

Jesus the Jew in Christian Memory

Jesus the Jew is the primary signifier of Christianity's indebtedness to Judaism. This connection is both historical and ongoing. In this book, Barbara Meyer shows how Christian memory, as largely intertwined with Jewish memory, provides a framework to examine the theological dimensions of Historical Jesus research. She explores the topics that are central to the Jewishness of Jesus, such as the Christian relationship to law and otherness as a Christological category. Through the lenses of the otherness of the Jewish Jesus for contemporary Christians, she discusses such topics as circumcision, natality, vulnerability, and suffering in dialogue with thinkers seldom drawn into Jewish-Christian discourse, notably Hannah Arendt, Julia Kristeva, Martha Nussbaum, and Adi Ophir. Meyer demonstrates how the memory of Jesus' Jewishness is a key to reconfiguring contemporary challenges to Christian thought, such as particularity and otherness, law and ethics after the Shoah, human responsibility, and divine vulnerability.

Barbara U. Meyer is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Tel Aviv University. She is the author of *Christology in the Shadow of the Shoah: In the Light of Israel* and numerous articles on contemporary interreligious dynamics and changing Christian approaches to law.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49889-0 — Jesus the Jew in Christian Memory
Barbara U. Meyer
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Jesus the Jew in Christian Memory

Theological and Philosophical Explorations

BARBARA U. MEYER

Tel Aviv University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-49889-0 — Jesus the Jew in Christian Memory
 Barbara U. Meyer
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108498890

DOI: 10.1017/9781108689755

© Cambridge University Press 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Meyer, Barbara U., 1968– author.

TITLE: Jesus the Jew Christian memory : theological and philosophical explorations / Barbara Meyer, Tel Aviv University.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA : Cambridge University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019035711 (print) | LCCN 2019035712 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108498890 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108712835 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108689755 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Jesus Christ–Jewishness. | Christianity and other religions–Judaism. | Judaism–Relations–Judaism.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BT590.J8 M49 2019 (print) | LCC BT590.J8 (ebook) | DDC 232.9/06–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019035711>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019035712>

ISBN 978-1-108-49889-0 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49889-0 — Jesus the Jew in Christian Memory
Barbara U. Meyer
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

For Jon

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49889-0 — Jesus the Jew in Christian Memory
Barbara U. Meyer
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> ix
Introduction: The Jewishness of Jesus as a Theological Challenge	I
1 What Is Christian Memory?	16
The Interreligious Dimension of Christian Memory	17
Ethics of Memory between Jews and Christians	28
The Presence of Memory in Liturgy	32
Theology between Communities of Memory	37
2 The Past: History of Halakhah and Dogma	42
Remembering Second Temple Judaism	44
Jesus and the Law: Bound and Binding	49
Only Jesus: Uniqueness and Belonging	56
The Historical Jesus and Christian Dogma	63
3 The Present: Jesus and Jewish Continuity	66
What Does It Mean to Say That Jesus <i>Is</i> Jewish?	67
Blackness and Jewishness	69
Jewishness between the First and the Twenty-First Centuries	75
Jesus the Jew between the First and the Twenty-First Centuries	89
4 The Future: Regarding the Human	99
The Future of Our Humanity	104
The Future of Our Divine Spark: Natality	107
Covenant Continued: Circumcision	115
Like Us – but Different: Two-Natures Christology	121

5	After and Against Suffering	128
	Against “Pathodicy”: After Levinas	128
	The Cross and Jewish Suffering	131
	The Suffering of the Other	137
	Against Redemptive Suffering	143
6	Between Jesus, the Jew, and the Other	149
	Otherness as a Christological Category	151
	After the “End of the Law”: <i>Telos</i> of Torah	157
	Jesus, the Jew, and Islam	168
	Vulnerability in Dogma and History	174
	Conclusion	180
	Postscript: Interreligious Christology	188
	<i>Bibliography</i>	193
	<i>Index</i>	206

Acknowledgments

As an anti-missionary Christian theologian at an Israeli university, I typically do not initiate conversations about Jesus with my colleagues. But we do talk about topics important to Christology, such as difference, uniqueness and belonging, the migration of knowledge, translation, how to avoid essentialism, or how to affirm cultural continuity. For this atmosphere of openness and methodological critique, I thank my colleagues in Interreligious Studies, first and foremost Menachem Fisch, who initiated and built CRIS (The Center for Religious and Interreligious Studies at Tel Aviv University), as well as Adam Afterman, Yossi Schwartz, Lena Salayme, and Ahmad Ighbariyye. Our seminars in Cambridge, together with Simon Goldhill and Christian Wiese, also gave me opportunities to speak with David Ford, whose theological work I greatly admire. Menachem Fisch's confident advice and appreciative mentorship have been extraordinary – blessed is the academic who has such a senior colleague to consult with.

Teaching Christian Thought in a Religious Studies program in a predominantly Jewish context sharpens the question of what precisely can be called Christian. I thank my colleagues of our small but intellectually intriguing Religious Studies program: Hami Verbin, Ron Margolin, Gidi Bohak, Uriya Shavit, and especially Shlomo Biderman, who founded the program and welcomed me there as a theologian. Tel Aviv University has become my academic base, and I thank many colleagues from other departments for making me feel at home here, especially Galia Patt-Shamir, Arye Edrei, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, Ishai Rosen-Zvi, Hagi Kenaan, Zohar Shavit, Aviad Kleinberg, Scott Ury, Yifat Monnickendam, Rivka

Feldhay, Jose Brunner, Eyal Zisser, our previous, and Leo Corry, our current dean.

While I have only recently begun using the word “Christology” in the titles of my seminars, my teaching about Jesus in Israeli academia goes back a long time, beginning at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem and then, for many years, at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (IDC). These teaching experiences, and the many fresh insights offered by both rabbinical and secular Israeli students there, have helped shape my theory of Jesus the Jew in Jewish memory. I thank Yehoyada Amir, who established “Introduction to Christianity” as a mandatory course for all rabbinical students at Hebrew Union College. And I thank my colleagues from IDC for their ongoing support and friendship, especially Lior Barshack, Uriel Procaccia, Marina Arbiv, and Haya and Yoram Shachar. I would also like to thank Uri Reichman and Amnon Rubinstein for their outstanding support in the early stages of my career.

I am grateful for an international circle of scholars serious about the Christological questions arising from the new Jewish-Christian encounter. We have convened in Rome, Istanbul, Chicago, and San Antonio, and I hope we will continue this and further conversations. Thanks to Tamara Eshkenazi, Hans Hermann Henrix, Jasper Svartvik, Phil Cunningham, Norbert Hofmann, John Pawlikowski, Joseph Sievers, Michael McGarry, Peter Pettit, and especially Mary Boys for her inspiring thoughts, and also for making me aware of Elisabeth Johnson’s work. I thank Ruth Langer for her remarkable scholarly guidance and Katharina von Kellenbach for her amazing cross-cultural insights. Many thanks to Ulrike Link-Wieczorek, Martin Hailer, Manfred Oeming, Randall Zachman, Ursula Rudnick, Wolfgang Raupach Rudnick, Christian Staffa, and Gabi Zander for their support and sharing of theological questions.

As for my local interreligious community, I am indebted to my friends from the Jerusalem Rainbow club who have discussed various memories of Jesus the Jew with me. This Jerusalem study group is engaged in a lifelong conversation among Jewish and Christian academics. I especially thank Zev Harvey for his interest in my work, for our many conversations, and for sharing his wide erudition; Debbie Weissman, whose decisive religious self-criticism feels close in spirit; my teacher Michael Krupp, the Christian expert for Mishna manuscripts, who first introduced me to Honi the Circle-Drawer as a Talmud student at Hebrew University; as well as Raphi Jospe, Yehuda Gellman, Eugene Korn, David Neuhaus, Jamal Khader, and all the other members whose commitment I greatly value. I am grateful to Menachem Lorberbaum, Moshe Halbertal, Steven

Acknowledgments

xi

Kepnes, and Yael Fisch for discussing theological aspects of Halakhah with me, and I am inspired by Hanoch Ben-Pazi's, Avraham Elkayam's, and Roberto Arbiv's true love for religious otherness. The ups and downs of writing this book were shared by my friends Astrid, Naama, Sheli, Ethan, and Smadar – so glad you are always there! Three summers of intense writing and a sabbatical were intellectually elevated by friends at Binghamton University: Allan Arkush, Randy Friedman, Gina Glasman, Jacqueline and Isaac Karp, Orly and Shalom Shoer, Steven Englund, and especially Bat-Ami Bar On who invited me to spend a semester at the Institute of the Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH).

My friend Astrid Schmetterling has broadened my horizon with her expertise in intercultural memory. I thank Adam Sutcliffe for reading an early version of the book and sharing important suggestions on how to improve its readability, and I thank the anonymous readers of the manuscript for their engaged comments, one of which I even quoted!

I thank my Cambridge editor Beatrice Rehl for her interest in my book and her immediate understanding of its unusual interdisciplinary crossroads. And I thank everyone involved in the production of this book, especially Eilidh Burrett. Heartfelt thanks go to Juan José Garcia for allowing me to use the artwork “sham/shem” by Moshe Gershuni, his late life partner, as the cover image of this book. I thank Amitai Mendelsohn, the curator of Israeli Art at the Israel Museum, and Rahel Laufer for helping to make this happen.

I thank all my family: my mother Ute Meyer; my father Christian Meyer, who helped with proofreading the index; and especially my aunt and Godmother Edelgard Meyer who refers to Levinas, Marquardt, van Buren, Alice Eckardt, and Adi Ophir as “old friends” – dear Edelgard, many new friends too to meet in this book! Dietrich Ritschl, my dear *Doktorvater*, passed away this spring. In this book, his spirit is very much present.

Discussing my thoughts on Christological dogma with the historian Jon Karp, who is the love of my life, is probably as good as it gets. Jon Karp has edited this book. He has taken out all the colons and exclamation marks: at least, all the ones he could catch! Jon: I love you!

While I was writing this book, our daughter Julie Miriam grew up to be the most loving and creative second grader, consoling her mother who can hardly fold an envelope, let alone a paper plane: “Never mind, you are creative in your writing!”

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49889-0 — Jesus the Jew in Christian Memory
Barbara U. Meyer
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
