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Christian and Jewish Readers of the Bible.

*Rosenzweig's Contribution to a Theological Hermeneutics of the Scriptures – a Protestant Perspective**

ABSTRACT: *How can the Christian reader regard the Old Testament as a canonical part of the Bible? The article argues that not only in the late essays of Franz Rosenzweig, dealing with questions of hermeneutics, but also in the Star of Redemption we find arguments to read the whole Bible in a Christian and a Jewish perspective. There is good news of God's grace in the Christian Old Testament already. Rosenzweig offers a hermeneutic of the conjunction and which presupposes a dialogical experience and prepares the way of further dialogue between Christian, Jewish and possibly also Muslim or "religious unmusical" readers of the Bible. This book gives witness of a common human experience in three dimensions, including the experience not only of man and the world, but also of God who is one in the Old and the New Testament.*

KEYWORDS: *Tanakh (Old Testament), New Testament, hermeneutics, Judaism, Christianity.*

1. The hermeneutics of Scriptures as a challenge for Christian theology

Until today the problem of a theological hermeneutics of the Scriptures arises if a Christian reader of the Bible follows the direction of reading shaped by the Church: the direction from the New to the Old Testament. He reads these texts as if they had something meaningful that can reassure him in his faith in God. A Jewish reader of the Tanakh also will follow the terms of reading found in his community, evaluate the truths these texts claim according to his standpoint and ascertain their meaning for practical life. According to Hermann Cohen "the verse of the Bible must have been present in the consciousness of the people"¹ who quoted it in Midrash and Talmud, as they discussed actual Jewish life on the background of the Scriptures².

*A more elaborated version of this contribution has been published in German in "Zeitschrift für Religion und Geistesgeschichte", LXIX (2017), 4, pp. 348-366. I thank Bernard Sanders and Dr. Michiel Decaluwe for their useful comments on the translation.

1 H. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (1919), ed. by B. Strauß, Frankfurt am Main, J. Kaufmann, 1929², p. 455.

2 For the question of a Jewish hermeneutics of the Scriptures see: G. Stemberger, *Zum Verständnis der Schrift im rabbinischen Judentum*, and J. Neusner, *The Role of Scripture in the Torah*

However, if a Jewish reader reads *Sh'ma Yisrael* (Deut. 6:4 ff.) or *Lech lecha* (Gen. 12:1-3) or *Nachamu, nachamu ami* (Isa. 40:1), he does not have to ask himself how this form of address can refer to him personally – like a Christian would. As a Jewish reader he belongs to the people addressed here. Admittedly, also for him *the nasty trench of history* Lessing has spoken of can open up. Not only is this a trench between *coincidental truths of history* and *necessary truths of reason*³, it is also a trench between contemporary and past social realities – with all the connected plausibilities for practical life. In his understanding though, the question whom these old texts address does not arise.

On the Christian side, this difference required a hermeneutics of the Old Testament. Early on already in the history of Christianity notions like *typology*, *allegory* and the *promise and fulfillment scheme* were developed to give the reader of the Bible orientation. Paul for instance already introduced the notion of *typos* as he understood the spiritual rock in the desert as a model for Christ (1 Cor. 10:6), Adam as a *typos* for the coming Christ and Sarah as a *typos* for Mary. Typology is a variant of allegorical interpretation with which one could “decipher a hidden spiritual meaning behind the literal sense which is supposed to be essential”⁴. However, the search of concealed layers of meaning was accompanied by a tendency to think in relative terms of the historical reality the texts attested. According to Franz Rosenzweig “the arts of allegorical interpretation would barely and insignificantly get hold of the mere book”⁵. Moreover the typological exegesis, related to allegory as it is, made use of the pattern of promise and fulfillment. With this scheme the Old Testament in its Christian interpretation is given “a *proprium* which both distinguishes and connects the New to it”⁶. Nonetheless, the scheme is unable to explain the use of the Bible as a unity for religious ascertainment⁷.

– *is Judaism a “Biblical Religion”?*, both in *Bibel in jüdischer und christlicher Tradition*, ed. by H. Merklein, K. Müller and G. Stemberger, Frankfurt am Main, Anton Hain, 1993, respectively pp. 212-225 and pp. 192-211.

3 According to Lessing the biblical miracles are in his days reduced to reports of inexplicable events and have lost the power of revelation. “This is the nasty wide trench which I cannot cross although I tried to jump often and honestly. If there is somebody who can help me he may do so; I beg him, I invoke him. He will earn a divine wage with me”: G. E. Lessing, *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft* (1777), in idem, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, vol. 8, *Werke 1774-1778*, ed. by A. Schilson, Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989, pp. 437-445, here p. 443. Further he writes that “coincidental truths of history [...] never can be the proof for necessary truths of reason” (p. 441).

4 H. Graf Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*, vol. 1, *Vom Alten Testament bis Origenes*, München, C. H. Beck, 1990, pp. 170-193, here p. 172.

5 F. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921), in idem, *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften II*, introduction by R. Mayer, Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1976 (= GS II), p. 461; Engl. transl. by B. E. Galli, *The Star of Redemption*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, pp. 437 f.

6 D. Rössler, *Die Predigt über alttestamentliche Texte*, in *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferung*, ed. by R. Rendtorff and K. Koch, Neukirchen, Neukirchener Verlags-haus, 1961, pp. 153-162, here p. 159, referring to Walther Zimmerli.

7 Cf. E. Zenger, *Am Fuss des Sinai. Gottesbilder des Ersten Testaments*, Düsseldorf, Patmos, 1993, p. 67.

None of these three interpretative models is without problems. An example can be found in Paul when he reinterprets the history of the families of Abraham “with a bold allegorical trick” in Gal. 4:21-31. “Hagar and Ismael, flesh and bondage, are associated with the law coming from Mount Sinai and the ‘current Jerusalem’, Sarah and Isaac, spirit and freedom, however are seen as a new covenant and a heavenly city”. This way “the Mosaic law, the Jewish people and kingdom become sentenced to bondage and exile”⁸. Nevertheless – whether problematic to a greater or to a lesser extent – the models helped the Christian reader to feel addressed by the Old Testament even when he was not originally meant to be its addressee.

This is obvious when one brings to mind the teaching of the fourfold sense of Scriptures that originated in Origen and Augustine and that was also for Martin Luther the starting point of his hermeneutics. In the *Lecture on the Epistle to the Galatians* (1516/17) he still quotes the mnemonic rhyme “Littera gesta docet; quid credas, allegoria; Moralis, quid agas, sed quid speres, anagoge”⁹. The development of his theological thought and of his interpretation of the Scriptures constantly went hand in hand – the one building on the other. In his first lecture on the *Psalms* one can see how he abandons both the *allegorical* and the *moral* sense, to concentrate on the *historical* and the *anagogical* sense which is also the *prophetic*¹⁰. In accordance with the scheme of promise and fulfillment, in his hermeneutics everything eventually centers on Christ, in whom “the set time had fully come” (Gal. 4:4 New International Version). That is why it is consistent that *solus Christus* emerges as one of the four principles of Lutheran theology next to *sola fide*, *sola gratia* and *sola scriptura*. With the “new dignity”¹¹ that the literal sense received – and with it the original language as a witness of history – the “faith stays anchored in history”¹², as Rosenzweig wrote in his critique of idealizing tendencies of the 19th-century liberal Protestant theology. In the Christian interpretation of the Bible the interpretative models typology and allegory were given a critical regulative principle.

What leads to Christ (*was Christum treibet*)¹³ is now what is relevant for the Christian reader of the New as well as the Old Testament. This criterion, with which Luther measured the individual biblical Scriptures and authors, was

8 D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaismus. Eine andere Geschichte des westlichen Denkens*, München, C. H. Beck, 2017², pp. 67 f.

9 As quoted in H. M. Müller, *Homiletik. Eine evangelische Predigtlehre*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1996, p. 55.

10 Cf. H. Graf Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*, vol. 3, *Renaissance. Reformation. Humanismus*, München, C. H. Beck, 1997, pp. 74 f.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 73.

12 GS II, p. 108; transl. cit., p. 107. Rosenzweig aimed at the loosening of this “anchoring” in his critique of Schleiermacher and 19th-century liberal theology (see *ibidem*, pp. 111 f.; transl. cit., pp. 110 f.). Cf. H. M. Dober, *Das Wir der religiösen Gemeinschaft. Schleiermachers Reden und Rosenzweigs Stern*, in *We and the Others* (Rosenzweig Jahrbuch / Rosenzweig Yearbook 5), ed. by M. Brassler and H. M. Dober, Freiburg, Karl Alber, 2010, pp. 160-176.

13 Cf. M. Luther, *Vorrede auf die Episteln Sankt Jacobi und Judas* (1522), in *idem, Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Weimarer Ausgabe (= WA), sect. 3, vol. 7, pp. 384-387, here p. 384, line 27.

founded in the conviction that Christ is “the scriptural matter in person”. The entirety of the Scripture for him did not consist in a “total reached by the addition of the single Scriptures”, but in “a peak in which the lines meet”, in “a goal everything converges in”¹⁴. As this unity was given by the Gospel (*evangelium*), which he fundamentally differentiated from the law, and in this way bound to the law, Luther considered that the Scripture could interpret itself (*scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres*)¹⁵.

Until today Protestant hermeneutics of the Scriptures is shaped by this hermeneutical directive, although the awareness has grown that the New Testament is “in all its parts related to the Old”, in other words in the New there is “no substratum, no core, no Christian truth which has not been won in relation to the Old Testament”¹⁶. Within his Bible consisting of two Testaments the Christian reader can move with sense only in “a double direction of reading”¹⁷: he will ask in the texts of the Old Testament where they point to Christ the redeemer – this means where and in how far *the star of redemption* is shining in them. In this manner a common reading of the Tanakh is possible in Christian perspective, even when in this perspective that what in the Jewish stays an open event, is determined. “Jesus belongs to the realm in between [*Zwischenreich*]; whether he *was* the Messiah will be revealed [*ausgewiesen*] when the Messiah *comes*”¹⁸, Rosenzweig writes to Hans Ehrenberg on April 21st, 1918.

2. The Old Testament belongs in the canon and not in the apocrypha

However, this degree of differentiation on the Christian side has not always been held through. From Marcion up to Adolf von Harnack there have been attempts to deny the relevance of this corpus of texts. And only recently Notger Slenczka has questioned the canonical rank of the Old Testament. In contrast, the following considerations given by Rosenzweig argue in favor of the unity of the Christian Bible. His hermeneutics of the *and* opens the way for a reading of the Bible in “canonical dialogicity”¹⁹ which presupposes a dif-

14 A. Beutel, *Theologie als Schriftauslegung*, in *Luther Handbuch*, ed. by A. Beutel, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2005, pp. 450-453, here p. 446.

15 Cf. M. Luther, *Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per bullam Leonis X. novissimam damnatorum* (1520), in *WA*, sect. 1, vol. 7, pp. 91-151, here p. 97, line 23.

16 F. Crüsemann, *Das Alte Testament als Wahrheitsraum des Neuen. Die neue Sicht der christlichen Bibel*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2011, quoted in U. Luz, *Theologische Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Theologie, 2014, p. 414.

17 B. Janowski, “Versteht du auch, was du liest?”. *Reflexionen auf die Leserichtung der christlichen Bibel*, in *Befreiende Wahrheit*, ed. by W. Härle, M. Heesch and R. Preul, Marburg, N. G. Elwert, 2000, pp. 1-27, here p. 17, referring to Erich Zenger. For both authors only in “canonical dialogicity” can the whole Christian Bible be understood sufficiently.

18 F. Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften I, Briefe und Tagebücher*, 2 vols., ed. by R. Rosenzweig and E. Rosenzweig-Scheinmann in cooperation with B. Casper, Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1979 (= *GS I*), vol. 1, pp. 543 f., here p. 544.

19 See above, footnote 17.

ference in the perspectives of reading, the Christological included. This difference in perspectives that is orientated on the other – an orientation that is founded on a dialogical situation that is a given in real life – is not understood as a final point, but rather as the beginning of a relationship that can bridge this difference.

Two arguments in particular oppose the thesis of Slenczka, that the texts of the Tanakh do not belong into the canon of the Christian Bible because they do not yet testify of Christ the redeemer, and the Christian consciousness of God cannot yet be found in them²⁰. *Firstly* they can be read as patterns of interpretation of human experience, that is explained and receives a new interpretation in the New Testament. Understood this way the texts of the Old Testament bear an anecdotal character, which means “like in the natural conversation they are dialogically the second [...]: answer, not question, divine contradiction and addition to intrinsically human motto and meaning”²¹. Considered this way they fulfill the function Luther accorded to “the beautiful examples of faith, of love and of the cross by the beloved holy fathers Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the others. Of them we should learn to trust and love God”²². In this context one may remind of Christian art in Italian churches, in which one can find an abundance of examples of this. North of the Alps Luther defended the presentation of Bible-stories in frescos and pictures against the Wittenberg and Zürich iconoclasts because they are instructive for the faith²³.

To this argument of a hermeneutics of experience in the medium of biblical texts and their presentation in art a *second*, theological one, can be added: these texts testify that in his entire history God, who becomes visible in both biblical parts, is “one and the same”²⁴. “The Jewish identification [*Ineinssetzung*] of the

20 Cf. N. Slenczka, *Die Kirche und das Alte Testament*, in *Marburger Jahrbuch Theologie XXV. Das Alte Testament in der Theologie*, ed. by E. Gräb-Schmidt and R. Preul, Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013, pp. 83-119, esp. pp. 96, 100, 119. M. Brumlik, *Antijudaismus in neuem Gewand?*, in “Jüdische Allgemeine”, April 23rd, 2015, <http://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/22056> (accessed August 8th, 2017), and J.-H. Tüek, *Christentum ohne Wurzel?*, in “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, June 21st, 2015, <http://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/christentum-ohne-wurzel-1.18565646> (accessed August 8th, 2017), have offered answers to this provoking text. In an additional publication and without revising them, Notger Slenczka has specified and commented his theses and gave examples of his own practical use of the texts of the Old Testament, that he now reads as apocrypha (see *Vom Alten Testament und vom Neuen. Beiträge zur Neuermessung ihres Verhältnisses*, Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017).

21 F. Rosenzweig, *Das Formgeheimnis der biblischen Erzählungen. Martin Buber zum 8. Februar 1928* (1928), in idem, *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften III, Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*, ed. by R. and A. Mayer, Dordrecht-Boston-Lancaster, Martinus Nijhoff, 1984 (= *GS III*), pp. 817-829, here pp. 821 f.

22 M. Luther, *Wie sich die Christen in Mosen sollen schicken* (1525), in *WA*, sect. 1, vol. 16, pp. 363-393, here p. 391, lines 7-10.

23 Cf. *Luther und die Folgen für die Kunst* (Ausstellungskatalog Hamburger Kunsthalle, 11.11.1983-8.1.1984), ed. by W. Hofmann, Hamburg, Prestel, 1983.

24 F. Hartenstein, *Weshalb braucht die christliche Theologie eine Theologie des Alten Testaments?*, in *Marburger Jahrbuch Theologie XXV*, cit., pp. 19-47, here p. 37. Friedhelm Hartenstein has expounded his thesis of the identity of God in both Testaments of the Bible

far with the near, of the ‘whole’ with the ‘own’ God [...] forges the whole Bible, from a blaze striking out of the ‘I am here’-call of the burning bush”²⁵, in one, in the name of God. This opposes every old-new Marcionism that draws a dividing line in the Gospel between the *foreign God* witnessed in *Genesis* and the one of the new born believer in the New Testament. Modern transformations of this dividing line, like those proposed by Adolf von Harnack and Slenczka are included. Positively spoken, the *name of God*, appealed to throughout this history as *Lord (Adonai)* allows continuity: the name “I will be the one I am” (*ehje ascher ehje*, Exod. 3:14, my translation), to which the Church refers, when she confesses God as the Father of Jesus Christ. In other words Christology is the dogmatic form that warrants continuity in the invocation of the divine name (as the Father of Jesus Christ)²⁶, even when in this form of communication the relation to God has been transformed with regard to the meaning the name of God had in the Tanakh.

Rosenzweig refers to exactly this invocation of the name of God in his introduction of the third part of *The Star of Redemption*, as he discusses the *possibility to pray* for the arrival of the Kingdom of God²⁷. The correlation of liturgical orders in the year of the Synagogue and that of the Church is founded on this possibility. Rosenzweig admittedly has not enfolded a hermeneutics of the Bible (in the way Christian theology has to require it) in this book. Nevertheless, the second part of the *Star*, addressed “in theologos”, offers an interpretation of the Tanakh as a basis for discussion with the Christian reader. In order to accept this offer, the Christian reader has to agree to it that on a theological level various perspectives of reading should be acceptable. In this an *and* is a premise. It is an *and* that also allows the inclusion of a Muslim or “religious unmusical” perspective (Max Weber).

3. “In theologos”: the “narrative philosophy” (*Star* II and III) as an offer to the Christian hermeneutics of the Scriptures to get involved in

“I received the new thinking in these old words”, Rosenzweig writes in the essay *The New Thinking*, referring to the old Jewish words of the written and oral Torah, “and [I] passed it on, in them. I know that to a Christian, instead of mine,

in his contribution *JHWHs Wesen im Wandel. Vorüberlegungen zu einer Theologie des Alten Testaments*, in “Theologische Literaturzeitung”, CXXXVII (2012), no. 1, pp. 3-20. Cf. earlier B. Janowski, *Der eine Gott der beiden Testamente. Grundfragen einer Biblischen Theologie*, in “Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche”, XCV (1998), no. 1, pp. 1-36.

²⁵ F. Rosenzweig, “*Der Ewige*”. *Mendelssohn und der Gottesname* (1929), in *GS* III, pp. 801-815, here p. 810.

²⁶ Rosenzweig has acknowledged this. In his letter to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy of March 16th, 1918 he writes: “‘Christ alone’ [*allein*], the ‘*sola fide*’ of the Reformation, corresponds to the Jewish ‘Unique’ [*Einzig*]. For *this* reason Christianity is ‘monotheism’” (F. Rosenzweig, *Die ‘Grütli’-Briefe. Briefe an Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy*, ed. by I. Rühle and R. Mayer, Tübingen, BILAM, 2002, pp. 60-63, here p. 61).

²⁷ Cf. *GS* II, pp. 295 ff.; transl. cit., pp. 283 ff.

the words of the New Testament would have come to his lips; to a pagan [...] perhaps entirely his own words”²⁸.

Those old Jewish words *Star II* discusses as witnesses he wants to tell about²⁹, are taken from (among others) *Genesis 1*, *Song of Songs* and *Psalms 115*, from some prophetic writings, for example Mic. 6:8, and there are quite a few quotations of *Isaiah*. In order to reconstruct this experience with God witnessed in the Bible in a philosophical way, Rosenzweig makes use of the theological notions of *creation*, *revelation*, *redemption*. They are seen as categories with which one can grasp this human experience. They allow the Bible to be read as a dense description of how the elements of experience – *God*, *world* and *man* – are related to each other. In the light of the constellation built by these elements in the symbol of the Star of David Rosenzweig retells of this relationship in process.

This narration is nonetheless a philosophical enterprise in as far as the account on the conditions of the possibility of this kind of experience – as given in *Star I* – underlays them. In order to show how it could come to *creation-revelation-redemption*, the elements of experience had to be developed on their own: to tell of their relation presupposed an understanding of the notions of *God*, *world*, *man*. As categories *creation*, *revelation*, *redemption* now make it possible to understand the relations between the elements. At the same time they are *more-than-categories*, as Rosenzweig emphasizes: they do not serve only to understand events attested in the texts of the Bible, but they are also metaphors of these events, in which the one who is “telling about” them is included; they stand for a reality³⁰. Thus it makes sense to read the *Star* as a philosophy of existence in the succession of the late Schelling³¹. Seen in this way Rosenzweig’s presentation of the Jewish and Christian “worlds of time”³² in *Star III* makes clear how the single existence can find itself embedded in modes of common life.

To understand *Star II* as an offer to Christian theology to get involved in, and especially with regards to its hermeneutics, I am required to argue against a statement of Rosenzweig, according to which “the *Star* outside of Judaism would not deserve that a cock would crow after it, had only Schelling finished

28 F. Rosenzweig, *Das neue Denken. Einige nachträgliche Bemerkungen zum “Stern der Erlösung”* (1925), in *GS III*, pp. 139-161, here p. 155; Engl. transl. by A. Udoff and B. E. Galli, *The New Thinking. A Few Supplementary Remarks to the Star*, in *Franz Rosenzweig’s “The New Thinking”*, ed. by A. Udoff and B. E. Galli, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1999, pp. 67-102, here p. 92.

29 Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 148 ff.; transl. cit., pp. 81 ff.

30 Cf. *GS II*, pp. 210 f., 256 f.; transl. cit., pp. 203 f., 247 f. “The initial emergence of the categories [...] takes place altogether originally, it is very nearly identical to the real process that they categorize” (*ibidem*, p. 167; transl. cit., p. 162, partly modified).

31 Cf. W. Schmied-Kowarzik, *Existenz denken. Schellings Philosophie von ihren Anfängen bis zum Spätwerk*, Freiburg-München, Karl Alber, 2015.

32 R. Wiehl, *Zeitwelten. Philosophisches Denken an den Rändern von Natur und Geschichte*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1998, esp. pp. 150-169 (*Das jüdische Denken von Hermann Cohen und Franz Rosenzweig. Ein neues Denken in der Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts*) and pp. 170-183 (*Die Hoffnung zwischen Zeit und Ewigkeit. Zum Ewigkeitsdenken Franz Rosenzweigs*).

his *Weltalter* [*Ages of the World*]³³. However, Rosenzweig has absorbed the impulses of this fragment in a way that has something to say to a Christian reader. The cock, that with his crowing accompanies the dawn, points out that the Jewish perspective of reading is being dealt with equally. And it is notably no alternative, but it is as a complement that Rosenzweig has put his Jewish perspective beside the Christian one in Schelling. His hermeneutics of *and* broadens the horizon and allows one to make new discoveries, also regarding the own perspective.

Following *Star II* and interpreting *Genesis 1* God has created the world *through the word* – this is indeed no innovation of Rosenzweig. However, in regard to the “speechlessness” of some philosophies “from the ‘analyst’ Descartes to the ‘analytic philosophers’ of the 20th century” one can say that he rediscovered “the superiority of the word that affects the single individual here and now”³⁴. To remember the “word of God” means to take “the character of origin and revelation”³⁵ seriously, and with it the origin of communication in and with the language, of listening and speaking. Also the speechlessness in the mythical context of fate and in the abstract heaven of idealism is overcome this way.

In the medium of created language God calls man to be responsible in the *parable of love*. Rosenzweig develops this key notion in interpretation of the *Song of Songs*. It deserves to be mentioned that he himself uses the means of allegorical interpretation that allows to discover the hidden spiritual meaning behind the erotically charged metaphors of this biblical book – a meaning that constitutes a dialog between the human soul and God. Yet this *spiritual* sense is still fundamentally related to the *literal* insofar as what is concerned, is profane lyrics of love³⁶. In this way the language of the *Song of Songs* – like everything that is profane – is a parable, but it is also more than that: a self-pronouncing of the language of love which constitutes the reality that a lover has chosen his beloved³⁷. Rosenzweig’s hermeneutics of *and* proves itself insofar as it can be related both to Jewish interpretation of the Bible as well as to the Lutheran dignity of literal sense. By the way of his exegesis of the *Song of Songs* he overcomes the competition of

33 *GS I*, vol. 2, p. 701 (letter to Hans Ehrenberg of March 18th, 1921).

34 K. W. Zeidler, *Unzeitgemäße Bemerkungen zu Franz Rosenzweigs Beitrag zum Universalienproblem*, in *Die Denkfigur des Systems im Ausgang von Franz Rosenzweigs “Stern der Erlösung”*, ed. by H. Wiedebach, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 2013, pp. 89-107, here p. 98: “the theologian Franz Rosenzweig insists on the superiority of the word that affects the single individual here and now [*insistiert auf der Überlegenheit des Hier und Jetzt und diesen Einzelnen betreffenden Wortes*]. In doing so, the theologian clearly shows his superiority to the philosopher”.

35 *Ibidem*: “with the ‘word, which was in the beginning’, have we not forgotten the original and revelatory character of the word too, and replace it by a surrogate of words that can be exchanged, replaced, constructed and deconstructed according to technical, political and pragmatic arbitrariness?”.

36 Cf. M. Bienenstock, *Die Sprache des Hohelieds: “mehr als Gleichnis”? Zu Rosenzweigs Stern der Erlösung*, in “*Zeitschrift für Religion und Geistesgeschichte*”, LXIX (2017), no. 3, pp. 264-278, esp. pp. 277 f.

37 Cf. *GS II*, pp. 221-224; transl. cit., pp. 213-216.

election by God which is being kept in check in the theology of Paul, but introduces a “logic of fright” (Kurt Flasch) in some of the writings of Augustine and Luther³⁸.

After all Jews and Christians each testify in their own way that the experience to be loved by God – in other words, the experience to be chosen by him – makes a life, which is oriented by the love of one’s neighbor, in the world possible. They both can be – as is said in *Star III* – “workers on the same task”³⁹. One could say that they are part of an ever renewed process of learning in which “the I learns to say you to the he”⁴⁰.

That this orientation in life can be gained out of the texts of the Tanakh, interpreted in the light of the *Star of Redemption*, although the Christian reader is not the immediate addressee, can be taken as Rosenzweig’s point of discussion about the Christian hermeneutics. He points out theological reasons why the Christian Bible, consisting of two parts, can be read as a whole witnessing a human experience of which one has to give account in the interpretative pattern of the relation between its elements God, world, man. The precondition is the *and*, also regarding the Christological coding of the twofold direction of reading, which Rosenzweig respects for Christianity, more than that: which he presupposes for his presentation of the year of the Church in *Star III*, although he does not require this presupposition for his presentation of the Jewish year. His offer to talk implies for the Christian reader not only to accept this difference in theory, but to live with it as a corrective in his own need to reassure his faith in God.

There is reciprocity in Rosenzweig’s hermeneutics of *and* insofar also, as words of the New Testament resonate in his own text⁴¹. Moreover his “narrative philosophy”⁴² presupposes some elements of Christian hermeneutics. An outstanding example is the interrelation of *way*, *truth* and *life* in the verse of *John* which Rosenzweig quoted in his famous letter of November 1st, 1913 to Rudolf Ehrenberg. To be sure, he relativized the Christological direction in *John 14:6* according to the *and*: it might well be valid for the gentiles that “nobody comes to the Father unless through him [Christ]”, but not for someone who is not in need “to come to the Father because he is already with him. And this is the case with the people of Israel”⁴³. This interrelation – that binds a hermeneutics of texts to one of

38 See below, section 4.

39 *GS II*, p. 462; transl. cit., p. 438.

40 *Ibidem*, p. 305; transl. cit., p. 292.

41 Without claiming completeness here are some examples: in *Star II Rom. 8* (*ibidem*, pp. 189, 201, 205; transl. cit., pp. 183, 195, 198), *Rom. 5:1* (*ibidem*, p. 206; transl. cit., p. 199), *Rom. 13* (*ibidem*, p. 269; transl. cit., p. 259); in *Star III 1 Cor. 12* and *3:21* (*ibidem*, p. 381; transl. cit., p. 364), *1 Cor. 13:13* (*ibidem*, p. 472; transl. cit., p. 447), *John 3:16* (*ibidem*, p. 388; transl. cit., p. 371), *John 4:24* (*ibidem*, p. 457, cf. p. 444; transl. cit., p. 434, cf. p. 422), *John 14:6* (*ibidem*, p. 445; transl. cit., p. 423), *Matt. 22:21* (*ibidem*, p. 390; transl. cit., p. 373), *Matt. 18:20* (*ibidem*, p. 382; transl. cit., p. 365), *Rom. 11:25* (*ibidem*, pp. 461 f.; transl. cit., p. 438), *Luke 2* (*ibidem*, p. 441; transl. cit., p. 419). The symbol of the cross is quoted *ibidem*, pp. 418 ff.; transl. cit., pp. 399 ff. Also in *Star I* some allusions to the New Testament can be found: *1 Cor. 15:55* (*ibidem*, pp. 4 f.; transl. cit., p. 10), *Mark 2:27* (*ibidem*, p. 15; transl. cit., p. 20).

42 F. Rosenzweig, *Das neue Denken*, cit., p. 148; transl. cit., p. 81.

43 *GS I*, vol. 1, pp. 132-137, here p. 135.

existence, of way, truth and life – functions in the *Star* exactly *with* this restriction of the Christian claim of absoluteness as a frame of orientation.

This is true in the sense that truth supports the individual on an existential-relational level, in his relation to himself, to others, to his environment and to God. It lies in the consequence of this understanding of truth that its individual shape has to stand the test in a logical⁴⁴ and existential regard. And, when the membership to a community with its own tradition plays a role in this process, one has to be able to make this tradition a part of individual certainty. This task is inescapable, since the normativity of the – be it Christian, Jewish or Muslim – faith is in question in modern pluralistic societies, in which the individual needs to find his position between the truth of faith and that of positive natural science. This is possible in the “jars of clay” (2 Cor. 4:7) of rituals, symbols, cultural and religious forms in which people live their own truth of their lives.

Thus the Christian reader finds parts of his own perspective and challenge in Rosenzweig’s interpretation of the Old Testament, in these texts which do not address him immediately, but are nevertheless part of his whole Bible. To understand these texts belongs to the preconditions of the ascertainment of his faith. Possibly astonished or even taken aback, the Jewish reader will perceive that Rosenzweig’s presentation of his own, Jewish, perspective adopts notions of theology which in their systematic include the Christian⁴⁵.

On his side, regarding the specific dangers a Christologically shaped relation to God can give rise to, he must be prepared to be, as is said in German, “read the Levites” (*die Leviten gelesen bekommen*: “to be hauled over the coals”) by this hermeneut of *and*. The *Star of Redemption* illuminates the Christian figure of the redeemer in a way of superimposing the twilight between either a “spiritualization” of God or an “apotheosis” of humanity⁴⁶. In a chorale of the protestant songbook however, divinity and humanity have unified in Jesus Christ so that the creator could come near to mankind⁴⁷. According to Rosenzweig Christology for the Christian faith undoubtedly has significance. However, he limits its categorical scope, pointing out the regulative potential which consists of the existence of the Jewish congregation *next to* the Christian.

44 There is a need of criteria of correctness, in other words: the personal claim of truth may not contradict the common rules of logic.

45 The astonishment might be even greater insofar as Judaism understands itself as a form of orthopraxy. “In Hebrew there is neither a notion of ‘theology’ nor for that, which in Christian tradition is understood under ‘faith’” (P. Schäfer, *Ein großes Dach sorgt noch nicht für ein gemeinsames Haus*, in “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”, 10 May 2017, no. 108, p. N4).

46 According to Rosenzweig the dangers of Christianity are to spiritualize God, to apotheosize man and to pantheosize the world (cf. *GS II*, p. 447; transl. cit., pp. 424 f.).

47 “Jesus ist kommen, Grund ewiger Freude; / A und O, Anfang und Ende steht da. / Gottheit und Menschheit vereinen sich beide; Schöpfer, wie kommst du uns Menschen so nah!” (1736), in *Evangelisches Gesangbuch. Ausgabe für die Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg*, Stuttgart, Gesangbuchverlag, 1996, no. 66, strophe 1. The Lutheran formula “true God and true Man” (*wahrer Gott und wahrer Mensch*) was known to Rosenzweig (cf. F. Rosenzweig, *Atheistische Theologie* (1914), in *GS III*, pp. 687-697, here p. 689).

The hermeneutics of the *and* is shaped by this just mentioned concrete situation in real life. In Paul, Rosenzweig recognizes an awareness of this situation, when the apostle – according to a verse of his *Epistle to the Romans* – “makes the Jews remain until the end – until ‘the full number of the Gentiles has come in’” (Rom. 11:25). This “theologumenon from the origins of Christian theology”, Rosenzweig writes in *Star III*, pronounces implicitly his thesis of Judaism as eternal “fire”, “that Judaism in its eternal survival through all times [...] is the one core from whose glowing embers the rays are invisibly nourished, which in Christianity break forth visibly and splitting up into the night of the pagan primeval world and underworld”⁴⁸.

4. The *and* to be chosen as precondition of the hermeneutics of *and*, or: belated reciprocity

In the course of Church history this awareness has time and again been suppressed, and with it the openness of plural understanding, that could be surprised by the possibility of a different interpretation. One example for such a restriction of meaning and understanding is how Paul is used to make a case for the doctrine of “double predestination”⁴⁹. Without a mentioning of *Romans* 11 Augustine and Luther simply limited themselves to *Romans* 9, to find “an absolute base of preference”⁵⁰.

Augustine had interpreted the story of Jacob and Esau, quoted by Paul in Rom. 9:16-21, in the way of a *typology* for Israel and the Gentiles, and at the same time in the way of an *allegory* for his – in difference to his earlier writings – new understanding of Gods predestination. He supposed that like in a “decree” “not by works but by him who calls” (Rom. 9:11-12), God had shifted the selection from Jacob to Esau (cf. Rom. 9:30-31). Valid first for Jacob i.e. Israel, and now also for Esau i.e. the Gentiles, in an unfathomable act of divine predestination, the selection was transferred from Israel to the Church⁵¹. In contrast, with his thesis of the hardening of Israel Paul keeps the eschatological dimension open (cf. Rom. 11:25). Rosenzweig recurs to that thesis, in the way he had interpreted it already in his letters to Eugen Rosenstock – namely according to the logic of *and*⁵². The Christian image of a “hardened” Judaism corresponds to the Jewish self-image in which

48 GS II, pp. 461 f.; transl. cit., pp. 438 (partly modified).

49 E. Troeltsch, *Luther, der Protestantismus und die moderne Welt* (1907/08), in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4, *Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie*, ed. by H. Baron, Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1925, pp. 202-254, here p. 250.

50 P. Sloterdijk, *Glaube, Fegefeuer des Zweifels*, in “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, October 2nd, 2016, <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/luther-und-die-folgen-glaube-die-hoelle-des-zweifels-ld.119711> (accessed June 22nd, 2018).

51 Augustine made this argument in his writing *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, I,2 (cf. *Logik des Schreckens. Augustinus von Hippo. Die Gnadenlehre von 397*, ed. by K. Flasch, Mainz, Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1995², pp. 162 ff.).

52 GS I, vol. 1, pp. 247-257, here pp. 249, 251 f. (letter to Eugen Rosenstock of October 1916).

Judaism has already arrived, has already reached its destination, and can deny the “realm in between” of history, whereas Christianity has to embrace it⁵³.

Rosenzweig’s hermeneutics of *and* proves itself also in this aspect that it has overcome the “metaphysics of fright” (to speak with Flasch) that had an influence from Augustine to Luther’s book *De servo arbitrio* (1525)⁵⁴. The outlined theology of predestination functions as the theological groundwork up to the late anti-Judaistic writings of Luther⁵⁵. According to Rosenzweig God is not the personalized power of fate choosing in the darkest ground of the world and its history the ones and few while discarding the others, the many, as if he were a potter who produces with success only a few bowls while most of them are afflicted with blemishes. And for Rosenzweig the selection is not any longer the event leading to the conclusion that God does not need man any more. To be sure, revelation is unavailable, yet through his *teshuvah*, his reversal, man is put in the condition to participate as a co-worker in God’s work.

His Christian friends did not take up Rosenzweig’s offer to talk in the way that he had hoped. In the case of Eugen Rosenstock this must have been deeply disappointing. Only Hans Ehrenberg discussed the questions of especially *Star II*, himself working out a Jesuanic Christology⁵⁶. To sum up, the vivid dialog in which Rosenzweig developed his “new thinking” can flourish when both Jews and Christians understand themselves as “workers on the same task”⁵⁷. Without an understanding of the common challenge in a common world, without actual encounters and dia-logues the *and* will lose its plausibility. However, whoever is ready to engage him- or herself in Rosenzweig’s hermeneutics of *and* will have the possibility to be enlightened by the understanding of others and surprised by different understandings of the same Hebrew Bible.

53 *Ibidem*, pp. 558-563, here p. 560 f. (letter to Hans Ehrenberg of Mai 10th-11th, 1918).

54 Cf. *Logik des Schreckens*, cit., p. 136; M. Luther, *De servo arbitrio* (1525), in *WA*, sect. 1, vol. 18, pp. 600-787, esp. pp. 699 f.

55 Cf. M. Luther, *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen* (1543), in *WA*, sect. 1, vol. 53, pp. 412-552.

56 Cf. W. Schmied-Kowarzik, *Rosenzweig im Gespräch mit Ehrenberg, Coben und Buber*, Freiburg, Karl Alber, 2006, pp. 96 f., and my review of *Hans Ehrenberg als Grenzgänger zwischen Theologie und Philosophie*, ed. by T. Jähnichen and A. Losch, Kamen, Hartmut Spenner, 2017, in “*Zeitschrift für Religion und Geistesgeschichte*”, LXX (2018), no. 3, pp. 275-280.

57 *GS II*, p. 462; transl. cit., p. 438.