsequent Fall, and the stories of the later prophets. The only difference was that these stories were always vividly alive in the minds of those present at the time.

However, with modern historiography, the history beginning with Adam was replaced by the explanations of the theory of Evolution. The story constructed by the theory of Evolution, in which some dark and some stone ages were found in prehistory, and the being called man evolved from some primates and became what we know today, became more convincing than the story that God created the world in 7 days.

In this narrative shift, of course, the venerable figures of the Bible also had their fair share. The concept of the miracle, which had been so prevalent in the Bible since the Enlightenment, threatened the comforts that modern man had hardly been able to establish in his mind. If the world was a rational machine, nothing could be permitted to disturb the ordinary functioning of this machine.

In this process, Jesus was one of the most glaring and unsettling figures. His birth and death found no correspondence in the mind of modern man. Moreover, while he was alive, he was also adorned with stories that would cause many tremors. Through the distortions of the Catholic clergy, the authentic Jesus had been imprisoned in a web of miracles. On top of that, he faced a tyranny that could not be otherwise recognised by a class that monopolised the Bible. That is why the pioneers of the modern world, the Protestants, took action to free Jesus from the tyranny and bondage of the Catholic Church. We call this endeavour, which later acquired an academic character, the Quest for the Historical Jesus.

The Quest for the Historical Jesus is, in this sense, a mere product of the Enlightenment, and it has a kinship with other products: racism and rational religion. This is because the rise of racism has the same history as racialisation of Jesus in the Western Christianity. The scriptural view of human racial unity (as the children of Adam or Noah) was challenged by the polygenist theories of multiple, separate origins of the races of mankind of the Enlightened ethnologists. The rational religion, natural law and moral philosophy of the Enlightenment era led to endless attacks on the Bible as the core of the Christian life of the pre-modern times. The scientific thought that has gained enormous momentum since the seventeenth century, historically queried the traditional understanding of Jesus in Western Christendom, and eventually defeated it. However, the problem was not based on the examination of the Bible as historical, but the examination of the Bible with the information of this new-born scientific history.

Today, almost everything has been said about Jesus, including that he never actually existed. However, the most common assertions are the separation of the historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith and, more recently, Jesus the Jew. We can easily comprehend the attempt at the distinction of Jesus as an indirect result of Secularism in Western Europe, particularly in the European left, among the Protestants. It was not a surprise to see the first works criticising the Bible and Jesus emerge from Protestant countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. In this context, some theologians went beyond the traditional portrayal of Jesus and began to ask, “Who was Jesus of Nazareth in the first century Galilee and Judea?”

Conventionally, the Quest for the Historical Jesus is divided into three sections: the Old Quest, the New Quest and the Third Quest.¹

Scholarly Excursus or the History of the Quest for the Historical Jesus

In terms of historical scholarship, conventionally, the Quest was begun with H. S. Reimarius, and reached its peak with the Jesus Seminary founded in 1985. The Old Quest period is deemed to have begun in 1778 with Reimarius and ended with Albert Schweitzer’s apocalyptic prophet in 1911. Between 1906 and 1953, the minimal interest in the historical Jesus, with Bultmann’s theological existentialism and form-critical approach, is thought of as the Interim or No Quest period. The New Quest is typically deemed to have been inaugurated by Ernst Kasemann in 1953. The Third Quest, dating from the 1970s onwards, is thought to be more historical and less theological in its attempts to study the historical Jesus, with particular emphasis on Jesus in his own cultural context, as a Jew.²

Owing to historical scepticism and rationality, the Old Quest period’s scholars asked certain questions about Jesus, such as “Who was Jesus?”, “What did he do and say?”, “Why was he crucified?”, and “Did he really resurrect from death?” As can be seen, the questions were about the sources. So, first of all, the criticism of the sources started. The main problem was whether everything in the Gospel accounts was historical or authentic. The search began with the post-humous publishing of the *Apology and Defense for Reasonable Worshippers of God* of Hermann Samuel Reimarius’ (d. 1768), who was the great exponent of the religion of reason concerning Jesus, by G. E. Lessing in 1778.³ For Reimarius, the Gospels cannot be read historically, so he began to seek a Jesus beyond the Gospels. According to Reimarius, the real Jesus was obscured by the miracles and superstitions of traditional Christianity. Reimarius made the famous distinction between the historical

1 For a scholarly good work on the Quest, see G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1998).

2 See Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus In Contemporary Scholarship* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1994); Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 2-15.

3 *Reimarius: Fragments*, ed. C. H. Talbert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 2-3.

Jesus and the Christ of faith. He also argued that Jesus was not a man who was presented by the New Testament as the theological Christ, but was a political saviour of his time against the Romans.⁴

Following this, David F. Strauss (d. 1874) analysed the Gospels' miracle stories as myths about Jesus, in his work *Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*.⁵ Before Reimarius, these works were approached theologically, but after him, the historical method was accepted. Strauss, as a Tübingen theologian, suggested making a distinction between the Synoptics and John. According to Strauss, the Gospel of John represents a more improved mythological process, so the Synoptics must be preferred instead of John as historical sources.⁶ His ultimate assertion about Jesus is that the historical Jesus was transformed into the divine Christ by the primitive Church.⁷ In short, according to Strauss, the historical Jesus is so deeply buried in the myths and legends of early Christian society, that it is almost impossible to reveal an authentic biography of his earthly life.

Here, we must consider a Liberal-Protestant German theologian, Adolf von Harnack (d. 1930). His 16 conferences which were given at the university of Berlin were translated into English in the work *What is Christianity?* in 1901.⁸ Harnack argued that the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul do not play a significant role in the drawing of the real portrayal of the historical Jesus, so we must prefer the Synoptics, particularly Mark. He also underscored his view of Jesus based on Mark.⁹ According to Harnack, the principal of the Christian faith is the sermon of the Kingdom of God by Jesus. However, the central figure of the sermon is not the person Jesus, but God, who Jesus called Father.¹⁰ In contrast to Schweitzer, Harnack did not scrutinise the Kingdom of God as an apocalyptical kingdom, but a kingdom which will flourish in human history. In Harnack's words, the Kingdom of God is the will of God in the heart of the faithful.¹¹

Undoubtedly, the most important figure in the No Quest period is Albert Schweitzer (d. 1965), thanks to his work *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, published in 1906. He summarised the history of the quest until his time and criticised the attempts methodologically. Schweitzer argued that every scholar had tried to build his own Jesus. They studied the Jesus they wanted to see as a socialist, reformer, revolutionary, or romantic.¹²

4 Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress From Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black Ltd, 1911), 16-23.

5 D. F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined I-III*, trans. George Eliot (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

6 Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 78-95.

7 Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 87.

8 Adolf Harnack, *What is Christianity?: Lectures Delivered in the University of Berlin during the Winter Term 1899-1900*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (London: William and Norgate, 1901).

9 Harnack, *What is Christianity*, 21-22.

10 Harnack, *What is Christianity*, 56-61.

11 Harnack, *What is Christianity*, 60-61.

12 Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 161-165.

At the end of his work, Schweitzer says that almost all scholars made the same mistake: they thought of Jesus as their contemporary outside of his own context in Judaism. Whereas Jesus was a man who lived in the Jewish environment, the scholars were the children of the Enlightenment in Western Europe, mostly Protestants. Jesus lived in a time that was dominated by the belief in God and the sovereignty of the Law (or Torah), without any rational attacks on them. The problem lies in the modernisation of Jesus for the people of the 18th and 19th centuries. While the Enlightened scholars tried to show Jesus as more universal, they minimised or rejected the eschatological size of his message. However, for Schweitzer, Jesus cannot be isolated from the eschatological context, shared with Judaism, of his milieu.¹³

The most important result of the Old Quest was to underline the fact that the historical Jesus could not be revealed based on the available resources. The superstar of the No Quest was Rudolf Bultmann (d. 1976). He claimed that we do not have any possibility of knowing anything about the historical Jesus from the New Testament.¹⁴ This is because we cannot be sure about the reliability of the Gospels in terms of their witness to the historical Jesus. He also used the form-critical method to understand the nature, origin and transmission of the Synoptic Gospels. He argued that the form-critical approach to the Gospels represented the end of the historical Jesus quest.¹⁵ Because the Evangelists were not historians, they used the first Christians' oral narratives (because each tradition has its own setting in life) in their Gospels. Based on the narratives, he revealed that the Jesus of history is not possible.¹⁶ This is because, for Bultman, the materials in the Gospels did not illuminate the life of Jesus, only the context of the newly established primitive Church. The Christ preached in the Gospels is not the Jesus of History but the Christ in Faith. The theology of the church is not based on the historical Jesus, but Christ; therefore, there is no need to make any changes to it.

According to Bultmann, the most difficult aspect of the Quest is the huge gap between the minds of the first Christians and modern readers; that is, the mythological and scientific worldviews. Therefore, he tried to bridge this gap with the help of existentialism and de-mythologisation. For Bultmann, when one looked at the Gospels as historical, one can only discover that Jesus preached the Kingdom of God and died on the cross. However, Christianity cannot build on this, but on the kerygma or essence of the first Christians' faith.¹⁷

13 Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 396-401.

14 Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament I*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden (London: SCM Press, 1952), 3, 86; Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. Louise P. Smith and Erminie H. Lantero (London: Collins, 1958), 8-9, 13.

15 Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper, 1963), 127.

16 Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament I*, 42.

17 Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity: In Its Contemporary Setting*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Living Age Books, 1956), 86-93; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament I*, 19-20.

In the 1970s, Marcus Borg said there was a Renaissance in the Quest for Historical Jesus.¹⁸ Craig Evans' work on the historical Jesus studies has shown that there were more than 1,300 sources up to the end of the 1980s.¹⁹

Thanks to the translations of the Nag Hammadi Library, the Dead-Sea Scrolls and the submission of these texts to the researchers are of great importance to the awakening. While the Old and New Quests were limited by German scholars, the Third Quest flourished in the Anglo-American scholarship.

In spite of the pessimism of Bultmann and the insufficient efforts of Kasemann concerning the credibility of the Gospels, the doubts about the Gospels started to gradually diminish in the 1970s in North America, and furthermore, some optimistic opinions were presented by scholars. For example, John Robinson argued that the texts of the New Testament were completed before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.²⁰ In Crossan's book, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, Jesus is presented as a Galilean peasant artisan in the socio-historical context of the first century. His mode of teaching to the public can be understood as an analogy with the Cynic sage, because of the Hellenisation in Galilee, and because Cynicism was a form of life at that time.²¹

Another important scholar in terms of Jesus as an eschatological prophet is Sanders. His Jesus was a prophet of the restoration of Israel. The central theme of Jesus' message was the Kingdom of God as a new kingdom of Israel on earth.²²

In 1985, the Jesus Seminary was founded by Robert Funk and Roy Hoover in Berkeley, California.²³ The seminar focused on the authenticity of the acts and sayings of Jesus in the Gospels. The Jesus of them was portrayed as an itinerant Hellenistic Jewish sage and miraculous healer.²⁴ As Crossley claimed, "The Seminar has performed a forcible epispasm on the historical Jesus, a surgical procedure for removing the marks of circumcision."²⁵ The Gospel of Thomas was accepted as the fifth gospel in the book *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*. Moreover, the seminar suggested that the Gospel of Q, the Secret Gospel of Mark, and the Gospel of Peter are more credible sources than the canonical New Testament, because these books were written down much earlier than was thought.

18 Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 5.

19 Childon Bruce and C.A. Evans, *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994).

20 John Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976).

21 John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 72-88.

22 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 326-327; Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 183-184.

23 R. Funk and R. Hoover (eds.), *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

24 W. Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism, and the Construction of Contemporary Identity* (London & Oakville: Equinox, 2005), 17.

25 J. G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Projects for a New American Century* (London: Equinox, 2008), 175.

However, there was also an undesirable element which is why it has been neglected: the Nazi Quest, which occurred during the 1930s and 1940s. This endeavour, which can be described as the Aryan Jesus, was in line with the internal politics of National Socialist Germany. It resulted in the claim that Jesus was not a Jew, not even a Samaritan, but an Aryan tribal leader who lived in the Galilean region and was murdered by treacherous Jews. However, in terms of the scope of this article, there is more. Since 1973, we have had a new phenomenon in the Quest: Jesus the Jew. While in National Socialist Germany, the dominant discourse was Aryan Jesus, in the post-1973 academia the axis shifted in favour of Jesus the Jew. The story of this narrative shift, and its possible causes, is the reason for this article.

An Unwelcome Part: The Nazi Quest

In terms of the Quest for Historical Jesus studies in Nazi Germany, scholars mostly deliberately or unwittingly neglected this point, in order to keep Western civilisation away from the atrocities of that time, mainly from the Holocaust. As C. Marsh pointed out that “labelling this period that of the No Quest is at best misleading, and at worse a sinister abdication of moral responsibility.”²⁶ However, there are some works on the theological side. One of the finest examples is Susannah Heschel’s illuminative work on Positive Christianity and the Aryan Jesus.²⁷

Briefly stated, the famous Aryan theory which was the ideological excuse for the domestic policy of the NSDP ruled Germany was developed with the help of the Schlegel Brothers (d. 1829, d. 1845 respectively), Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (d. 1882),²⁸ Richard Wagner (d. 1883), Houston Stewart Chamberlain (d. 1927), Alfred Rosenberg (d. 1946), Gerhard Kittel (d. 1948), Emanuel Hirsch (d. 1972), Ludwig Mueller (d. 1945) and many others.²⁹

If we retrospectively look to the nineteenth century, there was a common idea among the German intellectuals that Germany was alone, and so it created a genealogy for itself, known as Aryanism. For the Schlegel brothers, there were nations that had established civilisation: a blue-eyed, blonde-haired breed: Aryans. Chamberlain stated that only Aryans were regarded as being capable of creative culture.³⁰ The Germans also believed that the Renaissance was

26 C. Marsh, “Quests of the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective,” in *BibInt* 5 (1997), 403-37

27 There are literally few works on this subject. The most famous one is belonging Mrs. Heschel, See Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). However, there are some critics of her work. See Robert Morgan, “Susannah Heschel’s Aryan Grundmann,” in *JSNT* 32/4 (2010), 431-494; Peter Head, “Susannah Heschel’s The Aryan Jesus: A Response,” in *JSNT* 32/4 (2010), 421-430; James E. McNutt “A Very Damning Truth: Walter Grundmann, Adolf Schlatter, and Susannah Heschel’s “The Aryan Jesus,” in *The Harvard Theological Review* 105/3 (July 2012), 280-301.

28 Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (London: William Heinemann, 1915).

29 Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 31.

30 Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (London: Chatto & Windus Heinemann for Sussex University Press, 1974), 313-20.

an Italian myth. Aryanism was based on the Sanskrit and Avesta translations of European scholars such as William Jones, Anquetil Duperron and Max Müller. The Aryan assumption served the purposes of Germany, which had not yet constituted national unity. According to theoreticians, German was a continuation of Sanskrit, and so the Germans were the best representatives of the western Aryan peoples. However, I think Arianism was an ideological excuse found by the oppressed German intelligence in the steady triumphs of Greco-Roman intelligence and under Napoleon's schemes in the German-French Wars. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Germans, deprived of all their rights by the Treaty of Versailles, fused Fichte and Herder nationalism on the one hand and the new-born Socialism on the other to form National Socialism. Ultimately, Arianism gained a new meaning at the hands of the Third Reich, which is now known all too well.

The Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life was founded to support the theological background of the theory of Aryanism in 1939. The Institute's hymnbook removed Jewish references such as Jerusalem or Zion and Hebrew words (e.g., Hallelujah, Amen, Hosanna etc.). There is no reference to Jesus' Jewishness, to Jerusalem, the Temple, the Old Testament, and the resurrection appearance in Jerusalem, but only to Galilea.³¹

As a prominent figure, Walter Grundmann was a German Protestant theologian and anti-Semitic Nazi during the Third Reich.³² He simply argued that Jesus was a Galilean, so he was Aryan,³³ because Galilee was supposedly a non-Jewish region speaking an unknown Indo-European language³⁴ and because of the colonisation of Assyrians, Phoenicians and Greeks, which presumably included some "purely Aryan blood" after the Assyrian deportation.³⁵

Indeed, Grundmann's ideas were also shared by Adolf Hitler. For example, on the evening of 29th November 1944, Hitler said that

Jesus was most certainly not a Jew. The Jews would never have handed one of their own people to the Roman courts; they would have condemned Him themselves. It is quite probable that a large number of the descendants of the Roman legionaries, mostly Gauls, were living in Galilee, and Jesus was probably one of them. His mother

31 Susannah Heschel, "The Theological Faculty at the University of Jena as a Stronghold of National Socialism," in *History of Universities*, Mordechai Feingold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 143-169.

32 Walter Grundmann "Who Is Jesus of Nazareth? (1940)" in *A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940*, ed. trans. by Mary M. Solberg (London and New York: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2015), 453-469; Walter Grundmann, "Jesus of Nazareth and Jewry (1940)," in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, ed. and trans. Rabinbach, Gilman, 194-195.

33 Susannah Heschel, "Nazifying Christian Theology: Walter Grundmann and the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life," in *Church History* 63 (1994), 587-605.

34 Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 307-309; Walter Künneht "Jesus: Aryan or Jew? (1936)," in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, ed. and trans. Anson Rabinbach, Sander L. Gilman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 433-435.

35 H. S. Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Lees (London: John Lane, 1912), 201.

may well have been a Jewess. Jesus fought against the *materialism* of His age, and, therefore, against the Jews.³⁶

Hitler already said in his former discussion on 21 October 1941 that “Galilee was a colony where the Romans had probably installed Gallic legionaries, and it is certain that Jesus was not a Jew.”³⁷ As known, Hitler always mentioned Jews with the Bolsheviks, as the Judeo- Bolshevism.³⁸ He accused them of two completely contradictory sins: first, the Jews, for him, played the most active role in the Communist Revolution of 1917 (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, etc.); and secondly, they were the worst capitalist exploiters of the German folk for him.³⁹

Chamberlain, the son-in-law of Wagner, confidently argued that “the answer to the question, Was Christ a Jew? is by no means a simple one. In religion and education, He was so undoubtedly; in race- in the narrower and real sense of the word “Jew” -most probably not.”⁴⁰ For Chamberlain, the great personality of Jesus Christ has been burdened with all the sterility of Near-Eastern, Jewish and African life because of Paul’s falsification and exploitation of Jesus’ message.

In this atmosphere, therefore; Jesus was redefined as an Aryan hero who struggled against Jews and Judaism (so against materialism, like the Soviets’ Dialectical materialism), not against the Romans.⁴¹ According to Chamberlain, Christ of course lived in a Jewish context, but “His advent is not the perfecting of the Jewish religion but its negation.”⁴² The Old Testament as a book of religious instruction was abolished. There was an unbridgeable religious contradiction between Judaism and Christianity.⁴³ As a result of this ideologized theology, there was committed the Shoah.

However, if we accept the account of the Gospels, Jesus as the son of Mary was a kinsman of John the Baptist, according to Luke 1:36. John’s mother, Elizabeth, was a Levite. She is described as “a descendant of Aaron.” John’s father was Zecharia, a priest (Luke 1:5). In this case, Jesus descended -certainly through his mother- from the priestly house of Aaron, not from the royal house of David.

36 Hugh Trevor-Roper (ed. and intro.), *Hitler’s Table Talk 1941-44: His Private Conversations*, trans. N. Cameron and R. H. Stevens (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), 721.

37 Trevor-Roper, *Hitler’s Table Talk 1941-44*, 76.

38 Alfred Rosenberg, “Bolshevism: The Work of an Alien Race (1945),” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, ed. and trans. Anson Rabinbach, Sander L. Gilman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 199-200.

39 I. Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936: Hubris* (London: Penguin, 1999), 257, 259, 303; D. Eckhart, *Bolshevism: From Moses to Lenin: A Dialogue Between Adolf Hitler and Me*, trans. William L. Pierce (Hillsboro: National Vanguard Books, 1999).

40 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, 202.

41 Julius Streicher “Bolshevism and Synagogue (1941),” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, ed. and trans. Anson Rabinbach, Sander L. Gilman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 724-725.

42 Chamberlain, *Ibid*, 202.

43 Heschel, “Nazifying Christian Theology...,” 591.

The Birth of a Cliché: Jesus the Jew

The prominent scholar Vermes claimed that the Gospels only offer the skeleton of Jesus' life.⁴⁴ Indeed, he was the creator of the modern phenomenon of Jesus the Jew. His Jesus was definitely not a Christian. When he argued this, Vermes was really shocked at the positive reactions, and he returned to his idea.⁴⁵ He tried to present a new life of Jesus, using not only the Gospels but also the Jewish sources. Vermes' Jesus was a *Hasid*, a Galilean holy man. In the first century, being a Galilean made a person unreliable and dangerous in the eyes of the religious Jewish and secular Roman authorities in Jerusalem. He performed miracles, healed and exorcised people, and gathered many followers around him. Finally, he was executed by the religious and civic authorities because of political reasons.⁴⁶ However, Vermes stated that he was not thought of as an extraordinary or divine man, because there were some Jewish charismatic figures, such as Hanina ben Dosa who acted in a roughly similar way to Jesus in the Jewish literature.⁴⁷ He was a part of the charismatic Judaism of the first century. Theissen and Merz disagree with Vermes in this case, because the authors argued that

it was certainly not the case that in the world of the time of Jesus, every charismatic attracted miracle tradition. No miracles were related to John the Baptist... Nowhere else do we find a charismatic miracle worker whose miraculous deeds are meant to be the end of an old world and the beginning of a new one.⁴⁸

In 1985, the Jesus Seminar was founded by Robert Funk and Roy Hoover in Berkeley, California.⁴⁹ The seminar focused on the authenticity of the acts and sayings of Jesus in the Gospels. The Jesus of them was portrayed as an itinerant Hellenistic Jewish sage and miraculous healer. The Gospel of Thomas was accepted as the fifth gospel. Moreover, the Seminar suggested that the Gospel of Q, the Secret Gospel of Mark, and the Gospel of Peter are more credible sources than the canonical New Testament, because these books were written down much earlier than was thought.⁵⁰

However, Pearson and Arnal assert that the Jesus of the Jesus Seminar is also a non-Jewish Jesus, because the ideology which produced him is like that which produced the "Aryan Jesus" of the 1930s.⁵¹ As Crossley claimed, "The Seminar has performed a forcible epispasm on the historical Jesus, a surgical procedure for removing the marks of circumcision."⁵²

44 Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973); Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993).

45 Geza Vermes, *Providential Accidents: An Autobiography* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 213-14.

46 Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 42-53; R. Aslan, *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Random House, 2013).

47 Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 79.

48 Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 304, 309.

49 R. Funk, & R. Hoover (eds.) *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

50 Funk and Hoover, *The Five Gospels*, 2-5.

51 Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus*, 17; B. A. Pearson, "The Gospel According to the Jesus Seminar," in *Religion* 25 (1995), 317-38.

52 Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror*, 175.

Jesus among Post-Moderns

The rhetoric of the Jewishness of Jesus has been remarkably widespread in academia since the 1970s. There are several reasons for the emergence of the emphasis on a culturally stable Jewish identity in the historical Jesus scholarship.

Arnal gives some reasons for this popular stream. For example, he states that it is a reaction against the dominance of pre-1970s German scholarship, a desire to show that Christianity is not antisemitic at its core, and so to distance Christianity from complicity in the Shoah.⁵³ Jonathan Z. Smith claimed that Christianity has been insulated by the use of Judaism in Christian origins from outside influences such as Graeco-Roman beliefs or some esoteric cults.⁵⁴ In this case, Judaism might be seen to function as a kind of buffer zone to absorb pagan influences for the maintenance of the purity of Christianity.

Another scholar in this field, H. Moxnes, argues about how the historical Jesus studies emerged at the same time as the growth of nationalism in Europe.⁵⁵ That is not a surprise, and with the help of the demolishing of the Genesis-aligned anthropology by the Enlightened ethnologists and biologists such as Linnaeus, Blumenbach and others, they opened the way to a “secular or scientific racism.”⁵⁶ Frankly, there is no reason to dispute the contribution of these factors to the emergence of the strange debate over the “Jewish Jesus”, but the two which are mentioned above, the 1967 and 1973 Wars and the Prague Spring of 1968, might also be put on the list.

The Holocaust: Renaissance of a Forgotten Memory

The word Holocaust was originally derived from the Greek word ὁλόκαυστος / holókaustos, and it was then adopted into Latin as *holocaustum*. In turn, this is a compound word made up of the adjectives ὅλος / hóllos, which means whole, entire, and complete in all of its components, and καυστός / kaustós, which is another adjectival form and means “burnt.” Consequently, the etymological definition of the word “ὁλόκαυστος” and its English counterpart “holocaust” appears to be “something that has been completely burned away.” Yet, the technical definition of the term is “a sacrifice consumed by fire,” also known as a “burnt-offering.” Significantly, the word we are looking for (ὁλόκαυστος and its different forms), appears over two hundred times in the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, and each time it is used to refer about a sacrifice (to be

53 Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus*, 39-72.

54 Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 83.

55 H. Moxnes, “Schleiermacher’s *Life of Jesus*, 19th Century Nationalism, and the Present Challenge,” in W. Blanton, J. G. Crossley and H. Moxnes (eds.), *Jesus beyond Nationalism: Constructing the Historical Jesus in a Period of Cultural Complexity* (London: Equinox, 2009), 27-43.

56 C. Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 79-120.

offered to God).⁵⁷ As we know, the burnt offering was the highest order of sacrifice in the Old Testament ritual.⁵⁸

In this sense, the word favoured by the Jews for the tragedy that befell them in the concentration camps of 1940s Germany makes an interesting point. The Jewish mind, which claims to be the Chosen Sons of God, has found in the Greek Biblical meaning of the word holocaust a way out of this tragedy, which was a kind of culmination of the massacre it had suffered for centuries, without damaging its faith. Just as Abraham decided to sacrifice Isaac (according to the Torah) and God honoured his sacrifice with the Promised Land, so the Jews who lost their lives in concentration camps and gas chambers in the early 1940s were sacrifices offered to God for the establishment of the State of Israel in 1949. Therefore, their tragedy is in fact a test from God, and the atonement they have to pay in order to be able to return to their homeland from which they have been separated for almost 2000 years. In this sense, the Holocaust is, of course, a *genocide* in the legal sense since Raphael Lemkin.⁵⁹ But it is more than a genocide for the Jews. It is the reaffirmation of their covenant, which had been damaged for almost two millennia, through the blood of millions of Jews.

One thing ought to be taken into consideration here. According to Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, there was no use of this word in this context before it was used to refer to the extermination of Jews in Nazi Germany.⁶⁰ On the other hand, as Agamben alludes to in an indirect manner,⁶¹ we are familiar with a historical usage of the term “holocaust” that has the connotation of both a massacre and a sacrifice at the same time.⁶²

Richard of Devizes was an English chronicler who lived in the late 12th century. He was a Benedictine monk at St. Swithin’s convent in Winchester and is credited with writing the chronicles of King Richard I (r. 1189-1199). Seemingly, during the time of the coronation of Richard I, the people of London gave an example to the rest of the English people who lived

57 Edwin Hatch, Henry A. Redpath, *Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), vol I, 987-989; H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. H. S. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1217, and Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, “Why Do We Call the Holocaust “The Holocaust?” An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels,” in *Modern Judaism* 9/2 (May 1989), 197-211, at 199.

58 Morris Jastrow, Jr., J. Frederic McCurdy, Kaufmann Kohler, Louis Ginzberg, “Burnt Offering,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1902), vol III, 439-442.

59 Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Clark, N.J.: Lawbook Exchange, 1943), 79-98.

60 Garber and Zuckerman, “Why Do We Call the Holocaust “The Holocaust?...” 197-211.

61 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 30-31.

62 “Eodem coronationis die, circa illam sollemnitate horam qua Filius immolabatur Patri, incoeptum est in civitate Londonise *immolare Judaeos patri suo diabolo*; tantaque fuit hujus Celebris mora mysterii, ut vix altera die compleri potuerit *holocaustum*. Aemulatae sunt alise civitates regionis et urbes fidem Londoniensium, et pari devotione suos sanguisugas cum sanguine transmiserunt ad inferos.” Ricardus Divisiensis, “De Rebus Gestis Ricardi Primi,” in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett (London: Logman & Co., 1886), vol III, 383-454, at 383.

in the realm by submitting themselves to two days of atrocities perpetrated against the Jews. Here is the account of Richard of Devizes, which is as follows:

On the very day of the coronation [of Richard I (r. 1189-1199)], about that solemn hour, in which the Son was immolated to the Father, *a sacrifice of the Jews to their father the devil* was commenced in the city of London, and so long was the duration of this famous mystery, that *the holocaust could scarcely be accomplished the ensuing day*. The other cities and towns of the kingdom emulated the faith of the Londoners, and with a like devotion despatched their bloodsuckers with blood to hell.⁶³

With this background information in mind, we can move on to discussing how the idea of the Holocaust has developed in more recent times. As N. Finkelstein and P. Novick have argued, there was no Holocaust memorial or museum in the US before 1967, but since that time, Holocaust memorials and publicity have steadily increased.⁶⁴ There were some reasons to explain this absence. For example, in the Cold War conditions, the Jews were forced to forget the memories of the Shoah to avoid the accusation of Communism. This is because when Hitler failed, Stalin rose. After the war, West Germany was a crucial ally of the US against the USSR. To remember the Shoah meant to blame Germany for the crimes of genocide against the Jews. To criticise Germany, even if just with the name of Hitler, meant pro-Communism. The accusation of Communism was the least favoured thing among the Jews at that time, because of the McCarthy witch-hunt.

That is a strange situation. The Jews, when they were living under the Nazis in Germany, were accused of being Communist or “Judeo-Bolshevik.” After the terrible atrocity, the Shoah, the Jewish people were forced to stifle their reminiscences because of the fear of accusations of being a Communist. It seems like a short and terrible joke of modern times.

The birth of the remembrance of the Holocaust was in 1967. Not only the remembrance, but also the sacralisation of the Shoah as the Holocaust. From 1967 to now, every state had its own Holocaust memorial museum in the USA. In the UK it is the same. For example, a memorial will be built in the heart of London, in Westminster’s face. Finkelstein argues that the discourse of the Holocaust is used as an ideological weapon that supports Israeli actions and has little to do with the horrors of Jewish suffering under the Nazis. The Holocaust has taken a central role in society. Novick presents an expressive brief about the change, saying,

It has become commonplace in recent years that Israel and the Holocaust are the twin pillars of American Jewish “civil religion” – the symbols that bind together Jews in the United States whether they are believers or nonbelievers, on the political right, left, or

63 Richard of Devizes, “The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes, concerning the Deeds of King Richard the First, King of England,” in *Chronicles of the Crusades: Contemporary Narratives of the Crusade of Richard Coeur de Lion and of the Crusade of Saint Louis*, trans. John Allen Giles and Thomas Johnes (London : George Bell and Sons, 1888), 1-64, at 3.

64 N. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London & New York: Verso, 2003), 22; P. Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 146.

centre. But through the mid-1960s Israel, like the Holocaust, didn't loom that large in American Jewish consciousness. In the late sixties and early seventies, Israel became much more important to American Jews, and, in a set of spiralling interactions, concern with Israel was expressed in ways that evoked the Holocaust, and vice versa... As is well known, the spring of 1967 was a dramatic turning point in American Jews' relationship to Israel.⁶⁵

After 1967, the discourse on the Holocaust reached its peak. What Finkelstein and Chomsky called an industry was born in 1967. However, the question is still unanswered over why it took more than two decades.

The 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars

During the Six-Day War, Israel demonstrated beyond a doubt that it was victorious in its major conflict with secular national Arab states such as Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, and it maintained its winning streak in 1973. Israel's territory has politically and religiously increased as a direct consequence of its occupation of the Sinai Peninsula (which is located in Egypt), the Golan Heights (which is located in Syria), the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem (of Lebanon) following the conflicts that took place in 1967 and 1973. This meant that Israel had assumed its new position in the Middle East for the interests of the United States, alongside Saudi Arabia and Iran. Throughout this conflict, Israel was able to exhibit its effectiveness and highlight its significance to Western interests in the Middle East. Henry Jackson, a leading oil expert in the senate, explained why US interests and Israel's security became twinned, saying,

Mr. President, such stability as now obtains in the Middle East is, in my view, largely the result of the strength and Western orientation of Israel on the Mediterranean and *Iran* [under the Shah] on the Persian Gulf. These two countries, *reliable friends* of the United States, together with *Saudi Arabia*, have served to inhibit and contain those irresponsible and radical elements in certain Arab States – such as *Syria, Libya, Lebanon, and Iraq* – who, were they free to do so, would pose a grave threat indeed to our principal sources of petroleum in the Persian Gulf.⁶⁶

Moreover, this idea and Israel's victory might have another function, such as a cure for the US fiasco in Vietnam in the same years.⁶⁷

Consequently, there has been a dramatic shift towards a positive attitude towards Israel and Judaism, alongside greater interest in the Holocaust. In terms of the Quest, since Vermes' *Jesus the Jew* in 1973, the Jewishness of Jesus has gained invincible acceptance in academia.

65 Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, 48, 146.

66 A. Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (London: Pluto, 1999), 535.

67 D. Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 77-78.

No-one in the current mainstream New Testament scholarship actually questions whether or not Jesus was a Jew.⁶⁸

As Crossley stated,

It was in the post-1967 period that a staunchly pro-Israeli line is found more broadly in Western politics, culture and strands of Christian thought, and that these social and ideological conditions paved the way for the acceptance of, and emphasis on, “Jesus the Jew”, along with attempts to distance Christianity from complicity in the Holocaust.⁶⁹

Crossley is an impressive and passionate academic who still produces works on this issue.⁷⁰ However, in this case, there is one crucial point that he ignored. How could the American political shift from the Soviet Union to the Middle East be possible, when the USSR was alive as a threat to America in the 1960s? The answer might be found in one of the most important events of modern times: the Prague Spring.

The Prague Spring of 1968

Before the Six-Days War, the communist Czechoslovakia supported the Egyptian army in terms of munitions and tanks.⁷¹ Czechoslovakia, after the war in 1968, began to enact a series of reforms in the Communist circle. The Czech government initiated an independent programme of reform (the process of de-Stalinisation) which was called the “Action Programme” in opposition to its Russian rulers. It began on 5th January 1968 and continued until 21st August 1968, when the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Pact invaded the country to halt and crash the reforms. Their short-lived attempt to build a better Communism after its exploitation by Stalin and his successors such as Brezhnev was called the Prague Spring of 1968. However, Moscow’s Polit Buro, did not allow any activity such as the Spring without its permission. Finally, at the peak of the Cold War in August 1968, Soviet tanks entered Prague and occupied Czechoslovakia. Not only Soviet troops, but also East German forces from the German Democratic Republic, units that originally had trained to fight a war against NATO forces deployed in West Germany. Now their guns were turned in a different direction. Ultimately, all reformers were punished, exiled or killed. The reforms were reversed. A witness of 1968, Milan Kundera summarised what happened in 1968 that the Prague Spring, that dizzying liberalization of Communism which ended with the Russian invasion.⁷² Thus, the Spring was turned into winter.⁷³

68 Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus*, 100.

69 Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror*, 146.

70 J. G. Crossley, “Jesus the Jew since 1967,” in *Jesus beyond Nationalism: Constructing the Historical Jesus in a Period of Cultural Complexity*, eds. W. Blanton, J. G. Crossley and H. Moxnes (London: Equinox, 2009), 119-138.

71 Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 188-189.

72 Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. M. H. Heim (New York: Harper&Row, 1984), 133.

73 K. Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

According to Bloomfield, “in short-range and longer political terms, the crushing of the Prague Spring would have disastrous consequences for the future of world communism.”⁷⁴ With the Prague Spring, Communism committed suicide and lost its last chance to survive against the capitalist market. Communism in August 1968 had lost its moral value as a political and ideological movement. Moreover, the Russian invasion was intensively used by the socialist movements in the Western metropolises against the Soviet Union. The movements, at that time, were criticising American imperialism until the invasion of Prague. After the occupation, the US breathed a sigh of relief because of the shifting of the criticism center from America to the Soviet Union. The Eastern Bloc started to split within itself. For example, Albany and Romania condemned the invasion and withdrew their tiny fiefdoms from the Warsaw Pact.⁷⁵ Therefore, its threat to America gradually diminished, but in the media it survived, and it still persists as a good example of the manufacturing of consent.⁷⁶

Thanks to the Prague Spring, the attitude change was possible, and Israel has become a reliable friend in the Middle East. As a result, the Holocaust memorialisation was approved, and soon afterwards, Jesus the Jew emerged as the focal point of scholars.

Echoes from the Academy

Edward Said remarked that from the early-to mid-1970s, and after the Arab-Israeli wars in particular, “the Arab” and/or “the Muslim” had become a figure in American popular culture, the academic world, the cultural world, the policy planner’s world and the business world.⁷⁷ In this period, according to Chomsky and Achcar, antisemitism was transferred from Jew to Arab (an Israeli David confronting a brutal Arab Goliath).⁷⁸

Furthermore, the critics of Israeli state actions have been linked with antisemitism since the birth of Israel’s importance. Chomsky (1992) and Finkelstein (2005) argued that historical antisemitism was redefined with the Six-Day War, and that the critics of Israel, and those in opposition to the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan or Iraq and nuclear armament, are the new-antisemite. That is to say that talking about Israel’s actions now means questioning the USA. *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics* might be a good example to illustrate the point. David Horowitz’s sensationalist (and equally ridiculous) book was published in 2006, and his list includes plenty of prominent critics of Israeli state aggression, such as Chomsky, Finkelstein, Victor Navasky and John Bellamy Foster.

74 J. Bloomfield, “The ‘Prague Spring’ Re-assessed,” in *Marxism Today* May (1978), 154-160.

75 J. Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

76 E. S. Herman and A. N. Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Vintage, 1988).

77 Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Vintage, 1981), 3-79.

78 A. Noam Chomsky and G. Achcar, *Perilous Power: The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. S. R. Shalom (Boulder & London: Paradigm, 2007), 204-14.

As Crossley insistently argued that the implication of such antisemitism is also important for understanding the historical Jesus scholarship and the massive emphasis on Jesus' Jewishness.⁷⁹

Bernard Lewis was a prominent Middle East scholar, of Jewish and Muslim relations in particular. His article *The Roots of Muslim Rage* inspired the famous *Clash of Civilisations* by S. Huntington in 1993.⁸⁰ According to Huntington, after the USSR, the West lost its great enemy, the communists, and states will fight each other on a religious and cultural basis from now on.⁸¹ The war will be between Islamic and Judeo-Christian cultures. Sure, there is a Confucianist China, but the big problem will be between the unsecular Islamic world and the secular West, famously called "the West and the Rest."⁸² Hitler's labelling of "Judeo-Bolshevism" has now turned into "Judeo-Christian".

The birth of the Jewishness of Jesus, the importance of Israel for the West, and the Holocaust discourse interestingly, have the same roots at the same time. The Biblical promised lands must be protected against the Arabic Goliath, according to the Christian Zionists.⁸³

The cases of Nadia Abu al-Haj from Barnard College and Douglas Giles from Roosevelt University are well known as a result of neo-antisemitism. Giles was fired when he answered a question about Palestinian rights in 2005.⁸⁴ al-Haj's case was more dramatic, because she was intensively accused of something she did not do, and finally, her tenure was rejected.⁸⁵ Her crime was alleged by Paula A. Stern and A. M. Maeir that "*the Jews destroyed Jerusalem in the year 70 CE*" in her book.⁸⁶ However, al-Haj wrote that

Clearly we know from historical accounts (from Josephus's book *The Jewish Wars* for one) that *the Roman Legion burned the city down, destroying the Upper City on the eighth of Elul, in the year 70 C.E.*⁸⁷

These events are mentioned to show how the political change towards Israel and Judaism has developed since 1967, and how this political approach has determined academic research in spite of academics' objections. The political shift which has affected culture provides for a much more positive attitude toward Judaism which could take place in New Testament and Christian origins scholarship.⁸⁸

79 Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror*, 150.

80 Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," in *the Atlantic* (Sept. 1990), 47–60.

81 S. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1993), 22–49.

82 S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

83 Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror*, 152–156; H. Lindsey, & C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970).

84 H. Porter, "The Land of the Free – but Free Speech Is a Rare Commodity," in *Observer* (Sunday August 13, 2006).

85 G. Birkner, "Barnard Alumnae Opposing Tenure for Anthropologist," in *New York Sun* (November 16, 2006).

86 A. M. Maeir, "Review of Nadia Abu al-Haj, *Facts on the Ground*," in *Isis* 95 (2004), 523–24.

87 N. Abu al-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 144.

88 Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror*, 172.

Conclusion

The Quest for the Historical Jesus is conventionally deemed to have begun in the eighteenth century and reached its peak point with the Jesus Seminar in 1985. The portrayals of Jesus are various. He is thought of as an apocalyptic, an eschatological prophet, a miraculous healer, an exorciser, a Pharisaic teacher, a teacher affected by the Pharisees, an Aryan, a black man, an Indian, a non-Jew Galilean, a Galilean Jew, a Jewish prophet, a Hasid, a holy anarchist, a feminist, a vegetarian, a fighter against ecological crisis and so on. The extant criticism of Schweitzer is still valid, in that it is the reconstruction of Jesus in our own times through our modernised mind under different socio-political and cultural conditions. A well-known parable summarises what has been told during the history of the Quest for the Historical Jesus: *The Blind Men and the Elephant*.

In summary, in this essay, it has been argued that the increase in the importance of Israel has the same history as the Jewishness of Jesus idea in the Quest, and the formation of the worldwide acceptance of Holocaust memorialisation. These shifts originated in the 1967 and 1973 Wars, and the positive attitude towards Israel and Judaism. However, the change could possibly be due to the disappearance of the chief enemy, Communism, with the crushing of the Prague Spring by the USSR in 1968. That is because Communism lost its last chance to renew itself against Capitalism. Since that time, Holocaust discourse has gained tremendous dominance. In this context, Vermes' very sharp distinction between the Jewish Jesus of history and the Christ of Faith could gain appreciation. After Vermes, the emphasis on Jesus' Jewishness has constantly been perpetuated in historical Jesus studies.

This does not mean that all scholars who say that Jesus was a Jew write their works whilst thinking of the 1967 and 1973 Wars or the Prague Spring, but these are the circumstances that allowed them not to be alone when claiming these ideas. "Jesus the Jew" is not only possible but is also widely accepted. In the light of contemporary issues and geopolitical shifts under the influence of the Prague Spring and the Arab-Israeli wars of 1968-1973, to assert that "Jesus was a Jew" is an equivalent statement and has the same function as saying "Jesus was an Aryan, a non-Jewish Galilean" in Nazi Germany. That is because the second phrase was argued in Hitlerite Germany to support its political ideology. Similarly, the discourse on "Jesus was a Jew" has been promoted to contribute to the economic and political interests of the Anglo-American world after the 1970s. The claim that Jesus was a Jew is a simple conclusion for modern scholars to draw from the Bible, but since it took about 1900 years to reach this conclusion and for it to be accepted, we can speak here of an ideological attitude, as in Hitler's Germany, rather than a simple assertion of historical fact. In our opinion, both of these suggestions are politically and religiously biased and therefore erroneous. After all, Jesus was not a Jew nor a Christian, but an Israelite.

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