

THE JEWISH JESUS

Ziva Amishai-Maisels

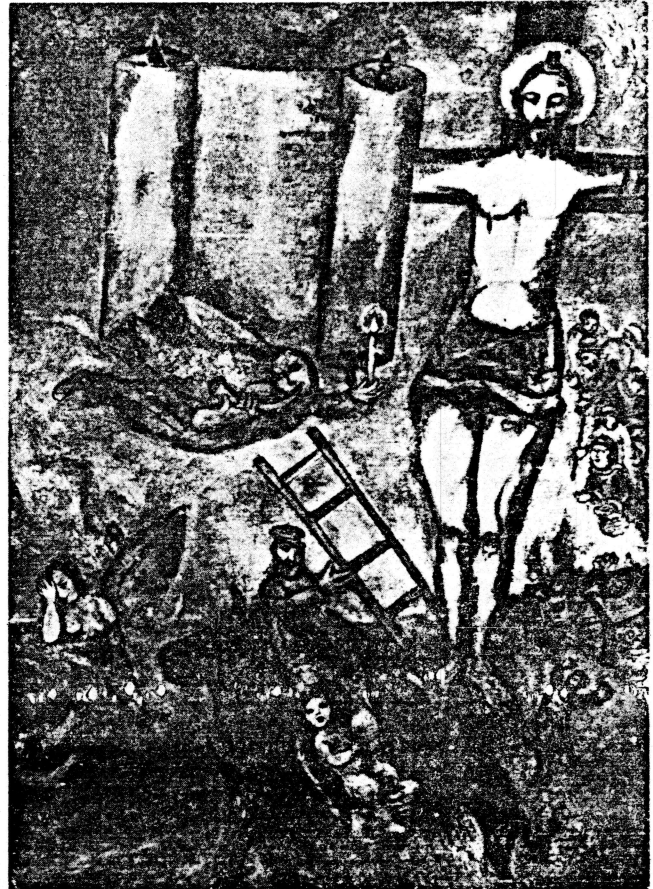


Fig. 2. Marc Chagall, *Yellow Crucifixion*, 1943, Chagall Collection.

To many Jews, one of the most profoundly disturbing images of Holocaust art involves the choice of the crucified Christ as a symbol of martyred Jewry. Both the portrayal of the innocent victim in the guise of the religious symbol of his persecutor, and the choice of the crucifixion itself, the historical event for which the Jews were blamed and because of which they were themselves repeatedly persecuted, strikes many as nothing less than sacrilege.¹ Even more shocking is the realization that this choice of symbol was created specifically by Jewish artists, and that one of its earliest exponents was Marc Chagall, one of the leaders of modern Jewish art. Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (1938, Art Institute of Chicago), *Yellow Crucifixion* (1943, Chagall Collection) and *The Crucified* (1944, Mr. and Mrs. Victor Babin Collection, Cleveland) are, in fact, perfect examples of this symbolism.

In the earliest painting of this series, the *White Crucifixion* (fig. 1), Christ is depicted with his head covered and a *tallit* (prayer shawl) replacing his loincloth to stress his Jewish identity. Above him the traditional INRI sign appears with the Aramaic translation: "ישו הנוצרי מלכא דיהודאי" to affirm that he is not only a Jew, but King of the Jews. Around him, Jews flee from pogroms, a Nazi breaks into a burning Ark, and the Patriarchs and a Matriarch mourn.² Jesus is lit by a ray of light from on high and by the *menorah*, one of the oldest symbols of Judaism, at his feet.

In the *Yellow Crucifixion* (fig. 2), Jesus wears phylacteries as well as his *tallit*-loincloth. An open

¹The instinctive negative attitude of the traditional Jew to the sign of the cross is best summed up by Dagobert Runes in *The Jew and the Cross* (N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1965). After stating that Jews have been falsely blamed and persecuted throughout the centuries for killing Christ, he concludes: "To the Jew the cross is the sign of hate and condemnation" (p. 67). Persecution had caused this feeling to extend to Jesus himself, as even Shalom Asch, whose book *The Nazarene* (New York: G.P. Putnam, ca. 1939) had created a scandal in Jewish circles, realized in 1945. In *One Destiny, an Epistle to the Christians* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1945), he wrote: "[Jesus] became...the source of death and destruction for Israel. How can we believe that Jesus is the

Messiah when he has become the origin of everything evil and wicked that has come over Israel, since his name appeared in the world?" is the painful cry heard in Jewish writings through the centuries" (pp. 42-3). See also H.-M. Rotermund's comments on Chagall's Crucifixions in "Der Gekreuzigte im Werk Chagalls", *Museion: Studien aus Kunst und Geschichte für Otto H. Förster* (Cologne: M. Dumont Schauberg, 1960), p. 270.

²Originally the soldier's armband and the flag above the ark contained swastikas. See the photograph in *Cahiers d'Art*, 14, no. 5-10 (1939), 152. The Matriarch is undoubtedly Rachel who "refused to be comforted for her children because they are not" (Jeremiah 31:15).



Fig. 3. Marc Chagall, *The Crucified*, 1944. Mr. and Mrs. Victor Babin Collection, Cleveland.

Torah scroll, illuminated by the candle held by an angel who blows a shofar, covers Jesus' right arm, as though joined to him in a single symbol. The cross is planted in the burning *shtetl* from which Jews escape, represented by the wandering Jews on the right and by the Christian image of Mary and the infant Jesus on the Flight into Egypt at the bottom. However, there is no escape: the refugees move left to join those who drown as a refugee ship sinks.

In *The Crucified* (fig. 3), Chagall clarified the meaning of these paintings. It is not Jesus but the Eastern European Jews who are crucified in the street of the pillaged and burning *shtetl*. These works are only a sample of what became for Chagall a major, obsessive symbol.

This was not a personal idiosyncrasy. Many Jewish artists used the image of Jesus in a variety of ways from the late 1930's on and not all of them were inspired by Chagall's Crucifixions, although

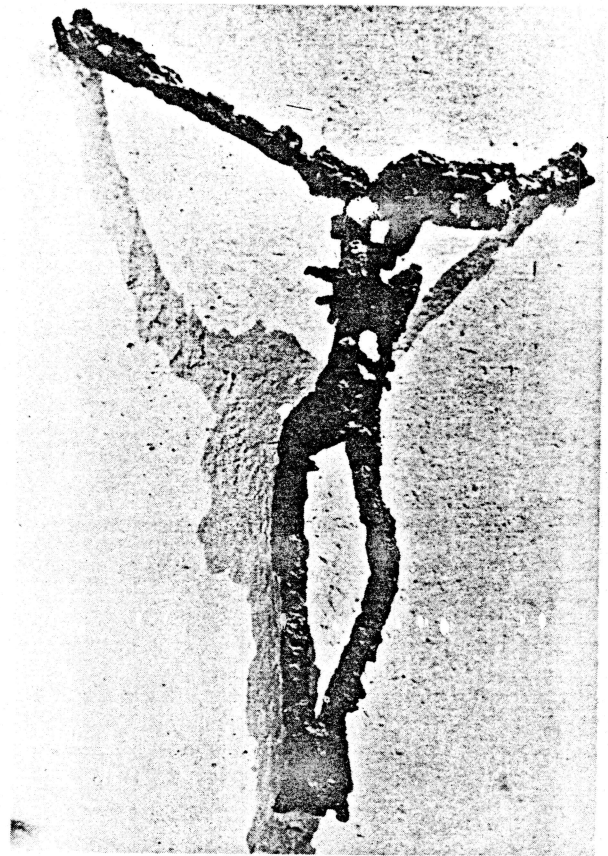


Fig. 4. Mathias Goeritz *Redeemer of Auschwitz VI*, 1951-53. E. Rojas Collection, Mexico.

his paintings were undoubtedly influential in the diffusion of this theme as a symbol of the Holocaust. For instance, John H. Amschwitz (1882-1942), an English Jew, used it in a cartoon in 1941. He depicts a Nazi priest who storms from the pulpit: "All Jews must leave at once," whereupon Jesus gets down from his cross and departs with his brothers.³ Max Band (1900-1974), a Lithuanian Jew who worked in Paris until 1940 and then in the United States, exhibited a portrait of a bearded Jew as the *Ecce Homo* as early as 1937.⁴ In 1944, he used the same title to depict the same little bearded Jew standing defenseless in a law court while a prosecutor points at him condemningly as "Ecce Homo".⁵ More striking still are Josef Foshko's painting from the early 1940's of the crucifixion of an old Jew wrapped in a *tallit*, who cries out: "Forgive them NOT, Father, for they KNOW what they do",⁶ and Mathias Goeritz's series of Crucifixions entitled *Redeemer of Auschwitz* of 1950-53,

³See Sarah B. Amschwitz, *The Paintings of J.H. Amschwitz* (London: Batsford, 1951), pl. 89.

⁴See Arthur Millier, *The Art of Max Band* (Los Angeles: Borden, 1945),

p. 10 and pl. 2. See also the slightly expanded version of 1938 (pl. 4).

⁵*Ibid.*, pl. 25.

⁶See *Josef Foshko* (New York: Ferargil Galleries, 30 April-17 May 1945).



Fig. 5. Marcel Janco, *Genocide*, 1945.

culminating in one in which Jesus seems to have been burnt in the ovens of Auschwitz (fig. 4).⁷

In other works the symbolism is not so explicit, but emerges from the context and the dates. The American painter, Abraham Rattner (1895–1978), did a series of Crucifixion drawings and paintings beginning in 1941, including *There was darkness over all the land* of 1942, in which kings and bishops, grouped like a row of death's heads in the foreground, turn their backs on the Crucifixion behind them which is illuminated by the candles they hold.⁸ In 1945 he replaced the Crucifixion theme for a while with a series of *Pietàs*, the mourning over the dead Christ, deeming it more fitting to the end of the war and the discovery of the extent of the destruction.⁹ This motif reappears in a contemporary painting by Marcel Janco (b. 1895), done in

Israel, whose title, *Genocide*, makes its meaning clear (fig. 5).

In using this symbolism, artists were aided by the knowledge that the theme of Christ's passion was so common in Western art that even a suggestion of this imagery would immediately be understood by the public.¹⁰ Thus Lea Grundig (1906–1977), a German Jewish artist, in a 1935 etching entitled *The Jew is Guilty*, shows a crowd mocking a Jewish family trapped in a cage, while the father extends his arms as though crucified.¹¹ Around 1945, an American sculptor, Chaim Gross (b. 1904), began a series of nightmare drawings, some of which were inspired by the death of his sister, Sarah, in the Holocaust. One of the 1949 drawings, part of a series entitled *Hands cannot hold*, combines Holocaust symbols such as barbed wire,

⁷ The title here is ironic. Not only is Jesus burnt as were his fellow Jews, but the artist comments bitterly on the destruction of the promised redemption, both for the Christian jailers and for their Jewish victims. Goeritz was born in Danzig in 1915 and lives in Mexico.

⁸ See Samuel M. Kootz, *New Frontiers in American Painting* (New York: Hastings House, 1943), pl. 69, and Allen Weller, *Abraham Rattner* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), pl. 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pl. 8.

¹⁰ This assumption is based on a long tradition in modern art, dating at least from Francisco Goya's *Third of May, 1808* (1814, Prado, Madrid). There stigmata were added to the hands of the main victim who stands with his arms stretched out as though he were crucified.

¹¹ See Lea Grundig (exhibition catalogue. Berlin: Ladengalerie, 1973), no. 46.

*

weeping and burning figures, with hands bearing the stigmata (fig. 6), while later drawings portray the weeping Virgin and the head of Jesus.¹² This type of suggestive symbolism reappears as late as 1968 in *The Question* from the *Holocaust Suite* of another American, Jacob Landau (b. 1917).¹³ Here the German soldier, armed with a machine-gun, throws a cruciform shadow on the ground on which are impaled a group of writhing tortured figures.

This brief selection of works demonstrates the pervasiveness of this theme among Jewish artists of various nationalities who deal with the Holocaust. But the statement of the bare fact of such a problematic symbolism is not enough; it must be explained. One of its sources is undoubtedly the common Christian use of Christ's passion in modern art to symbolize the sufferings of humanity, especially in times of war. This can be done by suggestion, as in Francisco Goya's use of the stigmata in the *Third of May, 1808* of 1814, or more obviously, as in George Grosz's portrayal of the crucified Christ who wears a soldier's boots and a gas mask to symbolize the martyrdom of soldiers in World War I, a message which is accented by the brutal inscription: "Shut your mouth and continue to serve."¹⁴ However, no matter how prevalent this symbolism was, it does not explain the distinctly Jewish complexion of the works discussed above: many of them stress Jesus' Judaism, and he symbolizes, not suffering humanity, but specifically the slaughter of Jews during the Holocaust. To understand this phenomenon, the Jewish rather than the general or Christian context must be analyzed. In this context two crucial questions arise: what alternative symbols were available to the Jewish artist, and on what traditions in modern Jewish art was this Christian symbolism based.

The basic alternate symbol, as presented in Jewish literature, is the Sacrifice of Isaac, which is far more widespread there than the passion of

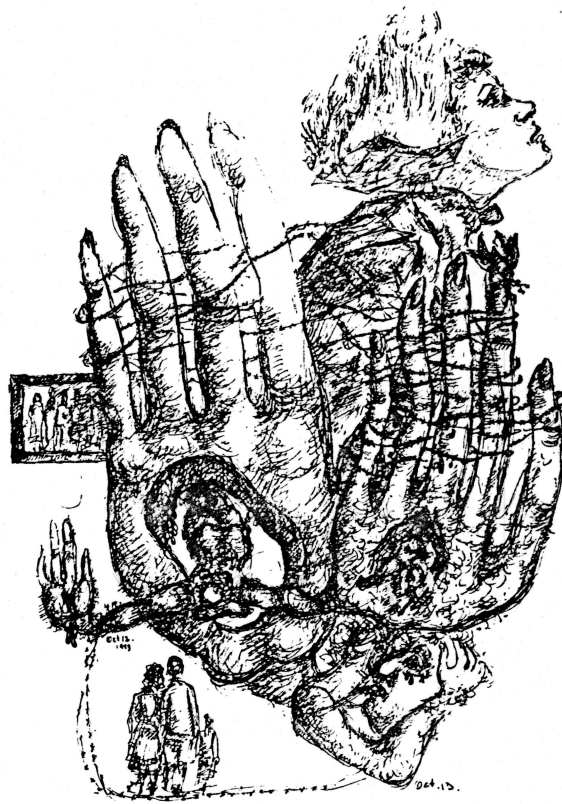


Fig. 6. Chaim Gross, *Fantasy Drawing*, 1949. Artist's Collection.

Christ in describing the Holocaust.¹⁵ The development of the theme of the Sacrifice of Isaac into a symbol of Jewish martyrdom in the Midrash and throughout the Middle Ages has been thoroughly documented by Shalom Spiegel. He discusses Jewish traditions which depict Isaac as having actually been sacrificed on the altar, the symbols of his blood and ashes, and his resurrection.¹⁶ This non-traditional view of the subject was incorporated into Judaism in the idea that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice

¹² See Chaim Gross, *Fantasy Drawings* (New York: Beechhurst Press, 1956), no. 40.

¹³ See Barry Schwartz, *The New Humanism* (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 39.

¹⁴ Grosz's *Maul halten und weiter dienen* was published as part of his drawings for the production of the play, *Schwejk*, in his *Hintergrund* (Berlin: Malik, 1928, pl. 10). It was known in New York at least by 1935, when it was shown in An American Place, New York, 17 March-14 April 1935, and illustrated in the catalogue.

¹⁵ See Gabriel H. Cohen, "בין תורה לספרות," a lecture given in July 1981 at a symposium on Judaism and Art to be published shortly by the Kotlar Institute, Bar-Ilan University, Tel Aviv. Cohen brings examples of the use of the theme of the Sacrifice of Isaac in modern literature, including several examples that were inspired by the Holocaust. See also גבריאל חיים כהן, "הרהורים ליום הקדוש הכללי, עשרה בטבת," פורר ישראל, כ"ג, 26-23 תמוז תשל"ב, ע' 26-23; Lawrence J. Wineman, "The Akedah Motif in the Modern Hebrew Story", Ph.D. thesis (Los Angeles: University of

California, 1977), especially pp. v, 48, 126-142; and Michael Brown, "Biblical Myth and Contemporary Experience: The Akedah in Modern Jewish Literature", *Judaism*, 31 (Winter 1982), 99-111. It should be noted, however, that there are references by Jewish and Christian authors to the Passion as a symbol of the Holocaust. One example, from Shalom Asch, an author who realized the basic repulsion of Jews to this sort of symbolism (see n. 1) should suffice: "The same outcry heard on the cross from him who gave his life to save the world, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani?'... — That same cry was heard on the streets of Warsaw from hundreds of souls who, with their crosses, were being whipped on the way to Golgotha" (*One Destiny*, p. 23).

¹⁶ שלום שפיגל, "מאגדות העקדה," ספר היובל לכבוד אלכסנדר מארכס (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950), pp. תע"א-תקמ"ז, translated by Judah Goldin as: Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1967). See especially pp. תע"ז-תפ"ג, "פירור מאגדות העקדה" (English, pp. 17-37, 42-59). See also Spiegel's "מאגדות העקדה," *The Abraham Weiss Jubilee Volume* (New York: Shulsinger Brothers, 1954), pp. תקנ"ג-תקס"ו.



Fig. 7. Mordecai Ardon, Sarah, 1947. Ardon Collection, Jerusalem.



Fig. 8. Marc Chagall, sketch for the *Yellow Crucifixion*, 1942. Chagall Collection.

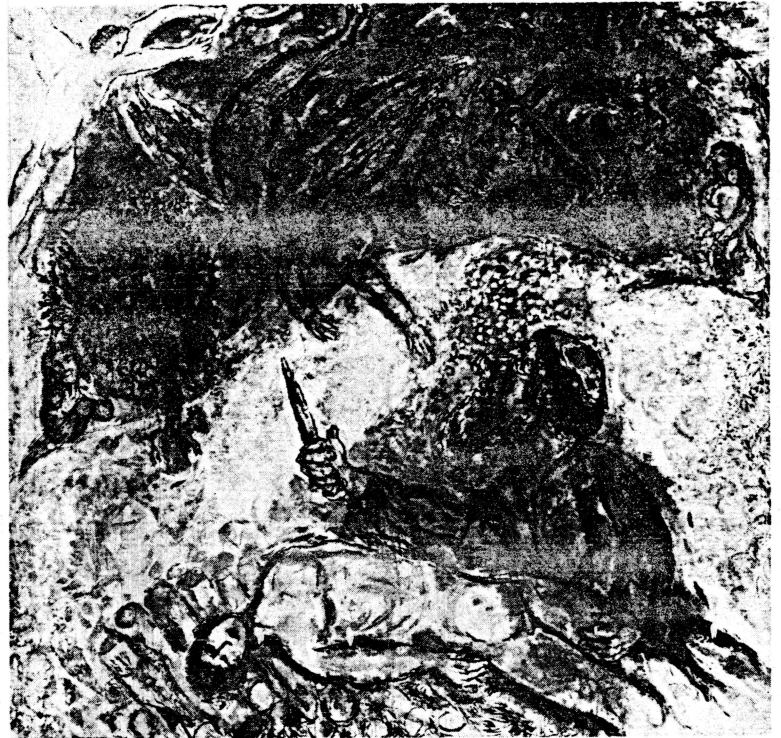


Fig. 9. Marc Chagall, *Sacrifice of Isaac*, ca. 1960-65. Chagall Museum, Nice (photo courtesy of the Chagall Museum).

his son, and Isaac's willingness to be sacrificed, are accepted by God *as though* the sacrifice had been performed, and will be remembered by Him when the Jewish people are being persecuted.¹⁷ In this guise, the Sacrifice of Isaac penetrated into prayers and into comparisons between martyred Jews and the "slaughtered" Isaac, and finally became a widely accepted literary symbol of Jewish martyrdom in the Holocaust.

However, this is a very difficult symbol to use visually, as the traditional artistic depiction of the Sacrifice of Isaac is of the dramatic moment of reprieve: an angel appears to stop Abraham from performing the sacrifice with the words: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad" (Genesis 22:12). There is no visual tradition of the sacrifice being carried out. The two modern attempts by Mordecai Ardon and Chagall to use the Sacrifice of Isaac to symbolize the Holocaust demonstrate the problems inherent in this use of the theme. In Ardon's *Sarah* (1947, Ardon Collection, Jerusalem, fig. 7), Isaac lies dead on the altar while Abraham sits helpless, head in hands, a tiny figure in the background. It is Sarah

who dominates the foreground,¹⁸ mourning over her dead son in a manner strongly reminiscent of Mary bewailing Christ's death in the *Pietà*. This parallel imagery explains the ladder beside Abraham: it is the ladder used in the Deposition from the Cross, but it now lies useless on the ground, for Isaac, whose sacrifice is a prefiguration of the Crucifixion in Christian theology, lies dead. Ardon, aware of the Christian parallel between Isaac and Christ, opted for the Jewish literary theme, but was unable to free himself from Christian visual images.

In Chagall's sketch for the *Yellow Crucifixion* (1942, Chagall Collection, fig. 8), the Torah scroll opens to reveal images of slaughter. Although the Sacrifice of Isaac is not actually depicted, it is suggested in the hand holding the knife and in the dead bodies lying in various poses which are traditional for Isaac in the biblical scene. These images form a concrete Old Testament parallel to the Crucifixion depicted to the right of the Torah scroll. Possibly for this very reason, Chagall omitted them from his painting in which he, unlike Ardon, opted for a Christian iconography, and which he

¹⁷ "ר' אלעזר בן פדת: אף על פי שלא מת יצחק, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו מת ואפרו מוטל על גבי המזבח (מדרש הגדול סי' בראשית כ"ב, י"ט, ירושלים, תש"ז, ע' ש"ס)...כשהיה בניו של יצחק חוטאין ונכנסין לצרה, תהא נזכר להן עקדתו של יצחק ותחשב לפניך כאילו אפרו צבור על גבי המזבח ותסלה להן ותפדם מצרותם. (שפיגל, "אגודת", ע' תפ"ט, pp. 41-42) (English, pp. 41-42) (תנח"ך וירא סי"ט: כ"ג")

¹⁸ This reverses the traditional composition in which Abraham is the main character, and Sarah, when she appears at all, is a minor figure in the background. See, for instance, the Sacrifice of Isaac at Dura Europos, and Chagall's version of this theme (fig. 9).



Fig. 10. Ephraim Moses Lilien, *Abraham and Isaac*, ca. 1907. Olga Bineth Collection, Jerusalem.

Fig. 11. Ephraim Moses Lilien, *Dedicated to the Martyrs of Kishinev*, 1903. From Maxim Gorki's *Zbornik*.



“judaized” by means of the Jewish ritual objects and the refugees.¹⁹ In a later painting of the *Sacrifice of Isaac* (ca. 1960–67, Chagall Museum, Nice, fig. 9), Chagall recombined the two themes, stressing the parallel between them by setting a Jewish Jesus carrying the cross into the background of the Sacrifice. However, this painting is not symbolic of the Holocaust, but is part of a series of Old Testament paintings made for an interfaith chapel.²⁰ To symbolize the Holocaust, Chagall specifically chose the New Testament theme, preferring a visual image which was a traditional and well-known expression of suffering and martyrdom.

In dealing with Chagall's seemingly unwarranted (from the Jewish standpoint) insertion of Jesus into the background of the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, it must be stressed that he was not the first Jewish

artist to make the connection between the Sacrifice and Christ's Passion. Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874–1925) had done so in his depiction of a rare scene, Abraham and Isaac on their way to Moriah (ca. 1907, fig. 10).²¹ Isaac carries the logs so that they clearly form a cross with his body. This image rests, moreover, as much on Jewish as on Christian symbolism, as in *Genesis Rabbah*, Isaac carrying the logs is compared to “one who carries his cross on his shoulder”.²² Lilien is not as explicit as Chagall, but his imagery is sufficiently clear. Further examination of Lilien's art shows another “prefiguration” of Chagall's symbolism. In *Dedicated to the Martyrs of Kishinev* (1903, fig. 11), Lilien juxtaposed his martyred Jew, bound in a *tallit* and tied to a stake, to an angel whose wings form a visual “cross-bar” to the martyr.²³ Chagall, who adapted Lilien's imagery in

¹⁹Note the presence of the ladder here and in the painting where it appears in its proper context as related to the Crucifixion.

²⁰Franz Meyer, *Marc Chagall* (New York: Abrams, 1963), pp. 563–564, 573 and 613. All the paintings are now in the Chagall Museum at Nice.

²¹This undated drawing was done as one of the illustrations to the Bible which Lilien began working on during his stay in Palestine in 1907. Lilien's Bible was published as *Die Bücher der Bibel: Überlieferung und Gesetz: Das Fünfbuch Moses und das Buch Josua* (Braunschweig: Georg

Westermann, 1908). There is no illustration of the Sacrifice of Isaac in this book.

²²“יקח אברהם את עצי העולה וגר כזה שהוא טוען צלובו בכתפיו” (בראשית רבה, פרשה נ”ו, ד).

²³This was done as an illustration to Maxim Gorki's *Zbornik* (St. Petersburg: Znamie, n.d.). The dedication is in Hebrew on the plate. I would like to thank Milly Heyd for pointing the visual cross out to me.



Fig. 12. Mark Antokolsky, *Ecce Homo*, 1873. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

his own painting, *The Martyr* (1940–41, Chagall Collection),²⁴ preferred in his Crucifixions to state openly what Lilien had only suggested.

²⁴ Meyer, *Chagall*, p. 418. This is the date given at the time the picture was first exhibited, at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York, 25 November–13 December 1941 (no. 21).

²⁵ Jesus had, of course, been portrayed as a Jew by Rembrandt, who broke with Christian tradition to do so. Although Rembrandt remained an exception to the rule, his influence on the Jewish artists who returned to portrayals of a Jewish Jesus was considerable.

²⁶ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 13–14, 16–22; and Samuel Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 53–54.

²⁷ Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem, Sämtliche Werke* (Vienna: Mich. Schmidt's sel. Witve und Jg. Klang, 1838), pp. 287–288. For discussions of these views, see Y. Klausner, *A History of Modern Hebrew Literature* (in Hebrew. Jerusalem: Ahiasaf, 1952), I 81; and Jacob Fleischmann, *The Problem of Christianity in Modern Jewish Thought* (in Hebrew. Jerusalem:

From this comparison, it becomes apparent that a tradition of Christ imagery and an identification between Isaac, martyred Jews, and Jesus, existed in Jewish art long before Chagall. In order to understand their use in Holocaust symbolism, it will be necessary to investigate the earliest example of this imagery, Mark Antokolsky's *Ecce Homo* of 1873 (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, fig. 12), which clearly sets forth the new Jewish idea of a Jewish Jesus.²⁵ However, to understand Antokolsky's work, we must first explore the new theological attitude towards Jesus which developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Christian and Jewish circles.

In 1778 Ephraim Gotthold Lessing published a book by Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), a German Christian, called *The Aims of Jesus and his Disciples*, which offered the first historical reconstruction of the life of Jesus. Reimarus saw Jesus as a law-abiding Jew who must be studied within the context of Jewish history and thought of the Second Temple period. This approach led Reimarus to state radical views: Jesus was completely human, not divine; he performed no miracles which cannot be rationally explained; he came as a Jew *only* to the Jews and had no intention of replacing Judaism with another religion; finally his words on the cross show that he failed in his mission to establish a messianic kingdom, which he conceived of according to Jewish ideas on the subject. After his death, his disciples spread his ideas among the pagans, altering them basically and developing Christianity.²⁶

These ideas find an echo in those of Lessing's friend, Moses Mendelssohn, who stated in 1770–71 that Christ was a Jew who kept the *mizvot* and did not want to destroy Judaism.²⁷ Mendelssohn's views parallel those of Reimarus, but they have Jewish sources as well in the writings of the Rambam and others who not only accepted Jesus as a law-abiding Jew, but gave him credit for spreading Jewish ideas among the pagans.²⁸

Magnes Press, 1964), pp. 20–21. Note that Mendelssohn had opposed Lessing's publication of Reimarus' writings (Schweitzer, *Quest*, p. 15), and that he stated this view as part of his justification for remaining Jewish and as a call on Christians to tolerate Jews without trying to convert them.

²⁸ Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925), p. 413. Rabbi Isaac Ber Levinsohn quotes the Rambam as saying: "Jesus of Nazareth came to pave the way for the Messiah" and gives a long list of Jewish scholars who agreed with him. ר' יצחק בר לעווניזאהו, אפס דמים (וילנא: מנחם מן רשמחה זימל, 1837) pp. 82–87. However, the quotation from the Rambam that he gives is fragmentary and imprecise. In context it is a backhanded compliment: even false messiahs such as Jesus have a saving grace. רמב"ם, משנה תורה, ספר שופטים (ירושלים: מוסד הרב קוק, 1962), "הלכות מלכים", פרק י"א: סעיף ד, ע' חס"ר"ח"י."

culled from a book on historical dress.³⁸ Antokolsky explained this sculpture in letters to his friend, Vladimir Stasov, in 1873–74, to the painter, Ivan Kramskoy, and to Elisaveta Mamontova, whose husband owned the statue, in 1874. In letters to Stasov in the beginning of 1873 he describes his current work:

Then I made a sketch: "Christ before the People's Court". Are you surprised? But it seems to me that nobody ever treated Him as I imagine. Because before this Christianity moved in the name of Christ — against Christ; before this He was in the hands of exploiters, but now everyone who denies Christianity approaches closer to Him.³⁹

For several weeks now I have been working on "Christ", or as I call Him "Great Isaiah" I want to evoke Him as a reformer, who rose up against the Pharisees and Sadducees because of their aristocratic injustice. He stood up for the people, for brotherhood and freedom, for that blind people who with such rage and ignorance shouted: "Crucify, crucify him!" I will represent Him during that moment when He stands before the court of that people for whom He fell as a victim. I chose this moment, first of all because it is dramatic. His spiritual motion is unusually grandiose at this moment. Indeed, only during this moment could He (and only He) say: "I forgive them, for they know not what they do." Secondly by the court of people, I mean also the present court. I am convinced that if Christ or Wise Isaiah was resurrected now he would see ... to what a level His ideas were brought by the Fathers of the Inquisition and others, therefore he would rise against Christianity in the same way that he had risen against the Pharisees, and ten times would let himself be crucified for the sake of truth.

Jews may have renounced and still renounce Him, but I solemnly admit that He was and died as a Jew for truth and brotherhood. That is why I want to present him as a purely Jewish type...with a covered head...I imagine to myself how Jews and Christians alike will rise against me. Jews will probably say, "How is it that he made Christ?" And Christians will say "What kind of Christ did he make?" But I do not care for this.⁴⁰

A year later he was still worried about the statue's reception, and continued to explain his motivations:

I just wanted to evoke Christ the way he can be

imagined in the nineteenth century...to add Eastern-Jewish features to this type...I just reproduced what I have seen and felt in reality among Jews...who day and night spend their time in the synagogue...as this is the environment out of which Christ came.⁴¹

I don't know whether you approve of my task that I myself being a Jew, represented Him because of Whom so much Jewish and non-Jewish blood was spilled...so that...there is a deep enmity between Christians and non-Christians. But should the Nazarene be accused of this?...I was guided by the true facts in the creation of the Nazarene....Moscow pharisees...judge my work as they want to...without seeing the work itself...that is why I wish to explain the contents of my statue. The Nazarene appeared when Israel's morals began to decline...The Nazarene wanted to anticipate that bloody tragedy which happened 100 years later, but for this the Nazarene was barbarically tortured. Nonetheless, Jesus the Nazarene, his story and destiny constitute a rare event in the history of mankind. Though some parts of his teaching existed already before him, in no one but Him was it so inflamed, nobody so truly and completely could, like Him, sacrifice his life for the sake of his ideas, beliefs and mankind. Jews can be positively proud that Jesus belongs to the descendants of Moses, of that great prophet who rose up earlier against violence and slavery...

If there is the hundredth part of humanity in the essence of the Jewish religion, the "Nazarene" not only did not rise up against it, but on the contrary, supported it, repeating Moses' words: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" ... The difference between [them] was that Moses was the great practical one and the Nazarene was the great idealist. There should be an immediate clash between such characters. Moses, in accordance with the times and his character...edited a whole row of strict and energetic laws, which were not supported even by the strongest fanatics... In contrast, the Nazarene as an idealist....wanted to base all person-to-person relations not on strict laws and fear, but only upon pure love and conscience....(time has proved how feasible this was — a bitter truth)...

A hundred years passed and more. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Rome began to decline....corrupt patricians preferred to feed the fish in their ponds with slaves rather than with anything else....only among such contemptible slaves could there appear...a contempt for life and...the deep solemn hymn "to death...like Jesus, for unity, for brotherhood, for common love"; the

³⁸ Letter to Ivan Kramskoy, Rome, 1 (13) January, 1874, in Vladimir V. Stasov, *Mark Matveyevitch Antokolsky* (St. Petersburg: Wolf, 1905), no. 87, pp. 112–113. I would like to thank Suzanne Landau for locating the appropriate passages in Russian for me, and Luba Freedman for translating the passages quoted here.

³⁹ Letter to Stasov, Rome, 17 February (1 March) 1873, *ibid.*, no. 60, p. 68.

⁴⁰ Letter to Stasov, Rome, 31 March (12 April) 1873, *ibid.*, no. 63, pp. 70–71.

⁴¹ Letters to Kramskoy, Rome, 28 January (9 February) 1874 and Sorrento, 6 (18) September 1874, and to Stasov, Rome, received on 17 September (4 October) 1874, *ibid.*, nos 88, 131 and 134, pp. 112, 176–177 and 183.

image of the Nazarene was resurrected. And here, out of death there was born the new illuminating idea, embodied in a religious shape (and at its head there was again a Jew), but nonetheless mankind did not delight... Already there appeared wise men, false interpreters, who... began to exploit him. Popes... appeared, then luxury... Then came the Crusades, burnings at the stake, and everyone worked in Christ's name against Christ. Why should one cover one's wish to harm one's neighbor instead of loving him with the name of such an idealist as Jesus?... Who is a Christian nowadays? Isn't it strange and offensive that the genius for evil still exists?⁴²

In his letters, Antokolsky stressed many of the arguments which had already surfaced in Jewish polemics: Jesus was a Jew, as is stressed in the statue by his face and his garb, and he must be judged against the corrupt background of his times. He came *only* to the Jews, as a reformer, sacrificing himself for them and forgiving them for killing him. Writing to Christians, Antokolsky compared Jesus to Moses and to Isaiah, seeing him as a continuation of them, but more softheartedly idealistic — in a way that has proven impossible to follow in real life. He stressed that the early Christians and Paul — and not Jesus — had created a new Christian religion and that a corrupt form of Christianity had persecuted Jesus' people for two thousand years. Therefore, if Jesus returned, he would be horrified at their actions and would preach against Christianity, for which the Christians would crucify him anew.

These last ideas are clear echoes from Jewish polemic and apologetic literature, published by Ribal, Rabbi Isaac Ber Levinsohn, shortly before the statue was made. Ribal was one of the founders of the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) movement in Russia, who in *'Aḥiya Shiloni ha-Hozeh* (written in 1841, but published only in 1863) not only reiterated the idea that Jesus was a law-abiding Jew, but harshly attacked Christians who persecute the Jews rather than obeying Jesus' laws of humility and charity.⁴³ A further parallel is found in the poetry of Abag, Abraham Ber Gottlober, especially in his *Hegeh*

va-Hi of 1864, in which Jesus disowns the Christians for their treatment of the Jews, reaffirming his blood kinship with the latter.⁴⁴

Yet Antokolsky's depiction of Jesus as a Jew was not based solely on theological polemics. His letters of 1873 to Stasov show his growing consciousness of anti-semitism, which awoke memories from his childhood of the kidnapping of Jewish children for Russian military service.⁴⁵ In this context, it should be remembered that Antokolsky had previously depicted not only purely Jewish or Russian scenes, but those dealing with the conflict between Christian and Jew, e.g. the relief depicting the Inquisition breaking in on a Marrano seder, done shortly after his relief of the *Kiss of Judas*.⁴⁶ In fact, in the 1870's Russian anti-semitism was on the rise after a period of "emancipation" in which Jews like Antokolsky with professional or intellectual abilities had been encouraged and given an "equal" standing with Christians. The reaction began with the 1871 pogrom in Odessa and the publication in that year of anti-semitic tracts by Jacob Brafman, an apostate Jew, in Antokolsky's hometown, Vilna.⁴⁷ Antokolsky's Christ, like Gottlober's, comes to remind Christians that Jesus was a Jew and that such persecutions are a perversion of his teachings.

Most of Antokolsky's other depictions of Jesus also parallel outbreaks of anti-semitism. For instance, his relief *The Last Breath* (1877, Russian Museum, Kiev), which is inscribed, according to the artist, "Forgive them for they know not what they do", was executed one year after the publication of Ippolit Lutostansky's *On the Use of Christian Blood by Jews* (1876).⁴⁸ This relief was to be one of a series of three, showing the dying Christ, the head of Mephistopheles, and Catherine de' Medici and her son Charles watching the St. Bartholemew's Day Massacre. This series was purportedly anti-Catholic, but the highly Jewish features of the head of Mephistopheles, and its inscription: "My people, I sang hatred to you", seems to be an allusion to Jacob Brafman and other apostate Jews who turned against their people. Thus even the Christian pogrom of St. Bartholemew's Eve would symbolize on one level Christian pogroms against the Jews.

⁴²Letter to Elisaveta Grigorievna Mamontova, Rome, 1874, *ibid.* no. 96, pp. 128-130.

⁴³Leipzig: C.W. Vollrath, 1863). A summary of this book can be found in Klausner, *Modern Hebrew Literature*, III, 95-103.

⁴⁴אברהם בער ברחיים גאטטלאבער, כל שירי מהללאל (וורשה: ישראל אלפין, 1890), pp. 91-97. "הגה והי" describes how the Christians took over the Jewish religion but degraded the Jews, persecuting them rather than listening to Christ's words. The poet calls on Jesus to judge the Christians, and he does so in harsh terms הוא ישראל, עם זו ישראל, לא אחי מרחם... חיי תתי לעם מנהו לקחתי. ומה לכם חנפים טפלי שקר, בא בסוד ה' לא "סמל הקנאה המקנא" of 1872, See also Gottlober's

especially: "הלמשיעכם גאלכם זאת תגמלו, כי על אחיו בני עמו לא תחלמו" (p. 138).

⁴⁵Mordechai Antokolsky, *Memoirs and Letters* (in Hebrew. Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1952), pp. 151-160, dated December 4, 1873.

⁴⁶See Stasov, *Antokolsky*, opp. p. 224. Although Antokolsky later stated that he did not know what had inspired his Inquisition relief, he executed it after suffering himself from the anti-semitic behavior of the directors of the Academy who decided not to give him the medal he had won until he passed theoretical examinations from which other students of his rank had been exempted (Maggid, *Antokolsky*, p. 31).

⁴⁷Simon Dubnov, *History of the Jews* (rev. ed., New York: Yoseloff, 1973), V, 322-328, 331-337.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, V, 339-340.



Fig. 14. Maurycy Gottlieb, *Jesus before his Judges*, 1877. Steiglitz Collection, Tel Aviv.

This seems to be borne out by the inscription which the series was to bear, "In Christ's name against Christ", a phrase which appeared repeatedly in his letters about the Christian persecutions of the Jews.⁴⁹

Antokolsky's *Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden* (present whereabouts unknown), was begun in 1882, as a reaction to the Easter pogroms of 1881 in Elisavetgrad, Kiev, Odessa, etc., which followed the murder of Alexander II.⁵⁰ Antokolsky's depictions of Jesus were thus inspired by a combination of modern Jewish theological ideas on the Jewish Jesus with the external pressures of anti-semitism to which the artist, an emancipated Jew, reacted sharply.

In the late 1870's, these causes, as well as the

influence of Antokolsky, motivated two other major Jewish artists to depict Jesus as a Jew. Between 1877 and 1879, Maurycy Gottlieb created two paintings which portray the two sides of the story of the Jewish Jesus. By mid-1877, Gottlieb had almost completed in Vienna a large painting depicting *Jesus before his Judges* (Stieglitz Collection, Tel Aviv; fig. 14), which stresses Jesus' differentiation from Judaism.⁵¹ Like Antokolsky's *Ecce Homo*, Jesus is dressed as a Jew, wearing a turban-like skullcap and a *zizit* (fringed garment). Although he too has side curls, Gottlieb has not opted for a Jewish physiognomy as had Antokolsky, preferring to set Jesus' delicate straight-nosed profile in contrast to the "Jewish" hooked noses around him, thus emphasizing a visual difference between Jesus and the Jews.⁵²

⁴⁹The first two of these works are visible together in a photograph of Antokolsky's studio (Stasov, *Antokolsky*, p. iii). For Antokolsky's explanation of the series and the inscriptions, see his letters to Stasov, *ibid.*, pp. 324 and 327. In the second letter, Antokolsky states that he had chosen a traditional image of Christ rather than a new type as his idea was anti-Catholic. It should be remembered that he was writing to a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, and may not have wanted to antagonize him. My thanks to Luba Freedman for pointing out to me Mephistopheles' Jewish physiognomy.

⁵⁰Dubnov, *History*, V, 514-533. These pogroms deeply shocked Antokolsky as can be seen from his letter to Stasov from Paris on 5 May 1881. See Antokolsky, *Memoirs*, pp. 162-3.

⁵¹The painting is dated by a letter to his father of 7 July 1877. See Mojzesz Waldman, *Maurycy Gottlieb* (Cracow: Narodowa, 1932), p. 37. I would like to thank my father for translating the Polish for me.

⁵²The similarities here to Antokolsky's statue are, however, great. In fact, the paintings seem to portray the scene Antokolsky described in his letters, including the criticism of the Jews of that period. Gottlieb could have learned of Antokolsky's statue through the Polish Jewish press: "Kronika Krajowa", *Izraelita*, 12 (29 April [11 May] 1877), p. 147 and "Hadashot Shonot", *Ha-Zefirah*, in Hebrew, 4 (13 [25] April 1877), p. 119. Gottlieb apparently received these papers in Vienna, and *Izraelita* seems to have inspired several of his paintings. See, for instance, the discussion there on Ahasver in 10 (28 November [10 December] 1875).

The moment chosen is his answer to the High Priest, which is understood to mean that he claims to be the Son of God (Matthew 26: 63–65). At this, he is rejected by the Jews, symbolized by Ananias, who lifts a whip to strike him (Matthew 26:67), and by the shocked looks of many of the Jews around him, and crowned (albeit mockingly with thorns) by the Roman soldiers, symbolizing the pagans who will develop his thoughts into Christianity. It is interesting that Gottlieb does not choose the moment when the High Priest tears his garment. He treats Caiaphas sympathetically, putting the onus of guilt on Ananias, and stresses the moment he has chosen by carefully inscribing excerpts from the first four Commandments on the Torah scroll behind the High Priest, commandments which in Jewish eyes contain some of the basic differences between Judaism and Christianity. This treatment, and the placement of Jesus as a Jew into his correct historical context, shows the influence of Graetz's *History of the Jews* on Gottlieb.⁵³

Yet to understand this painting, Gottlieb's own view of his national and religious identity must be taken into account. After leaving the ghetto, Gottlieb, believing himself to be emancipated, had become a Polish patriot, even portraying himself in Polish national costume.⁵⁴ However, he suffered constant anti-semitic attacks from his Polish comrades, for anti-semitism was on the rise in Poland as well as in Russia.⁵⁵ By 1875, he had begun to concentrate on Jewish subjects, depicting himself in 1876 as Ahasver, the Wandering Jew of an anti-semitic Christian legend, and in 1878 completely re-identifying with Judaism in his self-portrait in *Yom Kippur* (Tel Aviv Museum).⁵⁶ *Jesus before his Judges* lies midway between *Ahasver* and *Yom Kippur*, and it is an expression of Gottlieb's growing differentiation of himself from his anti-semitic background. However, the struggle within himself is still evident. Jesus is portrayed sympathetically as an ideal, gentle figure, standing midway between the pagans and the poor people who support and worship him on the right, and the Jews on the left. The latter, who portray an entire range of emotions and types, are treated with different amounts of



Fig. 15. Maurycy Gottlieb, *Jesus Preaching*, 1878–79. Narodowy Museum Warsaw.

sympathy and criticism. Gottlieb's attitude at this time may also be deduced from the way he portrayed himself in the painting: he stands as an impartial spectator directly behind and to the right of Jesus.

The second painting, *Jesus preaching* (December 1878–mid-1879, Narodowy Museum, Warsaw, fig. 15) was begun in Rome. In it, he paraphrased his own *Yom Kippur*, clothing himself, his family and his friends in ancient costumes and setting them in a classical synagogue in Capernaum listening to

p. 393. The tantalizingly brief notices in these papers may have inspired Gottlieb to seek more detailed information on Antokolsky's statue from other sources, and he may even have seen one of the numerous photographs that Antokolsky took of it. He combined the details of dress and hair there with the physical type and pose of Jan Matejko's Christ in the *Raising of Lazarus* (1867, in Stanisław Witkiewicz, *Matejko* [Lwów: Gubrynowicza i Syna, 1912], p. 64). He even included the Magdalene at Christ's feet there, depicting both figures as though turned more to the left.

⁵³ Graetz's influence on Gottlieb is attested to by a letter from 1876. See Maurycy Gottlieb, *Letters and Diaries* (in Hebrew. Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1957), pp. 24–25; and J. Weisenberg, *Maurycy Gottlieb* (Złoczów:

O. Zukerkandla i Syna, 1888), pp. 17–18. Gottlieb also derived the *zizit* from Graetz, who stated that Jesus wore one to stress that he was a law-abiding Jew (*History of the Jews*, II, 156). On the other hand, he chose a detail not mentioned by Graetz, but specifically in the New Testament (the priest preparing to strike Jesus), so that he clearly was also familiar with that version, and possibly with Renan's, as Renan also puts the onus of guilt on Ananias and not on Caiaphas (*Vie de Jésus*, pp. 364–368, 394–396).

⁵⁴ Waldman, *Gottlieb*, p. 16.

⁵⁵ Gottlieb, *Letters*, pp. 24–6, 45–6. The second quotation, from an interview, makes the incident sound much later than it was.

⁵⁶ Waldman, *Gottlieb*, pp. 24, 41 and 50.

Jesus preaching.⁵⁷ Jesus himself is dark-haired and powerful, recalling an Old Testament prophet rather than the softer figure of the first painting. He wears a *tallit* which covers the back of his head as well as *zizit*, and stands before the open Torah scroll. This depiction of Jesus as a Jewish preacher, albeit with a halo, whose words are weighed, accepted, or rejected by various members of the audience, emphasizes the idea that Jesus came to preach to the Jews and not to start a new religion.⁵⁸

This affirmation of Jesus' Jewishness goes beyond that of Antokolsky, but it had the same motivation behind it. In Rome, Gottlieb wrote to a friend: "How much I would like...to make peace between Poles and Jews, for the history of both people is one of pain and suffering".⁵⁹ Having re-affirmed his own Judaism in *Yom Kippur*, he now tried to open a dialogue with the Christian world, not by becoming a part of it, as he had tried to do in his *Self-Portrait as a Pole*, but by pointing out, as had the emancipated Jewish polemicists, that Jesus was a Jew.

At exactly the same time that this painting was being created Max Liebermann was working in Munich on *The twelve-year old Jesus in the Temple* (December 1878–April 1879, private collection, fig. 16). Liebermann may have been influenced by Antokolsky's *Ecce Homo*, which he could have seen at the 1878 International Exhibition in Paris, or even earlier as Antokolsky moved to Paris in 1877 and Liebermann lived there between 1873–78. Liebermann, like Gottlieb, chose a scene emphasizing Jesus' Jewishness.⁶⁰ He depicted him as a bright Jewish child expounding his ideas to learned rabbis who listen attentively, bending over to catch his words. However, unlike Gottlieb, Liebermann did not place Jesus in his correct historical context.



Fig. 16. Max Liebermann, *The twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple*, 1879. Private collection.

Instead he based his Temple on a Venetian synagogue, and Mary comes down from the *'ezrat nashim* (women's section) to find her son, who stands near the pulpit, his historical costume at odds with the East European garb of most of the Jews around him and with the modern look of the two bare-headed elders before him, one of whom

⁵⁷ The title and subject of this painting have been constantly confused. The scene is not Jesus preaching in the Temple (a subject not even mentioned by Graetz), as many have assumed, but as Gottlieb's first biographer stated: "Jesus preaching" or "Jesus teaching at Capernaum". See Weisenberg, *Gottlieb*, pp. 39–40; and Izrael Leon Groszlik, "Maurycy Gottlieb", *Israelita*, 14 (13[25] July 1879), p. 238. This confusion has led to a seeming proliferation of pictures on Jesus' life by Gottlieb, many of which seem to refer to the same painting or to different versions of it. See Zofia Sołtysowa, "Dzieło Mauryczego Gottlieba", *Rocznik Krakowski*, 47 (1976), 149, 153, 155–156, 158, 168, 177–178. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to locate two of the paintings she refers to there which seem to be of different themes: "Jesus among the fishermen of Capernaum" and a sketch for "Christ after his beating". The correct subject of *Jesus Preaching* was also identified in the exhibition *Ein Seltsamer Garten: Polnische Malerei des 19 Jahrhunderts: Romantik, Realismus und Symbolismus* (Luzern, Kunstmuseum, 13 July–9 September 1980), no. 34.

⁵⁸ The figure of Jesus here should be compared to that in Matejko's *Raising of Lazarus*, who is more traditional in type. Note that those who accept or weigh Jesus' words, including Gottlieb, are dressed as religious Jews, while the sceptic is bareheaded and wears a Roman toga. This is much more evident that it was in an earlier version of the painting

reproduced in *La Peinture Polonaise du XVI^e au début du XX^e Siècle* (Warsaw: National Museum, 1979), no. 347, in which the man directly in front of the dais not only turns his back on Jesus, but seems to be clutching his head at the sound of the preacher's words. I would like to thank Nehama Guralnik of the Tel Aviv Museum for calling this version of the painting to my attention.

⁵⁹ Letter dated 14 December 1878, from Rome; Gottlieb, *Letters*, pp. 55–6. Antokolsky's influence should, however, not be ignored, as he had just won a gold medal at the Paris International Exhibition for his statues, including the *Ecce Homo* and *The Last Breath*, an event which was widely covered by the Jewish and Polish press; e.g. "Hadashot Shonot", *Ha-Zefirah*, 5 (29 August [10 September] 1878), p. 279; "Rozmaitości: Antokolski", *Israelita*, 13 (3[15] March 1878), p. 88; and "Pogadanki", *ibid.*, 42 (20 October [1 November] 1878), p. 341. It is worth noting that *Israelita* had taken to linking Gottlieb and Antokolsky together as two major Jewish artists, e.g. "Pogadanki", *ibid.*, 40 (29 September [11 October] 1878), p. 322.

⁶⁰ He may have been influenced in his choice of scene by an early fictitious life of Christ by Karl Friedrich Bahrdt (1782), who stated that the twelve-year old Jesus argued with the scribes against the possibility of miracles (Schweitzer, *Quest*, p. 40).

looks like a Berlin banker.⁶¹ Liebermann was not a history painter as Gottlieb was, and this merging of ancient and modern is typical of the Naturalist school to which he belonged where it was used consciously to bring out the modern-day relevance of the biblical narrative.⁶² However, whereas Jean-François Millet and Josef Israels portrayed biblical scenes as though they took place among modern-day peasants,⁶³ Liebermann stressed the specifically Jewish background of the story by using two easily identifiable types, the Eastern European and the modern German Jew. When it came to depicting Jesus, however, Liebermann seemingly suffered a loss of nerve. Originally he had chosen a dark-haired, pointedly Jewish model for the young Jesus, but in the final painting he replaced him with a light-haired Italian boy, retaining but playing down the expressive hand motions common to both nationalities.⁶⁴

Liebermann was also motivated, like Antokolsky and Gottlieb, by growing anti-semitism, which led to the establishment in Germany in 1879 — the year of the painting — of the Anti-Semitic League.⁶⁵ Liebermann, who grew up as an emancipated Jew in Berlin and had just lived for over five years in Paris, was apparently struck in Munich, where he painted the picture, by the growing anti-semitism. Erich Hancke reports that Liebermann actually stated that “in those days increasing anti-semitism had brought him to it”.⁶⁶

The reactions of the critics to these works also

throw light on the Judeo-Christian dialogue at this time. Both Antokolsky and Gottlieb were praised in Italy, but although Gottlieb was praised in Poland where the paintings were exhibited as the unfinished works of a young artist who had just died under romantic circumstances,⁶⁷ Antokolsky and Liebermann were torn apart by Christian critics in their home countries for daring to represent Christ with an ignoble Jewish physiognomy, and this despite the fact that in Liebermann's case the Italian model had a clearly non-Jewish face.⁶⁸ The problems of the Jewish artist in depicting Jesus are best summed up by Antokolsky: “The Jews think I'm Christian and the Christians curse me for being a dirty Jew (*zhid*). The Jews rebuke me: why did I do “Christ”, and the Christians rebuke me: why did I do “Christ” like that?”⁶⁹

Later depictions of Christ by Jewish artists are also in many cases clearly linked both with contemporary polemics concerning Jesus' religion and with outbreaks of anti-semitism which struck emancipated artists with particular force. For instance, although Lilien never actually depicted Jesus, his use of Christian visual symbolism in themes related to martyrdom can be connected with historical events. *Dedicated to the Martyrs of Kishinev* (fig. 11) is a muted statement on the Christ-like quality of the Jewish victims of Christian persecution in the Kishinev pogroms, while *Abraham and Isaac* (fig. 10), although ostensibly simply part of a series of Bible illustrations, was done not only after Kishinev

⁶¹ Here, as in Gottlieb's painting, one listener seems sceptical of Jesus' words, and it is again not a religious bearded Jew, but the most assimilated one, the “banker” directly to Jesus' left. Note that in several of the sketches the bare-headed Jews wore caps; e.g. *Sketch of a Rabbi* in Max J. Friedländer, *Max Liebermann* (Berlin: Propyläen, ca. 1923), p. 55, pl. 17.

⁶² Liebermann's break with conventional history painting and his influence on a Christian artist, Fritz von Uhde, who owned this painting, are discussed by Hans Rosenhagen, *Max Liebermann* (Bielefeld: Velhagen und Klasing, 1927), p. 40, and Karl Scheffler, *Max Liebermann* (Munich: Piper, 1912), p. 170. To understand the importance of this break and the shock with which the painting was received, it should be compared with the accepted academic treatment of the theme by Adolf Menzel (1852) and Heinrich Hoffmann (1880) in *Max Liebermann in seiner Zeit* (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, catalogue of an exhibition, 6 September–4 November 1979), p. 31.

⁶³ See Millet's *Shepherd showing travellers their way* (1857) and *The Flight into Egypt* (1863–64) in *Jean-François Millet* (London: Arts Council, 22 January–7 March 1976), nos 76 and 94, and Israels' *Cottage Madonna* in Max Eisler, *Josef Israels* (London: The Studio, 1924), pl. XVI.

⁶⁴ Erich Hancke, *Max Liebermann* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1923), p. 132. The sketch of the Jewish boy as Jesus is reproduced in Ferdinand Stuttmann, *Max Liebermann* (Hannover: Fackelträger, 1961), pl. 82. The model in the painting was probably Philip Arechio, whose name and address in Munich figure on a sketch for Jesus (*Liebermann*, 1979, no. 201). This substitution of an Italian model in Munich shows that Liebermann made the change on purpose and not just because of the

availability of a local model — he did not choose a German.

⁶⁵ For the growth of anti-semitism in Germany in the 1870's, its socio-political causes and Bismarck's covert support of it, see Dubnov, *History*, V, 426–435. Between 1873 and 1879 twelve editions of Wilhelm Marr's pamphlet *Der Sieg des Judentums über das Germanentum* were published, and 1879 also marked the election to the Landtag of Adolf Schtekker, one of the main exponents of anti-semitism; and the first publications of “scientific” anti-semitic articles by Heinrich von Treitschke.

⁶⁶ Hancke, *Liebermann*, p. 131. This was in response to Hancke's question as to why Liebermann, who had previously specialized in genre scenes and portraits, had chosen such a topic. Despite this statement, Hancke preferred to think that the impetus was predominantly artistic, as in his view Liebermann's work was painterly and did not include *tendenzbild* (*ibid.*, pp. 131–132). Liebermann's words are particularly significant, however, as this painting was to be exhibited in Munich which was not pro-Jewish, rather than in Berlin, which had a large Jewish population and was more liberal.

⁶⁷ Waldmann, *Gottlieb*, pp. 69–70. See, however, Sołtysowa, “Dzieło Maurycego Gottlieba”, p. 153.

⁶⁸ For the reviews on Antokolsky, see Maggid, *Antokolsky*, pp. 164–168. For the reviews on Liebermann, see Hancke, *Liebermann*, pp. 133–142 and Liebermann's own comments in Hans Ostwald, *Das Liebermann-Buch* (Berlin: Paul Francke, 1930), pp. 128–134.

⁶⁹ Letter to Stasov, Paris, received 8 January 1883, in Stasov, *Antokolsky*, no. 345, p. 489. For similar comments on Gottlieb, see Sołtysowa, “Gottlieba”, p. 153.



Fig. 17. Jakob Steinhardt, *Pietà*, 1913. Bar-On collection, Nahariya.

but immediately after the Russian pogroms that started in October 1905 and continued till 1906.⁷⁰

A later anti-semitic outburst and the fear of pogroms in Russia in 1911–12 caused by the Beilis blood libel trial in the spring of 1911 and the murder of Stolypin in September 1911,⁷¹ form the background for Christological works by both Jakob Steinhardt and Chagall, both of whom had liberated themselves from the ghetto and were living in relatively liberal cities, Berlin and Paris. Steinhardt's

⁷⁰Dubnov, *History*, V, 738–747. Lilien had previously depicted the crucifixion of Freedom, represented by a nude woman with halo and wings, as the final vignette of his illustrations for Johannes Wildenrath, *Der Zöllner von Klausen* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1898). There the image is related to the story and is seemingly without a Jewish connection.

⁷¹Dubnov, *History*, V, 769.

⁷²Kurt Hiller, "Ausstellung der Pathetiker", *Die Aktion*, 48 (27 November 1912), 1514–1516. I discussed this aspect of Steinhardt's work in a paper read at the Seventh World Congress for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem in August 1977. For the depictions of the pogroms, see Leon Kolb, *The Woodcuts of Jakob Steinhardt* (San Francisco: Genuart, 1959), nos 13–14, and Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *The Etchings and Lithographs of Jakob Steinhardt* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1981), nos 80–81. Steinhardt did two other Christological themes at this time, both of which are based on the work of other artists: the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (painting 1912, etching 1913, *ibid.*, no. 69) was influenced by El Greco and the Christ-child is barely perceptible in it; and the *Head of Christ* (1913, Kolb, *Woodcuts*, no. 18) was influenced by German medieval art.

⁷³See Meyer, *Chagall*, p. 175.

⁷⁴See *ibid.*, pp. 172–173; Blaise Cendrars, "Portrait", from *Dix-neufs*

Pietà (1913, fig. 17), executed in several mediums, depicts Jesus as an old beaten Jew dying in the arms of Mary, an old careworn Jewess. Although many of his works of 1913 using secular and Christian themes were influenced by an attack on him in *Die Aktion* claiming that he was too Jewish an artist, the *Pietà* is closely associated with his representations of pogroms at this time.⁷²

Chagall's *Golgotha* (1912, Museum of Modern Art, New York)⁷³ may also have been inspired, at least on one level, by events in Russia. As it is based on a drawing purportedly done in Russia, but undated, in which the INRI sign has been replaced by one apparently inscribed "Marc" in Hebrew and Russian letters, this painting has always been interpreted as a highly personal statement.⁷⁴ This is undoubtedly true on a certain level, but there are also other factors involved. First of all, there is a connecting link between Chagall and Antokolsky: Chagall was repeatedly helped in St. Petersburg by Antokolsky's former assistant and close friend, Ilya Ginzberg, who may have explained to him the motivation behind the 1873 *Ecce Homo*, a sculpture with which Chagall was undoubtedly acquainted.⁷⁵ Secondly, Chagall has stated that in this work he was both influenced by and in revolt against Russian icons which depicted the Crucifixion,⁷⁶ a process that parallels Antokolsky's early development. Third and most important is the fact that Chagall depicted Jesus as a crucified child mourned in the painting by his Jewish parents, as opposed to the eminently Christian figures at the foot of the cross in the sketch. As a child Chagall had not only lived through a particularly anti-semitic period in Russian history, but had witnessed a pogrom in Vitebsk, had constantly suffered from anti-semitism at school and had even been arrested in St.

poèmes élastiques, of October 1913, quoted in André Pieyre de Mandiargues, *Chagall* (Paris: Maeght, 1975), pp. 20–21 and 24; and Abraham Kampf, "Marc Chagall — Jewish Painter", *The Reconstructionist*, 16 (12 January 1951), 10–13. Chagall's identification with Christ has precedents in the art of Gauguin (*Self-Portrait as Christ in Gethsemane*, 1889, Norton Art Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida) and of Ensor (*Ecce Homo*, 1891, Marteaux Collection, Brussels). Meyer (*Chagall*, p. 91), reads the inscription above the cross as "King of Judea" in Greek, which does not hold up to examination.

⁷⁵Marc Chagall, *My Life* (New York: Orion, 1960), pp. 79–80 and 93. Chagall could also have read Stasov's book of Antokolsky's letters in Russian, which was published in 1905. The influence of a major Russian Jewish artist such as Antokolsky on young Jewish artists of this period should not be underestimated, especially in St. Petersburg. That Chagall was interested in what the Jewish approach to Jesus should be emerges from his story of his later meeting with Rabbi Schneerson, whom he had wanted to ask "what he thought about Christ, whose pale face had been troubling me for a long time" (*ibid.*, p. 128).

⁷⁶Walter Erben, *Marc Chagall* (New York: Praeger, 1957), p. 50.

Petersburg for travelling without a pass.⁷⁷ Something of this can be felt in Chagall's statement: "The crucifixions I painted from 1908–12 up to these last times, had for me a meaning of human decadence (*déchéance*) rather than a dogmatic meaning".⁷⁸ Thus in *Golgotha* Chagall combined the traditional source of the Jewish Jesus with his own personal reading of the theme.

It was, however, a relatively unknown artist, Wilhelm Wachtel, who finally explicitly connected the Jewish Jesus with pogroms in *Christ in the Pogrom Quarter* (1920, Flakowicz Collection, Tel Aviv). Here Jesus, reminiscent of Antokolsky's *Ecce Homo*, walks through the *shtetl* after a pogrom as though asking who is responsible for the destruction behind him and for the suffering of his fellow Jews around him. This painting again derives not only from the kind of Jewish polemics which were discussed above, but from historical events: the pogroms in the Ukraine and Poland from November 1918 to April 1921, which included some of the worst persecutions witnessed until then in Eastern Europe.⁷⁹

Against the background of this development, Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (fig. 1) and the use of

Christological symbolism by other artists who deal with the Holocaust become more understandable. In fact, Chagall's use of this theme takes on an entirely new dimension when investigated in the same manner. The *White Crucifixion* of late 1938, for instance, was clearly inspired by specific events: the German *Aktion* of June 15, 1938 in which 1,500 Jews were taken to concentration camps; the destruction of the Munich and Nuremberg synagogues on 9 June and 10 August 1938; the deportation of Polish Jews at the end of October 1938 and the outbreak of pogroms in November, including Kristallnacht (9–10 November 1938).⁸⁰ Even details of the painting which have since been erased, such as the old Jew at the lower left whose sign once read "Ich bin Jude" can be connected to German attempts to brand Jews and Jews in mid-1938.⁸¹

Further historical parallels to Chagall's paintings can easily be found: *The Martyr* of 1940–41 was begun as the Germans entered France, and the *Descent from the Cross* (1941, Mrs. James McLane Collection, Los Angeles) was painted in the period of partial relief after Chagall had reached New York.⁸² The *Yellow Crucifixion* (fig. 2), which Chagall

⁷⁷ For the continuous pogroms of 1903–1906, see Dubnov, *History*, V, 716–747. Dubnov mentions a pogrom in Vitebsk in October 1904 (p. 728), which Chagall apparently refers to in the story of the synagogue fire (*My Life*, pp. 32–33). Chagall's sufferings from anti-semitism as a boy are discussed by Roy McMullen, *The World of Marc Chagall* (London: Aldus, 1968), pp. 77 and 142. Chagall's imprisonment in St. Petersburg is mentioned by Chagall (*My Life*, p. 83), but he fails to say that he left Russia in August 1910 shortly after wholesale deportations of Jewish "illegal residents" had begun in major Russian cities such as Kiev (Dubnov, *History*, V, 758).

⁷⁸ Georges Charbonnier, *Le Monologue du Peintre* (Paris: René Julliard, 1960), II, 45. With this statement in mind, it may not be so far-fetched to connect the portrayal of Christ as a child, which Chagall has explained as being due to the child's purity ("Only a child had its place on the cross", Meyer, *Chagall*, p. 173; see also Erben, *Chagall*, p. 50), with the blood-labels that ran like a leitmotif through the 1904–6 pogroms and culminated in the Beilis trial, as Jews were accused of killing Christian children to use their blood ritually. There may be a suggestion of this interpretation in the lines Blaise Cendrars wrote about Chagall's studio: "Il en tombe/Pêle-mêle/Des cosaques, le Christ, un soleil en décomposition". See "Atelier", in *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, quoted in *Marc Chagall* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, June–October, 1959), p. 174. It should be noted that although the cross has almost disappeared in the painting where the parents are Jews, in the drawing where the spectators are Christian (they are dressed as a Russian bishop saint and a nun), it is fully visible and the child is bleeding profusely from his wounds. Thus the libel is reversed: it is the Jewish child, Chagall-Jesus, who bleeds at the hands of the Christians.

⁷⁹ About sixty thousand Jews were killed by both Ukrainian nationalists and the White Russians in over a thousand pogroms, ostensibly because the Jews were Bolsheviks. The White Russian battle cry was "Hit the Jews — save Russia!" (Dubnov, *History*, V, 841–844).

⁸⁰ That this painting was done at the end of 1938 is indicated by Chagall's original dating of it to 1939. See *Cahiers d'Art*, 14, no. 5–10 (1939), 152. Since Chagall dates works to the new year after his return from summer vacation in September and paralleling the Jewish rather than the Christian New Year, the painting must have been done towards the end of 1938. See Raymond Cogniat, *Chagall* (Paris: Flammarion, 1965),

p. 6. That external events inspired the painting was suggested by Alexandre Benois when the painting was first exhibited (Paris, Galerie Mai, 26 January–24 February 1940, no. 1): "This painting was undoubtedly conceived in suffering. One feels that...something woke him [the artist] with a start, that he was frightened and revolted by it. It is clear that this vision was provoked by the events of the last years, especially by that untranslatable horror which has spread itself over Chagall's co-religionists...[it] corresponds entirely to the villany of the epoch in which we live". In "Les Expositions: Chagall, Oeuvres récentes", *Cahier d'Art*, 15, no. 1–2 (1940), 33.

⁸¹ See reproduction in *Cahiers d'Art*, 14, no. 5–10 (1939), 152. The German actions included: the first Jewish census (17 May 1938); the registration and marking of Jewish businesses (14 June 1938); the forced adoption by Jews of the names Abraham and Sarah (17 August 1938) and the letter "J" stamped in Jewish passports (5 October 1938). See *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), VIII, 839. Note that preceding this *Crucifixion*, Chagall had done a few undated drawings of Christ on the Cross, occasionally wearing a *tallit* as a loincloth. The earliest of these appears to be from 1930, done at Peyra-Cava in South France, as the landscape in the background here is similar to that in a Peyra-Cava painting of 1930 (Meyer, classified cat., no. 577), despite the fact that it has been dated 1931 in two exhibitions of Chagall's work: Berne, Klipstein und Kornfeld, 30 April–28 May 1960, no. 14 and Geneva, Galerie Gerald Cramer, 21 June–25 July 1962, no. 58. Chagall spent part of the spring of 1930 in Berlin for the opening of an exhibition of his works, and was undoubtedly struck by the atmosphere in Germany which led to the windows of Jewish stores being broken on 15 October 1930, the day the Reichstag opened (Dubnov, *History*, V, 868), at the time Chagall was in Peyra-Cava (Meyer, *Chagall*, p. 381). This would explain both the sudden appearance of the Jewish crucified Jesus in the peaceful landscape and the use of the window motif, common to the Peyra-Cava landscapes, but highly appropriate here within the Jewish context too.

⁸² Walter Erben, *Marc Chagall* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), p. 114. For an illustration of the *Descent from the Cross*, see Meyer, classified cat. no. 698. The date used here is the one that was given when the picture was first exhibited (New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, 13 October–7 November 1942, no. 6).

began sketching in 1942, was clearly inspired by the sinking of the *Struma* in the Black Sea in February 1942 and the drowning of the 769 Jewish refugees on board.⁸³ *Obsession* (1943, private collection, France), in which the cross lies fallen in the village street and the three-branched candelabrum founders in the hands of a Jew, parallels in time the crushing of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.⁸⁴ *The Crucified* of 1944 (fig. 3) is not only a reaction to the news of the liquidation of the ghettos which was published during 1943 and 1944, and to the failure of the Warsaw ghetto uprising which Chagall mentioned in a speech in April 1944, but to the news of the destruction of Vitebsk in the war, which Chagall reacted to in an article written in February 1944 in a Yiddish paper.⁸⁵ In all these works, the linking of historical facts to specific pictures is too close to be merely coincidental.

On the other hand, the traditional inspiration of Judeo-Christian poenics may well have given Chagall the formal theme — the adoption of the Crucifixion rather than other themes, such as the *Ecce Homo* or the *Pietà*. In 1937 a Jesuit, Joseph Bonsirven, published *Les Juifs et Jésus*, reviewing modern attitudes to Christ. This book not only includes portions of Max Hirtenberg's 1927 book, *The Crucified Jew*, with its evocative title,⁸⁶ but contains several statements which may have influenced Chagall. Bonsirven knew that the cross was an intolerable symbol for Judaism as it recalls bloody persecutions: "For them, the cross cannot be 'the symbol of a self-sacrificing love, nor the sign of a redeeming hope, nor an emblem of peace, but the symbol of persecution, oppression, discriminations,

the stake and the gibbet'". Bonsirven repeats the argument that Jesus was a Jew and states that if he came again, he would come to the Jews and pray in their synagogue. Moreover, he makes the identification between Jesus and the Jews even stronger by quoting Israel Zangwill: "Jews are not only the people of Christ but the Christ of the peoples", adding: "Like Jesus, the Jews have not ceased to mount Golgotha; like him, they are always nailed to the cross".⁸⁷ This is a verbal description of Chagall's Crucifixions.

Against this background, Chagall's statements on his use of the Crucifixion must be re-evaluated, particularly his comment in early 1944: "For me Christ was a great poet, the teaching of whose poetry has been forgotten by the modern world".⁸⁸ Despite the general poetic terms, this is simply an echo of other modern Jewish writers such as Levinsohn and Gottlober, who claimed that Christians have misunderstood and ignored Jesus' teachings. This aspect appears again in his comment in 1963: "God, perspective, color, the Bible, form, lines, traditions, the so-called humanisms, love, caring, the family, the school, education, the prophets, and Christ himself have fallen to pieces".⁸⁹ Recently Chagall has taken to fuller explanations of his symbolism in the war-time pictures: "For me, Christ has always symbolized the true type of the Jewish martyr. That is how I understood him in 1908, when I used this figure for the first time.... It was under the influence of the pogroms. Then I painted and drew him in pictures about ghettos surrounded by Jewish troubles, by Jewish mothers, running terrified and

⁸³ The *Struma* had been refused entrance into Palestine because of bureaucratic regulations: its refugees were from Rumania and Bulgaria, "enemy" countries, and thus could not be granted entry even though visas were available (*New York Times*, 21 March 1942, p. 16). The ship was also refused entry into Istanbul and was towed away, blowing up on a mine in the harbor. The sinking of this ship raised an international outcry against Britain, and was called by the director of the American Emergency Committee for Palestine a symbol of "the whole case of Jewish homelessness" (*New York Times*, 9 March 1942, p. 12).

⁸⁴ See Meyer, *Chagall*, p. 447. News of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and its outcome had been known in New York since mid-April (*New York Times*, 22 April 1943, p. 1; 23 April 1943, p. 9; 7 May 1943, p. 7; 4 June 1943, p. 7; 26 October 1943, p. 8 and 28 October 1943, p. 22). It should be noted that in 1943 more and more space was being devoted to German plans to exterminate the Jews and to the actual liquidation of the ghettos (*ibid.*, 27 January 1943, p. 10; 12 April 1943, p. 5; 9 May 1943, p. 34; 22 May 1943, p. 4; etc.). *Obsession* was first exhibited at the end of the year (New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery; 2–27 November 1943, no. 7). A hint of this reading of the picture, but without the historical details, was given by McMullen, *Chagall*, p. 150, and by Etienne Gasser, "La Peinture et la Gravure: l'Expressionnisme", *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade: Histoire de l'Art*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), IV, 893.

⁸⁵ For the liquidation of the ghettos, see note 84 above, and the *New York Times*, 11 February 1944, p. 5; 12 February 1944, p. 6; 17 February 1944, p. 9; 18 March 1944, p. 3; 29 March 1944, p. 2; 15 April 1944, p.

3, etc. For the speech given by Chagall on 30 April 1944, see the Chagall scrapbook in the Museum of Modern Art Library, New York. For Chagall's article, see "צו מיין שטאט וויטעבסק", *אייניקייט*, 15 February 1944, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Joseph Bonsirven, S.J., *Les Juifs et Jésus — Attitudes Nouvelles* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne et ses fils, 1937), pp. 171–172. In view of the 1930 drawing, it may be suggested that Chagall had already heard of Hunterberg's book, *The Crucified Jew* (New York: Bloch, 1927), in its early or in its expanded 1929 version. It could also have influenced Americans such as Abraham Rattner and Josef Foshko in their choice of symbolism. However, the influence in all these cases would appear to be from the title rather than from the book's contents which defend the Jews from the accusation that they were responsible for Jesus' death.

⁸⁷ Bonsirven, *Juifs et Jésus*, pp. 170, 199 and 203–204. A post-war expression of these ideas seems, on the other hand, to have been influenced by Chagall's paintings: "Perhaps Christ had come to earth to help His people in the many hours of despair and persecution. He may have been among them again and again, trying to protect his brethren...and they put Him to death again and again, together with the rest of His people" (Runes, *The Jew and the Cross*, pp. 16–17).

⁸⁸ J.J. Sweeney, "Art Chronicle — I — An Interview with Marc Chagall", *Partisan Review*, 11 (Winter 1944), 91.

⁸⁹ "A few of Chagall's Remarks", *Homage to Marc Chagall*, ed. G. di San Lazzaro (New York: Tudor, ca. 1969), p. 10. These remarks were made on 2–4 May 1963.

holding little children in their arms".⁹⁰ This is undoubtedly the primary meaning of his use of this image.

However, Chagall's own poetry gives another nuance to his Christ imagery. During the war he wrote:

A Jew passes with the face of Christ
He cries: Calamity is on us
Let us run and hide in the ditches,

clearly paralleling the imagery of his paintings. After the war he returned to a more personal identification, first in a poem accusing God of deserting Chagall and the Jews: "Day and night I carry a cross", and then in a love poem to Bella: "And like Christ I am crucified, Fixed with nails to the easel".⁹¹ This is the image of the Jewish Jesus which begins to dominate in Chagall's post-war paintings, where he is a symbol both of the artist and of suffering humanity in general and not only of the martyred Jew.

This imagery became even more pervasive after Chagall began to work on commissions for the Church, usually depicting Old Testament scenes to which Jesus or Mary were added.⁹² This combination of the "Two Testaments" soon penetrated into his independent biblical works (e.g. fig. 9), as the artist began to see Jesus as a Jewish prophet, in a direct line from Moses and David.⁹³ Statements of this kind and the obsessive quality of this image in Chagall's work have given rise to the idea that he

has "found Christ".⁹⁴ While it is true that "Christ and the Virgin have conquered their place little by little in his art", and that Chagall "is *nolente volente* inviting the spectator to read his iconography as Christian fulfillment of Jewish foreshadowing",⁹⁵ his works must be seen within the Jewish apologetic context that Chagall places them: "Moses is the source from which all springs, even Christ".⁹⁶ In fact, in seeing Jesus as a Jewish prophet, Chagall once more echoes contemporary Jewish theories on Jesus, this time those of radical Reform Judaism. As early as 1913, Stephen Wise wrote: "Jesus was not only a Jew, but he was *the* Jew, the Jew of Jews... We accept Jesus for that which he was... a Jewish teacher, a Jewish leader, a prophet in Israel, clear-visioned, tender-loving, selfless, Godlike, though not uniquely Godly".⁹⁷ This far from orthodox view cannot be ignored in the spectrum of Jewish thought on Jesus, and compared to it, Chagall's Crucifixions, especially those up to 1945, appear more traditional and acceptable.

Furthermore, this later development does not alter the original meaning or inspiration for this theme in his work. It does make it imperative to point out, however, that the crucified figure in the paintings from the 1930's and early 1940's is not the Christian Messiah who overcomes all suffering by his sacrifice,⁹⁸ but, as Bonsirven's description suggests, a symbol of persecution, the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" from Isaiah — the Jewish martyr who holds out no suggestion of

⁹⁰ ל. לענעמאן, 'מארק שאגאל וועגן זיינע קריסטוס־פיגורן אלס סימבאל פון יידישן אונזער ווארט', מארטירערטום, 17, 22 January 1977, 4.

⁹¹ "Où est le jour" (1940-45), "Des chemins" (1945-50), and "Si mon soleil" (1945-50) in Marc Chagall, *Poèmes* (Geneva, 1975), pp. 81, 66 and 17. Chagall had identified himself with Jesus in a few paintings done during the war, such as *The Painter Crucified* (Meyer, class. cat. no. 689), as part of his identification, as a refugee, with the persecuted Jew.

⁹² This procedure is already visible in his first Church commission at Assy, where he added a Crucifixion and David playing the harp to the *Crossing of the Red Sea* (1954-56, Meyer, *Chagall*, p. 514 and class. cat. no. 940).

⁹³ The connection between these three biblical figures is made in the *Crossing of the Red Sea*, *The Creation of Man* (1956-58, Meyer, *Chagall*, p. 574), and in his stele of *Moses, David and Christ* (*ibid.*, p. 523 and classified cat. nos 870-871). See also Sidney Alexander, *Marc Chagall* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1978), p. 477.

⁹⁴ E.g. Cornelia and Irving Süssman, "Marc Chagall, Painter of the Crucified", *The Bridge*, 1 (1955), 96-117, and the more hesitant version by Chagall's friend, Raïssa Maritain, who herself converted to Christianity, "Chagall", *Art Sacré*, 11-12 (July-August 1950), 26-30. This supposition would seem to be borne out by an oft-repeated quotation brought by Meyer in which Chagall calls Christ "the man possessing the most profound comprehension of life, a central figure for the 'mystery of life'" (*Chagall*, p. 16). This statement seems to have been made, however, by Rotermund, "Der Gekreuzigte", p. 271, and not by Chagall. Note that before the publication of Antokolsky's letters, he too was

believed to have converted. See A.J., *Antokolsky i yevraii* (Vilna: Matzkevich, 1902).

⁹⁵ Maritain, "Chagall", p. 30 and Alexander, *Chagall*, p. 477.

⁹⁶ Meyer, *Chagall*, p. 508. This recalls Antokolsky's linking of Jesus with Moses and Isaiah in the letters quoted above.

⁹⁷ Stephen Wise, "The Life and Teachings of Jesus the Jew", *The Outlook*, 104 (7 June 1913), 295-297. These ideas, which were not accepted even by the editors of *The Outlook* (p. 278), understandably raised a storm of protest when they were spoken from the pulpit in January 1925, and Wise was forced to resign his presidency of the American Zion Organization and the American Jewish Congress (Sandmel, *We Jews*, pp. 102-103). However, Wise's views were far from being only his own. They were preceded by those of Claude G. Montefiore, who stressed that Jesus was a prophet, in *Some Elements of the Religious Teaching of Jesus* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1910), pp. 14-25, 39-58, 87-90, 101-109, 114-116 and 162, which called down on him the wrath of Ahad Ha'Am. See "על שתי הסעפים", *Collected Works* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1947), pp. 370-377, and Gerald Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Ktav, 1969, first published 1911), among others. See also the somewhat modified form these ideas assume in the writings of Leo Baeck as quoted by Hermann Adler, "Das Christusbild im Lichte jüdische Autoren", *Symbolon*, 2 (1961), 48-49, and the lengths to which they were taken by Shalom Asch in *The Nazarene*.

⁹⁸ As Werner Haftmann, *Marc Chagall* (New York: Abrams, 1973), p. 26 and Walter Erben, *Chagall*, 1966, p. 112, suggest.

salvation.⁹⁹ It is also important to note that in periods of stress to the Jewish people, such as the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, Chagall returned to symbolizing the martyred Jew as the crucified Jesus in the burning *shtetl*, surrounded by mourning Jewish refugees in paintings which strongly recall the imagery of the Holocaust.¹⁰⁰ Further, Chagall himself has recently come out in defence of his depictions of Jesus: "My God is the Jewish God, my holy book is the Bible. The God of our *Fathers!* In my fantasy 'Christ' is only our *Jewish martyr*, with his Jewish mother, surrounded by our *Jewish prophets*... My Christ, as I depict him, is always the type of the Jewish martyr, in pogroms and in our other troubles, and not otherwise. I believe that the world understands me".¹⁰¹

It should now be clear that the Jewish use of

Christological themes in dealing with the Holocaust is based both on a tradition of Jewish art which is over one hundred years old, and on the same polemic and historical background of reaction to anti-semitism that was present from the start in the use of this subject. All the artists involved considered themselves to be emancipated Jews who lived in a Christian world which at least partially accepted them and then turned on them. Their works are a form of visual polemics, addressed not to the Jews as a means of bringing them closer to Christ, but to Christians as a condemnation of their actions against the nation of Jesus. In this way, paradoxically, the holiest Christian visual symbol, the Crucifixion, was used to indict Christianity, and an image which had been anathema to Jews became a symbol of their martyrdom.

⁹⁹ McMullen, *Chagall*, p. 152; Meyer, *Chagall*, pp. 414-416; and James L. McLane, introduction to *Chagall*, Pasadena Art Museum 26 May-28 July 1957. However, it must be admitted that something more Christian in meaning does enter the symbolism of several post-war paintings, especially the series *Resistance — Resurrection — Liberation* (1948-52, Meyer, classified cat. nos 829-831) although there is a clear Jewish historical context to these paintings as well: the birth of the State of Israel in 1948. Rotermund, who understood the symbolism of the Holocaust Crucifixions as linked to the suffering servant in Isaiah ("Der Gekreuzigte", p. 270), made the mistake of stating that this later messianic symbolism was already inherent in the wartime Crucifixions (pp. 271-274).

¹⁰⁰ E.g. the *Descent from the Cross* (1968-76) *Marc Chagall — Peintures Recentes 1967-1977* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 17 October 1977-2 January 1978), no. 40 and *The painter and his world* (1969) in *Marc Chagall, Paintings and Gouaches* (New York: Pierre Matisse Gallery, April-May 1972), no. 4.

¹⁰¹ "שואג" ליעומא, p. 4. For a further discussion of Chagall's use of the figure of Christ in his post-war works, see S.L. Schneiderman, "Chagall — Torn?", *Midstream*, 23 (June-July 1977), 49-62. Schneiderman raises the question of the different explanations Chagall gives of his Christian symbolism, depending on whether he is addressing Christians or Jews, a dualism which grows out of the problems often confronting the authors of polemic or apologetic literature.